2015

Examining the Role of Active Student Engagement in High School Arts Courses

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MS, SUNY Brockport, 1997

BS, SUNY Brockport, 1993

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Self-Designed Specialization Art Education

Walden University

January 2015

Abstract

A primary challenge to educators is the design and implementation of effective student engagement processes. High school students cannot be successful if they are frequently absent from school, as active engagement opportunities reinforce knowledge and help to keep students enthused in their learning. To address the challenges of frequent school absences, this study examined a gap in the literature—namely, the relationship between active engagement and arts courses as a motivator for students to remain in high school. For this study, *active engagement* was defined as a process in which the student's interests, efforts, and knowledge culminated in an application of the learning content. Using Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) flow theory, a mixed-methods study was conducted to examine students' experiences with active engagement in arts courses. Data were collected from a survey (50 = x) and phenomenological interviews (8 = x). Quantitative analyses of these data included a paired-sample *t* test to determine whether there was a significant difference between the average values of students' perceived learning capabilities and expectations for learning in relation to arts courses versus non-arts courses. Content analyses created categories and identified themes that found students felt more engaged, self-confident, and motivated about their learning during arts educational experiences. Contributions to positive social change included increased awareness about how students make meaning of active engagement in arts courses. Such information can help school districts understand more about the importance of providing students with artistic and creative educational experiences.

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Dedication

This doctoral study is dedicated to my husband and best friend, David who brings joy, laughter, technology, and vision to me every day; Chloe, who has grown into an incredible young woman of whom I am proud to call my daughter and my motivation; and to my supportive, encouraging, and loving parents, Barbara and Gus. Each of you has believed in my abilities and has inspired me to become the very best person and professional that I can be.

This doctoral study is dedicated to my faithful and loyal companion, Greta, an amazing and sweet Yorkshire terrier, who stayed by my side through countless late nights of study, research, and writing.

This doctoral study is also dedicated to the students I have had the privilege of teaching throughout my career. You have continually motivated me to improve my teaching abilities.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge and thank Dr. Victoria Yancey, who served as my doctoral committee chair. Dr. Yancey's encouragement, patience, and insight have been a source of strength throughout this journey. Her commitment and knowledge contributed greatly to my studies and made my time at Walden University a positive and fulfilling learning experience.

I would like to thank Dr. Janice Garfield, my doctoral committee member, for her leadership and support throughout this research endeavor. Dr. Garfield's support and expertise provided a continual beacon of light in the darkness for the many times I thought I would struggle on this journey. Her dedication is an inspiration. Dr. Garfield is a role model for all who desire to reach their highest potential.

Finally, I would like to extend a special thank you to my family: to my husband, David for being so considerate and understanding of the time I needed to dedicate in completing this milestone. You were optimistic and encouraging every step of the way, and I appreciate you and all the things you do for me; to my daughter, Chloe for cheering me on and giving me words of encouragement, you are wise beyond your years and are destined for greatness; to my parents, Barbara and Gus for your continued understanding, care, and support; and to Greta, Cooper, Zorro, and Heidi who have comforted me, made me smile, and reminded me countless times of the need to get some sleep throughout my doctoral journey!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Although researchers have investigated a variety of factors that affect student achievement, opportunities to conduct research on the relationship between students' exposure to the arts and their perceptions of active engagement have been largely overlooked. This topic is important to study because dropping out of school is a catalyst for unfavorable consequences for both the individual and the public. "Dropping out of school presents a serious national, state, and local problem related to economic and social repercussions for society as a whole, as well as consequences related to the individual's well-being" (Dunn, Chambers, & Rabren, 2004, p. 314). Facing these challenges requires increased attentiveness to the reasons some students achieve less and give up on their education. The creative effort needed to succeed in arts classes requires competence and motivation, yet understanding the source of inspiration for creative efforts is unclear (Rostan, 2010). Therefore, it is important to study motivational sources that are needed to develop, improve, and create (Runco, 2005). If a strong, positive relationship is found between students' feelings of engagement and being enrolled in an arts course, it could change the way student schedules are made, promote policies and processes to increase attendance rates, influence an increase in the cohort graduation rates, as well as create an effective body of evidence for expanding arts education at the high school level. This study is expected to add to the literature by understanding students' perceptions of active engagement in arts courses.

Chapter 1 begins with background information and the need to study student perceptions of engagement. The term *active engagement* is defined. Because this study was dedicated to student perceptions, this study considered how students' perceptions of active engagement were associated with enrollment in arts courses. The purpose of this mixed methods study was two-

fold and included two phases of data collection. After providing the research questions and hypotheses, I reflected on the factors associated with Csikszentmihalyi's (1975) flow theory, in which the degree of engagement with an activity or a task was based on the combination of concentration, interest, and enjoyment culminating in a state of deep absorption or "flow." A paired sample *t* test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the average values of students' perceptions of learning expectations and capabilities in an arts course versus a non-arts course. To help determine initial themes to explore during the in-depth interviews, a data analysis of the differences between the percentages for each category was conducted using Microsoft Excel (2011). Results were presented in tables for interpretation purposes, including statistical significance, how the results answered the research questions and hypotheses, the explanation of why the results occurred and the long-range implications of the results. Next, the study's limitations, assumptions, scope and delimitations, and potential significance are shared.

Background

For the purpose of this study, the term *active engagement* was defined as a process in which high school students' interests, efforts, and knowledge investments culminated in an application of the learning content. Promoting active engagement not only reinforces learning, but also keeps students interested and motivated to learn. Retaining students' interest and enthusiasm is critical for academic achievement. Using the arts to keep students actively engaged might improve teaching and learning processes. "Participation in an art-focused academic pathway increased students' motivation to attend school, expectation of success, desire to do well, attitude toward teachers, enjoyment of classes, and sense of community" (Gajda & Dorfman, 2006, p. 14). Students are more likely to be actively engaged when their academic

work involves connections between what they are learning and real-life problems beyond the walls of the classroom (Newmann, Wehlage, & Lamborn, 1992). Lee and Breitenberg (2010) argued that creative and applied learning… inspired genuine interest and increased motivation. Likewise, Rostan's (2010) study supported the connection among artistic creativity, motivation, competence, and real-world learning.

Motivation and enjoyment are important factors to consider in the development of engaging learning opportunities. According to Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider, and Shernoff, (2003) promoting excitement stimulates engagement in the learning process; Gullatt (2008) argued that providing artistic opportunities created the benefits of enjoyment and motivation for students; Csikszentmihalyi (1997) proposed that the sense of time is transformed when individuals are transfixed by a task. When one's sense of time on task is altered, one is more focused, inspired, and determined to meet or exceed educational goals. Thus, enthusiasm for a task is a motivational incentive for accomplishing objectives. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) argued that individuals benefited from increased feelings of enjoyment, satisfaction, and having accomplished challenges and thus were more likely to pursue future challenges. According to Chantarasombat (2011), the benefits of increased motivational factors included increased responsibility, positive attitude, persistence, and a sharing between and among peers and teachers. It has been theorized that motivational factors such as involvement, enjoyment, and absorption, inspire students to put forth greater effort, culminating in higher achievement (Kretchmar, 2008). As Kretchmar (2008) explained, enjoyable experiences help students grow and develop and using the arts to keep students actively engaged might help to improve teaching and learning processes. According to Marks (2000), students who are actively engaged with

high school are more likely to learn, to find learning rewarding, to eventually graduate, and to pursue higher education.

Without enthusiasm and interest, students tend to lose the zest for learning and ultimately lag behind their peers; some students drop out. It is theorized that dropping out of school begins with a gradual process of student disengagement and alienation coupled with chronic problems such as tardiness and absenteeism (Shernoff et al., 2003). According to Marks (2000), student disengagement in the classroom emerged as a problem in the mid-1980s. Studies during this time portrayed discouraged teachers and disengaged students trying to make sense of fragmented curriculum standards with few agreed upon assessment strategies other than state-mandated tests. Most research has shown that the level of students' engagement can be attributed to their personal backgrounds, as well as distinct qualities of their schools, including disjointed curriculum, weak instruction, and low learning expectations (Marks, 2000). According to Bronfenbrenner (1974), due to a feeling of disconnect between students' individual lives and expected learning outcomes, U.S. school systems have been characterized as "one of the most potent breeding grounds of alienation in American society" (p. 60). Newmann (1992) asserted that it is important for students to be engaged in meaningful learning in order to maximize achievement. Additionally, Newmann (1989) found that the primary source of student disengagement was bureaucratically organized schools with students doing meaningless, low-level work and having impersonal relationships with their teachers.

A learning environment that does not provide opportunities for students to engage in challenging tasks, that are impersonal and do not give opportunities to make meaningful connections with teachers to foster positive relationships, may lead to feelings of frustration and disappointment. In an effort to reduce possible feelings of frustration of high school students due

to academic disengagement from their high school education, a collection of individual experiences illustrating firsthand accounts of active engagement examples may help. Research revealed the need to collect students' perceptions of feeling actively engaged while taking an arts course. The perceptions of student realities, given by students from their personal experiences of arts courses, are invaluable to the search for wisdom and understanding in order to bring about positive social change in this area.

Problem Statement

A primary challenge to educators is the design and implementation of effective student engagement processes. High school students cannot be successful if they are absent from school frequently, and active engagement opportunities reinforce knowledge while helping to keep students enthused and interested in their learning. The relationship between the exposure of high school student to the arts and their perceptions of active engagement in arts courses is not known. Because the arts provide curriculum areas that change activities frequently, use technology and a variety of media, use creative criteria, make projects and assignments challenging, provide individual and group instruction, and provide positive reinforcement, students who are involved in the arts may feel more engaged and excited about their learning. Students who are more engaged and excited about their learning want to be present in school. To address the challenges of designing and implementing active engagement strategies, the relationship between active engagement and students' involvement in arts courses was explored as a motivator for students to remain in high school. Due to the lack of both empirical and phenomenological evidence in current literature on active engagement and the arts, a mixed-method design was selected.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine and describe the experiences of high school students' shared, lived experiences with feelings of active engagement in arts courses. This study may help increase understanding of the importance of providing opportunities for active engagement in the arts and for improving high school students' academic success. Describing and measuring the process of actively engaging students through the arts may help to explore ways students can become more engaged with their learning and complete high school.

Research Questions and Related Hypotheses

Phase 1 (Quantitative)

1. Is there a difference in students' engagement in classroom learning when enrolled in arts classes?

    H_0: There is no statistically significant difference between students' engagement in classroom learning when enrolled in arts classes.

    H_a: There is a statistically significant difference between students' engagement in classroom learning when enrolled in arts classes.

Phase 2 (Qualitative)

2. How do students describe their experiences of active engagement in arts classes?

Phase 3 (Mixed Methods)

3. What is the relationship between students' engagement in classroom learning and enrollment in arts classes?

Nature of the Study

This mixed methods study was comprised of two data collection phases. An explanatory, sequential model was used in which quantitative data from the survey used in the first phase helped to determine initial themes to be explored during the interview data collection, the qualitative phase. Approximately 75% of the estimated 200 students at Imperial High School (a pseudonym), who began as freshmen, finished as graduating seniors in a 4-year period; therefore, an initial, minimum sample of 50 students, or one-third of the 75%, was asked to participate. Using a school-prepared enrollment list segmented by grade level, the participant group consisted of students in their third year as juniors. These students had completed at least one arts course previously.

To help address issues of bias, participants were randomly selected for the quantitative phase. Using spreadsheet software with the capability to embed calculations, a list of 50 names was generated. It is a course scheduling policy of this high school that all freshmen and sophomores are expected to fulfill their state requirement of one arts credit, or one arts class, by the time they are in Grade 11. At that time, students are at the halfway point in their high school education; inviting these students ensured that the participants had at least one prior experience learning in an arts class. All juniors, regardless of their natural inclination to select an art elective, could be part of the random selection process.

The survey used was the Secondary School Engagement in Classroom Learning Survey (Cavanagh, Kennish, & Sturgess, 2008), which examined learning capabilities and expectations. A hard copy of the survey was selected, because it gave the researcher another opportunity to address any concerns of the participants and to guard against coercion. The survey was administered at two specified times to the randomly selected participants in one day, during

noninstructional time, in a quiet location at Imperial High School. The first time students completed the survey they were instructed to answer the questions according to a time spent in a high school arts course. The second time students completed the same survey they were instructed to answer the questions according to a time spent in a non-arts high school course. The first time-period to complete the surveys occurred during the non-instructional time, designated as homeroom. The second time period occurred after school and was designated for tardy participants who missed the first planned time period. Participants could take as long as they needed to complete the survey and turned in their completed surveys to the researcher.

The data analysis and interpretation from taking the survey twice examined students' perceived learning capabilities and expectations for an arts course versus a non-arts course. The steps involved in the analysis of data included a paired sample *t* test to determine whether there was a significant difference between the average values of students' perceptions of learning expectations and capabilities in an arts course versus a non-arts course. To help determine initial themes to explore during the in-depth interviews, a data analysis of the differences between the percentages for each category was conducted using Microsoft Excel (2011). Results were presented in tables for interpretation purposes, including statistical significance, how the results answered the research questions and hypotheses, the explanation of why the results occurred and the long-range implications of the results.

The second, qualitative phase described the experiences of Imperial High School students' shared, lived experiences with feelings of active engagement and enrollment in an arts class (e.g., visual arts, music, and drama). Because a mixed method plan uses multiple sources of data (Creswell, 2013), a smaller number of at least 12 or 25% of the original participating group of 50 students from the quantitative phase of the study participated in individual interviews; the

goal was to further understand experiences and behaviors closely associated with the research question. Using a purposive sampling helped the researcher "generate a wealth of detail from a few cases" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 173). This was a sufficient sampling size because purposive samples normally include less than 30 cases (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009); however, it was large enough to represent the population adequately and small enough to collect data in a cost efficient and time effective way rather than measuring the entire sampling frame. The data collection strategy for the qualitative phase included interviewing high school student participants and audiotaping their responses. Appendix B shows the formulation of the thought-provoking questions (descriptive, contrasting, and structural) that were prepared for participants to answer during the interview process. The purpose of the first four interview questions was to put arts-related experiences in context by asking participants to describe, explain, and interpret their learning expectations and recollections of activities they were engaged with during their arts course. The purpose of Questions 5–8 was to gather details about the students' perceived learning capabilities and experiences in arts courses.

Reflection on the phenomenological data from the interviews examined, described, and helped to understand students' perceptions of feeling actively engaged while taking an arts course. This procedure involved following Moustakas' (1994) transcendental or psychological phenomenological approach, in which the interpretation of the researcher was less of a focal point than the description of the participants' experiences. Personal biases were taken into account and acknowledged while striving for subjectivity. First, a researcher's journal was maintained to acknowledge and address concerns related to any prejudices or opinions. Through introspection and analysis, the possible preferences for certain types of evidence, interpretations, and explanations were explored. Second, personal experiences, opinions, and prejudices were

bracketed while consistently practicing self-reflection throughout the process. Third, in order to make sense of the large amount of data that was collected from several participants, quotes and significant statements from the participants were used to help narrow the information and formulate themes. Significant patterns were identified to develop a description of *what* the participants' experienced and another description of *how* they experienced it. The overall descriptions provided a deeper, richer understanding of student engagement in an arts course setting and helped to construct a framework for communicating what the data revealed about the essence of the phenomenon.

Drawing from the elements in Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) flow theory, this mixed methods study was designed to examine how students experience learning in arts courses. Typology development, a mixed method analysis strategy (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2008), was used to consider data from the quantitative portion to help develop emergent categories or themes which were analyzed in the contrasting qualitative data. The students' opinions and thoughts from the interviews about topics such as motivation and enthusiasm were considered top priority. Students were given an opportunity to expand on their initial survey answers. According to the Cavanagh et al. (2008) survey, student skills were defined as "learning capabilities" and learning challenges were defined as "expectations of learning." The coding from the survey reflected codes developed from previous use of the instrument with the learning capabilities scale: self-esteem (SE), self-concept (SC), resilience (R), self-regulation (SR), and self-efficacy (SE). The expectation of learning scale used the following coding: explanation (EXP), interpretation (INT), application (APP), perspective (PERS), and empathy (EMP). Data from the interview questions were coded in alignment with the survey coding. Using the predetermined codes from the Secondary School Engagement in Classroom Learning Survey

(Cavanagh, Kennish, & Sturgess, 2008) assisted with the analytical work involved in marking text, identifying overlapping or similar themes, and categorizing. The alignment of codes was relevant to the mixed methodology chosen for the study because the qualitative portion helped explain and support the quantitative findings.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

The research questions guiding this study included an investigation and description of active engagement in relation to arts classes and the ways students described and understood the essence of their lived experiences with arts education classes. It was the contention of Cavanagh et al., (2008) that active student engagement could be explained by applying Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) flow theory. Cavanagh et al., (2008) proposed that successful engagement in classroom learning was a balance between student capabilities and learning expectations. When both are high, more learning can occur. When both are low, less learning is expected. The interview questions were aligned with the survey instrument. The types of activities students described about their arts educational experiences, the reasons why they described those experiences, and their perceived learning expectations and capabilities in arts courses were explored during the interview portion of the study. These investigations were guided by the tenets of an explanatory, sequential, mixed methods design in order to explain and interpret the quantitative results with the use of qualitative follow-up data. The conceptual basis for this study was Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) flow theory, which combined three areas: *concentration*, the intense or absolute absorption in an activity; *interest*, the fundamental basis for becoming engaged with a topic; and *enjoyment*, the feeling of accomplishment or satisfaction. Flow theory is based on the relationship between experiencing challenges and using the skills necessary to complete those challenges.

From several opportunities observing artists at work, Csikszentmihalyi (1975) became intrigued with the idea of an optimal experience or state of peak performance. Using a psychological viewpoint to gather information, Csikszentmihalyi (1975) reflected on factors of internal and external motivation that aided in the development of the flow theory. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) theorized that engagement with an activity or a task was based on the combination of concentration, interest, and enjoyment, culminating in a state of deep absorption or flow. According to Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2002), performance is perceived by individuals to be a pleasurable and successful activity worth doing for its own sake. They asserted that the flow state was intrinsically rewarding and promoted a selective mechanism in which psychological functioning fostered interest in the individual to master new challenges. "Flow thereby invokes a growth principle, in which a more complex set of capacities is sought after and developed" (Shernoff et al., 2003, p. 161). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) used the lived experiences of creative individuals to develop his theory of the importance of concentration, interest, and enjoyment in concert with an appropriate challenge. These principles were used to guide the development of the research questions. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) argued that the balance between challenge and skill is delicate and, when disrupted, apathy, anxiety, or relaxation may be experienced. Therefore, providing appropriate challenges and opportunities to enhance learning are important when engaging students in learning.

The flow theory and Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider, and Shernoff's (2003) study of student engagement in high school classrooms were directly related to this mixed methods study in several ways. First, arts classroom settings are conducive to multiple activities in which the principles involved with the theory of flow can be gauged. Therefore, students had schematic backgrounds rich in descriptive explanation during the interview process that addressed their

experiences, attitudes, and examples of active engagement in arts courses. Also, students had clearly established expectations and thoughts about their capabilities in an arts learning environment. Second, few studies have been dedicated to the examination of experiences with flow in the classroom setting and, more specifically, in the arts classroom setting. The research questions for this study were in direct alignment with the flow theory principles of interest, enjoyment, concentration, and appropriate challenge. Third, most of what has been researched about motivation pertaining to instruction has been examined using experimental methods (Stipek, 1996), and measurements that have been devised during experimental circumstances may have restricted degrees of applicability. This study began with quantitative data collection and analysis followed by a phenomenological perspective in which the data that were collected reflected the student's perceptions of his or her experiences. The use of the word *how* helped direct an interrogative approach and denoted the openness of the researcher to information that became available during the qualitative data collection and analysis, while at the same time acknowledging and respecting the shared perceptions of the participants. This type of support from the qualitative phase enhanced the likelihood that explanatory data would be collected. Lastly, the concept of flow was applicable to this study because it was developed from a range of experiences originating with observations from arts activities.

Artists and scholars have reported experiences of flow while actively engaged in creative works as the catalyst for some of their best work (Shernoff et al., 2003). This study may have helped to substantiate these claims. While active engagement can be defined in a variety of ways, it is evident that engaged students are more interested in and challenged by their work. "The flow experience acts as a magnet for learning" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 33). This was one way to examine whether the arts promote a process in which the interests, efforts, and investments of

students culminate in an application of learning content. Other theoretical structures that guided this study are explored in Chapter 2. To develop frames of reference and conceptual categories, key characteristics from the conceptual framework—such as the importance of concentration, interest, enjoyment, and appropriate challenge—were used.

Definition of Terms

In order to facilitate clarity of thought throughout this research, the following terms and definitions are provided.

Active Engagement: For the purpose of the study, a definition of the term *active engagement* was formulated to be a process in which the interests, efforts, and investments of students culminate in an application of the learning content. Defined this way, active engagement was consistent with other researchers' definitions (Callison & Lamb, 2004; Renzulli, Gentry, & Reis, 2004; Kahne, 2004; Finn, 1993; Newmann, Wehlage, & Lamborn, 1992; Steinberg, 1996 and Marks, 2000). Student descriptions of the qualities of active engagement were considered as pertinent themes in the study.

Arts Courses: Arts courses at this study site included a variety of visual arts courses, instrumental and choral music courses, and drama and acting courses. It is important to note that, based upon the curriculum requirements; the arts courses offered are divided into basic or introductory level courses and more advanced and challenging courses. It is customary for students to be scheduled in an introductory course first. Prior to Grade 11, most students have not reached a level of mastery equivalent to beginning to develop a sequential portfolio. Prior to the start of their high school years, some participants may not have had experiences with visual arts courses since they were in elementary school. The sample of this study isolated participants of

Grade 11 because by the time students of this high school are at this level they have usually completed at least one introductory high school arts course.

Authentic Learning: Dewey (1916) defined engaging students' minds with authentic learning as opportunities for meaningful problem solving that extend beyond a classroom setting. Additionally, Renzulli, Gentry, and Reis (2004) defined authentic learning as the fluctuation from prescriptive to investigative knowledge.

Behavioral Engagement: Fredricks, Blumenfield, and Paris (2004) outlined behavioral engagement as being involved with curricular and extra-curricular activities. Behavioral engagement is one aspect that can be used to determine student involvement with academics; however, this research study considered all aspects of engagement to attempt to discover what involved students in the process of learning during arts courses.

Cognitive Engagement: Fredricks et al. (2004) defined cognitive engagement as the personal investment students make in their individual learning.

Concentration: Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defined concentration as the intense or absolute absorption in an activity.

Emotional Engagement: As explained by Fredricks et al. (2004) emotional engagement is the ability to identify with people and the process of learning.

Enjoyment: Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defined enjoyment as the feeling of accomplishment or satisfaction.

Interest: Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defined interest as the fundamental basis for becoming engaged with a topic

Lived Experiences: Dilthey (1985) defined the concept of lived experiences as those experiences that involve immediate, pre-reflective consciousness of life.

Assumptions

This study was subject to five assumptions. It was assumed that the purposeful sampling strategy and voluntary nature of participation in this study would identify participants who would reflect and articulate their experiences. It was also assumed that the sampling strategy would produce results that would be more beneficial than sampling other grade-level populations within the school because they may or may not have experienced at least one required arts course. Furthermore, it was assumed that the students would answer the survey and the interview questions honestly. It was assumed that the participants would reflect the beliefs and attitudes of the student population. It was assumed that the school grade level record reflected accurate information. The data collection, analyses, and interpretations were exclusive to this site only. These assumptions were necessary in order to investigate the possible types of activities and student perceptions of active engagement in arts courses.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was based on the investigation of arts classes and high school students' shared, lived experiences with feelings of active engagement. The study included information gathered from students in a Northeastern state school district. Results of this study may be of interest to other districts within the geographic region that are similar in size and demographics and are state-mandated to require 1 credit hour of arts. It may not be as important to generalize findings for districts that experience issues of extreme poverty or extreme wealth and are not state-mandated to require arts credit. These state requirements and economic conditions have been identified as having an effect on the type and quality of art programs offered at the high school level (National Endowment for the Arts, 1992, 2012; U.S. Dept. of

Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Secondary Arts Education Survey, 2009); these factors were not an issue in this district.

This study was limited to a phenomenological study to focus on what the participants had in common as they experienced active engagement in arts courses in one school district. The use of the word *what* helped direct an interrogative approach denoting the openness of the researcher to specific, descriptive information that participants shared during the qualitative data collection and analysis. Because the intent was to examine, describe, and understand students' perceptions of feeling actively engaged while taking an arts course it was important to learn about the specific aspects of both *how* they were engaged and in *what* ways. This focus was chosen because there are very few studies dedicated to the investigation of students' perceptions in relation to arts courses (Cavanagh, Kennish, & Sturgess, 2008). Furthermore, pedagogical theoretical frameworks were not used because the developmental growth of participants was not a central focus of the study. Because it is the practice of this high school to schedule students for their state-mandated one arts credit before the start of their junior year, the population boundaries for participant selection included Grade 11 and excluded the perceptions of students in other grade levels.

Limitations

This study was subject to three limitations. An initial limitation of this mixed methods study was the phenomenological approach used in the second phase of the qualitative portion of the study. By definition, phenomenology is the study of individual perceptions that are self-reported. Moustakas (1994) asserted that a characteristic of phenomenology is that it is clarified with comprehensive descriptions of experiences and not through scoring, rating, or measuring. Therefore, the interpretation of the data could be predisposed to various explanations. Creswell

(2012) affirmed that a phenomenological approach is limiting in that the findings cannot be generalized. In an effort to address this limitation, both nominal and ordinal data were measured using a paired sample *t* test in order to specify the nature of the relationship between variables. The district size and location was a limitation as well. The study site consisted of a rural high school with approximately 800 students enrolled in Grades 9-12. The participants were not categorized by demographic information. The perceptions of participants were not generalized to include the perceptions of other students in the school district or other school districts across the state and country. The results of this study are of use mainly to those within the local and surrounding area's educational community. Data were collected during the spring semester of the school calendar year of 2013-2014.

Another potential weakness of the study was the small sampling size. Approximately 75% of the estimated 200 students who begin Imperial High School as freshmen finish as graduating seniors within a 4-year period. To help address issues of bias, the initial participation selection for the quantitative phase was a random process. Using spreadsheet software with the capability to embed calculations, a list of 50 names was generated and survey data from the participants were gathered. For the second, qualitative phase, a purposeful selection of 12 students from the initial 50 participants who completed the survey were asked to participate in interviews to further understand experiences and behaviors closely associated with the research questions.

My role as the researcher was a limitation. My role in the school district is a high school drawing, painting, and studio art teacher. Although some of the participants might have been my students in previous semesters, I was not their teacher at the time of the study. It is important, however, to acknowledge that because of my role, students may have been reluctant to answer survey or interview questions in a way that might have been perceived as negative. Extra

measures were taken to reduce the risks of feelings of possible pressure to participate. For example, the participants were assured that my role in the research was that of doctoral student and not as a teacher and that it was not part of my role to judge, but to gather data (Patton, 2002). The purpose of the study and possible benefits of the study resulting from participation were described. As an additional measure of protection against coercion, I assured participants that their participation was completely voluntary and that their involvement in the study would remain confidential. I explained that they could withdraw from the process at any point without penalty.

Significance

Student engagement leads to achievement in the classroom; it also contributes to students' social and cognitive development (Finn, 1993; Newmann, 1992). The significance of this research study may be of interest to a wide variety of professionals ranging from arts educators to administrators and policy makers. Given the practice of scheduling students based on credit requirements, a study of this nature might help to promote the practice of scheduling based on student interest and motivation. This study may help to improve teaching techniques while adding to the scholarly research that has been done on the need for active student engagement. "Evidence is now emerging that shows that arts education can have powerful effects on student achievement" (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006, p. 60). This study may help when advocating for the promotion of strong arts departments in high schools. If a strong, positive relationship between students' feelings of engagement and being enrolled in an arts course were found, it could change the way student schedules are made, promote policies and processes to increase attendance rates, increase the cohort graduation rates, as well as create an effective body of evidence for expanding arts education at the high school level.

Summary

When skills, attention, and the individual's will are aligned in combination with the appropriate environment, learners will define, as well as refine, their learning experience. Teachers must encourage students to find what intrinsically motivates them, while creating favorable conditions in which active engagement opportunities are available. Not only do the arts create active student engagement opportunities, they also offer exploratory options that motivate and inspire enthusiasm for teaching as well as learning. This study was inspired by a desire to engage art students. A mixed methods approach was used to explore the essence of the lived experiences of high school students who participated in at least one arts course.

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to this study beginning with the need to study student perceptions of engagement and a definition of the term *active engagement*. Because this study was dedicated to student perceptions, the student voice was a critical component. I explained why disengagement is considered important and in need of further research. This mixed methods study considered how students' perceptions of active engagement related to enrollment in arts classes. Its purpose was two-fold and included two phases of data collection. After providing the research questions, I reflected on the factors associated with Csikszentmihalyi's (1975) flow theory in which engagement with an activity or a task is based on the combination of concentration, interest, and enjoyment culminating in a state of deep absorption or flow. Limitations, assumptions, scope and delimitations, and significance of the study were shared.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review, while Chapter 3 explains the methodology used in this study. Chapter 4 reports the results and findings, and Chapter 5 discusses conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

While research and best practices identify motivational benefits of providing artistic opportunities for students (Gullatt, 2008), art is one of the first areas of learning to be overlooked as inconsequential. According to Heath's (1999) decade-long study, student attendance at after-school arts programs was far greater than sports or community service programs. This finding opened the door for this study to investigate the relationship between the arts and active engagement. Aprill (2001) argued that the interaction between the arts and other curriculum areas promotes authentic learning and intellectual work. Therefore, students who are actively engaged in the arts can navigate through their requirements in interesting, thought-provoking ways. It is fair to presume that if a student is achieving/exceeding academic goals; his or her attendance rate is probably high. According to Oreck (2006), key results that relate to this study include the encouragement of bringing creativity into teachers' repertoire and addressing multiple learning styles in order to keep students motivated. With these factors in mind, and in an effort to increase attendance rates, the study examined and described the experiences of high school students' shared, lived experiences with feelings of active engagement in arts courses.

Designing and implementing processes that enhance student engagement remain a primary challenge to educators. If students are absent from school frequently, they cannot be successful. The purpose of the study was to improve teaching and learning processes and to maintain high school students' enrollment based upon their active engagement in arts courses. In preparation for this mixed method, phenomenological study, a review of the professional, and research literature was conducted. Studies concerning the arts, high school, active engagement and possible reasons for drop out were researched. Educational and motivational theories were

explored to understand creative development and the role of art within the education system. Csikszentmihalyi's (1975) research on the combination of concentration, interest, and enjoyment culminating in a state of deep absorption or "flow" was used as a framework for the study. This review of literature in this chapter is organized around each of these factors to offer a better understanding of previous work in these areas.

Using Academic Search Premier, Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), Educational Research Complete, PsycARTICLES, and Teacher Reference Center, I searched for articles using the following keywords: *active engagement, differentiation, multiple intelligences, arts, arts education, arts integration, brain-based learning, dropout rate, experiential learning, high school, academic resilience, learning theory, academic challenge,* and *intrinsic motivation*. The arguments developed in the articles I reviewed led me to conclude that some high school students become disengaged and disconnected with their academic learning and that exposure to an artistic and creative learning environment can provide active engagement with motivational benefits. I found a lack of studies exploring student perceptions of arts-related educational experiences and believed that this would be a valuable area of study.

Flow Theory

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) theorized engagement with an activity or a task was based on the combination of concentration, interest, and enjoyment culminating in a state of deep absorption or flow. Thus, individuals perceive their performance to be a pleasurable and successful activity worthy of accomplishing for its own sake, even if no additional goals are obtained (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2002) asserted that the flow state is intrinsically rewarding; thus, motivational and psychological functioning fosters the interest for the individual to master new challenges. Flow involves a

motivational growth principle, in which more difficult abilities are desired and developed (Shernoff et al., 2003, p. 161). Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) flow theory combines three areas: concentration, the intense or absolute absorption in an activity; interest, the fundamental basis for becoming engaged with a topic; and enjoyment, the feeling of accomplishment or satisfaction. The flow theory is based on the relationship between experiencing challenges and using the necessary skills to complete those challenges. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) argued that the balance between challenge and skill is delicate and, when disrupted, apathy, anxiety, or relaxation may be experienced. Providing appropriate challenges and opportunities to enhance learning is crucial for the active engagement of high school students in learning.

The flow theory was applied in a study based on data from the Sloan Study of Youth and Social Development (SSYSD) in which students' views of their lives in relation to their futures were examined (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000). Data for this study were collected from 1992-1993, 1994-1995, and again from 1996-1997; twelve research sites across the United States were selected (Shernoff, et al., 2003). Participants were randomly selected from Grades 6-12 using school-prepared enrollment lists segmented by gender, race, ethnicity, and academic performance (Shernoff, et al., 2003). A subsample of high school students enrolled in Grades 10-12, with 526 participants were selected for a longitudinal study. In this sampling, 62% were female, 34% male, 16% African American, 8% Asian American, 10% Latino, and 64% European American (Shernoff, et al., 2003). The parental education, occupation, and socioeconomic status were taken into consideration as well. The Experience Sampling Method (EMS), a previous measurement instrument proven to be both reliable and valid (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1987; Moneta & Csikszentmihalyi, 1996), was used to collect participants' location, activity, affect, and cognitive experiences at random moments throughout the day, totaling eight signals for each

day of one week (Shernoff et al., 2003). An electronic pager was used to signal participants to complete Experience Sampling Form (ESF) (Shernoff et al., 2003, p. 163) consisting of 45 items, four open-ended questions, and 41 Likert scale responses ranging from 0 (*low*) to 9 (high).

The primary, dependent measure of student engagement in the study was the evaluation of concentration, interest, and enjoyment. According to Shernoff et al. (2003), the central phenomenological feature of the flow experience is the simultaneous involvement of concentration, interest, and enjoyment is. Data revealed, "High levels of concentration, enjoyment, and interest were not routinely experienced together" (p. 163). Attention, a second dependent measure was reliant upon the thoughts of the participants and was coded as either academic or nonacademic in content. Four factors were identified for the dependent measure of quality: mood, participants' overall emotional state; esteem, self-assessment of success in meeting expectations; academic intensity, the amount of concentration demanded; and intrinsic motivation, the interest, enjoyment, and desire to engage in activity (Shernoff et al., 2003). Independent measures included challenge and skill, instructional relevance and control, and classroom activities and school subjects. Shernoff et al. (2003) reported the majority of students' instructional time involved activities in which little interaction with others was expected. It was also found that when participants perceived high challenge in balance with their skills, the learning environment was more relevant and controlled.

Interest: The Importance of Early Creative Development

With regard to educational practice, both Freud (1938) and Piaget (1926/1928) theorized about the natural, universally experienced progression of growth associated with stages, while Vygotsky (1978) believed that learning occurred in order to promote the development. Both Piaget (1930/1951) and Vygotsky (2004) advocated the use of engaging children with multiple

types of opportunities to explore learning and to help satisfy deep, complex human needs. Consistent with these three historical theorists is the idea that the exploration of creative abilities is an important area to investigate and promote for successful cognitive and emotional growth and development. There are several ties between the work of historical theorists and contemporary research that have validated and illustrated positive links between creative interests and growth. “Arts enrichment may provide important opportunities for children of varied developmental levels to grow in pre-academic skills” (Gregoire & Lupinetti, 2005). The use of creativity as an essential role in the learning and development of young students is a common theme repeatedly expressed within academic literature.

Hanline, Milton, and Phelps (2007) proposed that art experiences are of crucial importance to a child's development and communication with society. According to these researchers, there are implications that the ability to draw helps young children with complex symbolism and ultimately with the writing process. Their 12-point rating tool measured the progression of artistic growth through fundamental stages signifying young children's ability to comprehend symbols and spatial relationships. Vygotsky's (1997/2004) theory pertaining to the imagination and creativity of children is referred to in Slahoava, Savvina, Cacka, and Volonte’s (2007) work involved with collecting scientific literature proving that there are stages involved with creative activity. Their ideas regarding developmental stages are similar to that of Freud's (1966/1997) theory in that it is important for there to be a smooth transition through creative stages to prevent issues that could either hinder or stop the growth of an individual's ability. Similarly, Swann (2005) argued that the transitions made through the manipulation of art materials provide children the chance to begin exploring cause and effect relationships that inspire both cognitive and behavioral engagement.

Sutton, Trudeau, Morford, Rios, and Poirier (2010) proposed that preschool children with disabilities often use a combination of auditory and visual cues for help with comprehension and expression. Those with severe speech impairments must rely heavily on the use of graphic symbols and drawings to acquire necessary linguistic development. Furthermore, results from Kyung-Hwa's (2005) study showed that interest, curiosity and imagination had a significant correlation in the development of the language domain. The importance of early art experiences is also found in the work of Marjanovic-Shane and Beljanski-Ristic (2008) who explain that early introduction to creative activities and inspiring interest in the arts, significantly impacts cognitive thinking and communication skills. Their research shows creative, play like activities are essential ways to communicate, learn, and grow. Information presented by Yeh and Li (2008) emphasized the need for young students' to use creative tasks to cultivate their abilities to become motivated, enthusiastic, self-directed learners is a strong connection to Vygotsky's (1986/1987) theory. Furthermore, Loomis, Blumenthal, and Lewis (2007) documented the importance of providing children with experiences to interest and involve them in the process of creating art as vital for emotional engagement, as well as their overall growth and development.

Early childhood education strategies using the arts have been documented as successful options for inspiring creative and educational interest. Offering students a variety of artistic materials is one way to encourage and motivate (Hanline et al., 2007). Since it was carefully observed that the quantity and quality of art materials available to children inspired increased amounts of time working on projects, teachers could encourage quality behaviors simply through the types of supplies offered. It is also suggested that educators who use a variety of art media for children to experiment with and learn about build connections and create schematic

background knowledge (Swann, 2005). Looking for connections between art, imagination and play and how art helps in the formation of comprehension and communication, Marjanovic-Shane and Beljanski-Ristic (2008), found that drama activities created rewarding experiences in which emotions, interactions, relationships, and rules of logic and behavior could be cultivated. Gadsden (2008) suggested the expansion of the role of arts education in academic settings and raised the question of whether preparation of art activities should be used to promote interest in other academic areas of learning, as well. Additionally, Gadsden (2008) argued the need to research the arts as: a way of knowing, a cultural knowledge source, a merging of genres, and a primary method of interpretation and performance.

Eckhoff (2008) documented a set of teaching strategies to enhance and reinforce preschool children's artistic learning and skills. This research was meant to support early educators' quest to provide quality visual art experiences and supplied teachers with four strategies: game playing, questioning, storytelling, and technical dialogue. The successful use of these techniques is thought to heighten awareness and interest while engaging students creatively in the education process (Eckhoff, 2008). Maker, Jo, and Muammar (2008) recommended the use of six strategies observed as important aspects of integrating creative components: integrating multiple intelligences, problem solving, collaboration, interdisciplinary themes, modeling, and personal interests. Maker et al. (2008), emphasized that the consistency and support for children as they develop is the most important teaching approach. From teaching methods and observations of Loomis, Blumenthal, and Lewis (2007) five areas were found key in offering creative opportunities:

1. Address student perceptions of art, teach how to share, accept, and value.
2. Outline artistic process; pair older students with younger students.

3. Provide peer collaboration time with creative assignments.

4. Support emotional growth; use dialogue based on exploration of children's hopes, fears, and experiences involved with the process of creating.

5. Foster cognitive growth using integration and reflection.

In accord with these teaching strategies, Acer and Omeroolu's study (2008), affirmed the goal of aesthetic education lessons is to provide opportunities to pique curiosity and interest while teaching ways to distinguish between looking and seeing.

Researchers are able to learn more about the abstract concepts of creativity and artistic ability using scientific methodologies. The importance of establishing artistic interests and inventiveness in young students has promoted the design of several creativity tools. Designed by Pfeiffer and Jarosewich (2008), The Gifted Rating Scales-Preschool/Kindergarten Form is an assessment tool used to gauge the early identification of creative thinking and extraordinary abilities of children. In conjunction with the rating scale, the WPPSI-III full scale IQ test combined with the Torrence Test of Creative Thinking, researchers Pfeiffer and Petscher (2008) provided ways of identifying, developing and exploring creative and artistic abilities in preschool children. In addition, Yeh and Li (2008) developed a creativity test to investigate preschool children's level of creativity and developmental changes experienced through creative instruction. The Test of Creative Thinking-Drawing-Production developed in 1996 by Urban and Jellen was used for three consecutive years in Maker, Jo, and Muammars' (2008) longitudinal study. It was found that nurturing creative interests were essential in helping young children's growth and development. Kyung-Hwa's (2005) research used The Integrated Creativity Test to discover the possible relationship between the ability to think creatively and the creative personalities of preschool children. The developers of these creative measurement tools and

research studies echo Freud's (1938) and Piaget's (1930) theoretical standpoint in which children progress through recognizable stages of growth and are consistent with Vygotsky's (1986/1987) argument that creative tasks help support children's abilities to become motivated and enthusiastic learners.

A 12-point rating scale, developed by Phelps and Hanline (2005) has also been used to measure the artistic growth of children as they advance through identified artistic, developmental stages. Four sequential and cross culturally relevant periods signified children's ability to understand symbols and spatial relations. Similarly, the Ecological Systems Model of Creativity Development (2004) used in Yeh's (2004) study demonstrated that four phases impact children's creative development. From the reported findings of Hanline, Milton, and Phelps (2007) children from 18 months to 4 years of age move through a series of developmental stages pertaining to creative drawing and painting. Stage one, disordered scribbles is a time when children repeat randomly made marks that vary in size, length, and location. The second stage named controlled scribbles is when children realize that the marks they make are connected with motions they make. Stage three, a named scribble is when children form preconceived ideas of what they want to draw or paint before they begin. Results from this study show that the complexity of creations increases as a direct result of increased time spent on the art activity. It was also noted that this in turn, increased students' positive feelings about their work. Also, during this stage it was found that children begin to form letters within their artwork since the difference between writing and art is not yet clear (Hanline et al., 2007). Another important finding of this research is that all children move through the same stages but at different rates regardless of gender.

Inspiring interest and creativity is a gradual process and can aide in the growth and development of children. After examining scientific literature on creative practice, Slahoava et

al. (2007) reported that there are several sequential stages of creative development with three levels of creative personality in which the earlier a child is taught in an organized fashion the greater his or her creative potential was. Sutton et al. (2010) found that disabled preschool children requiring alternative communication methods also benefited from the use of creativity, symbolism, and graphics. Picard and Vinter's (2005) study focused on the use of graphics with young children and found that, as a developmental process, the order in which students drew features reflected how the items were conceptualized. Yeh and Li (2008) emphasized their most important finding being the positive relationship between imaginative opportunities and the overall level of children's interest in creativity, exploration, and collaboration. Their research confirmed that young children have the ability to creatively problem solve while independently regulating their emotions and behaviors. Using creative tasks helped children with motivation, enthusiasm, active engagement, and directing their own learning experiences (Yeh & Li, 2008). In addition, the implications of Eckhoff's (2008) research support the successful use of engaging young children with art viewing and art making opportunities. Numerous examples and recorded study results provided by Maker et al. (2008) have recommended the nurturing of creative development. According to Loomis et al. (2007), experiences with art provided cognitive and sensory stimulation that integrated valuable, interest provoking experiences with understanding and reflection.

Brown, Benedett, and Armistead's (2009) study regarding early childhood art education opportunities found the successful implementation of enriching children's curriculum with the arts not only inspired interest and motivation, but also supported overall skill and development. Incorporating arts education provided creative ways for all children, including those at risk, to acquire necessary skills they may not have otherwise been exposed (Brown et al., 2009).

Students attending schools that focused on creativity for two consecutive years demonstrated higher achievement levels than those attending for one year, thus illustrating the effects of the program over maturation processes alone (Brown et al., 2009). Independent of race, ethnicity, or developmental differences all children achieved promotion readiness skills. Students exposed to other preschool methods not using an arts enrichment style showed a much lower receptivity to new vocabulary (Brown et al., 2009).

Likewise, Maker's, et al. (2008) study explored transition phases of preschool children moving into kindergarten and beyond by investigating a curriculum model named Discovering Intellectual Strengths and Capabilities while Observing Varied Ethnic Responses (DISCOVER). Rooted in the integrated theories of Gardner (1983), Sternberg (1985/1997), and Ceci (1996) while combining Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi's (1967) research, the DISCOVER curriculum used creative, interdisciplinary themes. This model emphasized the use of multiple intelligences, problem solving, and collaborative opportunities to promote interest and motivation. Students were encouraged to develop diverse strengths, investigate personal interests, and use higher-level creative thinking abilities. Results concluded that use of the DISCOVER methods from a medium to high level resulted with students who performed better and achieved higher scores than those students whose teachers used low levels or did not use the DISCOVER strategies at all. Creativity levels were also found to increase or decrease in correlation to the amount of implementation teachers used with these curriculum strategies. This study illustrated a successful curriculum model for administrators or curriculum developers looking for an evidence-based model that cultivates creative growth and academic achievement for young children's short and long-term development.

Opportunities to experiment with varied art media may help inspire young children's interest in the arts at an early age. Moreover, the early exposure to creative thinking strategies has been shown to help improve children's short and long-term achievements (Maker et al., 2008). For school systems yearning to increase active engagement with higher level thinking skills, introducing creative thinking strategies at an early age may be one way to prepare youngsters and encourage resourceful and innovative learning. For parents of preschool age children who wish to encourage artistic and creative thinking in their child choosing an early childhood program that understands and believes in the importance of using creative teaching strategies and techniques to inspire development may be vital. A program that offers varied opportunities to experiment and explore with quality materials and supplies using a wide variety of organized lessons that introduce concepts helps encourage and excite young students (Eckhoff, 2008). Interdisciplinary learning opportunities that connect various core components with creative outlets give children a much richer and deeper understanding of concepts (Maker et al., 2008). Promoting imaginative play, musical experiences, movement and self-awareness knowledge, and familiarity with visual creations benefit children's development of communication and cognitive skills while giving them a chance to experience the rewards of using art form in ways to construct meaning and express emotions (Loomis et al., 2007). Creative tasks provide youngsters time to be motivated, collaborative, and self-directed learners.

Enjoyment: The Role of Art within the Education System

Now more than ever the arts have an uncertain position within school systems and research on the arts compared to other academic areas is sparse. According to Gadsden (2008), the arts successfully merge learning content that is traditional and avant-garde, local and global, and mainstream and cutting-edge. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) refer to the good

feelings experienced by people "when they break through the limits of homeostasis—when they do something that stretches them beyond what they were" (p. 12) as the meaning of enjoyment. Artistic performances, athletic events, good deeds, and stimulating conversations are examples of times when enjoyment leads to positive development and long-term happiness (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The creative arts are often introduced in the education system to students at an early age as enjoyable learning opportunities. So, why are the arts often overlooked as inconsequential? One of the main problems within the education system today is the priority given to high stakes testing in which students are driven routinely to receive information in order to score well on exams. With this mentality, only those subject areas that contain a culminating state exam are perceived as important in the learning arena. This undermines the ability to provide educational experiences in which students are exposed to and taught how to be creative, well rounded individuals. The historically misunderstood role of the arts within the education system has aided in the demise of potentially rewarding and fulfilling arts programs. Furthermore, the value of integrating the arts is often dismissed as being too difficult or non-applicable.

In considering the role of art in education, the concept of the curriculum must be considered. Miller, Bender-Slack, and Burroughs (2010) argued, "The notion of what exactly constitutes a curriculum and what its purpose might be varies" (p. 38). There are multiple ways of describing curriculum. For example, the work of Schiro (2008) explains four applicable ideologies. First, the scholar academic perspective helps students "learn the accumulated, knowledge of our culture, where understanding involves learning its content, conceptual frameworks and ways of thinking" (p. 38). Schiro's (2008) second ideology, social efficiency, is defined, as "the purpose of schooling is to efficiently meet the needs of society by training youth

in skills and procedures needed for the workplace" (p. 38). The learner centered perspective aids students in creating meaning by "interacting with their physical, intellectual and social environments" (p. 38). Schiro's (2008) last ideology, social reconstruction, postulates that education is a social process in which student beliefs and interactions can influence classroom learning.

Applebee (1994) defined curriculum as, "the sense of purpose and direction that is established by teachers around which all texts, classroom discussions, and pedagogical activities are centered" (p. 38). Miller, Bender-Slack, and Burroughs (2010) proposed three levels used to receive knowledge: first, the planned curriculum in which materials, textbooks, methods, and activities are selected by the teacher; second, enacted curriculum, when the curriculum is allowed to unfold, and teachers capitalize on teachable moments; and third, the received curriculum, which centers on the students' perceptions and may not be consistent with the planned or enacted curriculum. In agreement, Applebee (1994) argued the curriculum involves more than the content, it also involves how the learning takes place, and in what ways knowledge is represented. "Although traditions of discourse within disciplines change and evolve, what one often learns in school are often the codified notions of disciplinary traditions" (Applebee, 1996, p. 39). In contrast to Applebee's (1994) vision of active engagement with the curriculum, the expectation to learn about isolated and departmentalized content "may enable students to do well on multiple choice items" (p. 33) does not give learners the chance "to enter on their own into our vital academic traditions of knowing and doing" (Applebee, 1994, p. 33). Action and knowledge or physically doing and remembering are linked.

Learning subject matter in isolated time increments does not adequately reflect how material is learned, presented, or used outside of the education system. It is important that

students are prepared for the future by showing them how to link and transfer skills from multiple areas (Hickman & Kiss, 2010). A feeling of disconnected learning within the education system is not surprising since, teacher education programs are taught a part-to-whole curricular planning approach (Miller, Bender-Slack, and Burroughs, 2010). From a single lesson plan to unit planning, rarely do teacher education programs offer the chance to define a course of study or create a program prospectus. As a result, curriculum "appears to be organized and dictated by administrators and policymakers, and not determined by the educators themselves" (p. 38) thereby removing shared decision-making power with educators who have direct contact with students. Applebee (1994) proposed that successful teachers are crucial to the classroom construct and the pedagogical practices that are implemented within because they "have sense of where they are going and why, and they create within their classrooms a sense of coherence and direction that students recognize" (p. 46). Therefore, it may be pertinent for the education system to revisit curriculum planning strategies and procedures to include dialogue with educators in regards to the organization and implementation of curriculum that contains creative opportunities.

Historically, elusive phenomena such as the process of creative production, was difficult to obtain empirical data with systematic inquiry (Csikszentmihalyi & Getzels, 1970). Through the continued study, of problem-solving situations Csikszentmihalyi and Getzels (1970) found that creativity was the outcome of a pure form of the problem-solving process. At one end of this continuum, a problem, method, and solution are known and using the correct steps to satisfactorily complete the task is all that is required to achieve the desired result. On the other end, there are discovered problems as well as situations in which the problem is not yet identified, and the appropriate method to solve is unknown. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) asserted

that a feeling of enjoyment, satisfaction, or accomplishment is based upon the relationship between the problem-solving challenges and using the appropriate skills to complete them. Eisenberger, Jones, Stinglhamber, Shanock, and Randall (2005) suggested a student's ability to negotiate the combination between skill and challenge is associated with an increase in positive mood, task interest, and performance. The relationship between enjoyment and challenge has been found to help students concentrate and interact within a school environment (Carli, Delle Fave, & Massimini, 1988; Clarke & Haworth, 1994; Moneta & Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Csikszentmihalyi and Rathunde (1993) proposed that interest and enjoyment of tasks "follows from the realization that one is growing in complexity as a result of matching one's skills to difficult challenges" (p. 73). Similarly, Isen, Daubman, and Nowicki (1987) argued that the perception of high competence increased feelings of self-worth and positive affect. According to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), enjoyment leads to personal growth, long-term happiness, and positive human interactions.

Development of the arts in schools may increase students' ability to construct results they want and expand their patterns of thinking while gaining a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. Influential theorists such as Senge (1990), Fullan (2008), and Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros (2008) created systemic approaches in which the concept of a learning organization contains time for all participants to work, learn, grow, and fulfill shared, common goals. According to these methods the education system must be considered a learning organization for all, "where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together" (Senge, 1990, p. 3). By exemplifying these qualities, subject areas such as art, will no longer be seen as extra time during the academic day but rather another valid form of learning, communicating and expressing growth. Moreover, perceptions of the arts

as an integral part of educating the whole student may provide benefits to the academic curriculum in which enhanced learning can be offered. With recent educational budget cuts necessitating the redistribution of funds, many school systems must be reminded of the positive teaching and learning effects provided with arts programs.

Concentration: Differentiation to Enhance Motivation

Theories of intelligence, learning, and motivation offer an array of complexities in determining how individuals concentrate and approach learning situations. According to Hawk and Shah (2007), "Within the last three decades, the proposition that students learn and study in different ways has emerged as a prominent pedagogical issue" (p. 1). An influential factor associated with successful learning, concentration, and motivation is the ability of teachers to differentiate instruction. Hallmarks of differentiated instruction include individually specified ways for students to learn without presuming that standardized instruction will engage everyone. Principles of differentiated instruction include providing learning experiences based upon student interest, readiness, and ability while using ongoing assessments to adjust instruction accordingly. A teacher of a differentiated classroom facilitates meaningful activities and instructional strategies to help target individual needs with clearly established criteria, emphasis of student strengths, and encouragement of flexible group configurations (Tomlinson, 1995). Using Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple-intelligences combined with principles from Blooms' Taxonomy (1956), Bailey and Black (2008) maintained the relevancy and importance of motivating students with differentiating instruction.

Steps in how to differentiate the content, process, product, and environment are provided as part of Bailey and Black's (2008) mixed-methods study investigating to what extent regular education classroom teachers differentiated their instruction of literacy content. The first type of

differentiation is identified as changing the content in which students are intended to master. Differentiating content requires teachers to modify how students are given access to the learning material (Bailey & Black, 2008). Moreover, content should be relevant, authentic, and connected to students' interests and lives. Providing students with opportunities to make choices that match their interests is one suggestion to motivate and challenge students. Exposure to a variety of materials and resources that match students' level of understanding is recommended. Bailey and Black (2008) explained teachers must be knowledgeable about students' skills, the curriculum and content, as well as, where to access a variety of resources.

The second type of differentiation involved the process or activities offered to students to assist them with exploration and learning of content. Bailey and Black (2008) stressed that students need to enjoy the activities while at the same time being held accountable for the demands of intellectual challenges. Suggestions for teachers include the use higher-order thinking skills, research projects, and open-ended thinking in which students are advised to use approaches that best fit their personal learning style (Bailey & Black, 2008). Other approaches are "literature circles, graphic organizers, learning logs, role playing, cooperative controversy, centers or workstations, and interactive bulletin boards" (Bailey & Black, 2008, p. 137). Chan and Ahern (1999) asserted, to increase learner motivation, instructional designers could manipulate instructional variables from Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) Flow theory. Activity content, amount of challenge, appropriateness of goals and the presentation of information were found to have an impact on motivation (Chan & Ahem, 1999). Product differentiation promotes the use of Gardner's (1983) multiple intelligences and assists students in self-selecting ways to demonstrate their learning. It is important to balance teacher-assigned and student-selected projects and offer students choice of projects that will reflect a variety of interests and styles of learning. In

conjunction is the use of various evaluation tools, including open-ended and performance-based assessments.

Differentiating the environment involves the changes that can be made with seating and grouping arrangements and with opportunities for movement. While it would be futile to differentiate all of these areas for every student every day, it is crucial for the teacher to select areas within the instructional sequence to differentiate, based on formal or informal assessment (Tomlinson, 1999). Teaching strategies that support differentiated instruction include: multiple approaches to learning and assessing specified content, student choice, opportunity for movement and unconfined exploration while recognizing and embracing student differences (Dunn et al., 2010). Likewise, Robinson (2008) stressed the importance of encouraging students to become independent learners who can distinguish strengths and weakness in their educational needs. Differentiation recognizes the need to cultivate individuality within the classroom environment and three principles are necessary for efficient teaching and learning. The first principle is an awareness that intelligence is a complex and multifaceted concept. Thorndike (1911) suggested varied types of intelligence, Gardner (1993) identified 8 specific intelligences, and Sternberg (1985) proposed three. While the number of intelligences identified and the names of the researchers vary through time, three noteworthy inferences can be made. First, people learn, think, and create in many different ways; second, people's potential growth and development is affected by what is learned, and how it is learned; and third, intelligence is not fixed, it flows (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 18).

To respond to the array of student needs found in today's classrooms, lesson-planning strategies must incorporate elements of differentiation (Dunn et al., 2010). To prepare to learn objectives that allow for differentiation, individualization, and innovation it is important for

teachers to revise lesson plans to reflect quality teaching in which diverse students are engaged. Successful lesson plans need to address specific areas.

> Minimally, lesson plans should indicate the specific instructional objectives that students are required to master, alternative ways of learning, and the identification of which way of learning is most appropriate for each student based on their cognitive-processing and perceptual styles. (Dunn et al., 2010, p. 195)

Often times, students may find curriculum requirements to be uninteresting. It is up to the teachers to decide what is required to be taught from the curriculum while using their personal experience, ideas, knowledge and wisdom (Mokhtar, Majid & Foo, 2008). Teachers can capture student interest and heighten student concentration by providing opportunities to learn in multiple ways.

According to Dunn et al. (2010), less than 30 percent of students are able to retain new information by listening or reading alone. Students are able to learn substantially more when words are accompanied by drawings, images, photographs, pictures, or tables (Dunn et al., 2010). Dunn et al. (2010) argue that high school students are kinesthetic learners who retain information best when they learn with hands-on resources. Therefore, lesson plans need to incorporate illustrated, multisensory, and varied instructional resources. Furthermore, some students may require times for mobility within lessons (global learners) while others may learn well in traditional seating arrangements (analytic processors). Global processors are explained as having "to see how information relates to them and their lives before they focus on the content" (Dunn et al., 2010, p. 196). These students look for overall ideas, and must understand concepts first before they can address facts, interpret vocabulary, or intuit understandings. Global learners benefit from analogies, choices, stories, and making connections. In contrast, analytic learners

require concrete, specific, step-by-step instruction; sequencing of daily events, detailed learning, and global, multi-tasking learners may be a distraction. Dunn et al. (2010) also noted that many students are more successful when they independently learn. The time of day and environmental stimuli, including lighting and noise levels (Bernice 2007; Shea 1983) can also promote or inhibit concentration.

Dunn et al. (2010) provide five guidelines to help teachers plan for the cognitive processing differences of global and analytic learners' instructional needs.

- Introduce new lesson topics globally with a short anecdote or story.
- Use small-group instruction to begin; review with inferential, factual and creative questions, and applications.
- Assign a creative component in which a reflective product.
- As a method of reinforcement, encourage students to share.
- Periodically include tests to assess mastery of learning objectives.

Challenge to Enhance Cognition

Historically, cognitive style has been thought of as a psychological term representing individual consistencies when learning and processing information (Kozhevnikov, 2007). One experimental study that played a foundational role in this area was Witkin, Lewis, Hertzman, Machover, Bretnall, and Wapner's (1954) investigation of perceptual differences in relation to personality traits. Findings suggested a significant relation between performance on perceptual tests and personality traits including social behavior (Kozhevnikov, 2007). Because this study illustrated a close connection between intelligence and personality, further studies were generated to help distinguish individual differences in cognition that were stable over time, related to personality and social relationships, and value free (Kozhevnikov, 2007). Research in

the area of cognition illustrated differences in the way people process and organize information involving unique preferences, personalities, and cognitive characteristics of individuals. From Gardner's (1953) work with reactions to stimuli to Keefe's (1988) synthesis of 40 separate styles, researchers have proposed a variety of cognitive style dimensions.

By the 1970s, a shift had been made from studying individual differences in perception to focusing on cognitive styles in relation to problem solving, decision making, and learning (Kozhevnikov, 2007). As a result, assessment tools were created in order to examine and measure preferences and external factors affecting individual preferences. According to Kozhevnikov (2007), "As a consequence, the cognitive style construct multiplied to include decision-making styles, learning styles, and personal styles, without clear definitions of what they were or how they differed from the "basic" cognitive styles identified previously" (p. 470). Trends in cognitive research include identifying styles, unifying previous theories, creating completely new theories, and relating cognitive styles to other psychological constructs including neuropsychological perspectives (Kozhevnikov, 2007). Kozhevnikov (2007) proposed, "Cognitive styles have an adaptive function: They mediate the relation between an individual and his or her environment" (p. 477). Research findings indicate stability of individual cognitive characteristics; however, we are reminded, "Although intellectual abilities affect the dynamics of acquiring cognitive styles and one's overall level of accomplishment, they are not the sole determiner of an individual's cognitive styles" (Kozhevnikov, 2007, p. 477). Multiple factors including previous experience, habits, abilities, and personality traits can also affect the formation of cognitive styles. From this perspective, Kozhevnikov (2007) asserted cognitive styles should be viewed as distinct patterns of the interplay between an individual's characteristics and external stimuli.

While the formation of a coherent theory of cognitive styles remains a low priority among cognitive science researchers (Kozhevnikov, 2007), the fields of psychology and education have found significant reasons to advance theoretical and experimental findings. Sadler-Smith and Badger (1998) argued cognitive styles were a factor in the determination of personal and social behaviors. Also, Hayes and Allinson (1994) noted the critical importance of cognitive styles involved with communication, managing conflict, and guidance and counseling. In the education field, Sternberg and Zhang (2001) maintained cognitive styles predict academic abilities and achievement. Scholarly literature substantiates a gap pertaining to the combination of intellectual ability and personality traits as factors for the formation of cognitive style. Additionally, "There are almost no studies that examine the development of different cognitive styles in a real world context" (Kozhevnikov, 2007, p. 478). There has been an expansion of knowledge and understanding about teaching and learning. Sustained insights are gained from the fields of neuroscience and psychology with continued classroom observation.

From the brain research of Caine and Caine (1991), it was established that providing students with enhanced learning experiences could increase their intelligence; likewise denying students challenging opportunities can reduce their intelligence. "Neurons grow and develop when they are used actively; they atrophy when they are not used. Vigorous learning changes the physiology of the brain" (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 18). Imaging technology, observations and studies conducted on the functions of the brain have expanded what is known about teaching and learning, and it has been suggested that the brain looks for meaningful patterns (Caine & Caine, 1991). While the brain can retain isolated pieces of information, it is more efficient at organizing and retaining chunked information pertaining to categories and ideas that connect parts to form wholes, or to make sense out of information (Tomlinson, 1999). According to Tomlinson (1999),

"The brain doesn't respond much to things that carry only a surface meaning. It responds far more effectively and efficiently to something that carries deep and personal meaning, something that is life shaping, relevant, important, or taps into emotions" (p. 19). Another important principle is that people learn best with a moderate challenge (Vygotsky, 1978; Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993; Jensen, 1998). If the required work is too difficult or too easy, people will lose their motivation to learn. It is important for teachers to keep this in mind because "What is moderately challenging and motivating for one learner may offer far too little challenge (and therefore little motivation) for a classmate" (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 20). Moneta and Csikszentmihalyi (1996) maintained pleasant states of task absorption result from the perceptions of appropriate amounts of difficulty.

Despite the good intentions of teachers to infuse the curriculum with creativity and personal enthusiasm it can be difficult to motivate and challenge many students with sustained learning opportunities at one time. Therefore, Connor and Lagares (2007) have outlined some research based practices including brain-based research and differentiated instructional techniques, in combination with principles of learning and understanding diverse learner strategies to help high school teachers enhance the learning environment. Connor and Lagares (2007) offer an extensive list of strategies with corresponding examples that can be used to help prepare and challenge students with differentiated learning and assessment methods. For example, strategies that appeal to the senses because of visual and auditory clues are the memorization of concepts and symbolism with detailed storytelling, visualization, and choral repetitions, as well as, carousel graffiti in which students rotate to different stations to record observations and thoughts. Other possible techniques to promote cognitive connections include

creative, collaborative grouping, cartoon analysis, sorting and grouping current events and customizing learning materials for specific needs of a class (Connor & Lagares, 2007).

In addition to successful teaching techniques, it is important for students to feel supported in their educational environments. Templates of outlines and graphic organizers can aid in the visual synthesis of information. Illustrating and modeling is critical, "Whenever possible, show students exactly what you mean" (Connor & Lagares, 2007, p. 22). Structuring conceptual information by mapping out connections visually for students to see help teach ways to organize, memorize, and make personal connections with curriculum content. Individualized study plans in which students explain unique study habits can be used to show them how to map out a plan for study time including weekly tests and quizzes. Having students identify areas of strength and weakness, conduct error analyses, and goal setting customizes and improves learning. Differentiated instruction promotes self-analysis and actively engages students with their education. Although instructing high school classes in which culminating tests promote teaching and learning pressures, teachers need to rise to the challenge by engaging students in meaningful ways with creative lessons (Connor & Lagares, 2007) by pairing appropriate challenges with learning objectives.

Robinson (2008) stressed the importance of encouraging students to become independent learners who can distinguish strengths and weakness in their educational needs. In the areas of retrospective description, reflection, and future planning, results from Robinson's (2008) investigation of structure conversation with students possessing atypical learning styles illustrated greater student focus and engagement after participating with a visually supported conversation. A visual communication strategy entitled "Comic Strip Conversation" (Gray, 1994), is a system using a basic set of symbols to illustrate how artistically, events and situations,

and color can be used to represent emotions and moods. According to Robinson (2008), results showed an increase in focus and involvement for students visually structuring the conversation. The use of individualized and creative techniques to inspire and challenge helped students with sequencing, expressing ideas, conceptualizing, and communicating. With appropriate knowledge pertaining to the cognitive processing of individuals, Robinson (2008) maintained that beneficial learning opportunities like this one could be supported.

Arts Integration as a Form of Engagement

Beginning with Dewey (1934) during the progressive education era, the role of the arts as an integrated subject area has been debated. According to Gullatt (2008), in the late 1800s, researchers "demanded that visual arts and music be taught in the common schools in Massachusetts as an aid to the curriculum and an enhancement to learning" (p. 13). Furthermore, Dewey's (1934) recognition of the positive correlation between learning and the arts had a powerful effect on curriculum decisions. By the 1930s and the 1940s American school systems were exposed to the ideas of behaviorism and Vygotsky (1978) challenged educators' ideals by proposing that cognitive knowledge was an active, engaging process in which the arts were essential to the development. "Regardless of the philosophical disposition of the previous researchers, though, the arts were considered by each noted educational expert to serve a positive role in assisting with the teaching and learning process" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 13). Today, some schools often connect the arts with gifted and talented students. The opposite perspective is taken within foreign countries in which arts requirements are expected for all students. "Educational leaders in the Netherlands have mandated that both art and music be integral parts of the standard curriculum since 1968" and "Japanese students receive instruction in choral and instrumental music starting with the elementary grades and continuing through the secondary years" (Gullatt,

2008, p. 13). Educational leaders in China and Germany require arts programs for all students. "The assumption is that students can become proficient in the arts just as they can become proficient in other disciplines, thus enhancing their life-long skills and creative ability" (Gullatt, 2008, p. 14). School leaders in both Europe and Asia have successfully combined the arts into educational institutions, as well as, England, where teachers use artistic media to teach history and interpersonal and intrapersonal communication skills (Gullatt, 2008).

Using the work of Davis (1999) as a reference, Gullatt (2008) identified eight contemporary ways the arts have been included within the U.S. education system. These styles of teaching have been found to be implemented either alone or in combination.

- Arts-based inclusion, arts programs are required core subjects and learned content and skills from other subject areas are transferred.
- Arts-infused, the integration of arts activities are found within the general curriculum as a way to enhance particular topics within a subject area.
- Arts-included, the arts are taught as individual subject areas.
- Arts-expansion, the arts are taught outside of a regular school environment (museum, gallery, or performance trips).
- Arts-professional programs meant only for students preparing for professional careers within an art field.
- Arts-extra refers to the use of art as an extra-curricular, after school activity.
- Aesthetic education, students construct personal learning in the arts.
- Arts-culture, the empowerment of students to create individualized content in which the arts connect to other cultures of the world.

According to Gullatt (2008), “The arts may also be used as a response to what has already been learned and to help to synthesize what had been taught in schools” (p. 14) and provide a means of making enjoyable connections between topics and concepts.

Integrating Art

An investigation of arts integration with the regular classroom environment has resulted in four varying styles (Bresler, 1995). Bresler (1995) asserted that educators who use the arts as a special activity to enliven their curriculum are taking a subservient approach. This style of integration lacks outside support or expertise from an art specialist. An example would be craft projects or coloring pages used as filler activities that relate in some way to the content being taught. In contrast, the second style is a cognitive integrative approach (Bresler, 1995) in which the arts are used in concert with other areas of the curriculum requiring higher order thinking skills. For example, studying particular artists and their art work that correlate to specific historical events being taught within the curriculum while combining subject matter and media to demonstrate identified learning outcomes. The affective approach is the third style that utilizes self-expression and reaction to visual or musical art pieces. An example of this would be playing period background music while students worked on historical projects. Lastly, social integration is Bresler’s (1995) fourth approach in which plays or performances are used to increase involvement (Gullatt, 2008).

Contemporary researchers have written about effectively including the arts within learning objectives and teaching strategies. “The arts may be used as highly motivating entry points for content area instruction” (Gullatt, 2008, p. 16). While Andrews (2010) proposed the use of the arts to help students shape their individual education curriculum, Dewhurst (2010) suggested using the arts to examine and teach structural factors pertaining to injustice or

inequality. “Arts projects should be an extension of student understanding of the curriculum content, not merely a “color sheet” for early finishers” (Gullatt, 2008, p. 16). Dewhurst (2010) contended, “as long as the process of making art offers participants a way to construct knowledge, critically analyze an idea, and take action in the world, then they are engaged in a practice of social justice artmaking” (p. 8). To pursue answers in a problem-solving way that not only inspires curiosity and creativity but also excitement for learning, students could use the three dimensions of connecting, questioning, and translating. “Art made for social justice is not simply a meandering inquiry into the play of light or color across a page, but an inquiry motivated by a specific, purposeful desire to impact structures of injustice” (p. 9). It is recommended that teachers wanting to use art as a method of impacting social justice must be committed and willing to collaborate with students.

In agreement with Andrews (2010), Dewhurst (2010) proposed that the relationship between teacher and student shifts to a more collaborative approach when encouraging learning with art. This shift in student teacher relationships creates opportunities for the encouragement of student-driven projects. Dewhurst (2010) recommended student choice pertaining to the exploration of topics, while teachers “respond with activities and lessons that move students into a deeper analysis of their topics” (p. 10). It is suggested that students be allowed to communicate their creative ideas and share with others their process of connecting, questioning, and translating their topics into successful aesthetic creations. To inspire social change and to teach future generations about the artistic accomplishments of their predecessors, Norlund, Speirs, and Stewart (2010) developed fifteen principles for using artworks to teach K-12 art curriculum and stressed the “importance of understanding artworks as situated within multiple and overlapping contexts” (p. 36). Suggestions for teaching and interpreting complex artworks in K-12

classrooms involve spending quality time comparing, critiquing, and discussing to understand. Sustained and focused critical inquiry about art and its contexts provide opportunities to teach important links between art, history, and symbolism. Norlund, Speirs, and Stewart's (2010) sixth principle encourage dialogue reminds teachers that conversations do not automatically happen and that preparation in the form of prompts or open-ended questions help the process of getting students to communicate. Gullatt (2008) maintained in order for interdisciplinary arts instruction to be successful, there must be a shared interest in using the arts to communicate and an appreciation for the application of learning to promote higher order thinking skills, risk taking, and greater creativity.

Gajda and Dorfman (2006) recommended using the arts to engage students intellectually, socially, personally, and spiritually. According to Gajda and Dorfman (2006) developing a model, career academy "is an alternative academic pathway that integrates academic and technical skill instruction, creates healthy learning communities, and supports independent study and project-based learning" (p. 13). An art-based academy encouraging artistic self-exploration is an unconventional learning environment in which students could collaboratively become more empowered and creative members of society. Sternberg's (2006) investigation of six school districts across the United States illustrated how creative and dedicated professionals offer nontraditional methods of integrated arts teaching regardless of the school district's size. "By integrating the arts throughout the curriculum, teachers have found new ways to assess student gains and losses beyond the state's traditional testing system" (Sternberg, 2006, p. 44). In fact, artists and art educators have trained core subject area teachers to use alternative methods of evaluation with the arts.

Three elements have been identified as important to instituting an art-integrated curriculum. First, the organized implementation of a rigorous arts-integrated curriculum in which instruction and assessment are purposefully combined with art and other academic areas has been shown to help children explore history, language arts, culture, math, and science (Sternberg, 2006, p. 45). Using a discipline-based arts approach in which every core subject area contained artistic objectives, in addition to specific subject content, learning objectives, Sternberg (2006) found students in this type of school were "among the top scoring in Cleveland on statewide tests because the arts-integrated approach teaches them how to take a question apart" (p. 45). Second, a wide range of team teaching activities need to be offered in conjunction with teacher advisory time for students to explore possible learning opportunities with a mentor. Making decisions on artist-in-residence programs, field trips, materials, and projects are a few ways students can be empowered to take ownership of their learning. Likewise, Gajda and Dorfman (2006) advised the use of teambuilding to foster shared goals, respect, and trust with students. A third element in instituting an integrated arts curriculum is maintaining a relationship with the community in which students plan, fundraise, give presentations, and invite community members to participate or enjoy their artistic achievements.

From the research of Sternberg (2006), a collaborative connection with the community can publicly address questions while promoting artistic learning. Student driven learning opportunities with the arts "can enhance the artistic technical skills of students, cultivate personal growth, and allow previously underutilized student skills and dispositions such as leadership, citizenship, and inquisitiveness to flourish" (Gajda & Dorfman, 2006, p. 18). Using the unique attributes of the local community, school districts can draw "from an extensive network of local partnerships" (Sternberg, 2006, p. 47) with musicians, poets, painters, and potters that would be

willing to participate in artist and residence programs. Furthermore, partnering with local area museums and cultural organizations can afford professional educators the opportunity to expand their knowledge and improve their lessons. Cultivating partnerships with the community not only help to inspire ways to start or maintain arts education programs it also inspires civic minded, responsible, decision making skills for students.

Effectively engaging students through arts integration requires collaborative relationships among teachers. In agreement with providing meaningful arts programs, Dillon's (2006) research highlighted the need for professional educators to collaborate and share as much as possible, and Gullatt (2008) recognized the lack of time afforded for arts and classroom teachers to collaborate. It is particularly important for teachers committed to integrating subject content with the arts to be willing to carve out necessary planning time and approach building leaders who can alleviate professional time constraints. If learning through arts integration is to be appropriately enhanced, continual professional development must be provided for arts teachers, as well as, teachers coordinating academic subjects with the arts. Using best practices and receiving proper training can only enrich the teaching and learning experiences further. Along these same lines, "Planning and/or preparation time must be provided for arts teachers if they are to truly provide instruction by themselves as single teacher subjects within the school curriculum" (p. 23). Gullatt (2008) recommended that collaborative planning time would be necessary to target integrated outcomes. To obtain scheduled time to engage in collegial dialogue and to prepare integrated lessons, support from authority figures must be given. Moreover, "teachers who are expected to provide instruction utilizing the arts must be professionally trained and have sufficient content knowledge in the arts" (p. 23). Because as Gullatt (2008) warned, classrooms are sometimes staffed by personnel who are not certified or trained in the arts.

In agreement, Norlund, Speirs, and Stewart's (2010) fifteenth principle emphasized the importance for teachers to cultivate professional relationships with their colleagues and to discuss curriculum plans with others whose opinions are valued and trusted. Specifically, Zwirn and Libresco (2010) suggested using the input of art teachers' expertise in the creation and analysis of New York State Assessment Social Studies Regents (2010) exams in order for social justice instruction through arts integration to reach its full potential. Including the arts as a way to teach and evaluate social justice issues is a way to "represent an authentic assessment in that students read and analyze passages and visual images and then synthesize the information into a coherent essay" (Zwirn & Libresco, 2010, p. 30). Document-based questions (DBQs) are now an integral part of New York social studies curriculum and tests, "New York State suggests that documents should include graphs, charts, maps, cartoons, photographs, artwork, eyewitness accounts, and historical passages and requires that its social studies assessment contain at least 2-3 visual documents per DBQ" (NYS Social Studies, p. 30). Zwirn and Libresco (2010) asserted engaging art teachers in dialogue as to the selection of imagery for assessments would help elevate the arts to an equal platform with text.

Along these same lines, Eisner (1998) proposed three pertinent dispositions or outcomes for arts education: first, a willingness to imagine possibilities; second, a desire to explore ambiguity; and third, the ability to recognize and accept multiple perspectives. The combined efforts from both social studies and art teachers to work together in educating and assessing United States History students will aide in better instruction and improve educational quality in the construction of tests that require a higher level and critical thinking skills. Eisner (1998) stressed the critical role of art to reflect and create new meaning on history and culture. Because our culture is becoming more increasingly visual, students' knowledge of history, as well as, the

contemporary world they live in can be better analyzed with artistic imagery. According to Zwirn and Libresco (2010) “Art teachers strive to teach children how to read the visual signs of past and present cultures” (p. 35), and “DBQs offer art teachers intriguing openings to extend their influence beyond their own classrooms to those of their social studies colleagues” (p. 35). Just as Gullatt (2008) suggested collaborative planning time for art teachers and content teachers, Rabkin and Redmond (2006) affirmed the importance of including artists, art specialists, and teachers from all disciplines to create pedagogical and curricular links between the arts and other subjects.

According to Rabkin and Redmond (2006) successful arts programs occur when a school districts’ view “student achievement and school improvement as pivotal to their mission—they are not only about advancing arts education” (p. 64). In accord with a shared vision of success, Rabkin and Redmond (2006) recommended that school districts give teachers time to plan units with artists, compensate artists, and promote the use of multiple art forms. It is suggested that an alignment of curriculum in which the inclusion of the arts enhances teaching and learning is one important way administrators can help arts programming to evolve. It is also suggested that arts teachers integrate their knowledge of art forms with other subjects, and policy makers to mandate arts integrated learning. Rabkin and Redmond (2006) argued arts classes should be required for teacher certification. With this in mind, advocates of arts education within the education system must communicate the benefits of teaching with the arts “while persistently seeking higher levels of commitment from schools and districts” (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006, p. 64). Schedule planners “must be mindful that the arts must be allowed an appropriate share of the daily or weekly academic curriculum” (Gullatt, 2008, p. 23). Rabkin and Redmond (2006) explained the best programs “Do not look the same in every school, but reflect each school’s

particular strengths, interests, and available arts resources" (p. 64). "Thus, teachers, school leaders, and researchers continually must bring the need for arts education before policy makers, boards of education, and school district superintendents" (Gullatt, 2007, p. 219). A shared vision and positive administrative support will improve the likelihood that school districts can successfully transform arts education programs.

Funding is another consideration worthy of educational leaders' and policy makers' attention. "Educational planners must be mindful to consistently plan for the arts as an avenue to enhance teaching and learning" (Gullatt, 2008, p. 22). Gullatt (2008) cautioned the arts must be conscientiously protected from the district and school budget cuts because history has shown existing funds are allocated to other curriculum and support areas. It has also been shown that it is important for budget planners to recognize the need to establish support for existing and evolving arts education opportunities by dedicating money for equipment and consumable materials and supplies. While the school district arts programs across the nation will differ in both funding and curriculum outcomes, it is important to embrace this difference and varying strengths as "cookie cutter planning will stifle the implementation of creativity and diversity of an arts program" (Gullatt, 2008, p. 23). It is advised that school administrators encourage diversity and help to form opportunities to connect community with arts curriculum.

Student Benefits

Integrated curriculum in which arts instruction and assessment are purposefully combined within the study of another academic area, such as, Science, English, or Social Studies, have been found to benefit learning. "Arts-integrated programs are associated with academic gains across the curriculum as reflected in standardized tests scores" (Gullatt, 2008, p. 14). Rabkin and Redmond (2004) found arts programs had more powerful effects for struggling students than the

traditional arts programs intended for only talented students. Gajda and Dorfman (2006) found arts-based career academies could enhance students' artistic technical skills, leadership skills, and civic-minded inquisitiveness. According to in-depth interviews with parents, students, teachers, and community members, "participation in an arts-focused academic pathway increased students motivation to attend school, expectations of success, desire to do well, attitude toward teachers, enjoyment of classes, and sense of community" (p. 14). Rabkin and Redmond (2006) asserted that arts integration promoted the reproduction of knowledge in authentic intellectual ways without compromising the integrity of teaching lessons, learning can be achieved in exciting, thought provoking ways when the arts are paired up with other subject areas. "The paired subjects engage the same cognitive processes: attentive observation, identification of meaningful detail, selection of appropriate representational strategies, and student reflection and self-critique" (p. 63).

Developments in neuroscience have shown that the brain and the body are an integrated system using cognitive awareness to process sensory information. The research of Damasio (2003) and Lakoff and Johnson (1999) proposed the importance of physical sensation and emotion as integral components of logic. "It is ironic, then, that the arts are frequently dismissed as 'merely' emotional, not cognitive. Their emotional content is part of what makes them cognitively powerful" (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006, p. 63). From Rabkin and Redmond's (2006) research and observations of schools that successfully employ arts integration, results showed that integrating the arts created meaningful connections between content and students' own experiences and feelings. Similarly, Gullatt (2007) stated, "students who learn in the arts and those who learn through the arts experience an increase in academic success" (p. 215) and "the performing and visual arts challenge students to use reasoning skills—both concrete and

abstract—to draw conclusions and formulate ideas" (p. 212). Commonly listed reasons for the necessity of arts programs are: creative thinking, fluency in thought, originality, focused perception, imagination, risk taking, task persistence, and ownership with active learning.

Other benefits of actively engaging students with the arts are critical awareness, self-awareness, a way to communicate, and a way to express thoughts, ideas, and emotions while developing autonomy, individuality, and intrinsic motivation. "Students create a product for an audience that matters to them—not just their teachers, but also their school mates, families, and communities—and they internalize motives to do well" (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006, p. 63). As recognized by the National Endowment for the Arts (1991, p. 25), the arts provide five important roles in academics:

1. Arts foster the development of students who are actively engaged in learning.
2. Arts contribute to a creative, committed, and exciting school culture.
3. Arts generate a dynamic, coordinated, and cohesive curriculum.
4. Arts bridge learning to the larger community and broaden cultural awareness.
5. Arts humanize the learning environment.

"By involving students in learning catered to their specific intelligence strengths, they will become more active participants in the learning process" (Gullatt, 2008, p. 22). Researchers support the theory that individual intelligences can be used effectively to engage students in making important connections between and among curriculum concepts. Using Gardener's (1999) theory of multiple intelligences, Gullatt (2008) expressed how the education system caters more to the logical-mathematical and linguistic intelligences rather than using the additional six intelligences of bodily kinesthetic, musical, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. "Gardener supports the notion that these intelligences are strongly rooted in the

arts" (Gullatt, 2008, p. 22) and provide multiple ways to communicate. "If the arts are not provided for students in schools, they may be denied a preferred mode of communication, hence yielding or stunting their academic potential" (p. 22). Strengthening communication systems within academic disciplines with the use of the arts will provide a better understanding and more meaningful and enjoyable experiences with learning content.

The arts promote increased awareness of diversity and multiculturalism. The attitudes and respectful learning regarding ethnic and cultural groups that are different from them can enlighten students and promote more civic-minded clarity for generations to come. Teaching students to be mindful of minority groups, their struggles, and the symbolism embodied in their artworks helps to develop personally meaningful aesthetics and helps to explain diverse perspectives. The arts provide natural ways to construct meaning while enhancing reasoning and problem solving abilities. "As the ability to learn is derived from multiple sources, students increase the capability to broadly sort through various strategies to pick the one best serving their immediate needs" (Gullatt, 2008, p. 20). This affords students opportunities to practice participating in complex, creative, and imaginative activities in which they are assisted "with new ways to view and appreciate opportunities for interaction within the world around them" (Gullatt, 2008, p. 21). Because combining sensory perception with intellectual concepts allows students to be more expressive and insightful, students will acquire skills to become critical thinkers, see issues from a variety of perspectives, and express themselves with clarity and creativity.

In light of research and reform initiatives designed to improve teaching and advance learning in schools, researchers suggest reconsidering who is a part of the decision making process pertaining to curriculum development. Recommendations for the expansion of arts

programs include integrating art with other subject areas and using teaching strategies that incorporate the arts by regular classroom teachers to enhance learning. The involvement of art education within school systems is two-fold in that "learning in the arts would include specific skills acquired through arts classes such as music, visual arts, or drama" (Gullatt, 2008, p. 16) and learning through the arts involving creative activities to help teach other subject areas. While "it can be argued that there is a danger that certain subjects may become little more than vehicles for teaching core subjects" (Hickman & Kiss, 2010, p. 29) schools that are successful with arts integration provide both arts instruction as its own subject, as well as, within other subject areas. The rationale for teaching art cannot be based upon how it contributes to learning other subjects, nor should it be learned in seclusion from other subjects.

Implementing arts integration is not an easy task and "educators and artists who have developed it have worked with meager resources and have swum against a tide of stereotypes that keep the arts in the margin, despite their demonstrable and dramatic success in raising student achievement" (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006, p. 63). Research also indicates the necessity of collegial collaboration in combination with high levels of teacher commitment to managing and planning cross-curricular lessons. Teachers need to feel confident with the subject matter they are teaching, and explicit links between subjects need to be pointed out. "An ability to uncover relevant links with the students and make these links an integral part of their learning process seems to be necessary when delivering cross-curricular lessons in secondary schools" (Hickman & Kiss, 2010, p. 35). In working towards this goal, it is critical to assess the available options, create and maintain community partnerships, seek administrative support for professional development, and increase student exposure to creative opportunities.

While there have been a few identified deterrents of using cross-curricular teaching methods: teachers' views, a lack of knowledge about subject areas, and no experience teaching with cross-curricular approaches, several benefits of including the arts within learning objectives have been recognized. Among them are: enhancing higher level thinking and learning skills; allowing students to learn by actively doing/participating; expanding multicultural perspectives; reinforcing aesthetics; promoting imagination, risk taking, and communication; providing opportunities to collaborate; and improving spatial and logical reasoning. Because art education can be adapted to all areas of the curriculum, it "provides additional entry points for content discussion and discovery" (Gullatt, 2008, p.24) while encouraging "multi-sensory approaches to teaching and learning" (Gullatt, 2008, p. 24) with the use of a variety of media. "The best arts integration programs are developing a strategy that is helping to close the achievement gap even as it makes schools happier places" (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006, p. 63). The literature available contains examples of classrooms and school districts that have implemented arts programs and experienced academic benefits. Although there is a needed investment of funding and educators' time and energy, the rewards for both teacher and learner can be significant. "Longitudinally, research has shown that the arts support and enhance the academic programs for all students" (Gullatt, 2008, p. 23). The educators who take the time to understand art education, possible integrative methods, how this area of the system can positively affect students' learning and active engagement and ownership for their learning may be highly successful.

Changing Perceptions

Rabkin and Redmond (2006) noted community partnerships are a leading characteristic of what the best arts integration programs from around the country have in common. According to Dillon (2006), due to the historically poor perceptions of the role arts play in school systems,

arts courses are the first to be cut and the last to be reinstated when budgets are determined. Dillon (2006) argued, “In many school districts, there is a sense that arts are leisure activities and entertainment, useful only for the gifted and talented” (p. 36). School districts nationwide are working to diminish false perceptions of arts programs. Suggestions offered by these public school systems are: promote arts programs, do not become discouraged, work to secure grants, and maintain optimism for the continuation of arts programs. As Dillon (2006) recommended, arts programs can create and perform for public functions and build supportive community connections. Partnerships with professionals to train arts faculty are also suggested. Likewise, Norlund, Speirs, and Stewart (2010) suggested inviting community members whose expertise in other relevant areas can enrich learning.

Gullat (2007) suggested, “Until parents and guardians demand that arts be reinstated as a major force within the curriculum, the nation’s schools will continue to make token efforts to address the arts” (p. 219). After exposure to intensive arts-integrated courses, Gajda and Dorfman (2006) explained that student preparation time to fundraise and present for the community is a collaborative piece between school and community that is essential in changing the perception of art programs. Results from Davidson and Micheners’ (2001) National Arts Education Awareness Survey are cited in which 1,008 phone interviews with people over the age of 18 from all geographic areas of the United Sates, “reveal 73 percent of respondents felt that arts were important to children’s development and that arts should be available to all students, not just the economically privileged” (Gullatt, 2007, p. 212). While it may be difficult for arts advocates to overcome perceptions that the arts do not provide viable career options, or that the arts are meant to be hobbies, research findings and public-awareness campaigns reveal a large percentage of people believe children benefit from art related opportunities.

The arts may continue to be viewed as only extra classes that are unimportant to the foundation of students' educational experience. Tambucci (2006) asserted, "We find that study in the arts and other core subjects has become a victim of our political environment" (p. 34). When the downsizing of course offering throughout schools is necessary, history has shown that only those content areas that are tested seem to be kept. Despite the extensive professional documentation regarding the value of the arts, "when push comes to shove—when resources are precious and test results get published in newspapers—it is the arts that are the first to go" (Tambucci, 2006, p. 35). "The deterioration of arts is ironical because research findings show that the performing and visual arts challenge students to use reasoning skills—both concrete and abstract—to draw conclusions and formulate ideas" (Gullatt, 2007, p. 211). Within the classroom, changes can be made that will help alter the perceptions of the role of art within the learning environment. Students' attitudes towards learning need to shift from being reluctant learners to active participants. Rather than perpetuate academic frustrations over students who are "accustomed to receiving information, completing projects, and routinely taking tests" (Andrews, 2010, p. 41), the arts educator can challenge students and encourage student ownership of their education by providing learning outcomes that allow students to have a voice and a choice.

Research pertaining to art and the education system illustrate the importance of overcoming a testing saturated climate with the infusion of creativity into the curriculum. When students are able to write, reflect, and goal set while demonstrating "depth of thought, planning, self-assessment, and willingness to learn from mistakes" (Andrews, 2010, p. 42) students are most assuredly taking ownership of their educational experience. This type of classroom atmosphere has been referred to as student-centered or design-based learning. In addition,

Norlund, Speirs, and Stewart's (2010) first principle, start with students, illustrated the importance of assessing individual student needs while getting to know the individuals within a group. Andrews (2010) asserted, within a student-centered art room the focus of instruction begins with the students. The role of the teacher is to facilitate and lead students through a transition in which students gradually increase responsibility for setting and achieving goals. Students are more engaged and enthusiastic when they take ownership by constructing ideas for their learning. Empowering students to make decisions means students are expected to problem-solve, work as learners, co-teachers, and active artists to achieve personal, academic goals. "In this vein, students create their best work, take responsibility for their learning, and discover a deeper appreciation of art and the creative process" (Andrews, 2010, p. 46). The traditional relationship between students and teacher changes into a collaborative approach where the teacher guides and facilitates lessons based upon individual ambitions. Students develop their strengths based upon individual needs. "Students are more focused on engagement than on fulfilling assignment requirements, due dates, and grades" (Andrews, 2010, p. 45). Rather than focusing on a final grade, assessment is based upon the ongoing process of portfolios.

The process of engaging learners to observe and identify possible solutions in a collaborative and communicative environment is identified by Lee and Breitenberg (2010) as design-based instruction in which visual, spatial, and holistic thinking are simultaneously employed to engage learners. Similar to the term student centered learning; design-based learning encourages students to goal set and to prepare personalized learning outcomes. The case studies investigated by Lee and Breitenberg (2010) revealed, "holistic thinking, empathy, imagination, creativity, visualizing problems and solutions—have become more important in business than the traditional analytic skills taught in MBA programmes" (p. 55). Using Kress's

(Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2002) description of design as communication through assemblage, the relationships among different media and discourses are recommended by Lee and Breitenberg (2010) as a method of developing active engagement, critical discussion, strategies for communication, and visual techniques in the art education classroom.

Dewhurst (2010) proposed three educationally significant dimensions of creating art: connecting, questioning, and translating. Using critical reflection and an exploration of ideas to help students build connections with pertinent learning outcomes is fundamental. Next, a critical inquiry into the multiple factors that contribute to the students' selection of work enables learners to prepare, plan, and further research the depth of content. By using the dimension of questioning, Dewhurst (2010) concluded that both posing and pursuing answers to questions, the active artist simultaneously learns and teaches using problem solving. The dimension of translating, as Dewhurst (2010) defined it, "is created with an express intention to challenge and change conditions of inequality or injustice" (p. 9). This requires students to move beyond simply sketching ideas and encourages making strategic choices pertaining to how to affect the quality and meaning of their work. The effective translation of an artistic message requires critical reflection from the artist as well as the pairing of appropriate media and techniques. Negotiating a balance between the intended message and aesthetic aims of artwork is a unique and personal challenge that needs to be cultivated and facilitated. Similarly, Powell (2010) suggested eight effective ways to incorporate visual ethnography in arts education. Students become participant observers, develop a rapport with those studied, develop research questions, conduct interviews, and use visual methods for research purposes. Combining art with ethnographic research can "fully connect artistic practice with local knowledge, history, uses, and narratives of places" (p. 52). Successful ways to incorporate visual ethnography in arts

education can help to restructure the way students are taught so that the integration and study of aesthetics can be supported.

The major themes presented in current literature involve motivation and enjoyment as important factors to consider in the development of engaging, learning opportunities. According to Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider, and Shernoff, (2003) promoting excitement stimulates engagement in the learning process, and Gullatt (2008) argued that providing artistic opportunities created enjoyable and motivational benefits for students. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) proposed that a sense of time is transformed when individuals are transfixed by a task. When one's sense of time on task is altered, one is more focused, inspired, and determined. Thus, enthusiasm for a task is a motivational incentive for accomplishing objectives. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) argued that individuals benefited from increased feelings of enjoyment, satisfaction, and accomplishment of challenges and were more likely to pursue future challenges. According to Chantarasombat's (2011) the benefits of increased motivational factors included increased responsibility, positive attitude, persistence, and a sharing between and among peers and teachers. It has been theorized that motivational factors such as involvement, enjoyment, and absorption, inspire students to put forth greater effort culminating in higher achievement (Kretchmar, 2008). As Kretchmar (2008) explained, enjoyable experiences help students grow and develop, and "Students who are engaged with school are more likely to learn, to find the experience rewarding, to graduate, and to pursue higher education" (Marks, 2000, p. 154). The improvement of teaching and learning processes may help to increase high school students' retention based upon their active engagement in arts courses.

Summary

The conceptual framework guiding this study was rooted in not only the participants' perceptions regarding their learning capabilities and expectations but also the participants' lived experiences in arts courses. The framework is supported by Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) flow theory, which includes elements of concentration, interest, and enjoyment. The flow theory is based on the relationship between experiencing challenges and using the skills necessary to complete those challenges. The conceptual framework is also supported by the theoretical foundations developed by Dewey (1934), Freud (1938), Piaget (1926/1928), Vygotsky (1978), Gardner (1983), and Bloom (1956). These career theorists advocated the use of engaging children with multiple types of learning opportunities to help satisfy deep, complex human needs. Consistent with these historical theorists is the idea that the exploration of creative abilities is an important area to investigate and promote for successful cognitive and emotional growth and development.

It is known that a learning environment that does not provide opportunities for students to engage in challenging and meaningful tasks lead students to have feelings of frustration. What has not been researched is the concept of active engagement from student perspectives. A collection of individual experiences illustrating firsthand accounts of active engagement examples may help efforts to reduce possible feelings of frustration. Research also reveals the need to collect empirical information based upon students' perceptions of their learning capabilities and their learning expectations. The present study may fill this gap in literature by extending the knowledge of active engagement with high school students in arts classes. Due to the lack of both empirical and phenomenological evidence pertaining to active engagement and the arts, a mixed method design was selected as an appropriate research approach. The premise that active participation and experiences in high school arts classes may be beneficial to students

seemed to be supported by the literature. Anecdotal links between educational experiences in the arts and active engagement have been implied; however, there are no studies that have examined and described high school students' perceptions.

Measuring and describing students' learning capabilities and expectations, and following up with individual interviews will add depth, richness, and meaningfulness on multiple levels. Collecting data from the persons who are experiencing the phenomenon of student engagement will develop accounts of what they have experienced and how they have experienced it. The perceptions of student realities, given by students from their personal experiences of arts courses, was invaluable to the search for wisdom and understanding in order to bring about positive social change in this area. The ideas bounded by the conceptual framework were explored through the voices of high school participants who have experienced learning in arts classes using the mixed methodology discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine and describe the experiences of high school students' shared, lived experiences with feelings of active engagement in arts courses. Describing and measuring the process of actively engaging students through the arts may help to explore ways students can become more engaged with their learning and complete high school. Chapter 3 will explain the research design and rationale, setting, role of the researcher, possible threats to the validity, and a description of the strategies used to address issues of trustworthiness.

Setting

Imperial High School was chosen for this study for three reasons. First, a scheduling practice of this high school is to have students earn the one arts credit mandated by the state prior to their first semester of Grade 11. This study's sample isolated Grade 11 participants because they have usually completed at least one high school arts class at this stage of their high school career. This ensured that all randomly selected participants in the initial quantitative phase of the study had the experience relevant of being in at least one arts course. Arts courses are offered on a semester cycle and include a variety of courses in the visual arts, instrumental and choral music, as well as drama. It is important to note that, based upon the curriculum requirements, they into basic and advanced courses. It is customary for students to be scheduled in an introductory course first. Prior to Grade 11, most students have not reached a level of mastery equivalent to the development of a sequential portfolio of artwork. A sequential portfolio is a body of artwork that is developed over several consecutive years and is based on the students' commitment to continuous improvement. Before high school, some participants may not have experienced an arts course since elementary school.

A second reason for selecting Imperial High School is because it is committed to investigating ways to improve student attendance; it is part of a research- and data-driven school district. Because one of the building-level goals was to reinforce high attendance rates, address problems, and problem trends, Imperial's senior leaders formulated a goal to increase the school's monthly attendance rate by 0.5% per grade level by the end of the 2013 academic school year. Results from this study may help to shed light on the causes of some attendance issues.

The third reason for selecting Imperial High School for this study was the absence of any extreme economic conditions. According to the United States Census Bureau (2010), between the years 2007 and 2011 the average median household income in the district was estimated at $42,448. In addition, the school district in which Imperial High School is located is a small, rural area and thus is neither an underprivileged nor wealthy area. Imperial High School, located in the northeastern part of the United States, is home to approximately 800 high school students in Grades 9-12. Each grade level has approximately 200 students. The perceptions of 50 randomly selected participants in the junior class were measured. Of those, a purposeful sampling of 12 students participated in individual follow-up interviews.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Questions and Related Hypotheses

Phase 1 (Quantitative)

1. Is there a difference in students' engagement in classroom learning when enrolled in arts classes?

   H_0: There is no statistically significant difference between students' engagement in classroom learning when enrolled in arts classes.

   H_a: There is a statistically significant difference between students' engagement in classroom learning when enrolled in arts classes.

Phase 2 (Qualitative)

2. How do students describe their experiences of active engagement in arts classes?

Phase 3 (Mixed Methods)

3. What is the relationship between students' engagement in classroom learning and enrollment in arts classes?

Using the framework of elements in Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) flow theory, a mixed methods study designed to address and discover how students' experience learning in arts courses may aid in the conceptualization and classroom practice of active engagement. Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) flow theory combines three areas: concentration, the intense or absolute absorption in an activity; interest, the fundamental basis for becoming engaged with a topic; and enjoyment, the feeling of accomplishment or satisfaction. The flow theory is based on the relationship between experiencing challenges and using the skills necessary to complete those challenges. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) argued that the balance between challenge and skill is delicate and, when disrupted, apathy, anxiety, or relaxation may be experienced. Cavanagh et al. (2008) proposed that the level of challenge was perceived by students to be associated with their expectations of learning, while students' skill levels were perceived to be associated with their capabilities of learning. Therefore, the quantitative phase of this study, in which students' learning capabilities and expectations were measured, provided the foundation for gathering qualitative data from in-depth explanations of active engagement from students' perspectives of their lived experiences in arts courses. Following an explanatory, sequential approach, as diagrammed in Figure 1, I integrated the quantitative and qualitative data, to help investigate the relationship between high school students' engagement in classroom learning and enrollment in arts classes.

QUAN Collection	Data→	QUAN Analysis	QUAL Collection	QUAL Analysis	→	Interpretation of Entire Analysis
Surveys		Graphs/Summary (numerical values)	Interviews (notes/audio-tape)	Color Coded Alignment (descriptions)		Summary of Results

Figure 1. Diagram for Intended Mixed Methods Study
Adapted from Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Imperial High School is committed to investigating ways to improve student attendance and reinforce high attendance rates. I chose a mixed methods approach in order to reflect a holistic, systems-based perspective on the experiences and outcomes of high school students' engagement in arts classroom learning with the goal to discover the possible relationship between such engagement in the arts and attendance. A mixed methods approach was founded on the idea that worldviews and theoretical lenses frame the procedures used, incorporate, and prioritize one or both forms of data collection. Researchers integrate or link the two forms of data by merging, sequentially building, or embedding one form of data with the other (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). The theoretical perspective used in the development of this study was based on the interpretivist nature of phenomenology in which qualitative data is used to expand and elaborate on quantitative findings. "A phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their *lived experiences* of a concept or a phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). A review of current literature shows a lack of scholarly, arts-related research in which theory is linked with empirical findings and phenomenological approaches.

I believe it is important not only to investigate the benefits of arts education further, but also to use a mixed methods approach. Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) flow theory involved the observation of participants in order to make inferences about optimal learning experiences and states of peak performance. A mixed methods study is directly related to Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) work because students were afforded the opportunity to share and expand upon their initial self-report survey answers, and their perceptions of concentration, interest, and enjoyment during the interview phase. Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2002) asserted that the flow state is

intrinsically rewarding and promoted a selective mechanism in which psychological functioning fostered interest for the individual to master new challenges. Thus, participant viewpoints and descriptions regarding their lived experiences with motivation and individual performance were gathered. The principles of Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) theory were used to guide the development of the interview questions for this study. The types of activities students described about their arts educational experiences, the reasons why they described those experiences, and the ways in which students interpreted these experiences as being important to them in the future were explored during the interviews.

The quantitative phase helped to address the breadth of the topic concerning the measurement of students' learning capabilities and learning expectations when enrolled in arts classes versus enrollment in non-arts classes, while the qualitative phase helped to gain depth in the form of the personal meanings participants attach to their perceptions of the phenomenon of active engagement in arts courses. Analysis of these two data sources helped offer a richer explanation in order to increase the understanding of the importance of providing opportunities for active engagement in the arts. If a strong, positive relationship between students' feelings of engagement and being enrolled in an arts course is found to be present, it might change the way student schedules are made, promote policies and processes to increase attendance rates, influence an increase the cohort graduation rates, as well as create an effective body of evidence for expanding arts education at the high school level. Describing and measuring the process of actively engaging students through the arts may help to explore ways students can become more engaged with their learning and complete high school. Consequently, using a mixed methods approach helped to investigate relationships involving arts exposure that would yield results to substantiate theory with the needed phenomenological description *and* empirical data. Using the

quantitative spreadsheet software Microsoft Excel (2011), I examined numeric differences and commonalities among participant self-reported survey answers. Using a phenomenological perspective, I probed participant realities during interviews, and gathered student interpretations and lived experiences to identify significant patterns.

In an effort to follow Moustakas' (1994) transcendental or psychological phenomenological approach, the interpretation of the researcher was less of a focal point while the descriptions of the participants' experiences were of central importance. As the researcher, I acknowledged and took into account my own personal biases. With the aid of the following methods, I transcended my biases and strived for subjectivity. First, by maintaining a journal I was able to acknowledge and address concerns related to any prejudices or opinions. With the use of a researcher's journal, I practiced introspection and analysis to explore possible preferences for certain types of evidence, interpretations, and explanations. Second, I bracketed my experiences, opinions, and prejudices and consistently practiced self-reflection throughout the process. Third, in order to make sense of the large amount of data that was collected from several participants, I used quotes or significant statements from the participants to narrow down the information and to formulate themes. I identified significant patterns with the systemic approach of color-coding line-by-line. Once similar themes were identified, a description of what the participants experienced and another description of how they experienced it were developed. The overall descriptions provided a more in depth understanding of student engagement in an arts course setting and helped to construct a framework for communicating what the data revealed about the essence of the phenomenon active engagement. In order to avoid the risk of misrepresenting or misunderstanding participant answers, I acknowledged the complexity of the

situations being studied and recorded the perspectives participants shared in the ways they described their experiences.

A phenomenological strategy was chosen over other inquiry approaches because focusing on what all participants have in common as they experience active engagement in arts courses may help to describe their perceptions and develop a deeper understanding about the features of this topic, thus addressing the essence of active engagement in arts courses. Understanding the perceived reality of high school students is essential to gaining insight as to why they may fall behind in school or drop out. Only reviewing statistics associated with those students that lag behind their cohort group, or drop out of high school will not help to answer the fundamental question of how we can prevent high school student disengagement in the future. My decision to use a mixed methods research approach was guided by the constructivist paradigm. The epistemology of the constructivist paradigm is based on valuing multiple, descriptive perspectives with a focus on the construction of knowledge. Using the constructivist paradigm will require interviewing participants within natural settings to help pursue an understanding of the research issue from participants' perspectives.

In keeping the purpose of this study at the forefront of the decision-making process, I considered and rejected several qualitative methodological strategies for this study. I considered ethnography; a more culturally focused strategy, but rejected this option due to the emphasis on understanding active engagement from individual accounts of experiences. Given the purpose of this study, I rejected the narrative research approach because it would involve the exploration of the life of one individual and would not be suitable to examine the phenomenon of active engagement from the perspectives of several participants. I considered grounded theory research but rejected the approach for this study because of its emphasis on a process of constant

comparison in order to develop a theory. Although an inductive approach was used to generate codes from the data, no new theory was developed because of this study. Case study was considered, but I rejected this choice because in a case study, in-depth understanding of an event, program, or activity and not the interpretation of the lived experiences of several individuals are stressed. Because this study's purpose is to examine and describe the experiences of high school students' shared, lived experiences with feelings of active engagement in arts courses a case study would not be appropriate. In search of the most appropriate methodology to fulfill the purpose of this study, both quantitative and qualitative methods were considered in relation to students' engagement in classroom learning when enrolled in arts classes. Quantitative studies, alone, are insufficient to understand the essence of human experience. Additional research using qualitative approaches, provide opportunities to study research questions in a more holistic or thematic way.

Role of the Researcher

Imperial High School has 2 visual art teachers, 1 instrumental music teacher, and 1 choral and drama teacher. My role in relation to Imperial High School is that of a high school visual arts teacher. I am responsible for teaching the advanced arts courses in order to prepare those serious-minded art students for college courses in this area. The majority of students enrolled in the visual arts courses I taught were second semester juniors and first and second semester seniors preparing portfolio work. As such, I had little, if any interaction with students who were enrolled in a visual arts class for the sole purpose of earning their state mandated arts credit prior to the first semester of their junior year of high school. I had no professional interaction with the instrumental music, choral, and drama students. I ensured that the 12 students asked to

participate in the interview portion were not enrolled as my students at any time prior to or during the timeframe of this study.

The researcher's role was to gather survey information and conduct interviews. I obtained permission from the Imperial school district to complete this study, as well as, appropriate permission from the participants and their legal parent/guardian (Appendix C). I was responsible for the distribution and collection of all assent and consent forms from the participants and their parent/guardian. The assent and consent forms outlined my role as the researcher, background information, procedures, and the voluntary nature of the study, the risks and benefits of participation, information on confidentiality and contact information. In addition, upon distribution of the surveys and at the beginning of the interview sessions I verbally reviewed the outlined information from the assent and consent forms with the participants. Ethical concerns included completing the study in my work environment. The participants were assured that my role as researcher is that of doctoral student and not as a teacher. I ensured that the students who volunteered to participate in the interview portion of this study were not enrolled as my students at any time prior to or during the timeframe of this study.

I assured participants that their involvement in the study would remain confidential and that their participation was completely voluntary. It was explained that their decision of whether or not to be in the study would be respected and that no one at Imperial High School would treat them differently if they decided not to be in the study. I emphasized that if students were feeling stress at any time during the study they could stop their participation with no penalty for discontinuing their participation. Also, I explained that the risks to the participants are minimal and would be limited to not feeling comfortable answering certain question. Participants were informed that they could skip any questions they felt were too personal, and there would not be a

penalty. I explained that there is no compensation of any kind associated with participating in this study. The purpose of the study and the possible benefits of the study resulting from student participation were described. The benefits included self-knowledge and a better understanding of student perceptions and experiences in high school arts courses. I explained that participants may help educators understand the role of arts education experiences on student engagement and student achievement and this could be a possible benefit to school systems.

As an additional measure of protection against coercion, the researcher informed participants that the use of any information provided would not be used for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, it was explained that their names or anything else that could identify them would not be included in any reports of the study. The dignity, privacy, and anonymity of all participants was respected and protected throughout the study and within any future published materials. It was emphasized that the participant and his or her legal parent/guardian was free to withdraw consent and to discontinue participation in the project at any time without causing prejudice of the status of the participant. An opportunity to address any questions or concerns of the participants or their parents/guardians was given, and the representative contact information from Walden University was provided in the event that any participant and their parent/guardian would like to talk privately about their rights as a participant in the study.

Methodology

The quantitative phase of this study, in which students' learning capabilities and expectations were measured, provided the foundation for gathering qualitative data from in-depth explanations of active engagement from students' perspectives of their lived experiences in arts courses. Following a sequential, explanatory approach, as diagrammed in Figure 1, enabled the

researcher to integrate quantitative and qualitative data, to help investigate the relationship between high school students' engagement in classroom learning and enrollment in arts classes.

QUAN Data→ Collection	QUAN Data→ Analysis	QUAL Data→ Collection	QUAL Data→ Analysis	Interpretation of Entire Analysis
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Figure 1. Diagram for Intended Mixed Methods Study
Adapted from Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

An initial, minimum, random sample of 50 students were asked to participate in the survey portion of the study. To help address issues of bias, the initial participation selection for the quantitative phase was a random process. Using spreadsheet software with the capability to embed calculations, a list of 50 names was generated from the school-prepared enrollment list segmented by grade level. The participant group consisted of students in Grade 11 who had completed at least one arts course. It was not necessary to ensure that each participant was enrolled in an arts course during the semester the study was conducted because Imperial High School's course-scheduling policy requires all freshmen and sophomores to fulfill their state requirement of one arts credit, or one arts course, by the time they begin Grade 11. When they begin Grade 11, students are at the halfway point in their high school education; inviting these students to participate in the quantitative portion of this study will ensure that the participants have had at least one high-school-level learning experience in an arts class. A random selection process was selected for the first phase for two reasons. First, all juniors, regardless of individuals' natural inclination to select an arts elective, could be part of the selection process. Second, all juniors, regardless of their knowledge of my role as a teacher in the school district, could be part of the selection process. The full discussion pertaining to the protocols for

participant consent and Institution Review Board approval are included in the section on ethical procedures.

Participant Selection for Qualitative Phase

To further understand experiences and behaviors closely associated with the research question, a smaller, purposeful sampling of at least 12, or 25% of the original participating group of 50 students from the quantitative phase of the study, participated in individual interviews. Using a purposive sampling helped the researcher "generate a wealth of detail from a few cases" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 173). This is a sufficient sampling size because purposive samples include less than 30 cases (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009); however, it is large enough to represent the population adequately and small enough to collect data in a cost efficient and time effective way rather than measuring the entire sampling frame. The high school student participants were interviewed while the researcher will manually record and audiotape their responses.

Instrumentation/Procedure/Data Collection—Quantitative Components

Learning about classroom engagement in an arts course can be advanced with the consideration of the flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). According to Shernoff et al., (2003), it is important for concentration, interest and enjoyment to be experienced simultaneously in order for flow to occur. While Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre (1989) used the experience fluctuation model to measure skill level and perceived challenge, Cavanagh, Kennish, and Sturgess (2008) applied the theory to measure engagement and argued, "Students who are engaged within a particular situation will have a balance between the perceived level of the challenge being faced and their perceived capability to meet the incumbent requirements" (p. 7). Therefore, Cavanagh et al. (2008) defined challenge as the expectations of learning while skill

level was defined as the learning capabilities of the individual. Cavanagh et al. (2008) proposed students with high active engagement perceived their skill level as highly capable as well; thus, engagement was a function from the combination of learning capabilities and expectations. Kennish and Cavanagh's (2009) work illustrated the coordinates of engagement in learning in which "the balance that characterizes engagement is shown by: high capabilities in conjunction with high expectations; moderate capabilities in conjunction with moderate expectations; or low capabilities in conjunction with low expectations" (p. 2). Thus, the use of an instrument to rate perceived learning capabilities and expectations directly relates to the appropriateness of the current study.

The Secondary School Engagement in Classroom Learning (Cavanagh, Kennish, & Sturgess, 2008) is a self-report instrument containing two 25-item scales in which learning capabilities and expectations of learning are measured. I obtained permission (Appendix A) from developer, Rob Cavanagh, PhD, to use the survey for this intended study. The learning capabilities portion contains questions relating to the areas of self-esteem, self-concept, resilience, self-regulation, and self-efficacy with five statements for each area. The expectation of learning for understanding contains the areas of explanation, interpretation, application, perspective, and empathy and has five statements for each. Cavanagh (2009) maintained the statements were written so the first question would be affirmed easier than the rest. This survey contains a 4-point scale, (1 = *strongly disagree* and 4 = *strongly agree*) and was distributed to each of the 50 high school participants. The survey instrument was developed in order to gain a better understanding of classroom engagement and to quantify secondary student engagement (Cavanagh & Kennish, 2009).

As part of a longitudinal research project conducted with secondary students in Western Australia, the measurement scale was created to help study the phenomenon of engagement in classroom learning and to be used by pedagogic practitioners. The data collection using the four-category response scale was used with a sampling of 553 students in Grades 8 through 10 attending two metropolitan Western Australian school systems. The computer program, RUMM2020 (Andrich, Sheridan, Lyne, & Luo, 2003), was used to organize data scores. Using the Rasch rating scale model (Andrich, 1978), the measurement properties of the data were analyzed. Comparison graphs and tables including a RUMM summary test-of-fit chart with a chi-square likelihood-ratio test illustrated good matches between the distribution of item difficulties and the distribution of students' learning capability and students' learning for understanding scores (Kennish & Cavanagh, 2009). Person Frequency distribution bar graphs were generated to depict the frequency of responses by gender, grade level, and subject area. A direct relationship between learning capabilities and expectations of learning, consistent with the Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) theoretical model of engagement was found by plotting participant scores.

Using operational definitions identified from the first phase of development, the researchers implemented a second phase to investigate the use of the rating scale instrument with 195 secondary students. To collect both qualitative and quantitative data a sample from the original participant group was used. The data from the two scales were analyzed separately using the testing data-to-model fit with RUMM2020. Summaries for test-of-fit statistics, probability curves, threshold locations, individual item fit statistics, item characteristic curves, and Varimax location loadings from factor analysis of residuals were generated (Cavanagh & Kennish, 2009). The resulting measurements were "considered to manifest the latent trait of student engagement

in classroom learning" (Cavanagh & Kennish, 2009, p. 1). The instrument was found to confirm the compliance of data with the requirements for objective measurement that underpin the Rasch rating scale model (Cavanagh & Kennish, 2009).

In the initial, quantitative phase of this mixed methods study, 50 randomly selected students were instructed to respond to the survey statements regarding their experiences in their arts course. Once completed, a second copy of the survey was distributed and students were instructed to respond to the survey statements regarding their experiences in a non-arts course. The full discussion pertaining to the protocols for participant consent and Institution Review Board approval are included in the section on ethical procedures. The data analysis and interpretation from the surveys will examine students' perceived learning capabilities and expectations for their arts course versus a non-arts course. To help determine initial themes to explore during the in-depth interviews a data analysis of the differences between the percentages for each category was conducted using Microsoft Excel (2011). Results were presented in tables for interpretation purposes including statistical significance, how the results answer the research questions and hypotheses, the explanation of why the results occurred and the long-range implications of the results. A data alignment matrix (Appendix F) was used to organize and analyze the data.

Instrumentation/Procedure/Data Collection—Qualitative Components

The purpose of the second, qualitative phase of this mixed methods study was to describe the experiences of Imperial High School students' shared, lived experiences with feelings of active engagement and enrollment in an arts class. Because a mixed method plan uses multiple sources of data (Creswell, 2007), a smaller, purposeful sampling of at least 12 of the original participating group of 50 students from the quantitative phase of the study will participate in

individual interviews to further understand experiences and behaviors closely associated with the research question. The data collection strategy for the qualitative phase includes interviewing high school student participants while manually recording and audiotaping their responses. Appendix B shows the formulation of the thoughtful questions (descriptive, contrasting and structural) that have been prepared for participants to answer during the interview process. The purpose of the first four interview questions is to put arts-related experiences in context by asking participants to describe, explain, and interpret their learning expectations and recollections of activities they were engaged with during their arts course. The purpose of Questions 5-8 eight was to gather details of students' perceived learning capabilities and experiences in arts courses.

A phenomenological reflection of data from the high school participants will examine, describe, and understand students' perceptions of feeling actively engaged while taking an arts course. This procedure will involve following Moustakas' (1994) transcendental or psychological phenomenological approach, in which the interpretation of the researcher was less of a focal point while the description of the participants' experiences were of central importance. Personal biases were taken into account and acknowledged while striving for subjectivity. First, a researcher's journal was maintained to acknowledge and address concerns related to any prejudices or opinions. Through introspection and analysis the exploration of possible preferences for certain types of evidence, interpretations, and explanations will occur. Second, personal experiences, opinions, and prejudices were bracketed while consistently practicing self-reflection throughout the process. Third, in order to make sense of the large amount of data that was collected from several participants, quotes and significant statements from the participants were used to help narrow down the information and formulate themes. Significant patterns were

identified to develop a description of what the participants' experienced and another description of how they experienced it. The overall descriptions will provide a deeper, richer understanding of student engagement in an arts course setting and help to construct a framework for communicating what the data reveals about the essence of the phenomenon.

Interview Process

Creswell (2012) suggested the use of a predesigned questionnaire to aide in the organization of gathering quality data during an interview and emphasizes the importance of the investigator's preparedness in keeping a researcher's journal. Appendix B shows the formulation of thoughtful questions (descriptive, contrasting, and structural) that are prepared for participants to answer during the qualitative interview process. Twelve students participated in individual interviews using the attached interview questions (Appendix B). Each interview was conducted and transcribed by the researcher for approximately 30 minutes. Interviews will also be audiotaped. The purpose of the first four interview questions was to put arts-related experiences in context by asking participants to describe, explain, and interpret their learning expectations and recollections of activities they were engaged with during their arts course. The purpose of Questions 5-8 was to gather details of students' perceived learning capabilities and experiences in arts courses.

The protocol for conducting interviews will include the organization of all materials and supplies, reminder and verification of the participant's appointment, arrival to the location early, possession of a tape recorder, spare tapes, spare batteries and notebook at the site, a check that the recorder and tape are properly working, a test of voice on tape with the date, time, place and name of participant, and lastly, a backup plan including replacement participants (Janesick, 2011). Participants were greeted in a professional and pleasant manner while the expectations

and intended length of the interview were conveyed in a skilled and trustworthy fashion. The full discussion pertaining to the protocols for participant consent and Institution Review Board approval are included in the section on ethical procedures. Participants were allowed to answer the questions, give their opinions, statements, and descriptions without the interjection of viewpoints, stories, or biases from the researcher. Furthermore, I used probing questions when needed.

Data Analysis

Research Questions and Related Hypotheses

Phase 1 (Quantitative)

1. Is there a difference in students' engagement in classroom learning when enrolled in arts classes?

   H_0: There is no statistically significant difference between students' engagement in classroom learning when enrolled in arts classes.

   H_a: There is a statistically significant difference between students' engagement in classroom learning when enrolled in arts classes.

Phase 2 (Qualitative)

2. How do students describe their experiences of active engagement in arts classes?

Phase 3 (Mixed Methods)

3. What is the relationship between students' engagement in classroom learning and enrollment in arts classes?

The Secondary School Engagement in Classroom Learning Survey (Cavanagh, Kennish, & Sturgess, 2008) will examine learning capabilities and expectations. Although the participant

population may have a high interest in social media and technological devices, data collection in the form of an electronic survey was not chosen as an option. Distribution of a hard copy survey was selected, as it would afford the researcher another opportunity to address any questions or concerns of the participants and to guard against coercion. The surveys were be administered to the randomly selected participants in one day, during non-instructional time, in a quiet location in Imperial High School at two specified times. The first time-period will occur during the non-instructional time designated as homeroom. The second time period occurred after school and was designated for tardy participants who missed the first planned time period. Participants had as long as they need to complete the surveys and will give their completed surveys to the researcher. The coding from the survey reflects codes developed from previous use of the instrument with the learning capabilities scale using: self-esteem (SE), self-concept (SC), resilience (R), self-regulation (SR), and self-efficacy (SE). The expectation of learning scale utilizes: explanation (EXP), interpretation (INT), application (APP), perspective (PERS), and empathy (EMP). Data from the interview questions were coded in alignment with the survey coding. Using the predetermined codes from the Secondary School Engagement in Classroom Learning Survey (Cavanagh, Kennish, & Sturgess, 2008) assisted with the analytical work involved in marking text, identifying overlapping or similar themes, and categorizing. The alignment of codes is relevant to the mixed methodology chosen for the study because the qualitative portion helped to explain or support the quantitative findings.

To help determine initial themes to explore during the in-depth interviews, data analysis and interpretation from taking the survey twice examined students' perceived learning capabilities and expectations for an arts course versus a non-arts course. The steps involved in the analysis of data include a paired sample *t* test used to determine whether there is a significant

difference between the average values of students' perceptions of learning expectations and capabilities in an arts course versus a non-arts course. A data analysis of the differences between the percentages for each category was conducted using Microsoft Excel (2011). Results were presented in tables for interpretation purposes including statistical significance, how the results answer the research questions and hypotheses, the explanation of why the results occurred and the long-range implications of the results. A data alignment matrix (Appendix F) was used to organize and analyze the data.

The data collection strategy for the qualitative phase of the study includes interviewing high school student participants while recording and audiotaping their responses. Patton (2002) stated, "Thick, rich description provides the foundation for qualitative analysis and reporting" (p. 437). Using the results from the interviews conducted, I practiced the descriptive color-coding line-by-line technique. Emergent themes and categories were color-coded and compared. Using tips offered in Gibbs and Taylor's (2005) article, the following questions were asked: What were the participants saying or doing during the interview? How were their actions and statements delivered or linked? As Gibbs and Taylor (2005) clarified, descriptive examples make it easier to explain the phenomena. "Science emphasizes critical faculties more, especially in analysis, while art encourages creativity" (Patton, 2002, p. 513). Preparing the codes in a non-hierarchical arrangement, similar to creating a list in which there are no sub-code levels, proved to be the most helpful for this portion of the study.

The data analysis and interpretation from the follow up interviews with the researcher examined and described the experiences of the participants, based upon their perceived active engagement with arts coursework. Also gained from the data analysis was the students' acknowledgment concerning the importance of active engagement and student achievement and

what constitutes these feelings. Data of this nature proved useful and relevant given the desire to know more from the students' perspective and was essential to completing this phenomenological study. A phenomenological analysis was employed where the perspective of epoché was used to " . . . look inside to become aware of personal bias, to eliminate personal involvement with the subject material, that is, eliminate, or at least gain clarity about, preconceptions" (Patton, 2002, p. 485). Merely observing a classroom setting may not yield phenomenological results in this important area. Also, the interpretation of the findings involved attaching significance to particular results and organizing patterns into an analytic framework (Patton, 2002).

Once the data was bracketed, all aspects of the data were treated with equal value as the elements and perspectives are organized into meaningful clusters (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) suggested that irrelevant and overlapping data needs to be eliminated and the invariant themes identified in order to perform an 'imaginative variation' on each theme. Expanded versions of the themes to create an abstraction of the experience that provided the content or 'textural portrayal' was used (Patton, 2002). The next step in the phenomenological analysis involved creating a structural synthesis, ". . . the phenomenologist looks beneath the affect inherent in the experience to deeper meanings for the individuals who, together, make up the group" (Patton, 2002, p. 486). The documented and complex structural descriptions were combined to formulate the general meaning or essence of student experiences. The qualitative data analysis of contextualizing (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) was employed in order to understand the holistic and meaningful relations described within the context of particular situations. The quantitative and qualitative strands occurred chronologically in order to formulate initial themes and categories to compare further. The quantitative measures helped form attributes that could be

confirmed or denied through qualitative analysis of the interview data; a descriptive sequential mixed data analysis was written.

After the quantitative data from the survey were collected and analyzed, the results informed phase two, the qualitative data collection process. The coding from the survey reflects codes developed from previous use of the instrument with the learning capabilities scale using: self-esteem (SE), self-concept (SC), resilience (R), self-regulation (SR), and self-efficacy (SE). The expectation of learning scale used: explanation (EXP), interpretation (INT), application (APP), perspective (PERS), and empathy (EMP). In an effort to efficiently record codes, locate coded categories, group data, and compare data or paragraphs from field notes, data from the interview questions were color-coded in alignment with the survey coding. Although the decisions as to what patterns to establish, what themes, and what terms were applied to the was entirely up to the researcher, using the predetermined codes from the Secondary School Engagement in Classroom Learning Survey (Cavanagh, Kennish, & Sturgess, 2008) assisted with the analytical work involved. Color-coding line-by-line helped with the facilitation of marking text, identifying overlapping or similar themes, and categorizing. This sequential, explanatory design enabled the researcher to analyze the qualitative data and the mixed methods question pertaining to how the qualitative portion helped to explain or support the quantitative findings. The merging and connecting of data analysis in a sequential way helped organize displays that linked the qualitative themes to the quantitative results for the purpose of explanation (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). Lastly, in an effort to protect confidentiality, all data, including copies of field notes collected from observations and interviews were created and stored in a locked file for a minimum of five years.

Threats to Validity

Potential threats to the validity of this study include but are not limited to insincere attempts from participants while answering survey and interview questions, the maturation of participants, and participant dropout. The information gained from the interview section of the study was filtered accounts of the participants' shared, lived experiences. Since not everyone can articulate his or her perceptions clearly and accurately, inference of meaning could be misconstrued. I took several actions to address these threats. First, participants were encouraged and reminded of the importance of answering truthfully before beginning the survey and again during the interviews. Also, in order to account for students in the selected population that move or drop out I recruited a large enough sample of students in the same grade level so as not to compromise the integrity of the study. To avoid the ecological fallacy attributes from this group were not used to generalize about all high school students across the nation (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). The researcher acting as the interviewer may present a possibility for biased responses. Thus, two peer reviewers, one for each phase of this mixed methods study, were employed to cross-check the data obtained. Each peer reviewer was asked by the researcher to sign a confidentiality agreement (Appendix E) at the onset of the study. The first peer reviewer, a colleague of the researcher, was asked to cross check the data, variables, and interpretation of the quantitative phase including the graphing and charting of results, the statistical significance, and how the results answered the research questions and hypotheses. The first peer reviewer is employed as a local area college statistics teacher and is familiar with the process of conducting quantitative studies. The second peer reviewer is familiar with the arts environment in that she has extensive experience as a former high school visual arts teacher with over 25 years of arts education experience. The second peer reviewer was asked to crosscheck the line-by-line coding of the qualitative data to look for additional themes or identify ones that may have been missed.

This peer reviewer lives in a nearby community and has no affiliation with the Imperial school district or any of the students who were asked to participate. Using two different external auditors provided objective insights while enhancing the overall quality, reliability, and validity of the study. This is also a subtle method of creating awareness of the research study and anticipation among the professional community about the dissemination of the research findings. Discrepancies were identified and revised. Additionally, a researcher's journal was kept to document the data analysis and synthesis processes. This study does not take into account the participants' specific learning styles, and developmental or educational histories, which are all factors that are important when selecting learning objectives conducive to active engagement.

Evidence of Quality and Trustworthiness

In order to mitigate as best as humanly possible, any threats to the issues of quality, reliability, and validity in this study, it was emphasized to the participants to take time and care while answering the survey questions and the interview questions. Participants were told that they may have extended time to complete the survey or the interview for those who felt rushed. It was explained to the participants that the interview questions would give students opportunities to share and expand their thoughts and express details. This would enable the researcher to record and transcribe the actual words of the participants as evidence. The researcher signed the transcriptionist confidentiality agreement (Appendix E) before conducting the qualitative phase of the study. Reliability and consistency were improved when the field notes were transcribed from a good-quality tape. Therefore, selection of a new tape and a new tape recorder from the school's library reference section was secured for the study. The researcher manually transcribed descriptions of the direct observation of subtleties that occurred, such as, pauses, facial expressions, or body movements. Detailed descriptions of the researcher's findings helped the

study become more meaningful, while a self-reflection containing the researcher's background helped clarify any bias present. As Creswell (2012) advised, the quality of this study should be assessed using reflective questioning. As part of the self-checking process I needed to understand the philosophical views of phenomenology and articulate, the phenomenon studied in a clear, concise way. As recommended by Moustakas (1994) I used procedures of data analysis indicative of phenomenological study. Additionally, I checked to make sure the overall essence of the participants' experience was conveyed with descriptions of the experiences and the contexts in which these experiences occurred.

Dependability was established and confirmed by reviewing the research process (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, keeping codes consistent, adhering to the principles of phenomenological research, checking for precise transcription, and using descriptive language that truly reflected the participants' authentic experience helped with reliability issues. Using a strategy that incorporated qualitative terms comparable to the quantitative terms, helped the syntheses of different perspectives (Creswell, 2012). For this study, there was a need to establish a rapport with the participants in which a level of trust was built. As suggested by Creswell (2012), it would be important to make decisions during fieldwork in regards to what would serve the purpose of the study. Ethical validation, that questioned the underlying moral assumptions involved in the study, should be addressed, as well as ensuring the impartial management of diverse responses.

Additionally, substantive validation by the researcher occurred. Thus, a self-reflection helped to ensure credibility as well. After the examination of eight validation strategies, Creswell (2012) recommended the selection of at least two. Thus, two different sources of data (surveys and interviews), detailed descriptions, and peer reviewers were used in this study. A peer

reviewer was employed to cross check the data, variables, and interpretation of the quantitative phase including the graphing and charting of results, the statistical significance, and how the results answer the research questions and hypotheses. A second informed colleague familiar with the arts environment was asked to crosscheck the line by line coding of the qualitative data to look for additional themes or identify ones that may have been missed. Using two different external auditors provided objective insights while enhancing the overall quality, reliability, and validity of this study. This is also a subtle method of creating awareness of the research study and anticipation among the professional community about the dissemination of the research findings. Discrepancies were identified and revised. Additionally, a researcher's journal was kept to document the data analysis and synthesis processes.

Ethical Procedures

Participation in this study was voluntary with no incentives provided. Permission indicating the sanctioning of the study and a data use agreement was signed by school officials (Appendix D). Walden University's Institution Review Board approval was obtained before any potential participants were approached (No. **02-06-14-0170219**). To protect against coercion and to ensure the freedom of participants to choose whether or not to take part in this research project, letters thoroughly informing the potential participants about the purpose of this study and the procedures to be used were mailed to the home. Students received assent and consent forms (Appendix C) to sign and parents and guardians received consent forms (Appendix C) to sign. It was expected that the letters would be returned to the researcher. In addition, information on these letters indicated that there were no risk factors or consequences associated with participation in the study. Written with terminology that is readily understandable, assent and consent forms explained how the student was selected, the name, address, and written description

of the roles and duties of the researcher, and the data gathering technique of self-report surveys. It was stressed that the dignity, privacy, and confidentiality of the participants would be respected and protected throughout the study and within any future published materials. It was explained that specific procedures were developed for organizing the data to ensure anonymity. Benefits to the intended participants were shared as well, including, increased self-knowledge, a better understanding of student perceptions and experiences in high school arts courses and the knowledge that their participation would produce information that may potentially help educators understand the role of arts education experiences on student engagement and student achievement.

After addressing a fair explanation of the procedures, possible risks, and possible benefits, an offer to answer any individual inquiries concerning the procedures was extended. It was emphasized that the participant and his or her legal parent/guardian would be free to withdraw consent and to discontinue participation in the project at any time without causing prejudice of the status of the participant. Participants were reminded of this again before completing the survey and before interviews. As an additional measure of protection against coercion, the researcher informed participants that the use of any information provided would not be used for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, it was explained that their names or anything else that could identify them would not be included in any reports of the study. An opportunity to address any questions or concerns of the participants or their parents/guardians was given, and the representative contact information from Walden University was provided in the event that any participant and their parent/guardian would like to talk privately about their rights as a participant in the study (No. **02-06-14-0170219)**. In an effort to protect confidentiality, all data, including copies of field notes collected from observations and

interviews will be accessed by the researcher only and will be stored in a locked file for a minimum of five years before destroying. The data will be disseminated within the dissertation document and may be presented at professional education venues.

Summary

This mixed methods research study was conducted during the spring semester of the academic school year, 2013-2014. Consideration of the flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) guided the development of the methodology. In a search for the answers to the central research question, participants completed The Secondary School Engagement in Classroom Learning Survey (Cavanagh et al., 2008) in which the areas of learning capabilities and expectations were examined. Follow-up interviews using an interview protocol that included probing questions to provide insights into their lived experience of the phenomenon were conducted in order to saturate the data further. IRB approval was obtained and the confidentiality of the participants was assured. Data was kept secure to ensure protection of participants' confidentiality. Trustworthiness was addressed through the process of peer review. Reliability was enhanced with the use of audio taping interviews and checking transcripts and coding against the audiotape to ensure accurate transcription to address validity. Additionally, I maintained a researcher journal to document the processes of analysis and synthesis throughout the study. Chapter 3 has provided the methodological details used in this study. Chapter 4 will report the results and findings of this mixed methods study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine and describe the experiences of high school students' shared, lived experiences with feelings of active engagement in arts

courses. The findings from this study may help increase understanding of the importance of providing opportunities for active engagement in the arts and for improving high school students' academic success. Describing and measuring the process of actively engaging students through the arts may help to explore ways students can become more engaged with their learning and complete high school. The three research questions and related hypotheses for the study were as follows:

Research Questions and Related Hypotheses

Phase 1 (Quantitative)

1. Is there a difference in students' engagement in classroom learning when enrolled in arts classes?

   H_0: There is no statistically significant difference between students' engagement in classroom learning when enrolled in arts classes.

   H_a: There is a statistically significant difference between students' engagement in classroom learning when enrolled in arts classes.

Phase 2 (Qualitative)

2. How do students describe their experiences of active engagement in arts classes?

Phase 3 (Mixed Methods)

3. What is the relationship between students' engagement in classroom learning and enrollment in arts classes?

Chapter 4 will describe the setting and demographics, as well as the data collection and analysis for each of the three research questions. Next, the results and the evidence of trustworthiness will be reported from this mixed methods study.

Setting

Imperial High School, a pseudonym used for the study site, maintains a scheduling practice to have students earn the one arts credit mandated by the state prior to their first semester of Grade 11. The participant sample of this study isolates participants of Grade 11 because they have usually completed at least one high school arts class at this stage of their high school career. This process helped to ensure that all randomly selected participants in the initial quantitative phase of the study had experiences relevant to being enrolled in at least one arts course. Arts courses are offered on a semester cycle and include a variety of courses in the visual arts, instrumental and choral music, as well as drama. The rationale that guided the participant sampling was based upon the curriculum requirements and the fact that the arts courses offered are divided into basic or introductory level courses and more advanced and challenging courses. It is customary for students to be scheduled in an introductory course first. Prior to Grade 11, most students have not reached the more advanced arts courses offered. Prior to the start of their high school years, some participants may not have had experiences with arts courses since they were in elementary school. There were no changes in organizational conditions that influenced participants or their experiences at the time of the study. Therefore, no extraneous conditions could affect the interpretation of this study's results.

Demographics

The pseudonym Imperial High School was used for the name of the school district in order to protect the confidentiality of the participants and the organization. Extreme economic conditions are not present for this school district and were not a factor in this study. According to the United States Census Bureau (2010), the average median household income between the years 2007 and 2011 was estimated at $42,448. The school district in which Imperial High

School is located is a small, rural area and is relevant to this study because it is neither an excessively underprivileged nor wealthy area. Imperial High School, located in the northeastern part of the United States, is the educational environment for approximately 800 high school students in Grades 9-12. Each grade level has approximately 200 students. Approximately 75% of the estimated 200 students, who begin Imperial High School as freshmen, finish as graduating seniors from this same high school in a 4-year period. Therefore, an initial, minimum, sample totaling 50 students, or one-third of the 75%, were asked to participate. Using a school-prepared enrollment list segmented by grade level, the participant group consisted of students in Grade 11or juniors. These juniors had completed at least one arts course previously. The perceptions of 50 randomly selected participants in the junior class were measured. A purposeful sampling of 8 students from the initial participating group participated in individual follow-up interviews.

Data Collection

This mixed methods study comprised two data collection phases. Strategies included an analysis of survey data and individual interviews with high school student participants while manually recording and audiotaping their responses. An explanatory, sequential model was used in which quantitative data from the survey used in the first phase helped to determine initial themes to be explored during the interview data collection, which occurred in the second qualitative phase. Using a school-prepared enrollment list segmented by grade level, the participant group consisted of students in Grade 11 or juniors. These juniors had completed at least one arts course previously.

Quantitative Phase

To help address issues of bias, the initial participation selection for the quantitative phase was a random process. Using spreadsheet software with the capability to embed calculations, a

list of 50 names was generated. It is a course scheduling policy of this high school that all freshmen and sophomores are expected to fulfill their state requirement of one arts credit, or one arts class, by the time they are in Grade 11. At that time, students are at the halfway point in their high school education; inviting these students ensured that the participants had at least one prior experience learning in an arts class. All juniors, regardless of individuals' natural inclination to select an art elective, could be part of the random participant selection process. The Secondary School Engagement in Classroom Learning Survey (Cavanagh, Kennish, & Sturgess, 2008) examined learning capabilities and expectations. Although the participant population may have a high interest in social media and technological devices, data collection in the form of an electronic survey was not chosen as an option. Distribution of a hard copy survey was selected, as it would afford the researcher another opportunity to address any questions or concerns of the participants and to guard against coercion. The survey was administered twice to the randomly selected participants in one day, during non-instructional time, in a quiet location in Imperial High School at two specified times on Tuesday, March 25, 2014. The first time students completed the survey they were instructed to answer the questions according to a time spent in a high school arts course. The second time students completed the same survey they were instructed to answer the questions according to a time spent in a non-arts high school course.

The first time-period to complete the surveys occurred during the non-instructional time designated as homeroom. All participants turned in the assent and consent forms prior to taking the surveys. Forty-two students completed their surveys during the homeroom time slot. Most finished within 10 minutes. Five took 15 minutes. The second time period occurred after school and was designated for tardy participants who missed the first planned time period. Four students were tardy and came to the after- school session to complete their surveys, which took them

approximately 12 minutes to finish. Participants had as long as they needed to complete the survey and gave their completed surveys to the researcher. There were two variations in this data collection process due to the unique circumstances encountered with four of the randomly selected participants. One student with testing modifications needed the directions and survey questions read aloud in a quiet, separate homeroom location, across the hall from the survey-taking site with a one-on-one tutor. The tutor hand-delivered the participant's two completed surveys to the researcher. The remaining three students needed to answer their survey questions in an alternative location as well. Due to special, personal circumstances this high school makes accommodations for those in need of credit recovery. Those selected attend an alternative teaching and tutoring location separate from the school district's campus. Therefore, these three participants answered the survey questions by themselves and returned their surveys to an interoffice envelope that was mail carried and delivered to the researcher's mailbox at Imperial High School.

The researcher recorded the data in two ways. First, the researcher printed out copies of the two surveys and placed the Part A, questions pertaining to learning capabilities comparing a time when students were in an arts class and a time when they were in a non-arts class side-by-side on a large poster board. Likewise, Part B, questions pertaining to learning expectations was placed side-by-side on the reverse side of the large poster board. Columns were drawn next each question. First, the numbers of responses of each survey item on both surveys were tallied. The mean, median, and mode for each were also calculated and the researcher recorded all numbers manually on the hardcopy poster board (Table 1). Recording the survey numbers, this way enabled the researcher to process and to absorb the large amount of information at a slower pace. Next, using Microsoft Excel (2011) software, two spreadsheets, one for Part A and one for Part

B questions were formulated using a paired sample *t* test. A mean score for each paired question answered by each participant was tabulated, as well as a *t* test, and p-value. A statistical *t* test helped to determine the significance of mean differences between the arts and non-arts survey answers. The p-value, a numerical estimate, was used to help determine if the reliability of my assumption that the difference in means on the arts and non-arts surveys was a reality and not strictly due to chance. Additionally, a mean score for each category of questions was calculated between the arts and non-arts surveys along with the difference, *t* test, and p-value. Bar graphs illustrating categorical mean scores for Part A, Learning Capabilities and Part B, Learning Expectations were created (Figures 3 and 4). Additionally, line graphs depicting comparative differences between arts versus non-arts survey questions that showed a significant difference (p = < .10) were created (Figures 5-13). Next, this information was recorded on the Data Alignment Matrix (Table 3).

Qualitative Phase

The purpose of the second, qualitative phase was to describe the experiences of Imperial High School students' shared, lived experiences with feelings of active engagement and enrollment in an arts class. A smaller than expected, purposeful sampling of 8 of the original participating group of 50 students from the quantitative phase of the study volunteered to participate in individual interviews to further understand experiences and behaviors closely associated with the research questions. Although the research plan presented in Chapter 3 stated 12 participants would take part in the interview process, only 8 volunteered. To guard against coercion the researcher did not pursue the recruitment of others that did not willingly follow the protocol in place for volunteering. Appendix B shows the interview questions (descriptive, contrasting and structural) that were prepared and used for participants to answer. The purpose of

the first four interview questions was to put arts-related experiences in context by asking participants to describe, explain, and interpret their learning expectations and recollections of activities they were engaged with during their arts course. The purpose of Questions 5-8 was to gather details of students' perceived learning capabilities and experiences in arts courses. This predesigned questionnaire helped the researcher to gather responses, to record notes, and to organize data during the interviews. A 30-minute time-slot was made available for each interview; however, interviews took on average a maximum of 22 minutes. A total of 8, individual interviews were conducted, transcribed and audiotaped by the researcher in a quiet, empty location, after school from 2:35-3:05 p.m. at Imperial High School on May 12-16, and on May 19-21, 2014. There were no unusual circumstances encountered during the qualitative data collection.

Data Analysis: Phase 1

Quantitative Phase

The coding from the survey reflects codes developed from previous use of the instrument with five categories used for Part A, the learning capabilities scale: self-esteem (SE), self-concept (SC), resilience (R), self-regulation (SR), and self-efficacy (SE). Part B, the expectation of learning scale used the codes: explanation (EXP), interpretation (INT), application (APP), perspective (PERS), and empathy (EMP). A three-step process was used to move inductively from coded units to larger representations including categories and themes. First, a hand-written poster-board with the mean, median, and mode was created. Second, data was recorded in a Microsoft Excel (2011) spreadsheet, and a paired sample *t* test was constructed. Third, significant differences between categories were noted so that further detection of the questions that had significant differences could also be investigated and recorded.

Recording the mean (averages), median (middle values), and the mode (most frequent answer) for each question for both the arts and non-arts survey on a hardcopy poster-board enabled the researcher to gain an initial understanding of the overall comparisons. As illustrated in Table 1, this example from the hardcopy poster shows the self-regulation category of Part A, the learning capabilities section of the survey, in which Question 5 revealed that 90% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that they were in control of their learning within an arts class; whereas, 68% agreed or strongly agreed that they were in control of their learning within a non-arts class. The mean score for this question on the arts survey equaled 3.36 and on the non-arts survey 2.94. This example of a difference in percentages alerted the researcher to look carefully at this category for any possible significant differences represented for each question in the paired sample *t* test. Other categories that showed noteworthy differences in percentages for individual questions on Part A were self-esteem, and on Part B the categories of perspective and empathy showed significant differences. The hardcopy poster example served as a tool to cross check data while inputting numeric data into the Microsoft Excel (2011) spreadsheet software. Once the spreadsheets and accompanying tables were formulated, the first peer reviewer assessed the information looking for discrepancies and any areas that may have been overlooked by the researcher. After careful review, no inconsistencies in the data were found.

Table 1

Poster Example of Art and Non-Arts Chart Comparison for Self-Regulation Question 5

Part A Learning Capabilities Self-Regulation	Arts Classroom Learning Survey Answers										
	Strongly agree (4)		Agree (3)		Disagree (2)		Strongly disagree (1)				
In this class or subject . . .	Tally	%	Tally	%	Tally	%	Tally	%	x	M	m
SR5 I am in control of my learning	25	50	20	40	4	8	1	2	3.36	3.5	4

Part A Learning Capabilities Self-Regulation	Non-Arts Classroom Learning Survey Answers										
	Strongly Agree (4)		Agree (3)		Disagree (2)		Strongly Disagree (1)				
In this class or subject . . .	Tally	%	Tally	%	Tally	%	Tally	%	x	M	m
SR5 I am in control of my learning	16	32	18	36	13	26	3	6%	2.9	3	3

Note. SR5 = Self-Regulation Category Question 5, x = mean, M = Median, m = mode

A coded numerical value to each response on the Likert scale from the surveys included the following items: Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree = 1. A higher score reflected a higher level of agreement for each item on each of the surveys. Therefore, the assignment of higher values to stronger agreement meant the higher the mean score for each question, the higher the levels of agreement for each item, and lower scores would reflect participants' disagreement with each item asked. A paired sample *t* test for both Part A and Part B of the surveys was constructed using Microsoft Excel (2011) spreadsheet. All categories, including those with a significant difference ($p = < .10$), were shown in two bar graphs, with Part A Learning Capabilities shown in Figure 2 and Part B Learning Expectations shown in Figure 3.

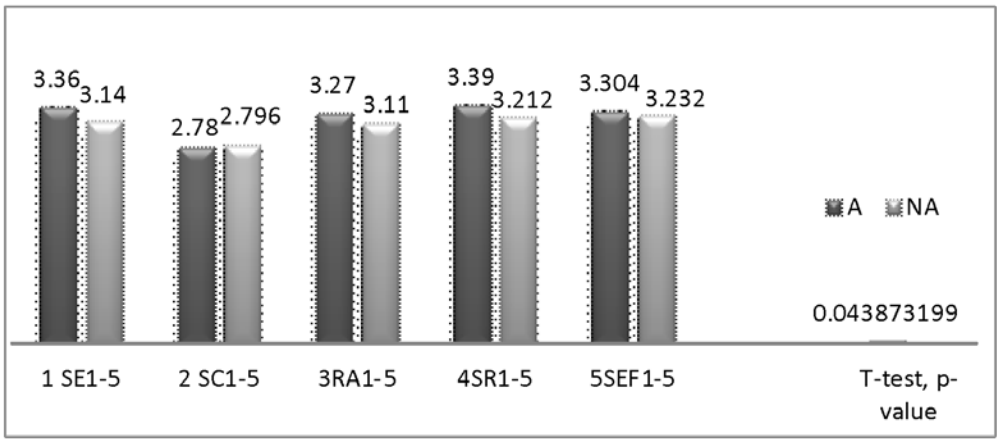

Figure 2. Part A. Learning capabilities: Comparative categorical mean scores of arts and non-arts courses.
Note. 1SE1-5 = Category 1 Self-Esteem Questions 1-5, 2SC1-5 = Category 2 Self-Concept Questions 1-5, 3RA1-5 = Category 3 Resilience Questions 1-5, 4SR1-5 = Category 4 Self-Regulation Questions 1-5
p value = .10

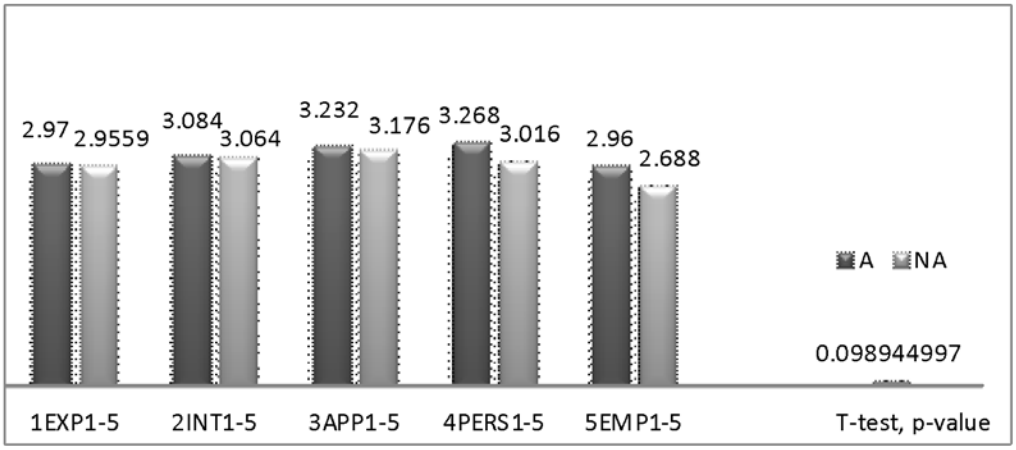

Figure 3 Part B. Learning Expectations: Comparative Categorical Mean Scores of Arts and Non-Arts Courses
Note. 1EXP1-5 = Category 1 Explanation Questions 1-5, 2INT1-5 = Category 2 Interpretation Questions 1-5, 3APP1-5 = Category 3 Application Questions 1-5, 4EMP1-5 = Category 4 Empathy Questions 1-5
p value = .10

Categories with two or more questions with significant differences ($p = < .10$) were noted and the individual questions were illustrated using line graphs for Part A survey answers (Figures 4-9) and Part B survey answers (Figures 9-12). The results from the first coded category from Part A. Learning Capabilities, Self-Esteem (Figure 2) showed a .22 difference between arts, 3.36 and non-arts, 3.14 answers to the 5 questions. Two questions in the Self-Esteem category, “In this class or subject I am pleased with myself” (Figure 4) and “In this class or subject I am confident about my ability to perform well” (Figure 5) showed a significant difference between the arts versus non-arts survey answers.

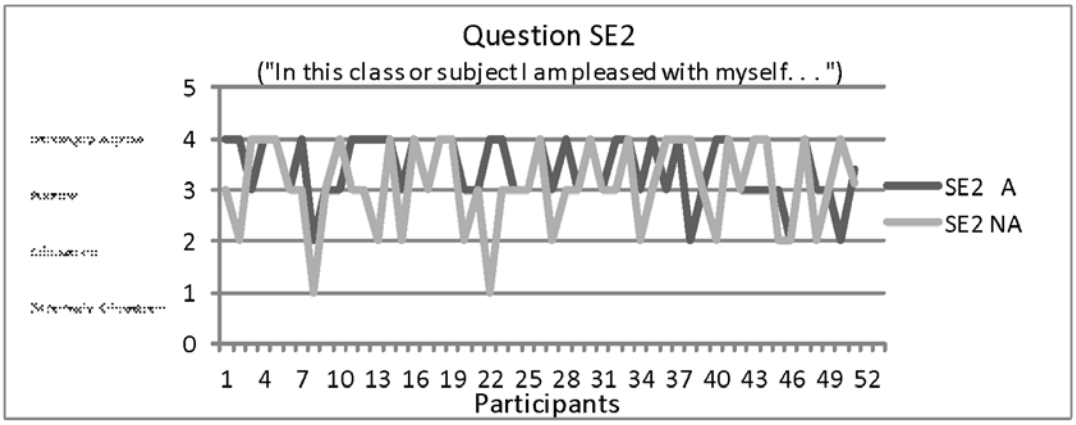

Figure 4 Part A. Learning Capabilities Self-Esteem Question 2 Comparative Arts and Non-Arts Answers

Note. SE2 A = Self-Esteem Question 2 Arts, SE2 NA = Self-Esteem Question 2 Non-arts

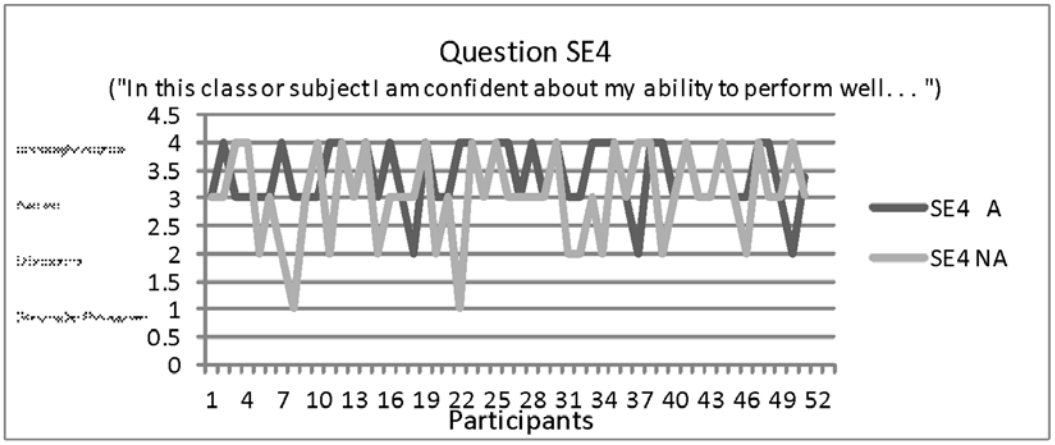

Figure 5 Part A. Learning Capabilities Self-Esteem Question 4 Comparative Arts and Non-Arts Answers

Note. SE4 A = Self-Esteem Question 4 Arts, SE4 NA = Self-Esteem Question 4 Non-Arts

The second coded category of Self-Concept (Figure 2) illustrated a 0.016 difference between survey answers with the non-arts questions, 2.796 weighing in slightly higher than the arts questions, 2.78. The third coded category, Resilience and the fifth coded-category; Self-Efficacy did not have any questions that illustrated a significant difference. The fourth coded category, Self-Regulation contained three questions that showed a significant difference between the comparative answers from the arts versus non-arts survey: "In this class or subject I know how to learn better" (Figure 6), "In this class or subject improvements in my learning come from me" (Figure 7), and "In this class or subject I am in control of my own learning" (Figure 8). One

theme that emerged from the coded category of Self-Esteem was those students that participated in the study were more pleased and confident about their abilities to perform well in an art versus a non-arts class. Another theme that surfaced from the coded category of Self-Regulation was that participants felt more in control of their learning and knew how to improve and learn better in an art course.

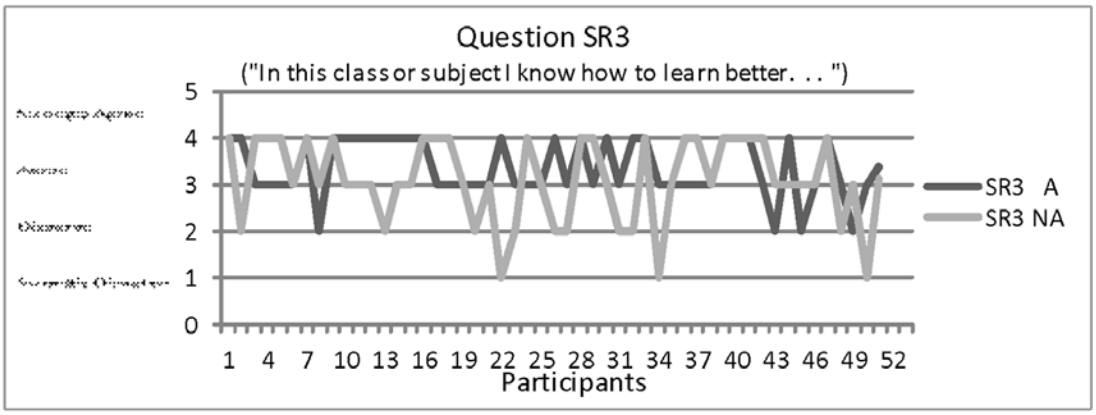

Figure 6 Part A. Learning Capabilities Self-Regulation Question 3 Comparative Arts and Non-Arts Answers

Note. SR3 A = Self-Regulation Question 3 Arts, SR3 NA = Self-Regulation Question 3 Non-Arts

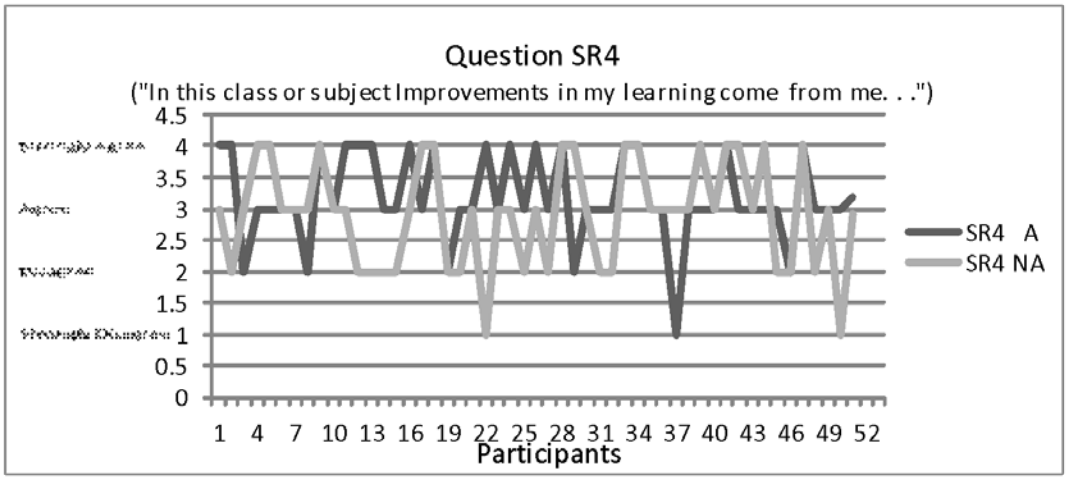

Figure 7 Part A. Learning Capabilities Self-Regulation Question 4 Comparative Arts and Non-Arts Answers

Note. SR4 A = Self-Regulation Question 4 Arts, SR4 NA = Self-Regulation Question 4 Non-Arts

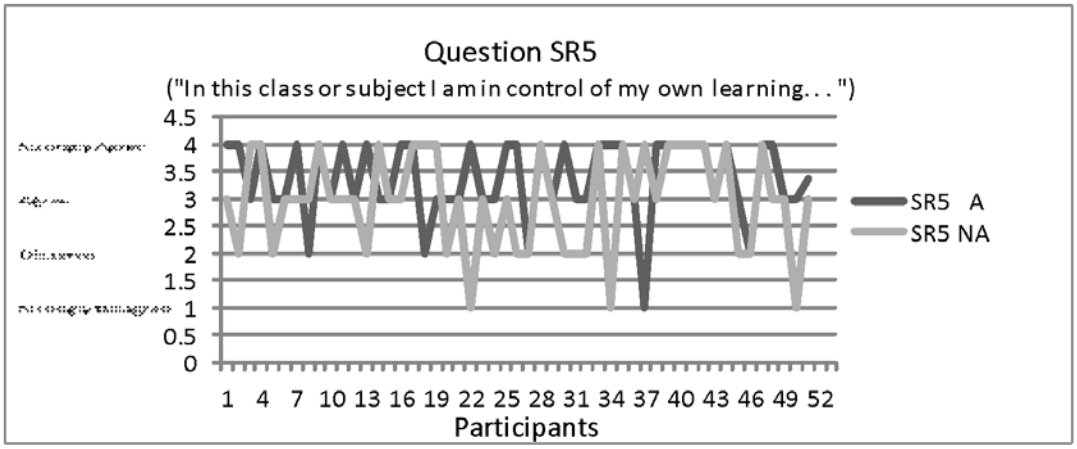

Figure 8 Part A. Learning Capabilities Self-Regulation Question 5 Comparative Arts and Non-Arts Answers

Note. SR5 A = Self-Regulation Question 5 Arts, SR5 NA = Self-Regulation Question 5 Non-Arts

The results from the first coded category from Part B. Learning Expectations, Explanation (Figure 3) showed a 0.0161 difference between arts, 2.97 and non-arts, 2.9559 answers to the survey questions. Two questions in the Explanation category showed significant differences. The first question, “In this class or subject I am expected to talk or write about things” showed a mean score of 2.74 for the arts survey and 3.2 mean score for the non-arts survey. The second question in the Explanation category, “In this class or subject I am expected to share my own ideas with others” showed a mean score of 3.12 for the arts survey and 2.82 for the non-arts survey. One question in the Interpretation category illustrated a significant difference. For the question, “In this class and in this subject I am expected to show different ways of understanding the work” the arts survey revealed a 3.18 mean score while the non-arts mean score was 2.96. There were no questions with significant differences between the paired scores for the Application category; however, the Perspective and Empathy categories both had two questions with significantly different scores. For the perspective category, question one (Figure 9), “In this class or subject I am expected to be positive towards learning about things that are new for me” showed a mean score of 3.62 for arts and 3.18 for non-arts while question

two (Figure 10), “In this class or subject I am expected to think about my own views when I’m learning new things” revealed a mean score of 3.38 for arts and 2.98 for non-arts. For the empathy category question one (Figure 11), “In this class or subject I am expected to try to understand the views of others” showed a means score of 3.1 for arts and a 2.76 for non-arts. Question five for the empathy category (Figure 12), “In this class or subject I am expected to be willing to change my own views to show respect to others” showed a mean of 2.9 for arts and a 2.42 for non-arts.

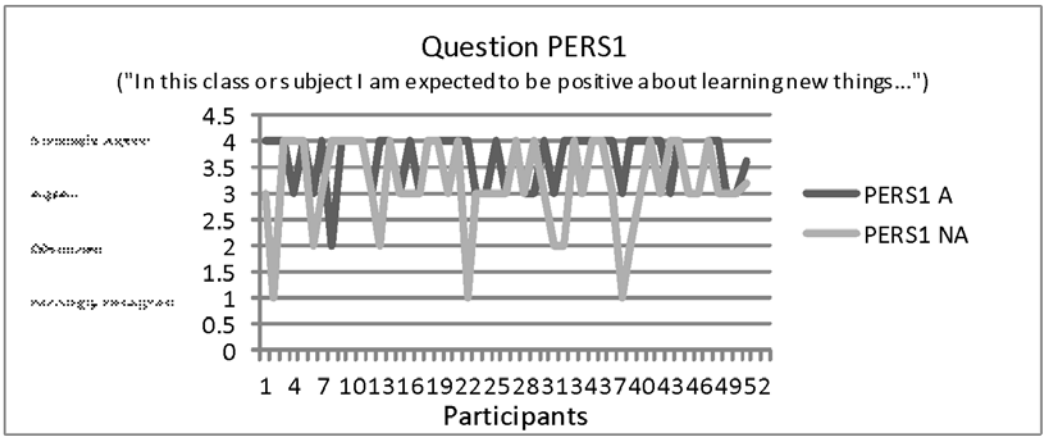

Figure 9 Part B. Learning Expectations Perspective Question 1 Comparative Art and Non-Arts Answers

Note. PERS1 A = Perspective Question 1 Arts, PERS1 NA = Perspective Question 1 Non-Arts

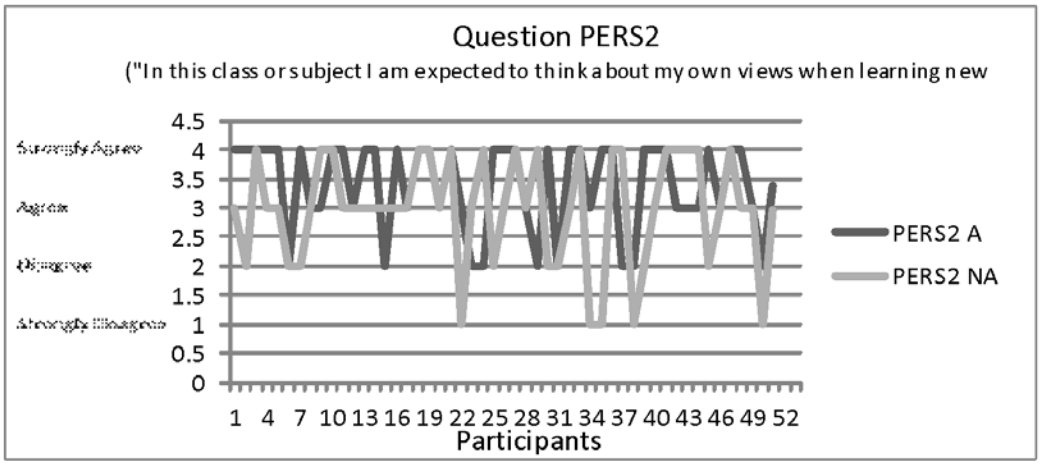

Figure 10 Part B. Learning Expectations Perspective Question 2 Comparative Arts and Non-Arts Answers

Note. PERS2 A=Perspective Question 2 Arts, PERS2 NA=Perspective Question 2 Non-Arts

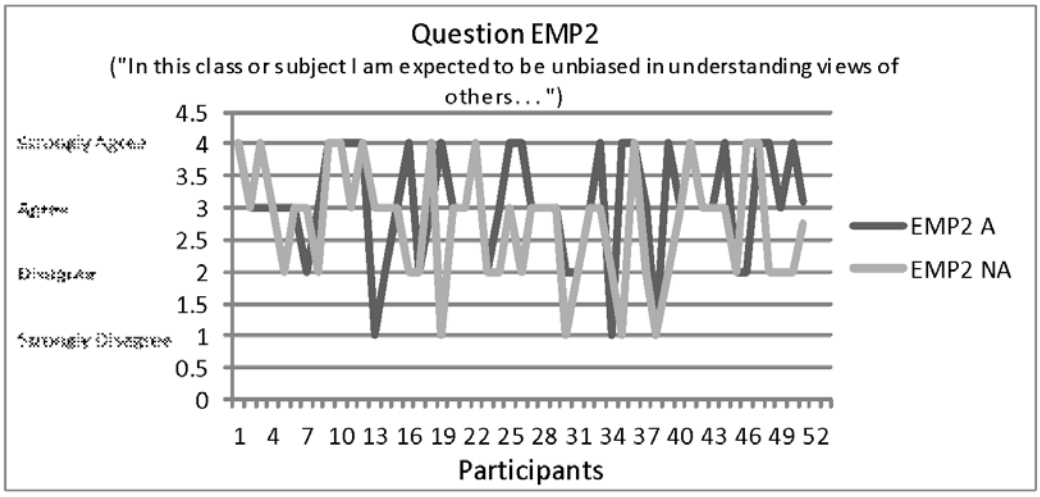

Figure 11 Part B. Learning Expectations Empathy Question 2 Comparative Arts and Non-Arts Answers

Note. EMP2 A = Perspective Question 2 Arts, EMP2 NA = Perspective Question 2 Non-Arts

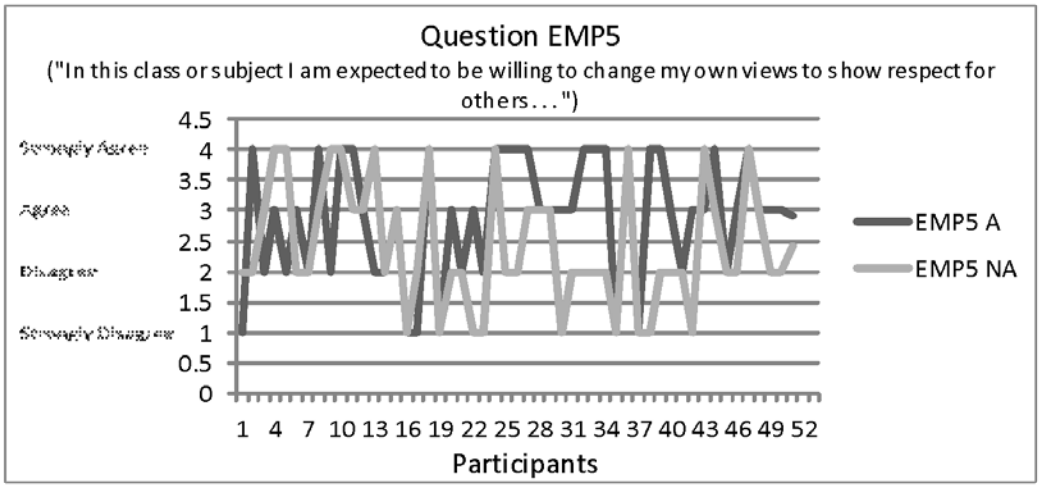

Figure 12 Part B. Learning Expectations Empathy Question 5 Comparative Arts and Non-Arts Answers

Note. EMP5 A = Empathy Question 5 Arts, EMP5 NA = Empathy Question 5 Non-Arts

From the significant differences among these questions, a few themes emerged. First, from the coded category of Explanation, student participants believe they are expected to talk or write about things more in non-arts classes than arts classes; however, participant answers also showed that they believe they are expected to share their own ideas with others more often in arts classes than in non-arts. Second, from the coded category of Interpretation, student scores show they believe they are expected to show different ways of understanding the work in an arts class

than in a non-arts class. Third, from the Perspective category student scores illustrate they are expected to be positive towards learning about things that are new to them in an art class as compared to a non-arts class. Additionally, they believe they are expected to think about their own views when learning new things more in an arts class than in a non-arts class. Lastly, for the category of Empathy student scores illustrate they are expected to try to be unbiased in understanding the views of others and are expected to be willing to change their own views to show respect for others more in an arts class than a non-arts class.

Although there was not a significant difference in mean scores for Self-Efficacy question number 2 on Part A. of the survey, it is important to note the importance of the data results of this question. Self-Efficacy Question 2 asked, “In this class or subject I need to be successful”. The mean score for the arts survey was 3.64 and the mean score for the non-arts survey was 3.66. As shown in Figure 13, most students find it important to be successful no matter whether they are in an arts course or a non-arts course. A breakdown of percentages shows that 96% of the students participating in quantitative survey portion of the study strongly agreed or agreed they need to be successful in both an arts and a non-arts class.

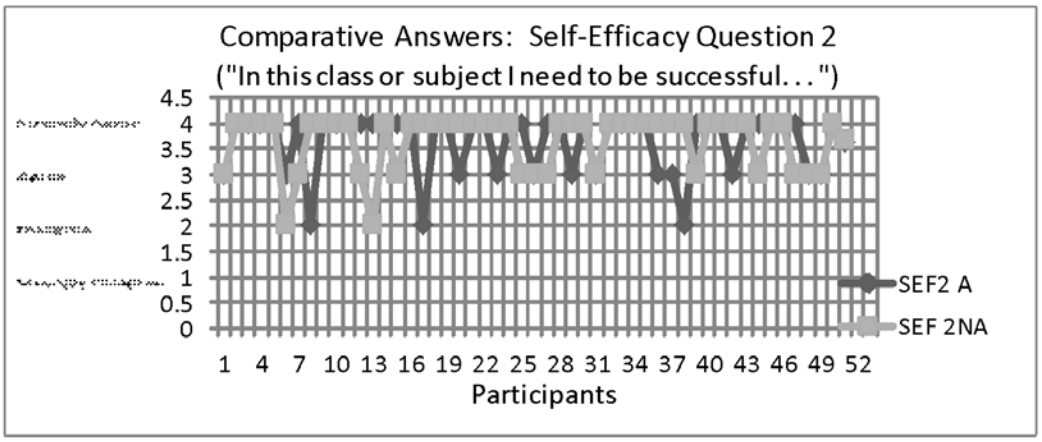

Figure 13 Part A. Learning Capabilities Self-Efficacy Question 2 Comparative Arts and Non-Arts Answers

Note. SEF2 A = Self-Efficacy Question 2 Arts, SEF2 NA = Self-Efficacy Question 2 Non-Arts

Results-Phase One

Quantitative Components

A *t* test confirmed that the change in overall survey items for the categories in both Part A. Learning Capabilities and Part B. Learning expectations were significant at a $p < .10$ level (Table 2). Additionally, a *t* test confirmed that the change on five survey items in Part A. Learning capabilities and seven items in Part B. Learning Expectations were significant at a $p < .10$ level. In general, a p-value of .10 or less is statistically significant, which means that we can be 90% sure that the difference in mean scores for the categories on the arts and non-arts survey and more specifically for 12 of the 25 questions on the survey was not due to chance.

Table 2

Mean Scores of Paired Category *t* test for Surveys Part A and Part B

Part A. Learning Capabilities Categories	A	NA		Part B. Learning Expectations Categories	A	NA
1 SE1-5	3.36	3.14		1 EXP1-5	2.97	2.9559
2 SC1-5	2.78	2.796		2INT1-5	3.084	3.064
3RA1-5	3.27	3.11		3APP1-5	3.232	3.176
4SR1-5	3.39	3.212		4PERS1-5	3.268	3.016
5SEF1-5	3.304	3.232		5EMP1-5	2.96	2.688
t test, p-value 0.043873199				*t* test, p-value 0.098944997		

Note. p value = < .10

From these results the quantitative research question for Phase 1 can be answered.

Phase 1 (Quantitative)

1. Is there a difference in students' engagement in classroom learning when enrolled in arts classes?

H_0: There is no statistically significant difference between students' engagement in classroom learning when enrolled in arts classes.

H_a: There is a statistically significant difference between students' engagement in classroom learning when enrolled in arts classes.

With a p-value of < .10 we can reject the null hypothesis. There is a statistically significant difference between students' engagement in classroom learning when enrolled in arts classes.

Data Analysis: Phase 2

Qualitative Phase

The purpose of the phase two data analysis in hermeneutic phenomenological research was the determination of the essential meaning of active engagement in arts courses. After the quantitative data from the survey was collected and analyzed, the results informed phase two, the qualitative data collection process. The interpretation of the researcher was less of a focal point while the descriptions of the participants' experiences were of central importance. Personal biases were taken into account and acknowledged while striving for subjectivity. A researcher's journal was maintained in order to acknowledge and address concerns related to any prejudices or opinions. Before starting the interview process, I spent time reflecting on quantitative findings, as well as, the research questions and interview protocol. In an attempt to bracket my own ideas and personal biases before the interviews and data analysis, I spent several hours examining my pre-existing beliefs and opinions about the topic. I believed this would help me to further suspend judgment and inspire an openness that would aide in revealing the essences of the phenomenon of active engagement in arts courses. Moustakas (1994) stated the value of the epoché principle is that it inspires one to examine biases and enhances one's openness even if a perfect and pure state is not achieved (p. 61). Through introspection and analysis the exploration

of possible preferences for certain types of evidence, interpretations, and explanations were acknowledged. Also, personal experiences, opinions, and prejudices were noted and bracketed while consistently practicing self-reflection throughout the process. The researcher's biases and opinions were not shared with the participants.

The protocol for conducting interviews included the organization of all materials and supplies, reminder and verification of the participants' appointments, early arrival to the location room at Imperial High School—room 112, possession of a tape recorder, spare tapes, spare batteries and notebook at the site, a check that the recorder and tape were properly working, a test of voice on tape with the date, time, place and name of participant. Participants were greeted in a professional and pleasant manner while the expectations and intended length of the interview was conveyed in a skilled and trustworthy fashion. Participants were allowed to answer the questions, give their opinions, statements, and descriptions without the interjection of viewpoints, stories, or biases from the researcher. Furthermore, the researcher used probing questions when needed and stayed focused, thoughtful, and organized throughout the interview process. At the conclusion of the interview, each volunteer was thanked and reminded that their participation would help educators understand more about the role of the arts in education.

Coding for the interview questions was developed to be in alignment with the survey codes. The survey codes were organized into eight categories, which served as domains. Interview questions one and three were aligned with the Explanation (EXP) category. Interview questions two and four were united with the Interpretation (INT) category, while question, two was also aligned with the Application (APP) category, and question four was also affiliated with the Perspective (PERS) category. Interview question five was aligned with the Self-Efficacy (SEF) and the Empathy (EMP) categories while question six was connected with the Self-

Regulation (SR) category. Question seven was associated with the Resilience (R) category, and question eight was aligned with the Self-Esteem (SE) and Self-Concept (SE) categories. The process of aligning the interview questions with the survey categories helped the researcher organize, color-code, and make sense of the large amount of data that was collected. Field notes were recorded throughout the interview and were used to help inform which probing questions would be the most useful in helping participants share his or her responses. The field notes were also used to record my personal thoughts throughout the interviews so that I could remain impartial and reflective during the process. Additionally, quotes and significant statements from the participants were noted and used to help narrow down the information and formulate themes.

Understanding the shared lived experiences of the participants' active engagement in arts courses was accomplished through an analytic analysis of the data. A three-step process was used to move inductively from coded units to larger representations including categories and themes. First, information from the field notes and audiotape were recorded line-by-line manually by the researcher and organized by color-coding the interview questions paired with the corresponding survey category. Color-coding helped to visually and conceptually identify reoccurring patterns and literal reoccurring themes. Identifying what the eight participant comments had in common helped to breakdown overarching themes. This in turn, helped to organize and develop the descriptions of what the participants' experienced in arts courses as well as descriptions of how they experienced it. The overall descriptions provided a deeper, richer understanding of student engagement in an arts course setting and helped to construct a framework for communicating what the data revealed about the essence of the phenomenon.

Second, after all field notes and audio-recordings were transcribed into a color-coded word-processed document, the researcher then created a large hard copy, poster board chart of

the Quantitative and Qualitative Data Alignment Matrix (Table 3). Being a visual learner, the large poster helped the researcher to make connections from the descriptive coding and prevented placing a barrier between the researcher and the data. All domains were expressed graphically on the matrix by listing the included terms and linking them using the specific terminology and language used by the participants. Using the matrix as an organizer, preliminary judgments were made concerning which domains were important to this study due to both the quantitative phase one, and the qualitative phase two data. The hard copy poster board helped the researcher reach the goal of data reduction in order to narrow the focus of the data analysis and get closer to the essence of student experiences. The process was repeated and refined as data for each categorical domain was collected from the field notes and audiotape transcript.

Third, the final step included identifying phenomenological themes across the categorical domains. The researcher looked for holistic connections, patterns, and links while choosing excerpts from the data that supported the phenomenological themes. The word-processed document and matrix was saved to a password protected jump drive. The document and the matrix were both e-mailed to the peer reviewer for further analysis. The researcher did not include the conclusions she had made prior to the peer review. Within one week the peer reviewer sent a return e-mail with comments regarding her thoughts about types of themes revealed from the field notes. A comparison of the peer reviewer's insights with the notes represented on the matrix revealed an agreement upon similar themes. This step was important to the analytical process in order to ensure that the categorical domains were supported by the data and reinforced which categories were significant in answering the research questions. The peer reviewer indicated identical themes initially found by the researcher and identified the same non-

supportive data that was necessary to determine if contradictions could be explained or if discrepant cases were included in the presentation of the data and final discussion.

Table 3

Quantitative and Qualitative Data Alignment Matrix

Learning Capabilities & Expectations Data Alignment Matrix			
Learning Capabilities (= Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory Combination of Concentration/Interest/ Enjoyment)	Quant. Survey Data	Qual. Interview Questions (*Application of Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory)	Quan/Qual Analysis
Coded Categories	Questions with sig. diff. $p = < .10$	Questions in Alignment w/Survey	Notes/Themes
Self-Esteem (SE)	How I see myself in this class/subject . . . SE2-I am pleased with myself A = 3.4 NA = 3.1 SE4-I am confident to make choices and decisions A = 3.38 NA = 3.04	#8. Describe how you felt when the work became challenging, and how you felt when you completed the work.	P1: wanted to give up; relieved P2: frustrated; accomplished, proud P3: distracted; happy, relieved, proud P4: give up; stuck it out, kept going, great P5: frustrated; happy, incredibly proud P6: frustrated; felt better, happy P7: frustrated; proud, accomplished P8: very frustrated; proud, felt amazing
Self-Concept (SC)	No sig diff	#8	
Resilience (R)	No sig diff	#7. Describe how you were able to complete challenging assignments.	P1: ask for help-teacher, peers P2: ask for help, look at examples P3: was taught techniques, worked diligently P4: listened to music during work time P5: had a plan, sketches, references, practice P6: took my time, ask for help, didn't give up, stayed calm P7: practice skills, complete pre-work P8: creatively problem-solve, ask for help
Self-Regulation (SR)	How I see myself in this class/subject . . . SR3-I know how to learn better A = 3.36 NA = 3.1 SR4-Improvements	#6. Was there a difference in how hard you tried to complete your arts assignments versus	P1: No; work hard in every class P2: No; take art as serious as other classes P3: Yes; non-art more pressure, stricter due dates, need more time/effort—art more relaxing, could take my time and gradually complete P4: Yes; art class can take my time—non-art rush through to get it done for deadline P5: Yes, I try hard in classes that interest me (art, English, history) P6: Yes; in non-arts I give up more and get

	in my learning come from me A = 3.18 NA = 2.92 SR5-I am in control of my learning A = 3.38 NA = 2.98	assignments for a non-arts class? (Probe: Why do you think that?)	angry—in arts teachers make more time for one on one help and demonstrations so I try harder P7: Yes; enjoy arts more so I put more effort in P8: Yes; try harder in arts there's more pressure in a group to do well; in a non-art class if I fail it only reflects on me
Self-Efficacy (SEF)	No sig diff	#5. Did you feel capable of successfully completing the learning and assignments? (Probe: Why?)	P1: Yes, Instructor gave me confidence P2: Yes, if I struggled I felt good about asking for help. P3: Yes, I would try hard and ask for help P4: Yes, I understood exactly what the assignments were, learned new techniques P5: Completely, wasn't too difficult or too easy, my creativity was tested a lot, never given anything impossible, and taught to embrace challenges. P6: Felt more than capable; teacher prepared us; broke learning down; one-on-one, demos, small group; teacher was always there to help. P7: Yes, difficult to learn new techniques at first, with practice/encouragement I got better. P8: Yes, learned if I tried hard I could get better
<u>Learning Expectations</u> (= Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory Level of Challenge)	<u>Quant. Survey Data</u>	<u>Qual. Interview Questions</u>	<u>Quan/Qual Analysis & Themes</u>
Coded Categories	Questions with sig. diff. $p = < .10$	Interview Questions in Alignment w/Survey	Notes/Themes
Explanation (EXP)	In this class/subject, I am expected to . . . EXP1-Talk or write about things A = 2.74 NA = 3.2 EXP2-Share my own ideas with others A = 3.12 NA = 2.82	#1. Think about a time you have spent in any high school arts class (i.e., visual arts, music, and drama); describe the activities or events that you were engaged or busy with during the class? If you have been enrolled in more than one class please only select one to consider for these questions.	P1: Band-very engaged with what instructor does, says, very important to pay attention/listen, pop quizzes, small group instruction, knowing where u r in music critical. P2: Art-drawing, learning how to improve, breaking down images, basic shapes, make connections, improving steps. P3: Studio Art-multiple units, elements, principles, focus on one technique at a time, projects, express ourselves, art history, quizzes, final exams, enjoyable P4: Painting-a lot of time, effort, used supplies I never had a chance to use before, enjoyable P5: Studio Art-learned basics, how to apply, projects became more detailed, added components we learned sequentially, reviewed P6: Chorus-practice singing, reading and writing music, performing P7: Studio Art-styles of art, art history, many types of units, got to pick themes & topics P8: Chorus-small groups, skill building, exercises, performance P1: Do my best; not everyone has same

		#3. What do you recall about the expectations of the arts class requirements? (Probe: How was that different for you in a non-arts class?)	abilities; main requirement try your hardest. P2: Give your best effort. In a non-arts have to know the right answers. P3: Meet certain aspects of each project, had freedom to choose how to meet criteria, expected to know our art history, certain styles, played games, had fun; non-arts not as much choice P4: Try your best; put thought into your work—non-arts not that much different but can't be as creative P5: Had to show good effort & turn in work on time; not allowed to throw together something or turn in late. P6: Be neat, organized, have good time management, draw with your heart not your head P7: Do your very best, give everything a try, hand in everything on time P8: You have to want to be there otherwise you bring down yourself and group, have to participate, if absent it is harder to make up missed work, not like a test it's a performance—songs, solos, concerts
Interpretation (INP)	In this class/subject, I am expected to . . . INP4-Show different ways of understanding the work A = 3.18 NA = 2.96	#2. Was there a difference in the ways you participated in an arts class as compared to a non-arts class? *#4. Answers to #4 recorded in the category of Perspective (PERS).	P1: Yes, band is group activity; working together key—non-arts work is individual P2: Yes, I was happier in art class it was quiet, relaxing, interesting P3: Arts more expressive, hands-on; felt "alive", energetic students get to contribute to nature of our projects; non-arts is boring, structured, taking notes, teacher gives assignments not as many choices P4: No, I try to do my best in all classes. More freedom in art class can pick and choose and make your own decisions more P5: Yes, normally just sit and take notes in normal classes; art classes overview of lesson, demos then we could "go! Loved it so much!" Plenty of freedom could let our creativity out. P6: Yes, major difference arts classes are hands on, fun, interesting, multiple steps; non-arts all worksheets, notes, not fun, boring, not interesting P7: Not to me I listen to the teachers, practice learning, and ask for help as I need it P8: Yes! Have to participate or nothing gets done in arts class only as strong as weakest link no one wants to be the weakest so everyone works hard. In non-arts everyone is much less motivated to try to do well. If you fail it only affects you and your grade no one notices. In arts class everyone notices and tries to help you participate and learn more.
Application (APP)	No sig diff	#2.	Answers to #2 recorded above.

Perspective (PERS)	In this class/subject, I am expected to . . . PERS1-Be positive towards learning about things that are new for me A = 3.62 NA = 3.18 PERS2-Think about my own views when I'm learning new things A = 3.38 NA = 2.98	#4. Were these expectations different from other types of classes?	P1: No, expectations do not change; you should try your best in all classes P2:Yes, rather than graded on what you know or remember you are graded on effort & product P3: Non-arts stricter due dates, more pressure, and state graded tests at the end, more work, more stress. Arts more creative, relaxed element but still learned, more projects to show what we learned and what we know P4: No, expected to try your best in all classes P5: More freedom and more relaxed in art still had deadlines but expected to be mature and get assignments done on time—wanted to succeed and be thought of as mature enough to handle the responsibilities P6: Expectations for non- arts is different they want you to get work done learn with your head no emotions or creativity involved P7: Expectations aren't too different but how you are graded in non-arts either right or wrong; In arts your overall project, the criteria, and your effort are considered important P8: Yes, you have to take a certain number of non-arts classes; if you do not like the class or do not want to be there, there is nothing you can do about it; if you take art classes you can pick which one(s) you are interested in or think will be appealing.
Empathy (EMP)	In this class/subject, I am expected to . . . EMP2-Try to be unbiased in understanding the views of others A = 3.1 NA = 2.76 EMP5-Be willing to change my own views to show respect to others A = 2.9 NA = 2.42	#5	

Results: Phase 2

Qualitative Components

Eight interview questions, corresponding with one or more of the survey categories, were used. Before the interviews, and as stated in question one, participants were asked to think of a time they were enrolled in an arts class and if they had been enrolled in more than one to please

only select one to think of as they progressed through the interview. One participant chose to describe band, five chose a visual art class and two chose chorus. Interview question one was aligned with the explanation category and students were asked to describe activities they remembered being engaged, or kept busy with during class time. The activities or events students described being engaged or busy with during their arts courses consisted of small and large group instruction, projects, quizzes, tests, reading and writing. The overall themes present for Q1 consisted of

sequential learning with hands-on experience, where students were actively busy preparing some type of project or performance. “During band you are very engaged with what the instructor says and does. It is very important to always pay attention and listen because knowing where you are in your music is critical”, (P1). Two participants emphasized how much they enjoyed projects and performances and explained specific examples. “Overall the class gave a good overview of all the ways we can express ourselves artistically. Particularly I enjoyed our painting unit, focusing on different blending techniques”, (P3). According to P4, “When I am in chorus, we are almost always working in groups to learn and perfect various different songs for our concerts”. There was a consensus among the student descriptions that in arts courses they expected to learn, develop or expand some type of creative ability by breaking concepts down or building off of pre-existing knowledge in order to improve. The overall theme the researcher and peer reviewer agreed upon was that students liked and were interested in the activities they were engaged with during their arts courses.

Interview question two asked if there was a difference in the ways students participated in arts classes compared to non-arts classes and was aligned with the interpretation and application categories. Six out of eight participants agreed there was a difference in how they participated in

an arts class as compared to a non-arts class. The overall theme present was that there is more freedom to make choices in regards to learning and opportunities to be creative. P1 shared,

> Yes, there is a big difference in how I do work in my arts classes. Like, band is a group activity and so we learn that working together is key, non-arts classes you work as an individual, on your own mostly and you're not supposed to work with others as much.

P2 explained, "I was happier in my art class because it was quiet, relaxing, and interesting." P3 put into words, "The arts are more expressive and hands-on. I really felt alive and energetic. Students get to contribute to the nature of our projects but non-arts classes are boring. I think this is because we have to take notes all the time so it is more structured and the teacher gives assignments so we don't get to have as many choices as we do in an arts class." Overall, participants explained how much they enjoyed having the freedom to make choices about their learning within an arts environment. As P6 described, "Yes, the major difference is that art classes are hands on which makes it more fun and more interesting to learn." P8 clarified, "You have to participate or nothing gets done in an arts class. This is because we work as a team and our performance will only be as strong as the weakest link, and no one wants to be the weakest so everyone works hard. In a non-arts class everyone is much less motivated to try to do well. If you fail it only affects you and your grade and no one notices. In my arts class everyone noticed and tried to help you to participate and to learn more." The overall themes present from this question were self-expression, freedom to create, and individuality.

Question three asked what participants recalled about the expectations of arts class requirements versus the expectations for non-arts classes. This question was aligned with the explanation category. Participants recalled that the expectations to do your best and follow

instructions is present across disciplines; however, in an arts course the expectations to be creative and do your personal best is emphasized more rather than simply knowing a right or a wrong answer. P4 recalled, “I remember that I was encouraged to give my best effort and to put thought into organizing my artwork. In other non-art classes it is not that much different, but in those classes I can’t be as creative as I want to be.” P1 commented, “We were expected to do our best even though not everyone has the same abilities or talents”, and P2 remembered, “We needed to give our best effort and break down our images into basic shapes; by making connections we could improve our steps in the process of creating the larger piece but in a non-arts class you are expected to know answers for tests and quizzes and you can only be right or wrong.” As P3 explained, “In an arts class you need to meet certain aspects of each project but we have the freedom to choose how to get it done.” The overall themes that emerged from this question were although students have varying skills, arts classes are based on creativity and effort. Question four was a follow up question and was aligned with the interpretation and perspective categories; it asked participants if the expectations were different for other types of classes. Participants explained that the behavioral expectations of arts and non-arts classes were not different; however, all participants mentioned that there are major differences in how both are selected and graded. Participants explained that selection of an arts class is an individual choice whereas non-arts classes are prescribed requirements they must complete. Additionally, participants clarified that grading is based on effort, projects, and products in arts classes rather than right or wrong test answers or essay questions given in non-arts classes.

Interview question five was aligned with the self-efficacy and empathy categories and asked if participants felt capable of successfully completing the learning and assignments in their arts course. All participants shared that they felt capable and some mentioned that if they did

struggle they felt good about asking for help from the teacher or their peers. P5, “I felt completely capable, the work wasn’t too difficult or too easy and my creativity was tested a lot. I was never given anything impossible, and the teacher taught us to embrace challenges and work hard at improving our skill.” Every participant shared that they felt capable of successfully completing the learning and assignments in their arts course primarily because each felt supported by their arts teachers. P1 shared, “Yes, I felt very capable because the instructor gave me confidence”, and P2 said, “Yes, I was capable of finishing all the work because I knew if I struggled I could feel good about asking for help and advice.” Likewise, P6 shared, “I felt more than capable because the teacher prepared us and broke the learning down. She also taught us one-on-one or in small groups so I never felt funny about asking questions. She did demos on some days and was always there to help.” The overall theme that emerged from the answers to this interview question was that students were successful at meeting criteria through the arts teachers’ lessons and encouragement.

Question six was in alignment with the self-regulation category and asked if there was a difference in how hard participants tried to complete arts assignments versus non-arts assignments. Overall, there was a difference in how hard students tried. While two participants said there was no difference because they work hard and take every class seriously, the other six participants shared there was a difference in how hard they participated based upon their interest(s). Students shared that in an arts class they believe there is not as much pressure to finish their work and they appreciated being able to take their time rather than rushing through their assignments. P4 stated, “Yes, there is a difference in how hard I try because in an arts class I can take my time and in a non-arts class I usually rush through my work to get it done for deadlines. There is more pressure to pass”, and P6 shared, “In non-arts classes I usually give up

more and get angry because I feel more frustrated but in an arts class the teachers make more time for one on one help and they demonstrate how to do what we have to do so I try harder." P8 explained, "I try harder in arts classes because there's more pressure in a group to do well because we perform, we depend on others, and in a non-arts class if I fail, it only reflects on me." Participants 5 and 7 both emphasized that they try harder in classes they enjoy and are interested in. The overall theme present with this question is that individual interest affects effort.

Question seven was aligned with the resilience category and asked participants to describe how they were able to complete challenging assignments in their arts class. Four out of the eight explained that in order to finish difficult tasks they would ask for help from both peers and teachers. Among the responses were

- "I creatively problem-solve".
- "I took my time, asked for help, and most importantly I didn't give up, I just stayed calm".
- "I practiced a lot and I had a plan and used my sketches and references to help".
- "When things got difficult I could listen to music during work time, and it relaxed and inspired me to create".

The overall theme that emerged from this question was that the completion of challenging work occurred because of prior lessons and with assistance and a comfort level in asking for help. Question eight was a follow-up question and asked participants to describe how they felt when their arts coursework became challenging and how they felt when the work was completed; this question was in alignment with the Self-Esteem and Self-Concept categories. Five participants described feelings of frustration, two described wanting to give up, and one explained feeling distracted and worried when they were faced with challenging work. Once they worked through the frustration, every participant explained how proud they were once they finished. P4

explained, “Even though I wanted to give up when it got hard, I stuck it out and kept on going until I finished. It was a really great feeling to know I had finished something I originally was going to throw out!” P5 described, “I was incredibly proud of myself because I finished something that was really difficult and it turned out beautiful.” Other descriptions included feeling amazing, relieved, and accomplished upon completing a challenging arts assignment. The overall theme was self-motivation resulting in feelings of pleasure and satisfaction.

During the data analysis, several main ideas were expressed throughout the interviews and were narrowed down to each interview question with its corresponding category. The help of a peer reviewer was employed to gauge any discrepant cases and to factor this information into the analysis as applicable. From this process the qualitative research question for Phase 2 can be answered.

Phase 2 (Qualitative)

2. How do students describe their experiences of active engagement in arts classes?

Student participants included effort, choice, freedom, practice, performance, creativity, individuality, self-expression, encouragement, interest, assistance, self-motivation, and pride in the descriptions of their experiences of active engagement in arts classes. Finally, these patterns and themes revealed that student perceptions confirm Csikszentmihalyi (1990) argument that individuals benefit from increased feelings of enjoyment, satisfaction, and accomplishment of challenges.

Mixing the Data

Coding for the interview questions was developed to be in alignment with the survey codes. The survey codes were organized into eight categories that served as domains. Interview

questions one and three were aligned with the Explanation (EXP) category. In discovering commonalities among participant answers, it was found that students expected to speak or write more about their learning in non-arts courses, and they expected to share their own personal ideas and creativity with others more often in arts courses. Interview questions two and four were united with the Interpretation (INT) category, while question two was also aligned with the Application (APP) category, and question four was also affiliated with the Perspective (PERS) category. Participants described their expectations to show different ways of understanding work in an arts class as a positive experience. This validated the survey information in which data showed students expected to be positive learning new things and to think about their own views in arts courses. Interview question five was aligned with the Self-Efficacy (SEF) and the Empathy (EMP) categories while question six was connected with the Self-Regulation (SR) category. Overall, participants felt more in control of their leaning and described a feeling of confidence in knowing how to improve and learn better in an arts course. Question seven was associated with the Resilience (R) category, and question eight was aligned with the Self-Esteem (SE) and Self-Concept (SE) categories. Both data sets revealed that participants were more pleased and confident about their abilities to perform well in arts courses. Additionally, participants survey answers and descriptions revealed the expectation to be unbiased understanding the views of others and to be willing to change their own views to show respect. The process of aligning the interview questions with the survey categories helped the researcher organize, color-code and make sense of the large amount of data that was collected as well as look for the overlap of data while mixing the results. Due to the researcher's interest in both narrative and numeric data and their analyses, The Quantitative and Qualitative Data Alignment

Matrix (Table 3) was created in order to organize and integrate the statistical and thematic data. From this mixed data analysis the third research question can be answered.

Phase 3 (Mixed Methods)

3. What is the relationship between students' engagement in classroom learning and enrollment in arts classes?

In arts courses students expect to: individually express themselves and as a group, work together, show respect, perform or create an end product, take their time, be self-motivated, take time to understand their own views as well as the views of others. Students interpret their learning expectations as time for: expression, freedom, happiness, learning new and different techniques, challenges, and rewards. Participants explain they expect to apply their learning in the following ways: individually, as pairs or small groups, and as large groups. Students' specified application expectations were described as performances, creations, products, and quizzes or tests. Students perceived and understood these learning expectations to be fair, challenging, fun, thought provoking, and interesting.

In regards to their learning capabilities in arts courses students described their effectiveness as: giving their best effort, trying their hardest, challenging, inspiring, and energizing, a chance to show maturity. Students included demonstrations by teachers, the ability to receive personalized help and instruction when necessary, and a relaxed atmosphere to explore options as art class attributes that elevated their capability to self-regulate learning. Participants explained their resilience, or ability to complete challenging assignments and tasks in arts courses, as due to be able to ask and receive help, not giving up, staying positive, practicing their learning, and creative problem-solving. In regards to self-esteem and self-concept, all participants described feelings of frustration when difficult concepts were taught in arts classes.

Likewise, all participants described feelings of pride and achievement when they had completed those challenging tasks.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

As stated in Chapter three, in order to mitigate as best as humanly possible, any threats to the issues of quality, credibility, reliability, and validity in this study, it was emphasized to the participants to take time and care while answering the survey questions and the interview questions. Participants were told they had an opportunity for extended time to complete the survey or the interview for those who felt rushed. It was explained to the participants that the interview questions would give students opportunities to share and expand their thoughts and express details. This would enable the researcher to record and transcribe the actual words of the participants as evidence. The researcher signed the transcriptionist confidentiality agreement (Appendix E) before conducting the qualitative phase of the study. Reliability and consistency were improved when the field notes were transcribed from a good-quality tape. Therefore, selection of a new tape and a new tape recorder from the school's library reference section was secured for the study. The researcher manually transcribed descriptions of the direct observation of subtleties that occurred, such as, pauses, facial expressions, or body movements. Persistent observation helped to provide depth in the form of characteristics that were most relevant in answering the research questions. Prolonged engagement investigating the research questions in the setting helped build trust with the participants, as well as helped to discern varied participant perspectives within the environment. Detailed descriptions of the researcher's findings helped the study become more meaningful, while a self-reflection journal containing the researcher's background helped clarify any bias present.

The quality and credibility of this study was assessed using reflective questioning as part of the self-checking process. As recommended by Moustakas (1994) I used procedures of data analysis indicative of phenomenological study. Additionally, I checked to make sure the overall essence of the participants' experience was conveyed with descriptions of the experiences and the contexts in which these experiences occurred. Dependability was established and confirmed by reviewing the research process (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, keeping codes consistent, adhering to the principles of phenomenological research, checking for precise transcription, and using descriptive language that truly reflected the participants' authentic experience helped with dependability and confirmability. A Quantitative and Qualitative Data Alignment Matrix (Table 3) helped keep coding consistent as well as organizing data. Ethical validation, that questioned the underlying moral assumptions involved in the study were addressed, as well as ensuring the impartial management of diverse responses by recording thoughts and biases within the researcher journal.

Creswell (2012) recommended the selection of at least two validation strategies. Thus, two different sources of data (surveys and interviews), detailed descriptions, and peer reviewers were used in this study. A peer reviewer was employed to cross check the data, variables, and interpretation of the quantitative phase including the graphing and charting of results, the statistical significance, and how the results answer the research questions and hypotheses. A second informed colleague familiar with the arts environment was asked to crosscheck the line by line coding of the qualitative data to look for additional themes or identify ones that may have been missed. Using two different external auditors provided objective insights while enhancing the overall quality, credibility, reliability, and validity. This also served as a subtle method of creating awareness of the research study and anticipation among the professional community

about the dissemination of the research findings. Discrepancies were identified and revised. The researcher's journal was also used to document the data analysis and synthesis processes.

Transferability boundaries from this study include limited applicable inferences from the results for those high school settings similar to the description of this study site. Therefore, similar schools in surrounding districts or within other geographical areas may benefit from the results and recommendations from this study. Detailed descriptions were recorded in order to maximize possible population transferability for high school juniors. A mixed methods study was chosen to aide in generalizing the findings to other similar settings and populations. The quantitative strategy was selected to illustrate a larger more representative sample, while the qualitative strategy was selected to illustrate details from which inferences could be made. The goal of mixing both forms of data was employed to substantiate theoretical constructs with empirical and descriptive data. Another limitation with transferability would involve the use of Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) theoretical framework of the flow theory within future replicated studies.

Summary

Using Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) theoretical framework of the flow theory, a mixed methods study was conducted to examine how students' experiences with learning in arts courses aids in the conceptualization and practice of active engagement. This mixed methods research was conducted during the spring semester of 2014. The constructivist paradigm guided the development of the methodology. In a search for the answers to the central research questions, 50 participants answered two surveys and 8 participants were interviewed using an interview protocol that included probing questions to provide insights into their lived experience of the phenomenon. IRB approval was obtained, confidentiality was assured, and all data were kept

secured to ensure participant protection. Trustworthiness was addressed through the process of keeping a researcher journal and peer reviewers. The researcher's journal was also used to document thought processes throughout the data analysis process. Reliability was enhanced by audio taping interviews and by checking transcripts against the audiotape to ensure accurate transcription. Additionally, field notes were used to check against the transcripts to ensure an accurate representation of interviews.

From the results of the quantitative research the question for Phase 1 can be answered.

Phase 1 (Quantitative)

1. Is there a difference in students' engagement in classroom learning when enrolled in arts classes?

H_0: There is no statistically significant difference between students' engagement in classroom learning when enrolled in arts classes.

H_a: There is a statistically significant difference between students' engagement in classroom learning when enrolled in arts classes.

With a p-value of $< .10$ we can reject the null hypothesis. There is a statistically significant difference between students' engagement in classroom learning when enrolled in arts classes.

During the data analysis, several main ideas were expressed throughout the interviews and were narrowed down to each interview question with its corresponding category. From this process, the qualitative research question for Phase 2 can be answered.

Phase 2 (Qualitative)

2. How do students describe their experiences of active engagement in arts classes?

Student participants included effort, choice, freedom, practice, performance, creativity, individuality, self-expression, encouragement, interest, assistance, self-motivation and pride in the descriptions of their experiences of active engagement in arts classes.

Due to the researcher's interest in both narrative and numeric data and their analyses, The Quantitative and Qualitative Data Alignment Matrix (Table 3) was created in order to organize and integrate the statistical and thematic data. From this mixed data analysis the third research question can be answered.

Phase 3 (Mixed Methods)

3. What is the relationship between students' engagement in classroom learning and enrollment in arts classes?

In arts courses students expect and enjoy being engaged with creative, thought-provoking assignments in which they have options to express themselves individually and as a group. Students interpret their learning expectations in arts classes as a chance to work individually or together, to show respect, to perform or create an end product, to take their time, to be self-motivated, to understand their own views as well as the views of others. Participants explained that engagement in arts course classrooms meant having time for: expression, freedom, happiness, learning new and different techniques, challenges, and rewards. In regards to their learning capabilities in arts courses students described their effectiveness as: giving their best effort, trying their hardest, completing challenges, inspired, energized, and a chance to show maturity. Students included demonstrations by teachers, the ability to receive personalized help and instruction when necessary, and a relaxed atmosphere to explore options as art class attributes that elevated their capability to self-regulate their learning and to complete challenging assignments. All participants explained the relationship between being engaged in arts classes as

a positive and rewarding experience. In regards to self-esteem and self-concept, all participants described staying self-motivated and determined as they moved past feelings of frustration to feelings of pride and achievement upon completion of challenging arts coursework. Finally, these patterns and themes revealed that student perceptions confirm Csikszentmihalyi (1990) argument that individuals benefit from increased feelings of enjoyment, satisfaction, and accomplishment of challenges. Chapter 3 provided the details of the methodology used in this study.

Chapter 4 of this study reported the results and findings of the quantitative and qualitative data, as well as the mixing of both forms of data in this study. Chapter 5 discusses the conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine and describe the experiences of high school students' shared, lived experiences with feelings of active engagement in arts courses. The conceptual basis for this study was Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) flow theory, based on the relationship between experiencing challenges and using the skills necessary to meet those challenges. Cavanagh et al. (2008) contended that active student engagement could be explained by applying Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) flow theory and proposed that successful engagement in classroom learning is a balance between students' capabilities and their expectations of learning. When both are high, more learning can occur. When both are low, less learning is expected.

This study included an explanatory, sequential model in which quantitative data from the survey used in the first phase helped to address the breadth of the topic by measuring students' learning capabilities and learning expectations when enrolled in an arts class versus enrollment in a non-arts class. The survey data helped to determine initial themes to be explored during the interviews, which were conducted in the second, qualitative phase. The qualitative phase helped to gain depth in the form of the personal meanings participants attached to their perceptions of the phenomenon of active engagement in arts courses. The interview questions were aligned with the survey instrument. The types of activities students described about their arts educational experiences, the reasons why they described those experiences, and their perceived learning expectations and capabilities in arts courses were explored during the interview portion of the study. The two forms of data were mixed using a data alignment matrix with overlapping codes used from the survey and the interview protocol. Mixing these two sources helped offer a richer

explanation in order to increase understanding of the importance of providing opportunities for active engagement in the arts.

Interpretation of the Findings

The research questions were used to organize the interpretation of findings. The patterns associated with each research question were used to develop basic themes that were then used to examine and describe the experiences of high school students' shared, lived experiences with feelings of active engagement in arts courses. The first quantitative research question asked if there was a difference in students' engagement in classroom learning when enrolled in arts classes? In order to examine student learning capabilities and expectations, 50 randomly selected participants completed the Secondary School Engagement in Classroom Learning Survey (Cavanagh, Kennish, & Sturgess, 2008) twice. The first time participants completed the survey they were instructed to answer the questions based on a time spent in a high school arts course. The second time participants completed the same survey they were instructed to answer the questions based on a time spent in a non-arts high school course.

With a p-value of $< .10$, there is a statistically significant difference between students' engagement in classroom learning when enrolled in arts classes. From the coded category of Self-Esteem, data revealed those students that participated in the study were more pleased and confident about their abilities to perform well in arts versus non-arts classes. This extends Loomis, Blumenthal, and Lewis' (2007) documentation of the importance of providing students with experiences to interest and involve them in the process of creating art as vital for emotional engagement, as well as their overall growth and development. Another theme that surfaced from the coded category of Self-Regulation was that participants felt more in control of their learning and knew how to improve and learn better in an art course than a non-art course. This affirms

Robinson's (2008) contention of the importance of encouraging students to become independent learners who can distinguish strengths and weakness in their educational needs. This data also confirms Yeh and Li's (2008) work that emphasized the need for students to use creative tasks to cultivate their abilities to become motivated, enthusiastic, self-directed learners. Yeh and Li (2008) stressed their most important finding was the positive relationship between imaginative opportunities and the overall level of children's interest in creativity, exploration, and collaboration. Using creative tasks helped children with motivation, enthusiasm, active engagement, and directing their own learning experiences (Yeh & Li, 2008).

From the coded category of Explanation, student participants believe they are expected to talk or write about things more in non-arts classes than arts classes; however, participant answers also showed that they believe they are expected to share their own ideas with others more often in arts classes than in non-arts. This supports Loomis et al. (2007), in which experiences with art provided cognitive and sensory stimulation that integrated valuable, interest-provoking experiences with understanding and reflection. In confirmation of Loomis et al. (2007), student scores from the coded category of Interpretation showed they believe they are expected to show different ways of understanding the work in an arts class more often than in a non-arts class. From the Perspective category student scores illustrate they are expected to be more positive towards learning about things that are new to them in an art class rather than in a non-arts class. Additionally, they believe they are expected to think about their own views when learning new things more in an arts class than in a non-arts class. For the category of Empathy student scores illustrate they are expected to try to be unbiased in understanding the views of others and are expected to be willing to change their own views to show respect for others more in an arts class than a non-arts class. Although there was not a significant difference in mean scores for Self-

Efficacy Question 2 on Part A. of the survey, it is important to note the importance of the data results of this question. Self-Efficacy Q2 asked, “In this class or subject I need to be successful”. The mean score for the arts survey was 3.64 and the mean score for the non-arts survey was 3.66. As shown in Figure 13, most students find it important to be successful no matter whether they are in an arts course or a non-arts course. A breakdown of percentages shows that 96% of the students participating in the quantitative survey portion of the study strongly agreed or agreed they need to be successful in both an arts and a non-arts class. From the quantitative data, the first conclusion is student participants in this study feel more confident and in control of their learning, are able to think about their own opinions, and empathize more often in an art class than in a non-art class.

The second, qualitative research question asked how do students describe their experiences of active engagement in art classes. Eight interview questions, corresponding with one or more of the survey categories, were used. A smaller than expected, purposeful sampling of 8 of the original participating group of 50 students from the quantitative phase of the study volunteered to participate in individual interviews to further understand experiences and behaviors closely associated with the research questions. Before the interviews, and as stated in interview question one, participants were asked to think of a time they were enrolled in an arts class and if they had been enrolled in more than one to please only select one to think of as they progressed through the interview. One participant chose to describe band, five chose a visual art class and two chose chorus.

Student participants included effort, choice, freedom, practice, performance, creativity, individuality, self-expression, encouragement, interest, assistance, self-motivation, and pride in their descriptions of their experiences of active engagement in arts classes. This extends

Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple-intelligences, principles from Blooms' Taxonomy (1956), and Bailey and Blacks' (2008) assertion of the importance of motivating students with differentiating instruction. Steps in how to differentiate the content, process, product, and environment are provided as part of Bailey and Black's (2008) argument that content should be relevant, authentic, and connected to students' interests and lives while providing students with opportunities to make choices that match their interests. Pdescriptions of active engagement in arts classes confirms and extends Connor and Lagares' (2007) work in which it was found that differentiated instruction promoted self-analysis and actively engaged students with their education. The second type of differentiation involved the process or activities offered to students to assist them with exploration and learning of content. This study's qualitative findings also support Bailey and Blacks' (2008) emphasis on the need for students to enjoy learning activities while at the same time being held accountable for the demands of intellectual challenges, and Robinson's (2008) proposal in which the importance of encouraging students to become independent learners who can distinguish strengths and weakness in their educational needs was stressed.

The activities or events students described being engaged or busy with during their arts courses consisted of a variety of small and large group instruction situations, projects, quizzes, tests, reading, and writing assignments. This supports the research that to respond to the array of student needs found in today's classrooms, lesson-planning strategies must incorporate elements of differentiation (Dunn et al., 2010). It also strengthens Dunn et al., (2010) argument, varied instructional resources should be made available, including those that are multisensory and illustrated. Teachers can capture student interest and heighten student concentration by providing opportunities to learn in multiple ways and by preparing learning objectives that allow for

individualization and innovation. Furthermore, some students may require times for mobility within lessons (global learners) while others may learn well in traditional seating arrangements (analytic processors). Global processors are explained as having "to see how information relates to them and their lives before they focus on the content" (Dunn et al., 2010, p. 196). These students look for overall ideas, and must understand concepts first before they can address facts, interpret vocabulary, or intuit understandings. "Globals enjoy analogies, anecdotes, choices, stories, making connections, and seeing relationships" (Dunn et al., 2010, p. 196). In contrast, analytic learners require concrete, specific, step-by-step instruction; sequencing of daily events, detailed learning, and global, multi-tasking learners may be a distraction. Dunn et al. (2010) also noted that many students are successful when they independently learn. Thus, the events participants from this study described as engaging within arts courses, reflect Dunn et al. (2010) six guidelines to help teachers prepare for the cognitive processing differences of global and analytic learners' instructional needs: introduce new lesson topics globally; use small-group instruction; review with creative questions and applications; assign a creative component or reflective product; encourage students to share; periodically include tests to assess mastery of learning objectives.

Six out of eight participants agreed there was a difference in how they participated in an arts class as compared to a non-arts class. Their descriptions included a process of sequential learning with hands on experience where they were actively preparing some type of project or performance to be assessed. The overall theme present was that there is more freedom to make choices and more opportunities to explore and be creative in an arts class. These findings extend the allegations of Dunn et al., (2010) that differentiated teaching strategies include multiple approaches to learning and assessing specified content, student choice, opportunity for

movement and unconfined exploration while recognizing and embracing student differences. Differentiation recognizes the need to cultivate individuality within the classroom environment and the findings from this study reinforce Thorndike's (1911), Gardner's (1993), and Sternberg's (1985) propositions that people learn, think, and create in many different ways. Likewise, participant descriptions of how their learning developed with hands-on projects in an arts course verifies Dunn et al. (2010) research in which it was found that middle and high school students were more kinesthetic learners who retained information best with hands-on resources. It also supports Tomlinson's (1999) argument that people's potential growth and development is affected by what is learned, and how it is learned; and that intelligence is not fixed, it flows.

Participants recalled that the expectations to do your best and follow instructions is present across disciplines; however, in an arts course the expectations to be creative and do your personal best is emphasized more than knowing a right from a wrong answer. Results from this study support the brain research of Caine and Caine (1991) that established providing students with enhanced learning experiences could increase their intelligence; likewise denying students challenging opportunities could reduce their intelligence. "Neurons grow and develop when they are used actively; they atrophy when they are not used. Vigorous learning changes the physiology of the brain" (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 18). Imaging technology, observations and studies conducted on the functions of the brain have expanded what is known about teaching and learning, and it has been suggested that the brain looks for meaningful patterns (Caine & Caine, 1991). Thus, participant references to sequential hands-on learning that provide steps in the process of creativity strengthen Tomlinson's (1999) argument that while the brain can retain isolated pieces of information, it is more efficient at organizing and retaining chunked information pertaining to categories and ideas that connect parts to form wholes, or to make

sense out of information. According to Tomlinson (1999), the brain responds far more effectively and efficiently when learning is linked to personal meaning, something life shaping or personally relevant, or taps into emotions. Therefore, descriptions from participants in this study that explain the high personal interest and connection to their creative work due to the freedom to make choices extends Tomlinson's (1999) argument that relevant, personal connections are crucial for successful higher level learning.

Participants explained that the behavioral expectations of arts and non-arts classes were not different; however, all participants mentioned that there are major differences in how both are selected and graded. Participants explained that selection of an arts class is an individual choice whereas non-arts classes are prescribed requirements they must complete. Additionally, participants clarified that grading is based on effort, projects, and products in an arts classes rather than right or wrong test answers or essay questions given in non-arts classes. Every participant shared that they felt capable of successfully completing the learning and assignments in their arts course primarily because each felt supported by their arts teachers and their individual interests affected their level of effort. Participants described the ability to complete challenging work occurred because of prior lessons and with assistance and a comfort level in asking for help. Five participants described feelings of frustration, two described wanting to give up, and one explained feeling distracted and worried when they were faced with challenging work. Participants explained their resilience, or ability to complete challenging and creative assignments and tasks in arts courses, as due to being able to ask and receive help, not giving up, staying positive, practicing their learning, and creative problem-solving.

Historically, elusive phenomena such as the process of creativity, was difficult to obtain empirical data with systematic inquiry (Csikszentmihalyi & Getzels, 1970). Through continued

study of problem-solving situations, Csikszentmihalyi and Getzels (1970) found that creativity was the outcome of a pure form of the problem-solving process. At one end of this continuum, a problem, method, and solution are known and using the correct steps satisfactorily is all that is required to achieve the desired result. On the other end, there are discovered problems as well as situations in which the problem is not yet identified, and the appropriate method to solve is unknown. The qualitative data from this study supports Csikszentmihalyi (1990) assertion that a feeling of enjoyment, satisfaction, or accomplishment is based upon the relationship between the problem-solving challenges and using the appropriate skills to complete them. Likewise, Eisenberger, Jones, Stinglhamber, Shanock, and Randall's (2005) proposition that students' ability to negotiate the combination between skill and challenge is associated with an increase in positive mood, task interest, and performance can be validated. The participants' descriptions of their enjoyment in relation to the completion of creative challenges extends the ideas of Carli, Delle Fave, and Massimini (1988), Clarke and Haworth (1994), and Moneta and Csikszentmihalyi (1996) who all proposed that the relationship between enjoyment and challenge has been found to help students concentrate and interact. P5 shared, "In Studio Art we had plenty of freedom to let our creativity out. I loved it so much! We still had deadlines but we were expected to be mature enough to get our work done well and on time." P4 explained, "The biggest expectation in my art class was to try your best and put thought into your work. Even though this could be hard it was still interesting and really fun to try to get all of the requirements for the project done." Also, Csikszentmihalyi and Rathunde (1993) proposed that interest and enjoyment of tasks "follows from the realization that one is growing in complexity as a result of matching one's skills to difficult challenges" (p. 73). Similarly, Isen, Daubman, and Nowicki (1987) argued that the perception of high competence increased feelings of self-worth and

positive affect. According to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), enjoyment leads to personal growth, long-term happiness, and positive human interactions. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) refer to the good feelings experienced by people "when they break through the limits of homeostasis—when they do something that stretches them beyond what they were" (p. 12) as the meaning of enjoyment. Thus, participant descriptions of the joy when overcoming challenging artwork supports Chan and Ahem's (1999) research that activity content, amount of challenge, appropriateness of goals and the presentation of information were found to have an impact on motivation (Chan & Ahem, 1999). In regards to self-esteem and self-concept, all participants described feelings of frustration when difficult concepts were taught in arts classes. Likewise, all participants described feelings of pride, joy, success, and achievement when they had completed those challenging tasks. Four out of eight participants described feelings of peace, happiness, contentment, and relaxation when participating in an art class. The second conclusion that can be made is that the freedom to make personal choices while learning in art classes aids feelings of enjoyment, inspires interest, and helps student motivation.

The final research question asked what is the relationship between students' engagement in classroom learning and enrollment in arts classes? Coding for the interview questions was developed to be in alignment with the survey codes. The survey codes were organized into eight categories that served as domains. Due to the researcher's interest in both narrative and numeric data and their analyses, The Quantitative and Qualitative Data Alignment Matrix (Table 3) were created in order to organize and integrate the statistical and thematic data. In combining the data and discovering commonalities among participant answers, it was found that students described their expectations to show different ways of understanding work in an arts class as a positive experience. This validated the survey information in which data showed students expected to be

positive learning new things and to think about their own views in arts courses. The data revealed that participants were more pleased and confident about their abilities to perform in an arts class than a non-arts class. Participants explained that they felt more in control of their learning and described a feeling of confidence in knowing how to improve and learn better in an arts course. This extended the quantitative data that participants were more pleased and confident about their abilities to perform in an arts class than a non-arts class. The following inferences can be made; in arts courses students expect to: express themselves individually and as a group, work together, show respect, perform or create an end product, take their time, be self-motivated, take time to understand their own views as well as the views of others. Students interpret their learning expectations as time for: expression, freedom, happiness, learning new and different techniques, challenges, and rewards. Participants explain they expect to apply their learning in the following ways: individually, as pairs or small groups, and as large groups. Students' specified application expectations were described as performances, creations, products, and quizzes or tests. Students perceived and understood these learning expectations to be fair, challenging, fun, thought provoking, and interesting. In regards to their learning capabilities in arts courses students described their effectiveness as: giving their best effort, trying their hardest, challenging, inspiring, energizing, and as a chance to show maturity. Students included demonstrations by teachers, the ability to receive personalized help and instruction when necessary, and a relaxed atmosphere to explore options as art class attributes that elevated their capability to self-regulate learning. These results indicate that in addition to successful teaching techniques, it is important for students to feel supported in their educational environments and strengthens the argument for illustrating and modeling as critical to student success, "Whenever possible, show students exactly what you mean" (Connor & Lagares, 2007, p. 22). The third

conclusion is providing differentiated or individualized instruction and providing appropriate levels of challenge are influential factors associated with successful learning, concentration, and motivation in art classes.

The theoretical framework used for this study was based on Csikszentmihalyi's (1975) flow theory in which engagement is based on the combination of three areas: concentration, the intense or absolute absorption in an activity; interest, the fundamental basis for becoming engaged with a topic; and enjoyment, the feeling of accomplishment or satisfaction. The flow theory is based on the relationship between experiencing challenges and using the necessary skills to complete those challenges. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) argued that the balance between challenge and skill is delicate and, when disrupted, apathy, anxiety, or relaxation may be experienced. Patterns and themes from this study reveal that student perceptions confirm Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) argument that individuals benefit from increased feelings of enjoyment, satisfaction, and accomplishment of challenges. This is evident from P7's response, "When the work was challenging I would get a little frustrated, but when I completed the work I felt proud and accomplished. It made me want to get into the next assignment even more and got me to feel confident in myself." P8 shared,

> When the work was challenging, I would sometimes get very frustrated and I would want to give up, but I knew that I had to keep working because when my work was completed I would feel a sense of pride because I did something amazing, and I was part of something that not everyone gets the opportunity to be a part of. This is a powerful and uplifting feeling.

Also, P3 explained,

> I learned how to fix or change mistakes or the things I dislike about my product. If I felt that I'd really messed it up I might start over, but the majority of the time it was continuing to work on diligently that helped the most. After the gradual completion of my project I feel proud especially if it was a project I particularly enjoyed.

These participant perceptions illustrate Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi's (2002) assertion that the flow state is intrinsically rewarding; thus, motivational and psychological functioning fosters the interest for the individual to master new challenges. Experiencing flow helps involves a growth principle, in which a more complex understanding and knowledge is sought after and developed (Shernoff et al., 2003). Similarly, the research of Vygotsky (1978), Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, and Whalen (1993), and Jensen (1998) emphasized the important principle that people learn best with moderate challenge. If the required work is too difficult or too easy, people lose their motivation to learn. It is important for teachers to keep this in mind because every learner is different, and what could be more complex for one student might be less challenging for another (Tomlinson, 1999). Moneta and Csikszentmihalyi (1996) maintained pleasant states of task absorption result from the perceptions of appropriate amounts of difficulty. This is evident from participant five's response to the question did you feel capable of successfully completing the learning and assignments in your art class? "Completely. They weren't too difficult but not too simple either, you know? Our creativity was tested a lot, but we were never given anything impossible!" The qualitative data supported the quantitative data that students were more confident and in control of their learning in an art class. P6 summed it up:

> There is a major difference between how I participate in an art class and a non-art class. In art class there is freedom to create and be yourself, it is way more hands-on, which makes it so fun that people wouldn't lose interest. In a non-art class it's all worksheets

and notes and memorizing and testing so that people get bored and lose interest. When it's not interesting I don't have any motivation.

It also revealed when participants perceived high challenge in balance with their skills, the learning environment was more relevant and concentration and interest were piqued more. Providing appropriate challenges, as well as, an individualized learning environment to enhance learning is crucial for the active engagement of high school students in art classes.

Limitations of the Study

The scope of this study was based on the investigation of arts classes and high school students' shared, lived experiences with feelings of active engagement. The study included information gathered from students in a Northeastern state school district. Results of this study may be of interest to other districts within the geographic region that are similar in size and demographics and are state-mandated to require 1 credit hour of arts. It may not be as important for districts that experience issues of extreme poverty or extreme wealth and are not state-mandated to require 1 arts credit. These state requirements and economic conditions have been identified as having an effect on the type and quality of art programs offered at the high school level (National Endowment for the Arts, 1992, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Secondary Arts Education Survey, 2009); these factors were not an issue in this district.

This study was limited to a phenomenological study to focus on what the participants had in common as they experienced active engagement in arts courses in one Northeast school district. The use of the word *what* helped direct an interrogative approach denoting the openness of the researcher to specific, descriptive information that participants shared during the qualitative data collection and analysis. Because the intent was to examine, describe, and

understand students' perceptions of feeling actively engaged while taking an arts course it was important to learn both *how* they were engaged and in *what* ways. This specific focus was chosen because there are very few studies dedicated to the investigation of students' perceptions in relation to arts courses (Cavanagh, Kennish, & Sturgess, 2008). Because it is the practice of this high school to schedule students for their state-mandated one arts credit before the start of their junior year, the population of participants included Grade 11 and excluded the perceptions of students in other grade levels.

An initial limitation of this mixed methods study was the phenomenological approach used in the second phase of the qualitative portion of the study. By definition, phenomenology is the study of individual perceptions that are self-reported. Moustakas (1994) asserted that a characteristic of phenomenology is that it is clarified with comprehensive descriptions of experiences and not through scoring, rating, or measuring. Therefore, the interpretation of the data could be predisposed to various explanations. Creswell (2012) affirmed that a phenomenological approach is limiting in that the findings cannot be generalized. In an effort to address this limitation, both nominal and ordinal data was measured using a paired sample *t* test to determine whether there is a significant difference between the average values of students' perceived learning capabilities and expectations for learning in relation to arts courses versus non-arts courses. Content analyses created categories and identified themes using qualitative coding and inferential methods. Contributions to positive social change included an increased awareness and insights regarding how students make meaning of active engagement in arts courses; such information can help school districts understand more about the importance of providing artistic and creative educational experiences. The district size and location was a limitation as well. The study site consisted of a rural high school with approximately 800

students enrolled in grades 9-12. The student participants were not categorized by demographic information. The perceptions of participants were not generalized to include the perceptions of other students in the school district or other school districts across the state and country. The results of this study are of greatest use to those within the local and surrounding area's educational community. Data was collected during the spring semester of the school calendar year of 2013-2014.

Another potential weakness of the study was the sampling size. Approximately 75% of the estimated 200 students, who begin Imperial High School as freshmen, finish as graduating seniors from this same high school in a 4-year period. To help address issues of bias, the initial participation selection for the quantitative phase was a random process. Using spreadsheet software with the capability to embed calculations, a list of 50 names was generated and survey data from the participants was gathered. For the second, qualitative phase a purposeful selection of 8 students from the initial 50 participants who completed the survey were asked to participate in interviews to further understand experiences and behaviors closely associated with the research questions. This was change from the initial 12 that was expected to participate. Although the sampling pool was small, given the size and dynamics of the high school, it was not difficult to get student participants.

My role as the researcher was an area of limitation. It is important to disclose that I am a visual arts teacher in the school district. My role is a high school drawing, painting, and studio art teacher. Although some of the participants might have been considered my students in previous semesters, I was not their teacher at the time of the study. It is important, however, to acknowledge that because of my role, students may have been reluctant to answer survey or interview questions in a way that might have been perceived as negative. Extra measures were

taken to reduce the risks of feelings of possible pressure to participate. For example, the participants were assured that my role in the research was that of doctoral student and not as a teacher and that, it was not part of my role to judge, but to gather data (Patton, 2002). The purpose of the study and possible benefits of the study resulting from participation was described. As an additional measure of protection against coercion, I assured participants that their involvement in the study would remain confidential and that their participation was completely voluntary. I explained that they could withdraw from the process at any point without penalty.

As stated in Chapter 3, in order to mitigate as best as humanly possible, any threats to the issues of quality, credibility, reliability, and validity in this study, it was emphasized to the participants to take time and care while answering the survey questions and the interview questions. Participants were told they had an opportunity for extended time to complete the survey or the interview for those who felt rushed. It was explained to the participants that the interview questions would give students opportunities to share and expand their thoughts and express details. This would enable the researcher to record and transcribe the actual words of the participants as evidence. The researcher signed the transcriptionist confidentiality agreement (Appendix E) before conducting the qualitative phase of the study. Reliability and consistency were improved when the field notes were transcribed from a good-quality tape. Therefore, selection of a new tape and a new tape recorder from the school's library reference section was secured for the study. The researcher manually transcribed descriptions of the direct observation of subtleties that occurred, such as, pauses, facial expressions, or body movements. Persistent observation helped to provide depth in the form of characteristics that were most relevant in answering the research questions. Prolonged engagement investigating the research questions in

the setting helped build trust with the participants, as well as helped to discern varied participant perspectives within the environment. Detailed descriptions of the researcher's findings helped the study become more meaningful, while a self-reflection journal containing the researcher's background helped clarify any bias present.

The quality and credibility of this study was assessed using reflective questioning as part of the self-checking process. As recommended by Moustakas (1994) I used procedures of data analysis indicative of phenomenological study. Additionally, I checked to make sure the overall essence of the participants' experience was conveyed with descriptions of the experiences and the contexts in which these experiences occurred. Dependability was established and confirmed by reviewing the research process (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, keeping codes consistent, adhering to the principles of phenomenological research, checking for precise transcription, and using descriptive language that truly reflected the participants' authentic experience helped with dependability and confirmability. A Quantitative and Qualitative Data Alignment Matrix (Table 3) helped keep coding consistent as well as organizing data. Ethical validation, that questioned the underlying moral assumptions involved in the study were addressed, as well as ensuring the impartial management of diverse responses by recording thoughts and biases within the researcher journal.

Creswell (2012) recommended the selection of at least two validation strategies. Thus, two different sources of data (surveys and interviews), detailed descriptions, and peer reviewers were used in this study. A peer reviewer was employed to cross check the data, variables, and interpretation of the quantitative phase including the graphing and charting of results, the statistical significance, and how the results answer the research questions and hypotheses. A second informed colleague familiar with the arts environment was asked to crosscheck the line

by line coding of the qualitative data to look for additional themes or identify ones that may have been missed. Using two different external auditors provided objective insights while enhancing the overall quality, credibility, reliability, and validity. This also served as a subtle method of creating awareness of the research study and anticipation among the professional community about the dissemination of the research findings. Discrepancies were identified and revised. The researcher's journal was also used to document the data analysis and synthesis processes.

Transferability boundaries from this study include limited applicable inferences from the results for those high school settings similar to the description of this study site. Therefore, similar schools in surrounding districts or within other geographical areas may benefit from the results and recommendations from this study. Detailed descriptions were recorded in order to maximize possible population transferability for high school juniors. A mixed methods study was chosen to aide in generalizing the findings to other similar settings and populations. The quantitative strategy was selected to illustrate a larger more representative sample, while the qualitative strategy was selected to illustrate details from which inferences could be made. The goal of mixing both forms of data was employed to substantiate theoretical constructs with empirical and descriptive data. Another limitation with transferability would involve the use of Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) theoretical framework of the flow theory within future replicated studies.

Recommendations

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine and describe the experiences of Grade 11 high school students' shared, lived experiences with feelings of active engagement in arts courses. This study was conducted to help increase understanding of the importance of providing opportunities for active engagement in the arts and for improving high school

students' academic success. One significant limitation of this study is that the sample was not large or nationally representative. Due to the limited scope of this study, the results cannot be generalized to include the perceptions of all students in the high school, in the school district or other districts across the state or other states in the region or the country. For that reason, it is recommended that this study be replicated using a larger population of students who have participated in arts courses in other school districts. Another consideration would be to include students from rural and urban areas. An extension of this study would be to replicate the study in order to gain perceptions of elementary school students in contrast to grade 11 high school students.

Professional development opportunities outlining research based practices including brain-based research and differentiated instructional techniques are one recommendation for future action. Thus, following professional development, a subsequent study could be conducted to gather data for comparison about how students perceive active engagement experiences conducted by newly trained teachers, or before exposure to training and again after the training. An interesting area for further study might include looking at how student perceptions differ between integrated arts course curriculums that involve the arts to help teach other subject areas. This type of study could be helpful to school districts trying to implement or maintain integrated arts programs.

Another recommendation for future practice is to encourage a change in administrators', policymakers', and the public's perception as to the value of arts education programs. In order to successfully create a scientifically significant body of knowledge on this topic more research based studies need to be conducted regarding the impact the arts have on students' performance, achievement, and well-being. Therefore, future studies using Csikszentmihalyi's (1975) flow

theory could be designed to distinguish specific aspects of subject areas and teaching methods that result in the higher levels of flow or peak performance. This would aide in the transformation of teaching curriculums in which optimal opportunities to experience flow for students could be planned and facilitated.

Implications

The implications for social change related to active engagement in arts courses were originally presented in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 incorporated related literature and current research pertaining to the research questions. The ideas bounded by the conceptual framework were explored through the voices of high school participants who have experienced learning in arts classes using the mixed methodology discussed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 presented the participants' survey responses and qualitative descriptions and perceptions related to active engagement in arts courses. The findings of this study are important to students, parents, art teachers, regular classroom teachers, administrators, and policymakers. This study contributes to social change in that it provides local and state educators with more information related to the investment in and importance of arts classrooms and the active engagement of students with their learning in these types of settings.

The findings of this study contribute to the literature on the impact of active engagement in arts courses on student education, and are important for parents and students. In this study, students identified their learning experiences in arts courses as grounded in experiential, sequential, hands-on opportunities that are personally relevant, creative, and meaningful. The benefit of active engagement in arts courses manifests as a learning environment that includes individual, paired, and group collaborations in which teaching strategies employed were diverse, individualized, holistic, and grounded in the constructivist philosophy. This type of teaching and

learning reinforces the theoretical framework used for this study which was based on Csikszentmihalyi's (1975) flow theory in which engagement is based on the combination of three areas: concentration, the intense or absolute absorption in an activity; interest, the fundamental basis for becoming engaged with a topic; and enjoyment, the feeling of accomplishment or satisfaction. The flow theory is based on the relationship between experiencing challenges and using the necessary skills to complete those challenges. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) argued that the balance between challenge and skill is delicate and, when disrupted, apathy, anxiety, or relaxation may be experienced. Patterns and themes from this study reveal that student perceptions confirm Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) argument that individuals benefit from increased feelings of enjoyment, satisfaction, and accomplishment of challenges. As a result, this type of learning environment increases the potential for students' academic success.

This study may help to improve teaching techniques while adding to the scholarly research that has been done on the need for active student engagement. Art teachers, regular classroom teachers, and administrators will find this study helpful as a catalyst to provide more opportunities for students to engage in arts classes and programs. Art teachers looking to expand course offerings or prepare advocacy material will find these study results helpful in highlighting how active engagement in art courses motivate, inspire, and encourage creative and educational interests. Regular classroom teachers looking for connections between art, imagination, and creativity and how arts opportunities can help in the formation of comprehension and communication will find the findings from this study helpful.

This research supports teaching and learning strategies designed to differentiate, enhance, and reinforce artistic learning and skills. The results of this study provide evidence of the

successful use of a variety of teaching techniques used in arts classrooms that heightened awareness, inspired interest, encouraged decision-making and problem-solving while engaging students creatively in the education process. The findings of this study may benefit teachers by indicating the benefits of active engagement in arts courses so that this type of learning is supported by administrators both building and district wide. Those administrators interested in creating or maintaining rewarding teaching and learning experiences in which emotions, interactions, relationships, problem-solving and creative behavior is cultivated may look to this study's results for verification.

Finally, the mixed methods approach used in this study is also important to administrators and policymakers as it clarifies the positive impact that investments in active engagement in arts courses have on students. Student benefits from the quantitative data revealed feelings of pleasure, confidence, and personal control in arts course learning. Additional advantages were the ability to share, collaborate, and to feel more optimistic and respectful of self and others. Student descriptions from the qualitative data underscored the importance of choice, creativity, individuality, encouragement, assistance, self-motivation, and pride. The mixing of data from this study supports Csikszentmihalyi (1990) assertion that a feeling of enjoyment, satisfaction, or accomplishment is based upon the relationship between the problem-solving challenges and using the appropriate skills to complete them. Likewise, Eisenberger, Jones, Stinglhamber, Shanock, and Randall's (2005) proposition that students' ability to negotiate the combination between skill and challenge is associated with an increase in positive mood, task interest, and performance can be validated.

Contributions to positive social change include an increased awareness and insights regarding how students make meaning of active engagement in arts courses, such information

can help school districts understand more about the importance of providing artistic and creative educational experiences. Student engagement leads to achievement in the classroom, as well as contributes to students' social and cognitive development (Finn, 1993; Newmann, 1992). Given the practice of scheduling students based on credit requirements, the nature of this study's results might help to promote the practice of scheduling based on student interest and motivation. This study's results may help to advocate for the promotion of strong arts departments in high schools, change the way student schedules are made, promote policies and processes to increase attendance rates, influence an increase in cohort graduation rates, as well as provide an effective body of evidence for expanding arts education at the high school level.

Educational and motivational theories were explored in an effort to understand creative development and the role of art within the education system. Several positive links exist between the work of historical theorists and contemporary researchers that validate the connection between creative interests and growth. The use of creativity as an essential role in the learning and development of students is a common theme repeatedly expressed within academic literature, and throughout the findings of this study.

Recommendations for further practice include providing and maintaining arts course offerings prior to and at the high school level. Providing active engagement opportunities in arts courses for high school students is a sequential, experiential, and hands-on instructional practice. The participants' descriptions illustrate the importance of active engagement through and with the arts. Based on the findings of this study, the provision of offering and maintaining arts courses is a meaningful endeavor of school districts wanting to improve the rate of student achievement and success. Consequently, it is recommended that the administrator's,

policymakers', and the public's perceptions of the importance of arts education experiences be changed.

To aide in changing perceptions it is suggested that the early introduction to creative development opportunities for young students be implemented and exposure to active engagement in arts courses be continued through the secondary level. Hanline, Milton, and Phelps (2007), Swan (2005), Kyung-Hwa (2005) Marjanovic-Shane and Beljanski-Ristic's (2008), and Brown, Benedett, and Armistead (2009) argued that the early introduction to arts experiences not only inspire interest in creativity, but significantly impacts cognitive thinking and communication skills. Their research showed creative activities are essential ways to communicate, learn, and grow. Incorporating arts education provided creative ways for all children, including those at risk, to acquire necessary skills they may not have otherwise been exposed (Brown et al., 2009).

The results from this study show that developing and maintaining arts in high schools may increase students' ability to construct ownership of their education and expand the results they want while gaining higher level thinking skills and a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. Data from the quantitative portion of this study show that students felt more confident and prepared to succeed while self-regulating their learning. By exemplifying these qualities, subject areas such as art, will no longer be seen as extra time during the academic day but rather another valid form of learning, communicating and expressing growth. Moreover, perceptions of the arts as an integral part of educating the whole student may provide benefits to the academic curriculum in which enhanced learning can be offered. With recent educational budget cuts necessitating the redistribution of funds, many school systems must be reminded of the positive teaching and learning effects provided with arts programs.

The arguments developed in the documents reviewed during the research for this study led me to conclude that some high school students become disengaged and disconnected with their academic learning. The results from this study found that exposure to an artistic and creative learning environment provided active engagement with motivational benefits. From the exploration of student perceptions in this study, key results relating addressing multiple learning styles in order to motivate and inspire creativity was found to promote the mediation between knowledge domains and ultimately lead to authentic learning and intellectual work. With these factors in mind, and in an effort to increase active engagement with the arts, professional development opportunities for the designing and implementing of effective processes that enhance student engagement are recommended. Despite the good intentions of teachers to infuse the curriculum with creativity and personal enthusiasm it can be difficult to motivate and challenge many students with sustained learning opportunities at one time. Professional development opportunities outlining research based practices including brain-based research and differentiated instructional techniques, in combination with principles of learning and understanding diverse learner strategies, would help both art and regular classroom teachers to enhance the learning environment.

While art should be taught for its own developmentally rewarding reasons, it is recommended that art teachers integrate their knowledge of art forms with other subjects, and policy makers to mandate arts integrated learning as well. An alignment of curriculum in which the inclusion of the arts enhances teaching and learning is one important way administrators can help arts programming to evolve. An expansion of the role of arts education in academic settings could be used to promote interest in other academic areas of learning. As this study's findings suggest, the arts explores and uses multiple intelligences, problem solving, and collaborative

opportunities that promote interest and motivation. By effectively including the arts within learning objectives of other subject areas, students would be encouraged to develop diverse strengths, investigate personal interests, and use higher-level creative thinking abilities. These suggestions are in alignment with the study's results in which participants described levels of high interest and enjoyment when learning was enhanced with choice and creativity. Because action and knowledge, or physically doing and remembering, are linked to learning, it may be pertinent for the education system to revisit curriculum planning strategies and procedures to include dialogue with educators in regards to the organization and implementation of curriculum that contains more opportunities for the integration of creativity.

The positive impacts participants in this study shared guides my recommendation that school district administrators encourage secondary teachers to work collaboratively in interdisciplinary arts curriculum strategies. Effectively engaging students through arts integration requires collaborative relationships among teachers. To create pedagogical and curricular links between the arts and other subjects, teachers would require shared common planning time. Therefore, to obtain scheduled time to engage in collegial dialogue and to prepare integrated lessons, support from authority figures must be given. Funding is another consideration worthy of educational leaders' and policy makers' attention. It is important for budget planners to recognize the need to establish support for existing and evolving arts education opportunities by dedicating money for equipment and consumable materials and supplies. While the school district arts programs across the nation will differ in both funding and curriculum outcomes, it is advised that school administrators encourage diversity and creativity. Further, it is recommended that school districts explore opportunities to connect community with arts curriculum. In doing so, the relationships with the community in which students plan, fundraise, give presentations,

and invite community members to participate or enjoy their artistic achievements would help to inspire ways to start or maintain arts education programs. Community relationships would also inspire civic minded responsible, decision making skills for students and help advocates of arts education within the education system to communicate the benefits of teaching with the arts. A shared vision and positive administrative support will improve the likelihood that school districts can successfully transform and maintain arts education programs.

Conclusion

High school students cannot be successful if they are frequently absent from school. The relationship between arts exposure and high school students' perceptions of active engagement in arts courses is not known. Due to the lack of both empirical and phenomenological evidence pertaining to active engagement and the arts in current literature, a mixed method design was selected as the research approach. To address this problem, this study described and measured the process of actively engaging students through the arts and explored the ways students become more engaged with their learning. Fifty randomly selected students completed the Secondary School Engagement in Classroom Learning Survey (Cavanagh, Kennish, & Sturgess, 2008) twice in order to examine learning capabilities and expectations in an arts course and in a non-arts course; eight of the students participated in follow-up interviews to describe their shared, lived experiences with feelings of active engagement and enrollment in an arts class. The two forms of data were sequentially organized, merged, connected, and displayed for the purpose of explanation.

Analyses revealed that students find value in the active engagement opportunities within arts educational experiences. The value of active engagement opportunities within arts educational experiences can be described with three key statements. First, student participants in

this study felt more confident and in control of their learning, were able to think about their own opinions, and empathize more often in an art class than in a non-art class. Second, the freedom to make personal choices while learning in art classes aids feelings of enjoyment, inspires interest, and helps student motivation. Third, providing differentiated or individualized instruction and providing appropriate levels of challenge are influential factors associated with successful learning, concentration, and motivation in art classes. Patterns and themes from this study reveal that student perceptions confirm Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) argument that individuals benefit from increased feelings of enjoyment, satisfaction, and accomplishment of challenges. Because the arts provide curriculum areas that allow students to make choices, use creative criteria, make projects and assignments challenging, provide diverse instructional strategies, and provide positive reinforcement, students who are involved in the arts feel more engaged, self-confident, and motivated about their learning. Students who are more engaged, self-confident, and motivated about their learning want to be present in school. Results from this study illustrate the need to diminish false perceptions that arts courses are extra classes that are unimportant to the foundations of students' educational experiences. The results of this study will help art teachers, classroom teachers, administrators, and policymakers understand the value of investing in active engagement opportunities with arts educational experiences.

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Appendix A: Permission to Use Survey of Student Engagement in Classroom Learning

Original E-mail
From : Rob Cavanagh [R.Cavanagh@exchange.curtin.edu.au]
Date : 04/23/2012 06:32 PM
To : Athena Nichols [athena.nichols@waldenu.edu]
Subject : RE: Permission

Feel free to use the instrument Athena. I have attached a 2012 AERA paper on this instrument and the learning environment.

All the best.

Rob

Rob Cavanagh PhD
Professor of well-being metrics
Director of Research and Development
School of Education
Curtin University
Kent St
BENTLEY 6102

From: Athena Nichols [athena.nichols@waldenu.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, 24 April 2012 1:39 AM
To: Rob Cavanagh
Cc: athena.nichols@waldenu.edu
Subject: Permission

Hello Dr. Cavanagh,

I am currently working on my dissertation and would like permission to use the Survey of Student Engagement in Classroom Learning for my mixed methods study. I came across two journal articles and the survey while completing my research and feel it would work well for my intended research questions. I would be most grateful for your positive response.

Sincerely,

Athena Nichols

Athena I. Nichols
PhD in Education
Self-Design Specialization in Art Education

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Purpose: To describe students' perceived learning expectations in arts classes.

(EXP) Explanation

1. Think about a time you have spent in any high school arts class (i.e., visual arts, music, and drama); describe the activities or events that you were engaged or busy with during the class? If you have been enrolled in more than one class please only select one to consider for these questions.

(INT) Interpretation

2. Was there a difference in the ways you participated in an arts class as compared to a non-arts class?

(EXP) Explanation

3. What do you recall about the expectations of the arts class requirements?

(INT) Interpretation

4. Were these expectations different from other types of classes?

Purpose: To describe students' perceived learning capabilities in arts classes.

(SEF) Self-Efficacy

5. Did you feel capable of successfully completing the learning and assignments?

(SR) Self-Regulation

6. Was there a difference in how hard you tried to complete your arts assignments versus assignments for a non-arts class?

(R) Resilience

7. Describe how you were able to complete challenging assignments.

(SE) Self-Esteem

8. Describe how you felt when the work became challenging, and how you felt when you completed the work.

Probes to use with each question (as needed)

To get more details . . .

· When did that happen?

· Who else was involved?

· Where were you during that time?

· What was your involvement in that situation?

· How did that come about?

· Where did it happen?

· How did you feel about that?

To elaborate . . .

· Would you elaborate on that?

· Could you say some more about that?

· That's helpful. I'd appreciate if you could give me more detail.

· I'm beginning to get the picture: but some more examples might help.

To clarify . . .

· You said X. What do you mean by X?

· What you're saying now is very important, and I want to make sure that I get it down exactly the way you mean it: please explain some more.

Appendix C: Consent Forms

Student Assent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study of your perceptions and of your experiences in arts courses at Imperial High School. You were randomly chosen for the study because you are a high school junior and have successfully passed at least 1 arts class. You are one of approximately 50 students asked to complete two surveys during one homeroom time. A sample of the survey questions are provided for you on the attached paper. After completing the surveys, you will be given an opportunity to volunteer to participate in a follow up interview scheduled for another day after school. This will be limited to the first 12 students who want to participate further by writing their name on the sign-up sheet outside of room 112 by the end of the school day. The sign-up sheet will have dates and time slots available for after school on another day beginning at 2:30. Choose a day and time that will work for your personal schedule. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes, and you will need to stay after school. A reminder note will be mailed to the students' homes to remind them of their interview appointment time and place. The interview will be audio-taped. A sample of the interview questions are provided for you on the attached paper.

Mrs. Nichols is conducting this study. Although you might recognize her as a teacher in the school district, it is important for you to know that this study is being conducted for her role as a doctoral student and is not associated with the school district. Your responses to the surveys, as well as the interview questions (if you choose to participate) will not be shared with the school district. Mrs. Nichols's current students may not participate.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to understand what you think about your arts education experiences at Imperial High School.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

· Participate in two surveys that will take approximately fifteen minutes to complete.

· If you volunteer to participate in a follow-up interview it will be scheduled on a different day, after school, in a private and quiet location of an empty high school classroom, room 112 and take approximately thirty minutes to complete. You will need to stay after school that day, and no other students will be present in room 112 while the interviews take place.

· Interviews will be audio recorded.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the study. No one at Imperial High School will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during the study. If you feel stressed during the study, you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions on the initial survey and within the interview that you feel are too personal. There is no penalty for discontinuing your participation in the study.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study: The risks to you are minimal and would be limited to not feeling comfortable answering certain questions. If you do not want to answer a question on the survey or during the interview, you do not have to. The benefits include self-knowledge and a better understanding of student perceptions and experiences in high school arts courses. Benefits for schools are that you may help educators understand the role of arts education experiences on student engagement and student achievement.

Compensation: There is no compensation for participants in this study.

Confidentiality: Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will

not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study. The dignity, privacy, and confidentiality of all participants will be respected and protected throughout the study and within any future published materials.

Contacts and Questions: You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone at 585-589-8989 or email at athena.nichols@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **02-06-14-0170219** and it expires on **January 13, 2015**.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information, and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant _____

Date of assent _____

Participant's written Signature _____

Researcher's written Signature _____

Parental Consent Form

Your child is invited to take part in a research study of their perceptions and of their experiences in art courses at Imperial High School. Your child was randomly chosen for the study because your child is a high school junior who has passed at least 1 arts class. Your child is one of approximately 50 students who will be asked to complete two surveys during one homeroom time. A sample of the survey questions are provided for you on the attached paper. After completing two surveys, your child will be given an opportunity to volunteer to participate in a follow up interview scheduled for another day after school. This will be limited to the first 12 students who want to participate further by writing their name on the sign-up sheet outside of room 112 by the end of the school day. The sign-up sheet will have dates and time slots available for after school on another day beginning at 2:30. Your child can choose a day and time that will work for his or her personal schedule. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes, and your child will need to stay after school. A reminder note will be mailed to the students' homes to remind them of their interview appointment time and place. The interview will be audio-taped. A sample of the interview questions are provided for you on the attached paper.

Mrs. Nichols is conducting this study. Although you might recognize her as a teacher in the school district, it is important for you to know that this study is being conducted for her role as a doctoral student and is not associated with the school district. Your child's responses to the surveys, as well as the interview questions (if your child chooses to participate) will not be shared with the school district. Mrs. Nichols's current students may not participate.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to understand what your child thinks about his or her arts education experiences at Imperial High School.

Procedures: If you agree to let your child be in this study, your child will be asked to:

· Participate in two surveys that will take approximately fifteen minutes to complete.

· If your child volunteers to participate in a follow-up interview it will be scheduled on a different day, after school, in a private and quiet location of an empty high school classroom, room 112 and take approximately thirty minutes to complete. Your child will need to stay after school that day, and no other students will be present in room 112 while the interviews take place.

· Interviews will be audio recorded.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want your child to be in the study. No one at Imperial High School will treat you or your child differently if you decide you do not want your child to participate in the study. If you decide to consent to the study now, you or your child can still change your minds during the study. Any child who feels stressed during the study may stop at any time. Children may also skip any questions that they feel are too personal. There is no penalty for discontinuing participation in the study.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study: The risks to your child are minimal and would be limited to not feeling comfortable answering certain questions. If your child does not want to answer a question on the survey or during the interview, he or she does not have to. Benefits for schools are that you may help educators understand the role of arts education experiences on student engagement and student achievement.

Compensation: There is no compensation for participants in this study.

Confidentiality: Any information your child provides will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your child's information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your child's name or anything else that could identify your child in

any reports of the study. The dignity, privacy, and confidentiality of all participants will be respected and protected throughout the study and within any future published materials.

Contacts and Questions: You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone at 585-589-8989 or email at athena.nichols@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a parent, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **02-06-14-0170219** and it expires on **January 13, 2015**.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information, and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my child's involvement. By signing below, I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant _____

Printed Name of Parent _____

Date of consent _____

Parent's written Signature _____

Researcher's written Signature _____

Student Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study of your perceptions and of your experiences in arts courses at Imperial High School. You were randomly chosen for the study because you are a high school junior and have successfully passed at least 1 arts class. You are one of approximately 50 students asked to complete two surveys during one homeroom time. A sample of the survey questions are provided for you on the attached paper. After completing two surveys, you will be given an opportunity to volunteer to participate in a follow up interview scheduled for another day after school. This will be limited to the first 12 students who want to participate further by writing their name on the sign-up sheet outside of room 112 by the end of the school day. The sign-up sheet will have dates and time slots available for after school on another day beginning at 2:30. Choose a day and time that will work for your personal schedule. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes, and you will need to stay after school. A reminder note will be mailed to the students' homes to remind them of their interview appointment time and place. The interview will be audio-taped. A sample of the interview questions are provided for you on the attached paper.

Mrs. Nichols is conducting this study. Although you might recognize her as a teacher in the school district, it is important for you to know that this study is being conducted for her role as a doctoral student and is not associated with the school district. Your responses to the surveys, as well as the interview questions (if you choose to participate) will not be shared with the school district. Mrs. Nichols's current students may not participate.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to understand what you think about your arts education experiences at Imperial High School.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

· Participate in two surveys that will take approximately fifteen minutes to complete.

· If you volunteer to participate in a follow-up interview it will be scheduled on a different day, after school, in a private and quiet location of an empty high school classroom, room 112 and take approximately thirty minutes to complete. You will need to stay after school that day, and no other students will be present in room 112 while the interviews take place.

· Interviews will be audio recorded.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the study. No one at Imperial High School will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during the study. If you feel stressed during the study, you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions on the initial survey and within the interview that you feel are too personal. There is no penalty for discontinuing your participation in the study.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study: The risks to you are minimal and would be limited to not feeling comfortable answering certain questions. If you do not want to answer a question on the survey or during the interview, you do not have to. The benefits include self-knowledge and a better understanding of student perceptions and experiences in high school arts courses. Benefits for schools are that you may help educators understand the role of arts education experiences on student engagement and student achievement.

Compensation: There is no compensation for participants in this study.

Confidentiality: Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study. The

dignity, privacy, and anonymity of all participants will be respected and protected throughout the study and within any future published materials.

Contacts and Questions: You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone at 585-589-8989 or email at athena.nichols@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **02-06-14-0170219** and it expires on **January 13, 2015**.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information, and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I am agreeing to the terms described above.

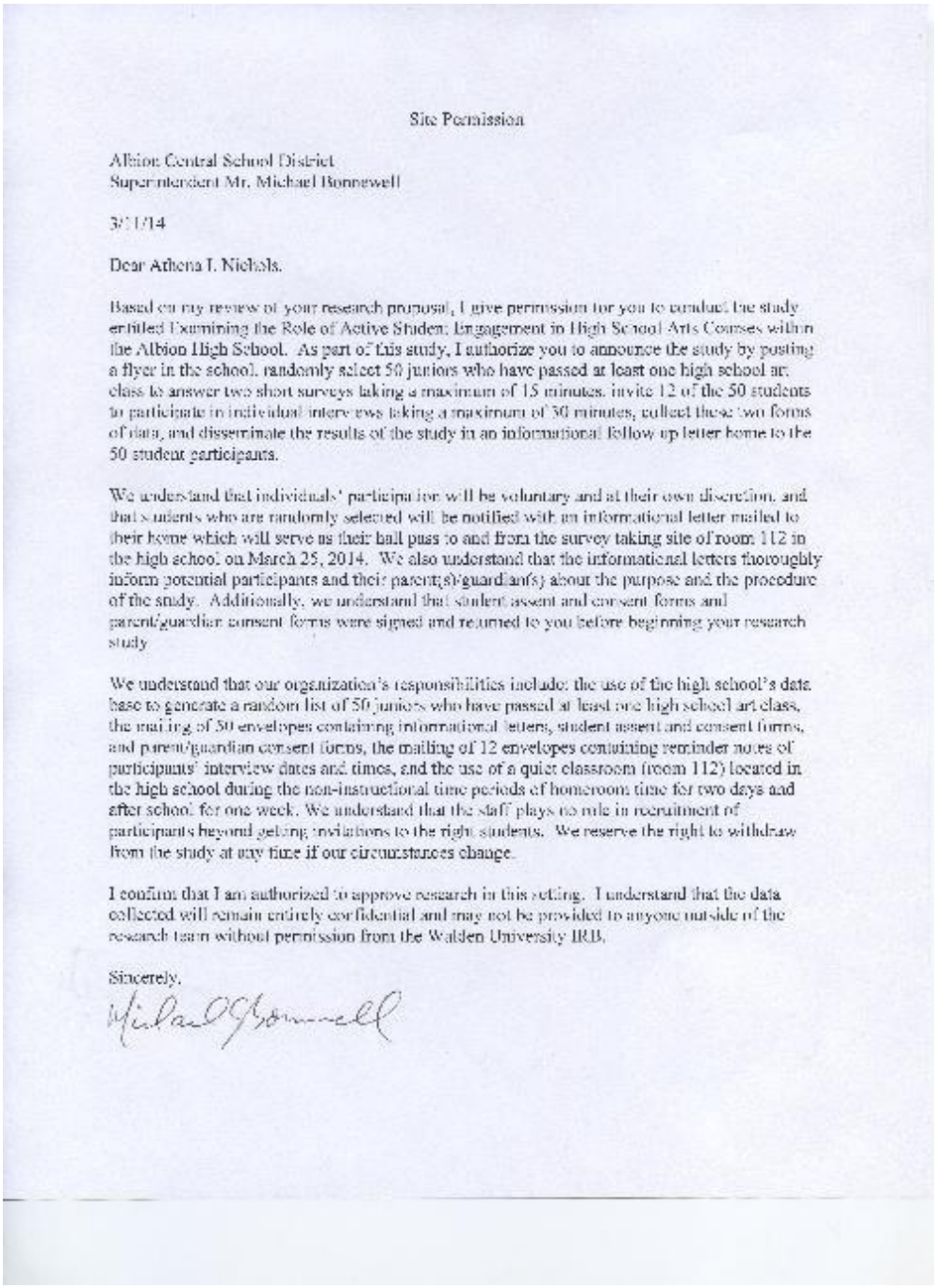
Printed Name of Participant _____

Date of consent _____

Participant's written Signature _____

Researcher's written Signature _____

Appendix D: Site Permission



Site Permission

Albion Central School District
Superintendent Mr. Michael Bonnewell

3/11/14

Dear Athena I. Nichols,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Examining the Role of Active Student Engagement in High School Arts Courses within the Albion High School. As part of this study, I authorize you to announce the study by posting a flyer in the school, randomly select 50 juniors who have passed at least one high school art class to answer two short surveys taking a maximum of 15 minutes, invite 12 of the 50 students to participate in individual interviews taking a maximum of 30 minutes, collect these two forms of data, and disseminate the results of the study in an informational follow up letter home to the 50 student participants.

We understand that individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion, and that students who are randomly selected will be notified with an informational letter mailed to their home which will serve as their hall pass to and from the survey taking site of room 112 in the high school on March 25, 2014. We also understand that the informational letters thoroughly inform potential participants and their parent(s)/guardian(s) about the purpose and the procedure of the study. Additionally, we understand that student assent and consent forms and parent/guardian consent forms were signed and returned to you before beginning your research study.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: the use of the high school's data base to generate a random list of 50 juniors who have passed at least one high school art class, the mailing of 50 envelopes containing informational letters, student assent and consent forms, and parent/guardian consent forms, the mailing of 12 envelopes containing reminder notes of participants' interview dates and times, and the use of a quiet classroom (room 112) located in the high school during the non-instructional time periods of homeroom time for two days and after school for one week. We understand that the staff plays no role in recruitment of participants beyond getting invitations to the right students. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting. I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Michael O'Bonnell

Appendix E: Announcement, Notifications, and Agreements

An Art-Related Research Opportunity With Mrs. Nichols

Who? To participate in this study, students must be in Grade 11 and have passed at least 1 arts class. 50 juniors will be selected at random. It is the individual student's choice to participate, and there is no penalty if a student decides not to participate.

What? Selected students will be notified by mail. If a student chooses to participate he or she and a parent will need to sign the forms included with the notification letter and either mail or place the envelope in the specially marked box in room 112 at the High School. During one homeroom time the 50 randomly selected students will fill out two surveys answering questions about a time when they were and a time when they were not in an arts class. This should take 15 minutes. After completing the surveys, Mrs. Nichols will invite participants to volunteer to participate in a 30 minute follow-up interview. The first 12 that sign up to volunteer on the sign-up sheet outside of room 112 by the end of the school day will participate in an after school interview on another day.

Where? Grade 11 students who receive an invitation and agree to participate will meet in room 112 during homeroom to fill out the short surveys. If there is a conflict individuals may meet in room 112 after school the same day. The 12 volunteers to be interviewed will be given a date to meet after school in room 112 to answer interview questions.

Why? To better understand the importance of providing opportunities for high school students in the arts.

When? Tuesday, March 25th, 2014

*This study is taking place with Mrs. Nichols to fulfill a requirement for her own degree as a student. Mrs. Nichols's current students may not participate.

Notification of Selection

Dear _____,

Congratulations!
You are one of fifty juniors selected at random to participate in an Art Related Research Study with Mrs. Nichols. Although you may know of Mrs. Nichols as a teacher at the Albion High School, this study is not associated with or sponsored by the school or district. This study is taking place with Mrs. Nichols to fulfill a requirement for her as a doctoral student. There will be no risks or consequences if you decide not to participate in this study, students must be in Grade 11 and have passed at least 1 arts class. Mrs. Nichols's current students may not participate. You will be asked to fill out two, short, surveys answering questions about a time when you were in a high school arts class (meaning visual, musical, or dramatic art) and a time when you were not. It should take approximately 15 minutes.

If you choose to participate you will need to:

- read and sign the student assent or consent form,
- have your parent/guardian read and sign the parent consent form,
- either mail or give back these forms to Mrs. Nichols in room 112 at the High School BEFORE Tuesday, March 25th,
- bring this letter as your hall pass to room 112 after checking in with your homeroom teacher on Tuesday, March 25th.

If you cannot attend during homeroom on the 25th please come to room 112 after school on the 25th to fill out the short surveys then. After you complete the surveys you will be given an invitation to volunteer to participate in a follow-up interview. This will be limited to the first 12 students who want to participate further. If you choose to participate in a follow-up interview you will need to:

- Write your name on the sign-up sheet outside of room 112 by the end of the school day.
- The sign-up sheet will have dates and time slots available for after school on another day beginning at 2:30. Choose a day and time that will work for your personal schedule.
- The maximum amount of time for the interview will be 30 minutes.
- The interview will be audio taped.

Thank you for thinking about being a part of this study. If you agree to participate you will be helping educators understand more about the role of the arts in education.

Sincerely,

Invitation to Participate in Interview

Dear Student,

Now that you have completed the surveys you will be given an opportunity to volunteer to participate in a follow-up interview. This will be limited to the first 12 students who want to participate further. If you choose to participate in a follow-up interview you will need to:

- Write your name on the sign-up sheet outside of room 112 by the end of the school day.
- The sign-up sheet will have dates and time slots available for after school on another day beginning at 2:30. Choose a day and time that will work for your personal schedule.
- The maximum amount of time for the interview will be 30 minutes.
- The interview will be audio taped.
- This invitation will serve as your hall pass to room 112 the day of your interview.

Thank you for thinking about being a part of this study. If you agree to participate you will be helping educators understand more about the role of the arts in education.

Sincerely,

Reminder Note

Dear _____,

This is to remind you that after completing your surveys you chose to participate in a follow-up interview with Mrs. Nichols. At that time she gave you an invitation to participate slip and you chose to sign up for the following date and time:

- Time: 2:30 pm
- Room 112
- Date: _____

If you have misplaced the invitation to participate slip please bring this reminder note with you instead. This note will serve as your hall pass to the interview.

I want to remind you that the maximum amount of time for the interview will be 30 minutes, and the interview will be audio taped.

Thank you for volunteering to be a part of this study. Your participation in an interview will be helping educators understand more about the role of the arts in education.

Sincerely,

Transcriptionist Confidentiality Agreement

Name of Signer:

During the course of my activity in transcribing data for this research: "Examining the Role of Active Student Engagement in High School Arts Courses"

I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant. Note: The interview data will be de-identified before it is given to the peer reviewer who will do a line by line review of analysis of each interview.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter, or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification, or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.
6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
7. I will only access or use systems or devices I am officially authorized to access, and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: Date:

Peer Reviewer Confidentiality Agreement

Name of Signer:

Note: The interview data will be de-identified before it is given to the peer reviewer who will do a line by line review of your analysis of each interview.

During the course of my activity as a peer reviewer for the research: "Examining the Role of Active Student Engagement in High School Arts Courses"

I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter, or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification, or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.
6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
7. I will only access or use systems or devices I am officially authorized to access, and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: Date:

Appendix F: Data Alignment Matrix

Learning Capabilities & Expectations Data Alignment Matrix			
Learning Capabilities (= Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory Combination of Concentration/Interest/Enjoyment)	Quant. Survey Data	Qual. Interview Data	Quan/Qual Analysis & Themes
How I see myself in this class	Questions with sig. diff. $p = <$ .10	Questions in alignment w/survey	
Self-Esteem (SE)		#8. Describe how you felt when the work became challenging, and how you felt when you completed the work. *Application of Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory	
Self-Concept (SC)		#8.	
Resilience (R)		#7. Describe how you were able to complete challenging assignments. *Application of Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory	
Self-Regulation (SR)		#6. Was there a difference in how hard you tried to complete your arts assignments versus assignments for a non-arts class? *Application of Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory	
Self-Efficacy (SEF)		#5. Did you feel capable of successfully completing the learning and assignments? *Application of Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory	
<u>Learning Expectations</u> (= Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory Level of Challenge)			
In this class, I am expected to	Questions with sig.	Questions in alignment w/survey	

	diff. p = < .10		
Explanation (EXP)		#1. Think about a time you have spent in any high school arts class (i.e., visual arts, music, and drama); describe the activities or events that you were engaged or busy with during the class? If you have been enrolled in more than one class please only select one to consider for these questions. #3. What do you recall about the expectations of the arts class requirements? *Application of Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory	
Interpretation (INP)		#2. Was there a difference in the ways you participated in an arts class as compared to a non-arts class? #4. Were these expectations different from other types of classes? *Application of Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory	
Application (APP)		#2.	
Perspective (PERS)		#4.	
Empathy (EMP)		#5.	

Athena I. Revelas-Nichols

athena.nichols@waldenu.edu

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS:

Creative and accomplished PhD candidate and educator with over 20 years of professional experience. I teach others to aspire, engage, and excel.

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy – Education, Art Education Specialization Expected 2014
Walden University, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Dissertation Topic - Examining the Role of Active Student Engagement in High School Arts Courses
G.P.A. – 4.0

Master of Science – Educational Administration 1997
Brockport State University, Brockport, New York

Bachelor of Science – Interdisciplinary Arts for Children, Painting Concentration 1993
Minors – Psychology, Studio Art
Brockport State University, Brockport, New York

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Roberts Wesleyan College, Rochester, NY 2013-Present
Adjunct Professor
Teach Contemporary Issues in Art Education Methods, Curriculum Teaching and Assessment Methods in Art Education, K-12 Art Education Student Seminar, Supervise Student Teacher placements in local area school districts.

- Practice excellence in teaching and instruction.
- Demonstrate evidence of professional growth and academic currency.
- Understand, appreciate, and value diverse cultural perspectives.
- Extensive experience and knowledge of pedagogical methods to inspire learning.
- Continually strive to improve instruction through:
    a. Self-analysis and evaluation.
    b. Observation and study of instructional techniques for lecture or performance.
    c. The use of technology where applicable to enhance the learning environment.
    d. Continual revision and updating of learning objectives and course content.
    e. Assessment, measurement, and evaluation approaches that support causal inference and advance data.

Albion Central School District, Albion, NY 1993- Present

Tenured Art Teacher – Grades 9-12 2005 – Present

Tenured Art Teacher – Grades 1-12 2000-2005

Differentiate instruction for students with a variety of learning styles in grades 9-12. Provide visual arts instruction including high school art courses: Studio Art, Drawing, Advanced Drawing, Painting, Advanced Painting, Sculpture, 3D Concepts, Pottery, and Web Design.

- Use positive reinforcement to encourage students to set and accomplish artistic and academic goals while improving skill sets.
- Use leadership skills to write and implement art curriculum; mentor student teachers and non-tenured teachers.
- Organize and install annual senior art show; organize and maintain school's art galleries.
- Apply local, state, and national contest criteria as real world learning opportunities for students. As a result, students earned awards and recognition in the following contests: American Legion Poppy Poster Contest, Strawberry Festival Poster Contest, Genesee/Orleans Council on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, Inc., and other art competitions.

Art Club Advisor 2005-Present

Organize and facilitate student leadership opportunities within the arts including community service, school service, and college portfolio readiness.

- Lead students as curators of the Albion High School Arts Foyer and two cafeteria art galleries within the building; maintain galleries.
- Organized and installed wall-mounted gallery system for a collection of over 100 school owned pieces of artwork, including two and three-dimensional pieces.
- Engaged students to re-design and create Albion Central School District's logo, including a large wooden emblem displayed at the annual commencement ceremony.
- Directed students to complete Albion High School murals located in Principal's office and along corridor walls.
- Involved students with mural painting for a school-wide campaign, "Chain Reaction," during Anti-Bullying Week.
- Structured numerous opportunities for students to complete service learning opportunities for local area businesses and organizations.
- Facilitate watercolor workshops for school sponsored Senior Citizens Day.

Adult and Continuing Art Education Instructor 1999-2005

Planned, advertised, and instructed creative art lessons for adult learners to participate and successfully execute several corresponding art projects. Each workshop series took place two nights a week ranging from 6-12 weeks in length.

- Jewelry Making and Its History
- Decorative Painting: A Series of Workshops
- Marvelous Mosaics

Super Saturday Art Specialist 1999-2003

Prepared and taught series of art workshops to groups of identified underprivileged, middle school age students with each student successfully creating works of art for a culminating end of series exhibit/reception.

- Pottery
- Mosaics
- Drawing and Painting
- Jewelry Making
- Photographic Collage

Tenured Classroom Teacher-Grade 5 1993-2000

Team teacher in a self-contained classroom with flexible block scheduling.

- Piloted IBM's Writing to Write Program.
- Served as the editor and designer of the school's literary magazine.
- Provided art direction for school musicals.
- Served as Art Contest Judge, High School Cheerleading Coach and Competition Judge, and Spelling Bee Announcer.

Holley Central School District, Holley, NY 1993

Substitute Teacher – Grades 1-5

Established a reputation as a highly sought teacher with both long and short term engagements.

- Developed enrichment, remedial, curriculum centered and integrated units.
- Responsible for discipline, supervisory duties and behavior management.
- Enforced rules, regulations, and policies; conducted conferences.

COMMITTEES & ELECTED POSITIONS:

Served on seven committees dedicated to the application of positive, district-wide changes resulting in the structure of three targeted goals involving academics, character, and attendance. Extensive experience writing department, building, and district level SMART goals for updates given to the Board of Education. Assisted in the planning, writing, and implementing of teacher evaluation procedures.

Laureate HigherEd Opinion Research Panel	2012-2013
Technology and Social Media Committee	2012-2013
Wellness Committee	2012-2013
Principal's Advisory Board	2010-2013
Served on Aspirations Committee	2008-2011
Served on National Honor Society Faculty Selection Committee	2009-2010
Served on Interview Committee	2009-2010
Served on Professional Growth Plan Committee	2004-2005
Elected Member of Building Leadership Team	1994-1999
Elected Member of the Natural Helpers Association	1994-2004
Elected Teacher's Association Representative	1993-1996

COMMUNITY SERVICE:

New York State Science Fair Judge –National FFA Convention	2009, 2013
HOSPICE of Orleans 12 foot outdoor fundraising sign	2011-2012
PAWS Animal Shelter murals	2010-2011
Face paint stations Strawberry Festival Albion, NY	2009-2010
Healthy advertisements and posters for school nutrition initiatives	2009-2010
Window dressings and displays for area businesses and organizations	2008-2009
School decorations, 12 foot paintings -Jazz Band dinner dance	2008-2009
The Villages Nursing Home Holiday decorations	2006-2008
The Orleans County Nursing Home Murals	2007-2008
Community as Schools Mural	2006-2007
Competitive Cheerleading and Dance Judge	2004-2007

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (Recent):

Dedicated to the completion of at least fifteen professional development hours per year to stay current on emerging topics and trends in Education.

Academic Vocabulary and Complementing Strategies
Alternative Assessments
Differentiated Classroom Techniques
Beyond Lecture
Aspirations for Student Success
Curriculum Development
How to Talk So Students Will Listen
Enhancing Lessons with Powerful Questions
Practical Strategies for Working with Difficult Kids
Bullying Among Students
Trained in Mediation and Natural Helpers Association
Service Learning with Author Catherine Berger-Kaye

LICENSES & CERTIFICATIONS:

New York State, Elementary Education N-6	Permanent Certification
New York State, Art Education K-12	Permanent Certification

PUBLICATIONS:

Nichols, A. (2006). Creative Learning: News in the Arts. *The Link*

Revelas, A. (2004). Faith. In Ely, H. (Ed.), The international who's who in poetry (pp. 2-3). Owings Mills, MD: Watermark Press.

Revelas, A. (1998). Notes on Education. [Special section] *Parent Newsletter: Albion Middle School, October* 2-3.

Revelas, A. (1994). Preparing Your Middle Schooler for Success. [Special section] *Parent Newsletter: Albion Middle School, September* 2-3.

HONORS & AWARDS:

Department of Environmental Conservation Teacher Award, NY	2008
Manhattan Arts International Exhibition Award, NY	2008
Plates to Pixels International Juried Exhibition Award, OR	2008
Swan Library Annual Art Exhibit the People's Choice Award, NY	2008
Orleans Chamber of Commerce Excellence in Service & Teaching Award, NY	2007
Orlo L. Derby Award in Elementary Education	1992
Distinguished Academic Achievement Award	1992

SHOWS, EXHIBITS & MEDIA:

Genesee Community College Show, NY	2008
Manhattan Arts International, Healing Power Exhibition, NY	2008
Plates to Pixels, International Juried Exhibition, OR	2008
Treasure Island Exhibition Auction by Invitation, NY	2005-2007
Faculty Show, NY	2006
Wonders of Winter Exhibition Award Winner, NY	2004
Press & Media Interview, NY	2004
Pasadena Art Expo Juried Exhibition, CA	2004
Photography & the Tropics Show, Bahamas	2004

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS:

Member, Golden Key Honor Society	2013-Present
Member, National Education Association	1993-Present
Member, New York Stat Art Teachers' Association	2005-Present
Member, Artists Alliance of Orleans County	2009-2011
Member, The Society of Decorative Painters	2003-2006
Member, Every Woman's Business & Entrepreneurs Association	2003-2006
Member, The George Eastman House	2003-2006

TECHNOLOGY SKILLS:

Office 2010, Adobe Photoshop, FrontPage, Grade Quick, Edline, Publisher, Macromedia Dreamweaver, Macromedia Flash, Macromedia Fireworks, Autodesk 3ds Max Design.

REFERENCES:

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Jeffrey Grubbs, PhD.
Art Education Coordinator
Department of Art
University of Arkansas at Little Rock