


2015

Elementary School Teachers' Perception of Art Integration to Improve Student Learning

Lynn Maxey Fagan
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Lynn Maxey Fagan

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Walden University
2015

Abstract

Elementary School Teachers' Perception of Art Integration to Improve Student Learning

by

Lynn Maxey Fagan

MA, Walden University, 2006

BS, University of Georgia, 2000

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

June 2015

Abstract

Teachers are seeking effective teaching strategies to support an array of student learning needs. The arts hold the potential to transform the learning experience for students; however, the use of art integration is limited and unknown to many educators. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to interview and observe 8 elementary school teachers who were identified by the school administration as successfully having integrated art into the curricula, defined by teaching with and through the arts across all content areas. The intent of this study was to explore the participants' perceptions about the use of art integration in the classroom, effective practices for integrating art into the curricula, and the way art integration supports student learning and provides focus for student learning. Constructivist theory and the theory of multiple intelligence served as conceptual frameworks for this study by relating to the need for students to build learning from social engagement and experience, and to learn from different perspectives which can be facilitated through arts integration. Data collected from the 8 teacher participant pool through 8 interviews and 4 classroom observations were analyzed with open coding followed by axial coding to determine emergent themes. Results suggest that art integration enriches the entire learning experience. Teachers used art to make the curriculum visible to students. Students interacted with the curriculum through art making, and finally demonstrated understanding in an art form. Teachers credited the use of art integration for higher levels of learning due to increased student engagement through hands on activities, real life connections, document-based inquiry, and collaborative learning. The findings of this study suggest the expanded use of art integration may lead to social change in the classroom that will improve student learning.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving and supportive family, especially my four awesome children, Matthew, Zach, A.J., and Kelly. I could not have completed this paper without their understanding, patience, and encouragement. I want to also thank my fellow colleagues who tirelessly encouraged me and held me to completion of my doctoral degree. This dissertation is also dedicated in loving memory to my father and grandmother who always believed in me.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The problem that prompted this qualitative case study is the need for teachers to effectively teach each student in a method that not only meets the individual needs but pushes students to perform at higher levels of academic achievement. Teachers are held accountable for closing the achievement gap exposed by standardized testing. With the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) established in 2001 by the United States Department of Education, the focus of education turned to improving student achievement based on standardized test scores. NCLB established the requirement and expectation that every child will meet or exceed on assessments measuring his or her knowledge and understanding of curricula content developed for his or her grade level. Student learning and achievement levels are measured by standardized, high stakes tests that not only drive classroom instruction but determine if a student will advance to the next grade level or graduate.

Heeding the warnings and concerns over the effects of NCLB, the Center on Education Policy (CEP)—a national, independent advocate for public education—conducted comprehensive studies on the impact NCLB has had on curriculum and instruction (CEP, 2007). The CEP findings suggested NCLB has increased the time spent on testing Language Arts and Math by 62%, significantly reduced time for other subjects, and has a higher level of impact on school districts with identified areas of improvement. Resulted changes in the curricula reflect a greater emphasis placed on tested content and skills, leaving the remaining curriculum areas battling for instructional time and resources

(Armstrong, 2009). This imbalance between tested and nontested curricula creates significant gaps in student learning (Goldberg, 2008; Holzer, 2009).

Problem Statement

The challenges teachers face in a time when school improvement is primarily being defined by standardized testing is finding alternatives to instruction that foster engaging and effective learning experiences for all students. Armstrong (2009) suggested that the legacy of the NCLB (United States Department of Education, 2001) is a shift from the education of individual students to a focus on tests, standards, and accountability. Therefore, educators and administrators need to look for creative alternatives to constructively deal with this trend. The real challenge is to create meaningful learning experiences for students (Costa & Kallick, 2000; Gullatt, 2007; Stronge, 2007). This study was conducted in an elementary school experiencing these same challenges. The research site has in place a local school plan for improvement to increase academic performance of students in Grades 3 to 5 to a level of meets or exceeds on state standardized assessments in the areas of literacy, mathematics, and science (GCPS, 2014). This qualitative case study addresses the use of art integration to create engaging and creative instruction as a viable solution to address this problem.

The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (2011) prepared an executive summary acknowledging that art integration models have yielded promising results in closing the achievement gap. In their report, the Committee found that significant "instrumental outcomes [can be] derived from high quality arts education in" for example, "student achievement, typically as represented by...performance on

standardized tests” (PCAH, 2011, p. 18). The visual arts provide rich material and hands-on engaging activities that foster learning and can mitigate the over emphasis on standardized testing (Gullatt, 2008; Holzer, 2009). Art integration allows teachers to engage the students in work that expands learning beyond the mere memorization of knowledge to levels that apply knowledge through effective learning practices (Baker, 2013; Rabkin & Redmond, 2006; Raudonis, 2011). Using the arts as an alternative pathway to understand content enables students to connect and apply otherwise disconnected concepts, content, and vocabulary (Burnstein & Knotts, 2010; Nelson, 2008). Art integration can lead to holistic and authentic learning experiences that foster opportunities for in-depth understanding and meaningful learning (Russell-Bowie, 2009).

The Nature of the Study

The nature of the study is to examine the basic instructional principles and processes involved with art integration in the elementary school curriculum from the perspective of teachers. The study is framed by four research questions: (a) What are the teachers’ general perceptions concerning using art integration in the elementary classroom? (b) What practices have the teachers found to be effective in integrating art into their elementary classroom? (c) How does art integration support student learning? and (d) How does art integration provide a focus on student learning instead of standardized test scores?

The qualitative case study approach, which strives to describe meaning of a lived experience for participants, was best suited for the goals of this study (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2011; Hatch, 2001; Merriam, 2002). This approach allowed me to develop a

deeper understanding of the arts integrated learning experience. Complete details outlining the research design are discussed in Section 3, Methodology.

Purpose of the Study

The arts serve to enrich our lives in many ways, such as aesthetic beauty, functional design and creativity, personal expression, and cultural representation. However, the arts are often questioned by the public, politicians, and educational policy makers as to what value and role the arts play in education, and if the arts can enrich student learning (McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, & Brooks, 2005). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the instructional practices of art integration in an elementary school setting using interviews and observations that allowed me to explore the process of art integration in depth within the instructional setting where they are practiced (Briggs & Coleman, 2007; Glesne, 2011; Hatch, 2002). Art integration is a shift from conventional instruction that has focused on standardized testing and a lack of creativity. The strategy of art integration addresses the diversity of learning styles and student needs in order to improve student learning (Albers & Harste, 2007; Deasy, 2008; Oreck, 2006; Rabkin & Redmond, 2006; Raudonis, 2011). Findings from this case study may provide insight into the practices of art integration that may benefit other teachers and lead to opportunities for more enriched student learning through art integration.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study has its basis in two theoretical sources: social constructivism and multiple intelligence theory. Each in its respective way is

described in turn and provides a conceptual lens to examine art integration in the curriculum and the teacher's role in facilitating this instructional process.

Constructivist Theories

Constructivist theories of education suggest that learners are participatory members of the classroom and are actively building their own knowledge and understanding of the content taught, and that learning is not isolated or separated from previous experiences, nor prior knowledge. Au (1998) credited Vygotsky (1987) in impacting the constructivist approach of learning to include the influences of social, cultural, and historical factors as well as encouraging the development of higher cognitive levels of learning (pp. 299-300). Bruner's (1961) constructivist approach to learning saw learning as an active process where the student constructs knowledge through three stages: first enactive or action based information; second, iconic or images, and third, through symbolic or language form (McLeod, 2008). Bruner (1996) suggested teachers should facilitate student learning through the encouragement of thinking, problem solving, and discovering principles by themselves. Additionally, Efland (2002) applied constructivist theories to art education and asserted that integrating knowledge from many subjects through art creates a learning experience that cultivates a deeper understanding while activating the cognitive potential of the learner. Believing art integration makes cognitive demands on thinking, Efland further suggested that art integration awakens intellectual inquiry and can widen the powers of understanding in growing minds. Marshall (2007) characterized constructivist theory as an interactive process of learning and further suggested that image making and visual imagery play a

vital role in constructing new insights and learning. Moreover, the constructivist theory provided the foundation for the successful Reggio Emilia approach that placed emphasis on children building knowledge through the arts (Gandini, 1993; Schroeder, 2008).

Hence, the purpose of this study is to provide an understanding of the potential of arts integration. Arts integration has the potential of enriching student learning experience and increasing student levels of engagement and achievement. The research site in this study follows the ArtsNOW model for art integration in all content areas as a means to reach the school vision of providing quality, engaging instruction that allows the students to be actively involved in their learning through a variety of hands on opportunities to help all students succeed (Gwinnett County Public Schools, 2014).

Theory of Multiple Intelligences

Sharing the constructivist mindset that students learn in a complex integration of methods, Gardner (1983, 1999) developed a theory of multiple intelligences (MI) in which he identified the seven original forms of intelligences. Verbal-linguistic intelligence requires the sensitivity to spoken and written word. Logical-mathematical intelligence involves the capacity to analyze problems logically. Spatial intelligence is the potential to recognize and manipulate patterns. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence is the potential to use one's body to solve problems or fashion products. Musical intelligence encompasses talents and aptitudes in music composition and performance. Interpersonal intelligence is a person's capacity to understand the intentions and motivations of other people, and intrapersonal intelligence involves the potential to understand oneself. Gardner (1999) extended his list with two additional intelligences by adding naturalist,

one which has an acute awareness and understanding of nature, and existential, which is one who can embrace the vastness of the universe Adopting the theory of MI has a direct impact on practices within the classroom by changing instructional practices and expanding learning opportunities for students to address the different intelligences (Armstrong, 2009; Gardner, 2011; Lemov, 2010). Christodoulou (2009) called educators to stop asking how smart a student is, and to ask instead, what innate talents, strengths and abilities the students' have. To address the MI of students, teachers must incorporate a variety of stimulating learning experiences that cultivate each student's unique blend of intelligences and encourage the intermixing of intelligences to yield meaningful learning (Armstrong, 2009; Moran, Kornhaber, & Gardner, 2006). Using art integration to provide the needed variety in classroom instructional practices was explored in this study. As Gardner (1999) suggested, the arts should be an important part of learning and as a valuable tool to effectively reach the range of intelligences presented by students and teachers. Rich experiences allow students to learn along several dimensions at once. For example, strong spatial intelligence may improve the ability to conceptualize mathematical concepts, and strong musical intelligence may spark an interest in writing (Moran et al., 2006).

Gardner's theory MI is not without critics. Holding (2009) criticized Gardner's use of the word intelligence to identify what he believed to be an individual's ability or talent. Furthermore, Waterhouse (2006) argued Gardner's theory of MI "lacked empirical evidence and has no validating data published in the fields of cognitive psychologists, cognitive neuroscientists, or evolutionary psychologists in support of MI" (2006, p. 208).

Waterhouse further suggested that the theory of MI “should not be applied in education” (2006, p. 247). Similarly, Sternberg (1999) criticized Gardner’s theory of MI, referring to it as an “extreme” theory of intelligence, one that ignored the theory of general intelligence, and has not been subjected to rigorous empirical tests (1999, p. 436). Even supporters of using the theory of MI in the classroom, Silver, Strong, and Perini (1997), acknowledged gaps and limitations in Gardner’s theory due to the narrowed focus on content and disciplines and the neglect in addressing the process of how an individual learns.

In an argument for the integration of art into the curriculum, Efland (2002) recommended Gardner’s view of a comprehensive education that would enable students to become proficient through a vast array of educational experiences. Efland warned that failure to accommodate the different domains of learning would result in over simplified learning experiences that would not prepare the students for higher levels of learning. Efland further stated that Eisner’s and Gardner’s pleas on behalf of the arts in education are quite similar. Eisner (2002) argued that the arts evoke both complex and subtle forms of thinking through the meaningful creation of images to the emotional experiences of perception. Eisner (2002, 2004, 2008) suggested that the arts foster critically important cognitive skills, such as sensibility, imagination, representation, problem solving, and a way of knowing. Additionally, Burnaford, Aprill, and Weiss (2013) stated that the arts deepen the level of instruction and student learning through authentic interaction with the content.

In summary, the conceptual framework for this study is based upon the educational theories of constructivist and MI. Art integration involves engaging students in learning and takes into consideration a variety of learning styles and needs. The instructional approach of art integration may offer teachers new avenues in designing learning environments for students.

Operational Definitions

The following definitions frame the study:

Achievement gap: The imbalance of success exposed by test scores for students of minority and poverty (Walker, 2002).

Adequate yearly progress (AYP): The measure of a school's ability to meet federally mandated benchmarks set through curriculum specific performance standards involving identified student subgroups (Creswell, 2007).

Art educator: A trained art teacher who possesses characteristics of being a highly skilled, dedicated, proficient, reflective practitioner of best practices (National Art Educators Association, 1999).

Art integration: Using the arts as curriculum partners in the regular education classroom to teach other content areas and make meaningful connections that engage the students in critical thinking (Burnaford et al., 2013; Smilian & Miraglia, 2007).

ArtsNOW professional development model: The training for school teams in how to implement arts integration in the regular education classroom. This training model was developed in 1994 by Creating Pride, a nonprofit organization with a mission and vision to equip teachers with the skills needed to present the curriculum in creative and

engaging ways through the use of true arts integration as a means to foster student growth academically, socially, and artistically (ArtsNOWLearning, 2013; Creating Pride, 2007).

Collaboration: The partnership between the art teacher and teachers from other curriculum areas (Burnaford et al., 2013). This partnership shares the responsibility to provide students with engaging content enriched through the introduction of the arts. “Integration of knowledge is maximized when works of art are used as the keys to understanding” (Efland, 2002, p. 164).

Curriculum: This encompasses English and language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and physical education as outlined by the Georgia performance Standards adopted by the Georgia Department of Education (Georgia Department of Education, 2011). The curriculum content and instructional calendar will follow the school district studied established curricula known as Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS), identifying what teachers are to teach and students are to learn (GCPS, 2011).

High stakes testing: Standardized tests that determine if a student will move up in grade level or graduate from high school (Munoz, 2013).

Multiple intelligences: Intelligence model generated and expanded by Gardner (1983, 1999). Gardner (1983) developed a theory of MI in which he identified the seven original forms of intelligences (see Conceptual Framework). Gardner (1999) expanded his list of intelligences adding naturalist, which enables a person to recognize features of nature, and existential, which entails the ability to consider questions about life and ultimate realities. Silver et al. (2000) characterized the theory of MI as the relationship between learning content and the eight domains of knowledge the students represent.

Learning styles: Silver et al. (2000) called for a combination approach to classroom instruction identifying four learning styles: the sensing-thinking style of the mastery learner, the sensing-feeling style of the interpersonal learner, the intuitive-thinking style of the understanding learner, and the intuitive-feeling style of the self-expressive learner. Silver et al. stated that the learning style model focuses on the process of learning for the individual students and differs from Gardner's theory of MI that focuses on the content of learning. Silver et al. further suggested the two theories complement each other and should be integrated into the learning experience for students.

Student engagement: A student's attitude toward school, his or her participation in school activities, the extent to which a student identifies with and values learning outcomes, and the student's sense of belonging (Willms, 2003).

Visual arts: Instruction designed toward fostering creative expression and developing skills in drawing, painting, design, pottery, sculpture, and computer graphics through art history, art production, art criticism, and aesthetics (Fowler, 1996).

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope and Delimitations

Assumptions

Underlying assumptions are present in this study. It is assumed that elementary teachers must create an engaging classroom environment to enable all students to learn and meet achievement expectations on both standardized tests and curriculum content. It is further anticipated that art integration could serve as an instructional strategy needed in the elementary classroom to ignite creativity, engagement, and learning for all students. It is also assumed that the ArtsNOW (Artsnowlearning, 2013; Creating Pride, 2007) model

educates teachers on how to develop and implement art integrated instruction in their elementary classrooms. Moreover, the assumptions exist that the participants would respond openly and honestly during the interviews as well as freely provide access to the classrooms and curricula documents during observations. As the researcher, I anticipate that the findings of this study may provide valuable insight towards explaining how the visual arts are effectively integrated into the curricula as well as possible evidence supporting the potential value the visual arts bring to the students' learning experience.

Limitations

This study was limited in that all participants attended professional development on integrating the arts offered exclusively by ArtsNOW. The training and participation of participants in only one educational model for arts integration may suggest limitations towards fully understanding both the benefits of art integration and the strategies for implementing art integration in the elementary classroom.

The research site was selected because of its commitment to integrating the arts into every classroom and across all content areas (Magill Elementary, 2014). The school chosen was partnered in collaboration with the ArtsNOW integration model of teacher development and resources, which are dedicated to providing tools teachers need to create engaging classroom instruction through the integration of art across all disciplines on a daily basis (Artsnowlearning, 2013; Creating Pride, 2007). Since the participants received professional development prior to the study, a limitation of the study is that I was unable to observe instructional strategies used prior to implementing art integration.

Another limiting factor was in the study's design. Data were collected from eight teacher interviews and four classroom observations. Data gathered from a small number of teachers may not present the perceptions of all teachers. Limited observations prevent me from viewing all art integration lessons and activities conducted across all content areas and each and every grade level.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this case study was bounded by a single elementary school located in the southeastern region of the United States. In the study, I focused on the art integration practices taking place within the elementary classroom as well as the teachers' perceptions of those practices. I gathered the perceptions of eight teacher participants within one suburban elementary school in the southeastern United States. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to conduct interviews and observations of teachers within the research site to inquire about the instructional practices of art integration and his or her general perceptions concerning the use of art integration in the elementary classroom, practices found to be effective in integrating art in elementary classrooms, how art integration supports student learning, and how art integration provides a focus on student learning and away from standardized test scores.

Delimitations of a study arise from the limitations, scope, and specific choices made by the researcher during the development of the study (Simon & Goes, 2013). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the instructional practices of art integration in an elementary school setting using interviews and observations that allowed me to explore the process of art integration in depth within the instructional

setting where they are practiced. The first delimiting choice was to narrow the scope of this study and its confinement to examining the teaching practices, classrooms, and perceptions of teachers within one elementary school. The teaching strategies studied were bounded by the instructional approaches supported by the Creating Pride (2007) ArtsNOW art integration model. The study was further narrowed by the choice to limit the number to eight participants, based on time and feasibility. Therefore, the participant pool was made up of teachers who had been identified by the local school principal as successfully integrating art into their classroom instruction.

Significance of the Study

It is the intention of this study to offer contributions to the knowledge and understanding of the instructional processes of art integration as a way to improve student learning. Standardized, high-stakes tests have become the measure of student achievement and the schools' level of progress. The local school used in this study incorporates authentic arts integration across all content areas with the intention of improving student academic achievement on state standardized tests. Believing art integration can facilitate improved academic performance, the school studied has set the long term goals that the school will increase the percentage of students who meet or exceed the state standardized assessment to 100% in literacy, mathematics, and science by the year 2016. Annual goals strive to have all students increase academic performance in the same content areas, resulting in 90% or better of the students in Grades 4 through 5 performing at meets or exceeds levels on the state standardized test. The arts offer educational potential by providing a variety of teaching and learning opportunities

(Dobbs, 1992; Gadsden, 2008; Marshall, 2007; Rabkin, 2010; Russell-Bowie, 2009; Swann, 2008). The President's Committee on Arts and the Humanities (PCAH, 2011) reported the arts as an "effective tool for school-wide reform" that addresses some of the biggest educational challenges as well as a way to equip students with the skills they needed to be successful in the ever-changing global market (p. 29).

Findings from this study add to the body of research that addresses the value of art integration in the elementary classroom as perceived by the classroom teachers. A deeper understanding may be provided by analyzing the potential strengths associated with elementary classrooms that use art integration to teach and engage students. Administrators, teachers, and art educators could potentially benefit from the findings of this study. Contributions are significant on four critical levels. First, an examination of teachers' general perceptions concerning using art integration in the elementary classroom was gathered. Second, an opportunity for teachers to share practices they have found to be effective in integrating art in their classroom was given. Third, teachers' perspectives on how art integration supports student learning were sought. Fourthly, positive social change came through a gained appreciation for how art integration can provide a focus on student learning instead of standardized test scores (Carroll, 2011).

Summary

How to improve student learning is at the forefront of education with data gathered from standardized tests serving as the driving force behind current decision making. This qualitative case study explored teachers' perceptions and practices of art integration within the elementary classroom setting. The conceptual framework for this

study is built on the constructivist theories approach to the learner as an active participant in constructing knowledge, acknowledging the theory of MI that helps to identify the variety of student needs within the classroom and embracing the instructional methods and approaches of art education. The research questions focused on participants' perceptions about the use of art integration in the elementary classroom, effective practices for integrating art into the curricula, the way art integration supports student learning, and the way art integration concentrates on student learning rather than standardized tests. Data collected from eight interviews and four classroom observations were used to explore the meaning participants attributed to using art integration in their classrooms. Successful art integration enriches the entire learning experience from content delivery, student interaction with content and final assessment. Study findings added to the body of research on the value of art integration. The findings are also expected to lead to positive social change: Expanded use of art integration should improve student learning.

Research explored in the literature review, offered in Section 2, provides a literature review including themes and theories that encompass the fields of education, cognitive science, and art education. Section 3 addresses the methodology of this study, including guiding research questions, the participant sample, and the method of data collection, analysis, and synthesizing applied in this study. In Section 4, I discuss the findings of the study to include uncovered themes that emerged inductively across data sources and the conclusion drawn regarding the implications of using an art integrated approach to increasing student engagement and achievement in the elementary school

setting. Finally, in Section 5, I provide an interpretation and summary of the study's findings, outline recommendations for action, examine the need for future research, suggest implications for social change, and present my reflections.

Section 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Today's teachers face the challenge of closing an achievement gap exposed by standardized testing. Careful examination of the achievement gap reveals an unprecedented diversity of students to include African American, Hispanic American, and students from low income families (Evans, 2005; Stronge, 2007). Successful gains in closing the achievement gap require teachers to breakout from conventional, narrow, and monotonous teaching practices. Art Integration may provide the means for closing this achievement gap. The purpose of this literature review was to examine the instructional idea of art integration from various research perspectives. The review is organized according to the following topics: theories on learning, MIs present in classrooms, instructional design to address student learning, teacher perception of art integration, and role of art in education. The literature search used the following terms: *art education, art integration, integrating curriculum in elementary school, student learning, student engagement, learning theory, multiple intelligence, and No Child Left Behind*. Primary sources related to the search terms including articles and scholarly journals were used. Multiple databases were searched online through EBSCO host, including Education Research Complete, ERIC, SAGE Education full-text collection, and ProQuest. Additional searches took place through the teacher reference center with school district studied database called Galileo and the Walden University Library. Literature chosen for review contributed to the understanding of art integration and the potential role it plays in

student learning, levels of engagement, and teachers' perceptions about the arts in the classroom as a teaching tool.

Learning Theories

Researchers have suggested there are many theories addressing how people learn. For the purpose of this study, the conceptual framework embraces the constructivists' approach to learning with a merger of Efland's (2002) art and cognition theory and Gardner's (1983, 1999, 2008) theory of MI. Both approaches support the role of arts in education as a positive catalyst for student learning

MI Theory

Gardner's (1983) work and the theory of MI was profound in the history of intelligence as it presented an alternative understanding of the mind, one that did not measure intelligences and predict success or failure but instead provided a range of cognitive competences and produced a very different role of education (Silver et al., 2000). Gardner (1993) suggested that classrooms need to be centered around the individual learners in order to accommodate the many different cognitive strengths and contrasting learning styles. Gardner (1983, 1999) originally identified seven intelligences and later added additional intelligences to complete the nine MI, which would include verbal-linguistic (an aptitude for verbal and written language), logical-mathematical (the capability to identify patterns, understand number sense and apply logic), spatial (the natural tendency to form mental or visual images as a method of problem solving), bodily-kinesthetic (having the natural skill to maneuver one's own body), musical (having the natural competence to understand and create music), interpersonal (being

sensitive and understanding of the moods and feelings of others), intrapersonal (having a self awareness of one's own self), naturalist (an acute awareness of nature), and existential (the capacity to consider possibilities beyond the known). Brualdi (1996) suggested every person possesses all of the intelligences at varied degrees, working concurrently, and complementing each other.

Gardner's approach found credence among researchers citing his multifaceted view using both cognitive science and neuroscience, supported by rich research and a stringent system of criteria (Armstrong, 2009; Jensen, 2008; Silver et al., 2000). In support of Gardner, Armstrong (2000) stated "MI is a theory of cognitive functioning, proposing that each person has capacities in all eight intelligences which function together in ways unique to each person" (p. 8). Armstrong (2009) suggested the MI theory encompasses what great teachers use to go beyond the traditional teaching methods to reach students. Researchers Poole, Dittrich, and Pool (2011) conducted an action research study to understand classroom application of the theory of MI using art integration in the lesson planning. Their research findings suggested students' interest and engagement increased when art integration was used as a pedagogical approach. Gardner (2009) defended his theory stating that MI has been helpful to educators by stimulating innovations in pedagogy, curriculum, and developing learning approaches. Furthermore, Gardner teamed with university-based educators and researchers from the Harvard Graduate School of Education to conduct research to further understand the implications and applications of the MI theory in education to include Project Zero, Project Spectrum, and Project SUMIT (Harvard, 2012; Veenema, Hetland, & Chalfen,

1997). Believing that MI theory had huge implications for the parents, schools, teachers, and culture as a whole, Gardner (1983) asserted that intelligences cannot be seen or counted on, but rather must be activated depending on the opportunities and decisions made by the individual or by the influential people in their lives.

Researchers within the educational realm emphasized the importance of teachers acknowledging and addressing each of the distinctive profiles their students possess (Armstrong, 2000, 2009; Gardner, 1999; Silver et al., 2000). Findings conducted within the educational setting suggested success in the classroom can be obtained from incorporating MI as a part of pedagogy and instructional approaches (Armstrong, 2009; Barrington, 2004; Hyland, 2011; Nolen, 2003; Ozdemir, Guneysey, & Tekkaya, 2006). Armstrong (2000) urged teachers not to limit students into only one of the intelligences and instead encouraged the identification of the students' preferred intelligence. Gardner (1993a) stressed the importance that teachers recognize and nurture all of the intelligences through varied and creative methods of presentation. Identifying a child's preferred intelligence can help the student learn more intuitively and lead to success in school (Lorenzi, 2011). Moreover, Goebel (2009) suggested that using Gardner's MI theory to differentiate instruction "transcends the rules that govern poverty" and provides the students with the tools necessary for success (2009, p.1). Gardner echoed the importance of recognizing and nurturing all of the diverse human intelligences and all combinations of intelligences in order to develop problem solving abilities needed to succeed in real world situations. McFarlane (2011) suggested applying MI in classroom

instruction provides an effective educational pedagogy to teach students of the 21st century.

Teachers are trusted to embrace and nurture each student who enters their classrooms, meeting the student at his or her current academic levels and fostering his or her growth to reach grade level expectations. Ormrod (2006) suggested educators find Gardner's theory of MI appealing because of the promising assessment of human potential. Additionally, Baroody (2006) suggested teachers find using MI theory appealing because of its adaptability to reach learners with both low and high levels of ability and achievement. A substantial part of the challenges faced in today's classroom is the wide range of levels in students' knowledge, abilities, motivation, and achievement. Teachers are challenged to address this diversity by providing thought provoking, engaging instruction and believing in every child's ability to learn. This, increasing one's repertoire with research based instructional strategies, such as art integration, enables teachers to rise and meet the challenge.

Gardner's MI theory does have its critics. Hyland (2011) cited several counts of criticism toward Gardner's MI theory to include questioning the criteria used for qualifying intelligences and confusion in the meaning of intelligences versus human ability; in addition, Gardner does not clearly state how his theory should be applied to education. Armstrong (2001) suggested the harshest criticism comes from the argument between talent verses intelligence. Delisle (2001) viewed Gardner's MI theory to be a threat to the gifted student and gifted programs in school, calling it convenient, simple, and wrong. Furthermore, Klein (1997) asserted that Gardner's theory has limitations

being too expansive to be useful in curriculum planning and presenting a fixed, nonchanging interpretation of student competence. Schuvler (2009) suggested the concept of individuals possessing MI is not new nor solely credited to Gardner. Schuvler proposed that people possess cognitive learning styles not intelligences. However, despite Schuvler's critical analysis of Gardner's MI theory, he acknowledges the benefits of adopting multiple factors toward learning on improving educational practices. Moreover, Peariso (2008) argued that Gardner's MI theory is widely accepted among the field of education because it addresses the emotional desire for equality with the belief that every student is intelligent in one way or another. In the face of criticism, Gardner's MI theory has helped to shape the field of education. McMahon, Rose, and Parks (2004) asserted that Gardner's MI theory has produced a desire in educators to develop a variety of teaching strategies that can better address the varied learning styles of students.

Constructivist Theory

Constructivism is defined as a theory of knowledge built on the premise that learners construct meaning based upon their previous knowledge, beliefs, and experiences (Walker, 2002). The constructivist theory is said to derive from the works of Dewey (1959), Piaget (1963), Vygotsky (1971), and others (Efland, 2002; Goldberg, 2001; Hesser, 2009; Liu & Matthews, 2005; Rabkin, 2010; Walker, 2002). Impacting education the constructivist theory calls for standards, challenging curriculum, availability of help for struggling students, professional development for teachers, meaning center learning environments, and equity for all students (Liu & Matthew, 2005; Walker, 2002). Walker (2002) elaborated, identifying principles of constructivism as it

applies to education: (a) The learner constructs his or her own knowledge and beliefs; (b) the students determine the meaning and value of a learning experience; (c) it is beneficial for new learning to be attached to prior knowledge and experiences; (d) learning cannot take place without consideration of the students' cultural and economic background; (e) providing opportunities for collaboration reinforces the learning experiences; (f) providing an opportunity for students to reflect on their own learning is necessary; (g) students should participate in self monitoring and assessing their own understanding of the content; and (h) the success or challenges of the learning experience can vary due to the complexity and individuality of the students. Rabkin (2010) called for a constructivist approach to education with a focus on the arts ability to improve student performance and attitudes toward learning, while promoting the development of cognitive, social, and emotional skills needed for success in the work place.

Potential Role of Art in Education

Efland's (2002) description of constructivism, as it applies to art education and the potential role of the arts in education was examined in this study. Efland presented an integrated view of cognition, merging the views that the mind computes using symbols, cognition is a constructive process, and learning includes the acquisition of social reality. In his approach to art and its role in cognition, Efland credited Gardner and Eisner in his adoption of their argument that different domains of knowledge use different cognitive abilities, citing that "the intuitive, creative, and emotional aspects of the arts offer an active source of insight, understanding and knowledge" (2002, p. 157). Efland called for the development of students' cognitive abilities in preparation for real-world situations

and the need for creative thinkers. Efland further suggested the arts offer unique ways of representing ideas and feelings by providing multiple perspectives unmatched by other systems. Efland argued the presence of arts in education is justified due to the cognitive abilities nurtured. Hetland, Winner, Veenema, and Sheridan (2007) supported Efland's stance stating that the arts teach mental habits of observing, envisioning, innovating, and reflecting. Kagan (2009) further advocated the arts in school because the arts use both schematic and procedural knowledge providing a healthy development of the brain. The theory of learning presented by Efland focused on the development of basic cognitive ability and assumes the development of artistic knowledge and skills to be a regular part of learning and cognition. Efland's constructivist approach to learning embraced the arts as valuable works created by mankind, rich in knowledge and beauty, for all to enjoy.

However, the constructivist view of learning is not without critics. Terhart (2003) contended that constructivism does not suggest the need for or offer a new educational model (as cited in Liu & Matthews, 2005). In addition, Fox (2001) warned that the constructivist emphasis on active participation of the learners neglected and dismissed passive participation experienced in memorization and mechanical learning methods found in traditional lecturing. Efland (2002) warned of the complexity of content demands flexibility and representation through a multiple of ways. Goldberg (2001) also described the state of education and learning as an opened ended process of gaining knowledge. Goldberg further suggested the arts could be used as a tool to aid in the pursuit of knowledge.

A significant amount of research has been conducted to identify the advantages art brings to the students' learning experience to cultivate an individual's imagination (Greene, 1995; Unrath & Mudd, 2011), foster creativity (Boldt & Brooks, 2006; Deasy, 2008; Isbell & Raines, 2012), develop social-emotional competencies (Brouillette, 2010; Scott, Harper, & Boggan, 2012), enhance cognitive development (Deasy, 2008; Eisner, 1998, 2002; Heid, 2005), develop students' creative thinking, critical thinking, problem solving skills, and higher order cognitive skills (Lampert, 2012; Miller & Hopper, 2010; Siegel, 2010), preserve and transmit heritage while promoting an appreciation and understanding of cultural diversity (Freedman & Stuhr, 2012; Keifer-Boyd, 2012), and provide links to real-world situations and content (Albers & Harste, 2007; Gadsden, 2008; Goldberg, 2006; Irwin, Gouzouasis, Grauer & Leggo, 2006). In addition, research has shown that art integration not only benefits the individual student but also has a positive effect on the learning environment. Art integration transforms the classroom into an engaging, interactive learning environment where learning is deepened and students succeed, thereby increasing student achievement (Burnstein & Knotts, 2010; Purnell, 2004; Raudonis, 2011; Spencer-Chapman, 2008). Art integration has been credited for creating stimulating, positive, nurturing learning environments (Flanagan, 2012; Rabkin & Redmond, 2006; Respress & Lutfi, 2006). Researchers have demonstrated that art integration is associated with academic gains across the curriculum, improves student learning, and fosters engaging learning environments (Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 1999; Catterall, 1998; Fowler, 1996; Gadsden, 2008; Rabkin, & Redmond, 2006). To gain knowledge of arts' potential in education, the purpose of this study is to use interviews

and observations of seven teachers in a suburban elementary school in the southeastern United States who have been identified by the school administration as successfully integrating art into their curricula to understand both their practices and their perceptions of art integration's effect in improving student learning.

Art Education and Cognition

This section of the literature review presents the stance and vision held by many art educators that the arts provide a critical and crucial component of education. Eisner's (2004) position and beliefs are firmly rooted in his knowledge of art and art education. He suggested that the goal of education should be to develop and inspire creative and inventive students in in the field of the arts. Eisner further defined artists as skilled creators of original works and ideas. Irwin and Reynolds (2010) credited Eisner for impacting both the field of art education and education as a whole with his view of teachers as performers capable of implementing an array of strategies to draw in the students and inspire learning while encouraging students to be active participants engaged in creative problem solving and meaningful learning.

Eisner (2004) argued that the experiences the arts make possible should take place in schools. Eisner identified the following experiences the arts make possible for students: (a) the opportunity to form their own opinion even if it differs from the norm, (b) the opportunity to tackle problem solving with an understanding there can be more than one solution and more than one approach to solving, (c) goals that are ever changing and can be adjusted, (d) the knowledge that a students' knowledge and understanding cannot be limited to words and numbers, (e) the depth of understanding cannot always be

put into words, and (f) excitement for learning comes from the anticipation of growth through new knowledge and experiences. With the identification of art's intrinsic values to education, Eisner suggested education should focus on identifying what should be taught and why, not on measuring achievement through higher test scores. Moreover, Eisner identified valuable lessons needed for preparing students for the future, stating schools should teach: the ability to form opinions, to apply an analytical approach to thinking, a variety of literacies that are thought provoking, provide opportunities to collaborate with other students, and foster a sense of community through service projects.

Through his writing, lectures, and research, Eisner (2008) elaborated on what he characterized as the value of the arts, along with what the arts can teach students. Expanding his position of the arts in education, Eisner stated that the improvement of education can be made possible through both scientific methods and methods that are deeply rooted in the arts, citing "the limits of language are not the limits of cognition" (2008, p.3). In his thesis presented after receiving the Lowenfeld Award (National Art Education Association, 2008), Eisner identified insights and practices he described as embedded in artistic practice and that are relevant for the improvement of education. Furthermore, Eisner argued educators should acknowledge that all things interact causing the form and content of learning to be inseparable. Additionally, Eisner called for nuance, encouraging educators to welcome the element of surprise into the classrooms. Addressing the classroom, Eisner suggested that practices needed to slow down and allow students to fully perceive what is actually there. He completed his list of insights with the recommendation for teachers to utilize open-ended tasks as a way to exercise

and develop the students' imagination and to explore the implications the arts have in education. Believing children deserve an educational experience that is filled with emotions, vitality, inquiry, exploration, and discovery, Eisner called for innovations that inspire new visions, standards, and practices in education.

Applying Research and Theory Within Classroom Instruction

With the massive body of research and theory surrounding education, the question becomes how to permeate classroom instruction to create effective teaching practices and engaging learning experiences for all learners. Solomon (2003) suggested using an expanse of hypotheses to impact the curriculum. She further suggested that educators use scientific knowledge base as the rationale for decision making, creating the template for the curriculum content, and instructional strategies (2003, p.77). In a call for action, Solomon warned that the high standards written and agreed upon will set on the closet shelf and collect dust if the classrooms are not transformed into creative environment enabling every child to achieve (2003, p. 103). Solomon further suggested highly engaging and interactive instruction that builds on students' prior knowledge in a way that stretches and expands the students' understanding of the content.

Acknowledging effective and engaging instruction is no easy task, Jensen (2001) warned against a simple, quick and easy approach for teaching standards, and suggested diverse approaches and strategies are needed to reach a wide range of learners (p. vi). Jensen expanded his theory of a brain based approach learning to argue that the arts can facilitate learning through engaging multiple competences to include physical, cognitive,

sensory and emotional capacities. School reform recommended by Jensen pushes the arts into the core of the curriculum in conjunction with integrating the arts into other subjects.

Echoing the need for diversity in teaching practices, Silver, Strong, and Perini (2000) called for an integrated approach using the arts. Silver et al. (2000) suggested a fusion of Gardner's (1983) MI theory and Jung's (1927) learning styles as an effective approach to create practical, feasible, and enjoyable learning experiences that address the diversity in student needs. Silver et al. (2000) further suggested teachers should allow learners to rely on their strongest intelligence to understand the content while fostering the development and flexible use of the sensing, thinking, feeling, and intuition dimensions of personality. In summarizing call for education to renovate, remodel, and improve, Silver et al. (2000) proposed that by uniting research knowledge of learning styles with MI when designing classroom instruction educators will be able to create engaging and enjoyable learning experiences. In a survey of the stated approaches to student learning there is a presence of overlapping themes and descriptors of effective learning experiences which include: accessibility to all students, engaging and enjoyable activities, hands-on active doing, while addressing all students senses, interest, cognitive, and emotional needs.

The Role of the Arts in Education

In NCLB, the arts are found among the core subjects of education and held accountable to national standards. Goals 2000: Educate American Act, passed in 1994 placed the arts among the core subjects, acknowledging the arts to be as important as english, mathematics, history, and science to education. Former U. S. Secretary of

Education, Richard Riley (1994, 1998) addressed the arts role in education on several occasions. Based on research findings from the study *Champions of Change* (The Kennedy Center for the Arts, 1999), Fiske (1999) asserted engaging in the arts will prepare our students with the skills that will facilitate success in the 21st Century . Fiske further called for the arts to be at the heart of education, providing creativity, perseverance, and sense of standards. Support for the arts role in education continues with current administration. President Obama’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities reported the president believes the arts are a necessary part of education to prepare students for the future (Dwyer, 2011). Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (2011) also reinforced the importance of the arts in education to help students become problem solvers and leaders in the future.

Goldberg (2001) identified creativity and imagination to be two of the most important qualities of effective education and spirited living, Furthermore, Goldberg suggests learning through the arts as an approach to teaching, citing the arts provide students an opportunity to make deep, powerful connections with the content, and to become involved intellectually, and personally in their own learning. Based on her research findings, Goldberg suggested the arts can be used effectively in classrooms three ways: “learning *about* the arts, learning *with* the arts, and learning *through* the arts” (2001, p. 25). Moreover, Goldberg’s position is one for broadening the potential of the arts in the classroom to serve as a methodology or strategy for learning which allows for creative exploration of subject matter. She stated art integration can create magical adventures in the classroom which open the doors to increased student understanding

(2001, p. 219). Goldberg (2006) called for the use of art integration to accommodate the learning of all students, especially those that come from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and English is their second language. Additionally, Goldberg encouraged classroom activities that promote creativity, foster collaboration, and develop the students' critical thinking and communication skills. Furthermore, Goldberg (2008) believed that what one learns from practicing the arts can carry over to enrich other parts of their lives.

Fowler (1996) presented a similar approach to arts in our schools, stating "the arts provide a fundamental source of human knowledge, cultivate students' imagination and originality, and provide significant ways for students to discriminate, communicate, and comprehend the human universe" (p. 4). Fowler also suggested the arts can infuse education on multiple levels as a core part on the curriculum, a means to develop thinking habits and as an interdisciplinary approach to teaching other subjects. Fowler asserted the arts "should take educational priority, developing a partnership with education with the goal of educational excellence" (1996, p. 181).

Integrating the arts throughout the curriculum is an approach gaining acceptance in the field of education based on positive findings in a growing amount of research. Research findings have identified positive changes in student achievement when students learn through the arts along with increased attendance, and engaging learning environments (Ashby, 2007; Fiske, 1999; Lynch, 2007; Smilan, 2007). Sherman (2010), serving as consultant for the American Federation of Teachers, called for art integration as the means to enliven the curriculum and transform individual students and entire

schools. Brouillette, Grove, and Hinga (2014) credit art integration for increasing student achievement and deepening learning for ELL students. The arts make all types of learning exciting (McDonald & Fisher, 2002). Snyder (2001) stated meaningful integration of the arts offers links to other disciplines to enhance student learning through connections, correlation, and integration. Intersections and interactions of the disciplines help teachers design curricula in which students experience more meaningful connections, a deeper understanding, and a fusing of new and old knowledge (Barrett, 2001; Zhanova, Rule, Montgomery, & Nielsen, 2010). Rabkin and Redmond (2006) asserted art integration transforms curriculum, moving classwork away from merely reproducing knowledge, toward using knowledge in authentic, meaningful ways. Teachers who effectively integrate the arts experience higher levels of student engagement and motivation, which leads to improved cognitive and social skills, and ultimately academic success of their students (Catterall, 2002; Rabkin & Redmond, 2006; Raudonis, 2011; Stevenson & Deasy, 2005). Educational research provides a wealth of evidence to support integrating the arts as a way to enrich and improve the educational experience for students.

Art Integration Defined

Acknowledging the benefits of the arts to education, this section reviews literature in order to define and depict art integration. Rolling (2012) called for a pluralistic approach to learning that uses the arts to go beyond the concepts and limitations of any one content area by making connections and inviting the students to think empirically, think expressively, question their context, and seek to gain new knowledge. Jensen

(2001) stressed that students can use the visual arts in every class, every day, and calls for the arts to be integrated across the curriculum, not segregated. Jensen (2001) emphasized that arts are not only a vital part of world students live in, the arts have the capabilities to serve as a tool for improving student learning and thinking. Burnaford, Aprill, and Weiss (2013) echo Jensen's (2001) cry for the visual arts in education stating the arts capacity to facilitate understanding, enrich learning, and promote higher order thinking skills.

Burnaford, et al. (2013), working in collaboration with the Chicago Arts Partnership in Education (CAPE) provide a definition of art integration as a powerful vehicle to cross boundaries using both cognitive and affective modes. In addition, they further suggested that an art-integrated curriculum requires artists, art educators, and classroom teachers to collaborate in the search and development of curriculum that creates the right fit between domains of knowledge, while teaching beyond the standards. To create the integration model suggested by Burnaford et al. (2013) the arts must become an intricate part of classroom instruction and reach across all content areas. Furthermore, the arts integration model suggested by Burnaford et al. (2013) uses curriculum integration to deepen instruction, uses project based learning, addresses MI, develops a synergy between content areas, connects to present knowledge, provides a means for students to commit concepts and content to memory, generates concrete evidence of learning, and finally provides a representation of history and culture. Changing Education through the Arts (CETA) suggests a similar definition of arts integration is a method of teaching which fosters creativity and facilitates learning through various art forms and art production (Silverstein & Layne, 2010). In a literature

review of research spanning twelve years in art integration, Burnaford, Brown, Doherty, and McLaughlin (2007) defined art integration in three categories:(a) facilitating learning in and through the arts, (b) making connection across curricular areas; and (c) engaging in collaborative learning

Taking advantage of the arts to improve education is not a new concept. Fowler (1996) called for the arts to serve as a catalyst for educational reform, transforming teaching and learning by establishing the connections between subjects in a way he believes only the arts can. Fowler elaborated his position suggesting art integration allows both teacher and students to engage in creative instruction and makes vital connections between content and subject areas. Citing findings from *Schools, Parents, Educators, Children, Teachers Rediscover the Arts* (SPECTRA, 1992), Furthermore, Fowler claimed that strong arts programs with their enormous educational potential created schools where students demonstrate a desire to learn and are invested and participate in the learning process. Valuing the benefits of the arts, Fowler warned that using an art integration model for instruction does not replace the need for an authentic fine arts program within the school. Moreover, Fowler called for the arts to take their place inside the core of education, by sharing objectives, and building relationships to general education.

The ArtsNOW model for art integration created by the nonprofit organization Creating Pride is the model used by the schools observed in this study (Artsnowlearning, 2013; Creating Pride, 2007). Therefore, the remainder of this section of the literature review will be focused on their philosophy and approach to art integration. ArtsNOW is a

state and county supported professional development for teachers in authentic arts integration. ArtsNOW encourages and prepares teachers to use creativity, and the arts to facilitate students learning and mastery of the Georgia performance standards. ArtsNOW teamed up with the local arts through the Atlanta Ballet, Department of Theater at Emory University, Georgia State University School of Music, and Savannah College of Art and Design with the goal of igniting the use of creativity and arts in the local schools (ArtsNowLearning, 2013). The model employed in this approach began with a weeklong training workshop for teachers and administrators, and consisted of: (a) helping school communities use the arts as an agent of change for students, institute a weekly school wide, (b) providing an opportunity to engage with the arts; such as, an “Art Hour”, and (c) identifying and developing school community art leaders (ArtsNowLearning, 2013; Creating Pride, 2007) ArtsNOW based their initiative and approach on the belief that when the arts are integrated into other content areas, creativity is ignited, and students excel academically, socially, and artistically (ArtsNowLearning Org., 2013; Creating Pride, 2007; Raudonis, 2011).

The ArtsNOW instructional model allows for mobility across a range of research-based teaching strategies from teaching creatively to the use of authentic arts integration (ArtsNowLearning, 2013; Creating Pride, 2007). Authentic arts integration is defined as actively engaging students in high quality, valuable learning experiences in an arts discipline and another content area (ArtsNOWLearning, 2013; Creating Pride, 2007). Through collaboration between classroom teachers, grade levels, and art specialist, the team identifies commonalities between the arts and nonarts disciplines in order to

develop integrated activities that cultivate at least one arts and one nonarts area in an engaging, active, relevant and meaningful experience for students (ArtsNowLearning, 2013; Creating Pride, 2007). Implementation of the ArtsNOW model is credited for increased student achievement, increased student engagement, and encouraging higher level thinking skills in students (Raudonis, 2011).

Examining the Opposition to MI

Art educators are fighting to secure a place within the educational system; however, many are cautious in supporting an integrative approach to art education. Abbs (1987) called the pushing aside of the arts in education as the destruction of aesthetics education in our schools. Fowler (1996) documented the perceptions of art educators as feeling victimized by the system, and not valued as an important part of education. Fowler continued his documentation by analyzing the objectives of art organizations and the development of national standards for the arts. Furthermore, Fowler stressed concern over taking the arts for art sake warning “art education would serve its own cause better if its relationship to general education were made more explicit” (p. 157). Goldberg (2001) acknowledged art as a subject matter in itself, emphasizing our young people need the valuable knowledge and experiences the arts bring to education. Goldberg further suggested the arts should remain a core subject in education while extending into other curriculum areas as a means to enrich and facilitate learning.

Fowler (1996) cautioned collegiate education classes and training leaves art educators and classroom teacher inadequately prepared to teach using an integrated model. He suggested education of art teachers needs to be revised and broadened in order

to prepare art teachers to teach more comprehensively. Fowler further argued that the regular classroom teachers were already overburdened thus would resist taking any responsibility for teaching the arts. Additionally, Fowler expressed concern for the classroom teacher ability to teach the arts because they have not received the formal training and education necessary to serve in the role of art educator. Gardner (2010) warned that there is a lack of standards in place for what counts as adequate or appropriate interdisciplinary work, and as a result, success depends on teachers embodying the knowledge they are going to teach, supported by a suitable school climate and a viable means of assessing.

Teacher Perception of Art Integration

Teachers serve a vital role in the implementation and success of art integration in the elementary classroom. Burnaford, et al. (2013) described the creation of art integration curricular as an artistic process itself, in which the teachers, art teachers, and artists work as a team. Buda, Fedorenko, and Sheridan (2012) called for art educators to be compassionate and understanding of the accountability and stressed placed on classroom teachers and encouraged art teachers to become “teacher of children through the arts”. Smilan (2007) identified the art educator’s role as one of leadership in educating the educators. Hausman (2012) suggested that the best art teachers realize that all academic areas connect and overlap in context and use the art processes to bring about new understanding. Acknowledging the challenges and rewards of art integration Burnaford, et al. (2013) identified steps the team of teachers and artists must undergo before art integration can happen with students to include: (a) building a team and vision,

(b) learning from each other, (c) trying new skills, (d) finding problems, and asking questions, (e) brainstorming and planning together, and (f) finding and using access points (p. 26). The process outlined by Burnaford et al. (2013) is one of exploration into foreign strategies and ways of thinking, engaging in new materials, and taking risks.

Implementing art integration has direct effect on teachers and teaching practices. Arts for Academic Achievement (AAA), a research study conducted by the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement at the University of Minnesota, encompassed a 4 year project to transform teaching and learning through art integration. Werner and Freeman (2001) summarized findings from AAA to identify changes in teacher practices in the areas of learning and leadership. Through personal interviews, group interviews and classroom observations AAA identified two significant areas of change to be how teachers conceptualize learning and how teachers approach classroom instruction (Werner & Freeman, 2001). Anderson and Ingram (2003) in continuation of the AAA project summarized the teacher survey results during the fourth year to identify changes in teacher attitudes. Their findings revealed the teachers were more positive in their attitudes regarding the effectiveness of learning, schools attentiveness to supporting the arts, and engagement of the students in the classroom (Anderson & Ingram, 2003).

Insight from teachers involved with Arts for Academic Achievement (AAA) provided positive and encouraging benefits, while revealing the realistic challenges in implementing art integration in the classroom. Ingram (2007) collected data from teachers involved in AAA for multiple years with the purpose of identifying what teachers perceived to be benefits for students and teachers. Through teacher focus groups

Ingram identified the benefits of art integration for students to be: (a) providing a place for struggling students to shine; (b) helping English language learners have success in the classroom; (c) helping to develop peer relationships; (d) creating powerful and memorable learning experiences; (e) helping students remember and understand academic content; and (f) providing challenges for strong academic students.

Furthermore, Ingram found that teachers using the AAA program: (a) expanded instructional strategies used in the classroom; (b) expanded the comfort zone in the classroom to be more flexible; (c) saw new capacities in students and gaining empathy; and (d) gained a better understanding what students feel when they struggle or take risk.

Teachers with years of experience in AAA are a valuable source of knowledge for future schools wanting to implement art integration. Data gathered by Ingram showed that there are challenges in implementing art integration into the classroom. Some of the challenges include finding time for collaboration, getting more teachers to participate, making sure the arts are truly integrated and not just add-ons, budget restraints and cuts, overwhelmed multiple initiatives, and intense pressure to make adequate yearly progress and improve standardized test scores.

Literature Related to Research Methods

As a nation strives to reform education and ensure that every child achieves, researchers, educators, and research organizations are combining efforts to study effective schools to learn what is working and what strategies effectively increase student achievement. The Chicago Arts Partnership in Education (CAPE) is one such research group that brought together local artists, art agencies, teacher-artists into partnership with

teachers at all grade levels. CAPE conducted a six year initial study of 37 public schools, 53 professional arts organizations, and 27 community organizations. The motivation of CAPE was to advance art integration as an inventive approach to teaching and learning through collaborative efforts of the schools and community. Additionally, the CAPE partnership was built on: “(a) integration of the arts (dance, theater, music, literary arts, media arts, and visual arts) into other curricular areas (mathematics, science, social studies, language arts, physical education, foreign languages); (b) commitment of time for collaborative planning; (c) developing long term relationships of a professional community; (d) facilitate long-term professional development; (e) establishing arts education policy; and (f) providing access to arts learning for all students” (Weiss, 2001, p. xxxvi).

The results from CAPE suggest positive changes in school climate, increased support from school administration, successful collaboration among teachers and artists, and teachers’ belief in art integrative curriculum. Positive findings led CAPE to recommend a commitment to providing quality art integration that can be measured by standards based assessments. Fiske (1999) credited the research and findings from CAPE as enriching and supporting other research efforts regarding the benefits of implementing an arts integrated curriculum.

DeMoss and Morris (2002) continued the research of Chicago Arts Partnership in Education (CAPE) arts integration model and veteran partnerships to conduct an exploratory analyses to deepen our understanding of students’ learning when given the opportunity to engage with the curriculum through arts integration. Researchers DeMoss

and Morris (2002) conducted a deeper exploration into how the arts might facilitate student growth by asking important questions; such as: (a) What might the learning look like? (b) Can the many facets of student development be identified and assessed? and (c) How do the mental processes and thinking habits observed come together to explain student achievement and individual growth? Classroom observations, interviews, and student compositions lead to identifying a distinction between “arts integration” and “arts enhancement” (DeMoss & Morris, 2002). Observed characteristics of arts-integrated teaching included: (a) learning activities that are designed with clear goals and expectations, (b) students exhibit high expectations in their work habits; (c) the teacher and artist join together in teaching, (d) integrity of the content areas is protected by both the artist and teacher, (e) understanding of the academic curriculum is deepened through the application of art concepts, and (f) all students actively participate and pursue the desired learning goals (DeMoss, & Morris, 2002). Characteristics of an arts enriched classroom exemplify learning environment where the arts and academic content coexist rather than interact, the artist teaches the arts and the classroom teacher is responsible for the academic content, and the focus is placed on producing an art project or activity (DeMoss and Morris, 2002). Through the analysis of data, DeMoss and Morris (2002) identified ways art integration affects student learning by improving the learning environment, serving as a stimulus for engaging students in the learning process, and expanding the collaborative learning communities.

Champions of Change (1999) consisted of seven teams of researchers dedicated to the task of examining a variety of art education programs as a part of an initiative in

cooperation with the Arts Education partnership and the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities. The researchers were charged with the task to explore and understand the impact the art experiences had on the students. Champions of Change research found quality art education provides genuine and meaningful learning experiences that engage the whole student, mind, body, and heart (Catterall, 1999, Fiske, 1999).

Researchers within Champions of Change conducted their investigations independently. Fiske (1999) reported the findings suggest the nontraditional ways of learning offered by the arts reach students that may not otherwise be reached. He further asserted the arts create an exciting learning environment that allows students to connect to the content, fellow students, and the real world. Deasy (2002) suggested research evidence showed a strong correlation between a learning experience with the arts and students demonstrating increased learning and achievement, sighting gains in higher-order language, literacy skills, writing skills, and numerical skills.

The Arts for Academic Achievement (AAA), funded by the Annenberg Challenge Grant, was a five year study involving the Minneapolis public schools and the Perpich Center for Arts Education designed to accelerate student achievement and facilitate learning through the arts (Horowitz, 2004). The AAA project was designed to expand and enhance the use of art integration into core curriculum through the development of strong partnerships between artists, art organizations, and schools. The initiative utilized a three-part implementation structure; school-based projects, district initiated professional development, and continuous research, assessment, and correction. Freeman, Seashore,

and Werner, through observations, identified five models of implementation: (a) Residency Model where one or more artists are brought into the school to engage students in a range of art experiences, (b) Elaborated Residency Model which intentionally used arts experiences to developing non-arts skills, (c) Capacity Building Model which equips the teachers with the skills needed to incorporate a variety of art forms into their own teaching, (d) Co-Teaching Model involves teacher-artist pairs integrating arts and non-arts disciplines that reinforce each other, and (e) Concepts Across the Curriculum Model which involves three or more teachers collaborate to develop an interdisciplinary unit with common concepts (2003, pp. 6-11). Through their study Freeman, et al. (2003) witnessed schools increasing the depth or breadth of their use of the arts and concluded the models they identified were real, the role of the arts specialists in the schools were supported, partnerships and integration in subjects of reading and writing were the easiest to implement, all of the models changed the classroom practices; and finally the AAA project was truly a teacher-led initiative.

Early research into learning, in and with the arts, can be found at the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University (Harvard.edu, 2010) dating back to 1967. In its long history of research into the areas of thinking dispositions and visible thinking, Project Zero's mission is to "understand and enhance learning, thinking, and creativity in the arts as well as humanistic and scientific disciplines" (Project Zero Harvard.edu, 2010). Two of the more recent research projects Artful Thinking and Art Works for Schools focus on four high-level thinking dispositions viewed as central to thinking and learning in art and other disciplines. The four identified thinking dispositions are: (a) the

disposition to consider different perspectives, (b) the disposition to seek and solve problems, (c) the disposition to understand and make judgment, and (d) the disposition to discover and investigate figurative and symbolic connections (Harvard, 2010).

Researchers at Project Zero identified three criteria essential for learning and thinking through the arts are: (a) the use of authentic thinking dispositions in making and viewing art, (b) the use of genuine cognitive powers in the arts, and (c) the use of genuine cognitive powers in others areas of learning (pz.Harvard, 2010). With a key goal of integrating the arts as a means for improving reading, writing, and general academic achievement, Project Zero research findings suggested the teacher perception shifted to embrace the thought that art does connect meaningfully and centrally to the curriculum. Building off of past research in the arts ability to stimulate creativity and higher order thinking skills, along with appreciation for the teachers' power of influence and perspective, the purpose of this qualitative case study is to use interviews and observations of teachers in a suburban elementary school to inquire about the instructional practices of art integration and their perceptions of art integration's effect on student learning.

Qualitative research is interested in understanding the participants' perspective of the circumstance and condition being investigated. Merriam (2002) suggests qualitative research is motivated to understand the meaning and perspectives individuals have as they interact in the real world. Qualitative research produces richly descriptive data describing a specific group (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011; Merriam, 2002). Yin (2009) suggests case study research as the preferred method for answering the how and why

questions. Yin (2008) goes further to identify the strength of a case study method is the ability to examine and explore in depth, a case or single bound unit within its natural setting. Furthermore, Yin suggested case study research “satisfies three tenets of qualitative methods by describing, understanding, and explaining” (1994, p. 4).

Qualitative case study is a common method of research in social sciences, organizations, and education (Merriam, 2002; Yin, 2009). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to use interviews and observations of eight teachers in a suburban elementary school to inquire about the instructional practices of art integration, and their perceptions of art integration’s effect on student learning. The case is bounded within the natural setting of one elementary school who integrates art into the classroom curricula. The researcher will serve as the primary instrument for data collection with the intentions of generating richly descriptive image of the research findings.

Summary of Literature Review

Today’s educators are faced with the challenge of ensuring every student achieves the established standards for all curriculum areas. Cognitive research suggests that each student is unique in his or her abilities, MI, and learning styles. Teachers must utilize a variety of teaching strategies, and create enriched classroom environments to effectively teach all students. Art integration, the use of meaningful learning experience in the arts to creatively and effectively teach a non-arts discipline, is one approach to creating an engaging learning environment. Through research efforts, a body of evidence is building in support of art integration. Art integration is reported to facilitate learning beyond that of a discipline and pedagogy in and of itself, by providing teachers and students with

effective tools for deepening the study of content, by developing higher level thinking skills in students, all while providing a creative and engaging learning experience. These connections may affect long-term learning motivations. In an era of accountability the education system cannot afford to ignore research evidence that points to a possible answer to increasing student achievement. Whereas the above mentioned studies considered the potential role the arts and art integration could serve in improving student learning, the research took place prior to the NCLB act and the subsequent focus on student achievement measured by standardized test scores. This study may provide a fresh look at the use of art integration in the elementary classroom setting using the teacher perspective to gain knowledge and understanding.

Through data gathered from individual interviews, classroom observations, and curricula documents, this study explores art integration from the teachers' perspective. The four guiding research questions: (a) What are the teachers' general perceptions concerning using art integration in the elementary classroom? (b) What practices have the teachers found to be effective in integrating art into their elementary classroom? (c) How does art integration support student learning? and (d) How does art integration provide a focus on student learning instead of standardized test scores?, will provide current, real-world classroom experiences that can validate past research as to the positive value art integration brings to the students' learning experiences. Evidence gathered will provide instructional practices that can be implemented into other elementary classrooms to increase engagement, meet the variety of student needs and learning styles, and build connections between content areas. Participants in this study are teachers who are held

accountable for his or her students' achievement and performance on state standardized assessments. Understanding why and how each teacher integrates art into the classroom will provide insight as to the potential benefits of art integration in an era of high accountability.

In section 3 I focus on presenting the qualitative approach used in this study. A detailed description of the methodology will be provided along with a description of the participants, role of the researcher, and how data were collected and recorded. The methodology will be carefully applied in order to generate rich and descriptive findings from teacher interviews and focus groups with the intentions to explore and explain the nature of the learning experience for students when arts integrated instruction is used in the elementary classroom.

Section 3: Research Method

Introduction

Schools are faced with increasing levels of accountability for improving student achievement. Educators and researchers warn against the current narrow focus on test scores and encourage redirecting attention to classroom instruction and actual learning opportunities, not test preparation, by creating quality activities that will engage students (Ankeney & Manriquez, 2010; Armstrong, 2009; Urath & Mudd, 2011). Consequently, the intent of this research study was to interview and observe teachers who integrate art into the curricula to inquire about the instructional practices and perceptions of art integration's effect on student learning in the elementary school setting, as a possible way to refocus instruction on student learning. The study was framed by the following questions: (a) What are the teachers' general perceptions concerning using art integration in the elementary classroom, (b) what practices have they found to be effective in integrating art in their elementary classroom, (c) how does art integration support student learning, and (d) how does art integration provide a focus on student learning instead of standardized test scores? The intent is three fold; first is to learn how teachers perceive and value art integration as a way to improve student learning, second is to understand the instructional practices used to integrate the arts in an elementary school program, and third is to present the findings in a context to encourage conversation about student learning and academic achievement.

This section provides an outline of the methodology applied within this study, a description of the qualitative tradition implemented, the research questions informing this

study, and a justification for using a qualitative case study design. Procedures used for selecting participants, gaining access to participants, and the measures taken to ensure the ethical protection of the participants are specified. The role of the researcher, including professional roles, working relationships with participants, experiences, biases, and how these relationships are likely to affect data collection are also addressed. Additionally, data collection and data analysis procedures, along with the methods used to address validity and trustworthiness, are described.

Research Design and the Qualitative Tradition

In this study, I used a qualitative case study approach to explore the use of art integration in an elementary school program. The case study approach is the preferred method to focus the research on a phenomenon, bounded by space and time, and within the real-life context (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011; Yin, 2008). Yin (2008) identified case study as the preferred approach for “(a) answering how and why questions, (b) when the investigator has little control over events, and (c) when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context” (p. 312). This case study is bounded to one elementary school that incorporates art integration in their curricula. The real-life context of art integration was explored through interviews and classroom observations with the intent to answer how the teachers integrate the arts and why the teachers use art integration as an instructional approach.

To avoid distorting the essence of the social meaning by relying solely on numbers, Hatch (2002) suggested using qualitative research in an educational setting to study the social setting as a whole and to generate detailed descriptions. In this study, I

explored both the perceptions and practices of teachers who integrate art into their curricula to improve student learning. Merriam and Associates (2002) suggested insights gained from case study research can directly influence policy and procedures. In this case study, qualitative data were gathered from multiple sources, the research occurred in the social setting of an elementary school, and I served as the primary instrument of data collection with the purpose of understanding and interpreting the teachers' perceptions of the integration of art throughout their curriculum and the practices they use to do so. Multiple sources of data provided the opportunity for triangulation of the findings and established validity and reliability of the study results (Creswell, 2003). Glesne (2011) identified qualitative research as a valuable method for gaining a greater understanding of perceptions, attitudes, and processes. I used individual interviews, classroom observations, and curriculum integration documents (e.g., lesson plans). Merriam and Associates characterized qualitative research as the search for meaning and understanding through an inductive analysis process, resulting in a detailed picture of the case. For this research study, the case was the instructional context in which art integration occurs and the picture was gained through the perspectives of teachers implementing the program.

In summary, the primary objective of this case study is to understand how teachers perceive the instructional practice of art integration in order to gain insight on how to implement art integration and how it may improve student learning; therefore, the qualitative tradition as reflected in the case study approach is the most appropriate methodological decision. Hancock and Algozzine (2011) identified the goal of qualitative research as to understand the case being investigated through the participants'

perspectives. Following Creswell's (2007) list of characteristics of and purpose for various qualitative methods in choosing a tradition for this study, all other approaches were eliminated. The intent of this research was not to explore the life of an individual as in a biography, develop a theory as in a grounded theory, nor describe and interpret a culture as in ethnography. The intent of the research was instead to develop an in depth description of how teachers view and understand the implementation of arts integration in an elementary school program as well as the effect teachers believe art integration has on improving student learning. It was also my intent to gather insight into effective instructional practices of art integration that can be shared with other elementary school teachers and subsequently lead to the expanse of art integration within the elementary school setting. Thus, a case study research design was appropriate.

Context of the Study

The research site was a suburban elementary school in the southeastern United States. The school and teachers were chosen based on their participation in the ArtsNOW (ArtsNowLearning Org., 2013; Creating Pride, 2007) training program that emphasizes the integration of the arts into the classroom curriculum and their successful use of art integration within their own classroom. In 2010, the site had a population of 1,399 students, with 40% Black, 34% White, and 17% Hispanic students (GCPS, 2011).

Selection of Participants

Participants in this research study were a representative sample of the teaching staff at one school and consisted of eight teachers spanning across grades kindergarten through fifth grade, including regular classroom teachers, an Early Intervention Program

(EIP) teacher, a gifted teacher, and a fine arts teacher. The participants were identified by the local school's principal as teachers who successfully integrate the arts into the curricula as an effective instructional tool for teaching their students. Merriam (2009) suggested using a purposeful sampling from which the most can be learned. A purposeful sampling consisting of teachers with knowledge and experience in implementing art integration provided insight, understanding, and information-rich data for this study. The eight participants in this study provided insight and experience teaching all grade levels represented in the elementary school setting, thus providing both a breadth and depth of knowledge.

Criteria for Selecting Participants

The teaching staff at a suburban elementary school in the southeastern United States was the sample pool for this study. The school's principal was asked to provide a list of teachers who are implementing the ArtsNOW art integration model in their classrooms. A letter of invitation was sent to all recommended teachers, and eight teachers were selected to participate in the study. Selection criteria included the following: years of teaching experience, post graduate education and professional training, grade level assignment, and experience in art integration.

Justification for the Number of Participants

The intent was to have a purposeful sample that would allow one teacher participant from kindergarten through fifth grade. Following the school principal's recommendations, the eight-teacher participant pool was made up of teachers spanning across grade levels from kindergarten through fifth grade, including the arts. The

participant pool represented regular classroom teachers, an EIP teacher, a gifted teacher, and one fine arts teacher. The number of participants allowed for balance, depth, and expanse of inquiry.

Measures for Ethical Protection of Participants

Approval was gained from Walden University's International Review Board (IRB; Approval No. 06-13-14-06-13-14-0101332) and the research site's school district before requesting participation of the eight teachers in the research study and conducting interviews and observations. These approvals were required to ensure that the study was low risk to the participants. In addition, the IRB certified there were no ethical issues that would harm the participants in the study. Upon IRB approval to conduct the study, I sought the participation of teachers from the identified school. Gaining access to participants began with the approval from the gatekeeper, who, as the initial contact for me, led me to other participants (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2011). The gatekeeper for this study was the local school principal who is responsible for the management and administration of the school. Initial contact requesting permission and consent was made through the local school district's email. After negotiating access to the school site with the principal through a Letter of Cooperation (Appendix A) and gaining participant consent (Appendix B), I arranged and scheduled interview sessions and classroom observations. Participants provided times and dates that were accommodating to their schedule; they also selected locations for interviews as a measure of establishing rapport and a maintaining a sense of comfort.

Role of the Researcher

As suggested by Merriam (2002), the role of the researcher is to represent as accurately as possible the instructional setting of the school program and the teachers who participate. Serving as the key instrument of data collection, I thoroughly examined all documents, observed behaviors, and interviewed participants, thus immersing myself in the case (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2011).

Past and Current Professional Roles

In addition to serving as the researcher, I am an art specialist with 16 years of teaching experience in the same school district as the participants, but not within the same school. Like the participants, I have undergone training in the ArtsNOW (ArtsNowLearning Org., 2013; Creating Pride, 2007) model for art integration. As an art specialist and teacher, I possess firsthand knowledge of the challenges facing today's educators. Common purpose exists between the researcher and participants in the need for exploring more research-based strategies to aid in the implementation and success of using art integration to enrich students' learning experiences. The common purpose outlined in the vision and mission statements for the participants' school called for using authentic arts integration to provide quality instruction and to create an engaging learning environment across all content areas (GCPS, 2011).

Method for Establishing Researcher-Participant Relationship

I entered the research site as both a researcher and a learner (Glesne, 2011). I also served as the interviewer for the individual interviews, a classroom observer, and as the primary collector of curricular documents (i.e., lesson plans) with the intention of

learning from the participants. Time was taken before each interview to engage in casual conversation with the participants and to establish a sense of comfort and rapport.

Opportunity was given to answer any questions the participants had concerning the research.

Researcher's Biases

Accepting the role of researcher required being cognizant of potential biases. A potential source of bias could stem from my belief that the arts have a vital role in the elementary school and could serve as a vehicle to creating engaging hands-on learning in the elementary classroom. Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggested the researcher “examine any preconceptions and feelings that might slant the research and with this understanding in mind, work to formulate questions to offset any possible biases” (p. 82). Reflection and examination of any biases I held came through the process of journaling. As suggested by Rubin and Rubin, questions were also recorded to represent other opinions regarding the role of the arts in education. Written notes provided an awareness of potential biases, keeping them visible throughout the data collection and analysis stages of the research.

Data Collection

Creswell (2007) described data collection as a sequence of purposeful research activities used to gain reliable insight and understanding needed into answer the research questions. The data collection procedures for this case study followed a systematic series of steps (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). Three forms of data collection were used for this study: individual interviews, classroom observations, and curriculum documents. The

duration of the study was 1 month. The data collection stage lasted 4 weeks, consisting of eight interviews followed by four classroom observations. Interviews and observations were conducted during times chosen by the participants in order to accommodate his or her schedule. (See Appendix E for the data collection schedule and timeline for the research study.)

Interviews

Hatch (2002) described qualitative interviews as a special kind of speech, using open-ended questions that encourage participants to explain their unique perspective. Rubin and Rubin (2005) described qualitative interviews as conversations guided by the researcher in order to elicit depth and detail about the research topic. Teacher participants were provided the interview protocol prior to conducting the interview (see Appendix A). Each of the eight teacher participants was interviewed in the first weeks of the study prior to classroom observations. The semistructured individual interviews followed the interview protocol (see Appendix C), lasted approximately 45 minutes, and took place in a private location at the research site chosen by the participants. Interviews were audio taped, and transcriptions were typed into a computer word document by me. Transcription findings were shared with participants via email to provide validity and trustworthiness.

Observations

Yin (2008) suggested that good case study research benefits from direct observations that focus on human actions, physical environment, and real-world events and generates a narrative based on what was seen, heard, and sensed. After the first series

of interviews were completed, I sent an email to all participants asking permission to conduct classroom observations. Four participants were selected from the teachers who responded with an invitation to observe art integration being implemented within their classroom. A broad sample was formed across grade levels to further inform the study: one kindergarten teacher, one third grade teacher, one fifth grade teacher, and one EIP teacher servicing fourth and fifth grade resource students. Participants provided dates and times in which art integrated instruction would be taking place in their classrooms. Observation dates and times were scheduled and finalized through email. The intent was to observe each of the teachers' classrooms through one complete class period (approximately 45 minutes). The intended focus was on introductory strategies: content instruction, class and student activity, and summarizing strategies (see the Observational Protocol, Appendix D). I entered each classroom as a nonparticipant observer, with the purpose to gather data in the form of field notes and journaling.

Curricular Documents

It is important to collect data from multiple sources in order to provide “accounts that include enough contextual detail and sufficient representation of the voices of participants where readers can place themselves in the shoes or classroom of the participants” (Hatch, 2002, p.16). According to Yin (2009) using multiple sources within the data collection allows for triangulation of findings. In support of collecting multiple sources, Creswell (2003) stated that multiple sources enable the researcher to create a more complete image of the research findings. For this case study, the third form of data collection involved collecting curriculum documents (i.e., lesson plans) from each of the

participants. Following the individual interviews, each participant was asked to provide an example of curricula documents and lesson plans integrating art into the curricular instruction. Participants that participated in classroom observations provided a copy of the curricular documents prior to the observation beginning. Other participants emailed examples of curricula documents through the local school district's email after the individual interview was completed.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involved reviewing, coding, categorizing, and interpreting findings. Hatch (2002) defined data analysis as a systematic search for meaning, resulting in gained knowledge that can be communicated to others. Hatch further described the analysis process as “organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories” (p. 48). Glesne (2011) defined data analysis as the coding or organizing of what you have seen, heard, and read from the data collection process in order to make sense of the experience. Glesne further suggested that the data analysis occur simultaneously with the data collection process to allow the researcher to reflect and focus the study as it unfolds. Zucker (2009) suggested a multi level approach to coding. Both open and axial coding was applied to data gathered from the interviews, content analysis of data gathered from observations, and descriptive coding of the curricula documents collected. Through the coding process common themes and categories were identified and then collaborated between multiple sources, thus allowing for triangulation to take place (Creswell, 2003). Emergent themes included

student activity, student engagement, instructional practices, art integrating activity, art production, and evidence of learning.

Coding Data

Zucker (2009) suggested a three stage approach to data analysis consisting of stage one being describing the experience, stage two describing meaning and finally stage three as the focus of the analysis. During the beginning stage of analysis, I assigned codes to words or short phrases embedded in the data that symbolize or capture the essence of the case being studied at the most basic concepts and categories.

Open coding. The first level of coding that I applied was open coding to the typed transcriptions of the interview data, and content analysis to information gathered from observation and documents. Open coding allowed for transcribing the data into written text for comparability, and the development of categories. The text data were marked and color highlighted as concepts are identified that address the research questions; such as; teaching strategies, student activities, classroom structure, and planning procedures.

Axial coding. During the second stage of data analysis in which meaning is described, I searched for patterns within the coded data by applying axial coding, in which the text will be reread and reviewed in order to identify text that supports the concepts and categories identified through the open coding process. Saldana (2013) described the process of coding as “linking” of data to ideas and the ideas back to the data in a cyclical act (pp. 654-655). Next, in the analysis the significant coded statements were sorted and grouped into larger units or categories and interpreted to produce themes.

Furthermore, Saldana defined themes as the “outcome” of coding, followed by categorization, and analytic reflection (p. 782). During axial coding I looked for connections among the categories developed in the previous open coding. Identifying connections began with highlighting key words and phrases found within the transcriptions. The highlighted text was then used to code each interview, observation, and curricular documents. I reviewed the coded data to discover common themes. The third and final stage explored the identified themes and provided the focus of the analysis.

Analysis of Data

As described by Zucker (2009) the final stage provides attention to details, enhances the analysis, increases clarity, and provides rigor. Hancock and Algozzine (2011) suggested maintaining a focus on the research questions guiding the study, collecting and interpreting only data potentially meaningful to the study, and developing a method for labeling, storing and accessing data acquired during the research. Through the analysis process, Yin (2009) challenged the researcher to question if the findings make sense are credible to the participants, and if the conclusions drawn are transferable and able to be generalized, or whether the findings present a discrepant case. It is quite possible that the views of the participants about their instructional approach to art integration will differ in their classroom approach, reflecting their personal preferences. However, it is not likely given the nature of the study that a participant will have a negative view of art integration. Nevertheless, when reporting findings, the basic approach is to represent the view of the participant as accurately as possible following the

transcript, checking it against the audio recording. In the process of coding by assuming there will be different instructional views and perspectives on art integration, which may be in marked contrast to other participants, and consequently should be thematically organized and if necessary categorized as such, so that a complete picture as possible of art integration was developed in the data represented.

Validity and Trustworthiness

The purpose of this research was to understand both the teachers' practices and perceptions of art integration's effect in improving student learning. Eisner (as cited in Merriam & Associates, 2002) asserted "qualitative research is the creation of an image, a vivid portrait of excellent teaching that can become a prototype that can be used in the education of teachers or for the appraisal of teaching" (p. 28). As the researcher, I aspired to produce valid and reliable knowledge that could benefit other educators and lead to improving classroom instruction. Yin (2009) outlined four tests that should be applied throughout the study to establish the quality of the research conducted to include (a) construct validity using multiple source and evidence gained through the data collection process, (b) internal validity conducted through the data analysis process to match patterns and build explanation, (c) external validity incorporated in the research design through the use of theory and finally (d) reliability established during the data collection process through the use of protocols and establishing database to store data. To ensure validity and trustworthiness, I triangulated evidence from three sources: individual interviews; classroom observation; and, curricula documents (i.e., lesson plans). Additionally, Yin (2008) defined the process of triangulation as the creating of

converging lines of evidence from three or more independent sources that all point to the same interpretation. Creswell (2003, 2009) stated that multiple data sources enable the researcher to create a more accurate and complete image of the research findings. In this study I used interviews, observations, and teacher lesson plans to formulate an image of art integration within the elementary classroom with the intent of answering the research questions directing this study.

Summary

In this study I used a qualitative case study approach to explore the use of art integration in an elementary school program. The case study approach is the preferred method to focus the research on a phenomenon, bounded by space and time, and with the intentions of answering how and why questions. This case study is bounded to one elementary school that incorporates art integration in their curricula. The real life context of art integration was explored through interviews and classroom observations with the intent to answer how the teachers' integrate the arts and why the teachers use art integration as an instructional approach. The intent of conducting this research was to develop an in depth description of how teachers view and understand the implementation of arts integration in an elementary school program as well as the effect teachers believe art integration has on improving student learning. It was also the intent of the researcher to gather insight into effective instructional practices of art integration that can be shared with other elementary school teachers and subsequently lead to the expanse of art integration within the elementary school setting. I have presented the findings from this study in section four, along with identified themes that emerged from the data sources.

Section five follows with an interpretation of the findings and recommendation for further study and social implications.

Section 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to use interviews and observations of teachers who integrate art into the curricula to inquire about the instructional practices of art integration as well as the teachers' perceptions of art integration's effect on student learning in the elementary school setting. The conceptual framework for this study is based upon two theoretical sources: constructivism and MI theory. Each in its respective way is described in turn and provides a conceptual lens to examine art integration in the curriculum and the teacher's role in facilitating this instructional process. In the literature review, I focused on past and current research as regards to how students learn and construct knowledge, what practices are needed in the classroom to facilitate learning as well as how the arts and art integration can serve to foster student learning.

In this section, I detail the qualitative process used to gather, analyze, and report data in addition to a description of the participants and the research findings. For this study, I collected data from eight elementary teachers, spanning across grade levels from kindergarten through fifth grade, to include an EIP teacher, a gifted teacher, and a visual arts teacher. Qualitative data were gathered from multiple sources to include individual interviews, classroom observations, and a review of curriculum documents (i.e., lesson plans). This research was guided by the following research questions: (a) What are the teachers' general perceptions concerning using art integration in the elementary classroom?, (b) What practices have the teachers found to be effective in integrating art into their elementary classroom?, (c) How does art integration support student learning?,

and (d) How does art integration provide a focus on student learning instead of standardized test scores? Data gathered from individual interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed by me, and then stored on my password protected computer. Data gathered in the form of curricula documents and observational field notes were coded to allow for triangulation of data sources. The coded data were stored in the same computer protected files. An electronic folder for each participant using the assigned pseudonym was created in order to organize the data and facilitate easy retrieval. All hand-written field notes, completed observation protocols, and reflective journaling were scanned and saved in the designated data file for each participant stored on my personal, password protected computer.

Case Description

For this study, I chose to conduct my research in an elementary school located in the Southeastern United States and located in one of the largest school districts within the state. The demographics of the school setting used in this research consisted of a student population made up of 44% African American, 21% Hispanic, 27% White, 12% Special Education, and 10% ESOL students. Of the entire student population, 65% are designated free and reduced lunch (GCPS, 2014). The school studied faces the challenges of ensuring that every student meets or exceeds on the state standardized assessments. As a means to address the challenges, this local school adopted the use of authentic arts integration to help all students succeed academically, socially, and artistically. Learning through arts integration is an active participatory learning experience that engages both the students' body and mind in the learning process (Isenberg, 2009). Isenberg (2009)

further suggested art integration reaches students who are not typically reached through traditional methods of instruction.

Participants

The participant pool for this study came from a list of teachers the school administration identified as successfully integrating arts into their classroom curricula with the intent of improving student learning. The specific demographics of the participants for this qualitative case study were outlined (see Table 1). The demographics, such as years of teaching and prior experience with the arts, provided insight into the purposeful sampling pool used for this study.

Table 1

Participants' Demographics

	Years of experience in teaching the elementary grades	Grade level taught	Prior experience with the arts
Participant 1	4	4 th grade	None
Participant 2	15	EIP 4 th and 5 th grades	Yes / Band
Participant 3	2	5 th grade	Yes / Camps
Participant 4	5	Kindergarten	Yes / Classes
Participant 5	6	Gifted 3 rd , 4 th , 5 th grades	None
Participant 6	7	2 nd grade	Yes
Participant 7	7	3 rd grade	None
Participant 8	20+	K – 5 th grades	Yes / Certified in Art

Data Collection

Upon gaining IRB approval from Walden University (06-13-14-0101332) and the approval from the school districts research review board (2015-17), I asked the principal of the suburban elementary school via school email for permission to conduct this

qualitative research study (Appendix A). As a part of the initial correspondence, I asked the principal to provide a list of potential participants who were identified as successful in integrating art into their classroom curricula. Upon gaining approval to conduct research from the principal of the elementary school research site, I contacted each potential participant through school email and invited him or her to participate in the research study. Each potential participant was provided a description and purpose of the study, along with the consent form (Appendix B) as an attachment to the school email and through the school district's interschool mail system marked *Confidential*. Having receipt of each signed Consent Form, I contacted each participant via email to schedule the time, date, and location for the individual interviews. The data collection process extended over the time period of 1 month and consisted of individual interviews, classroom observations, and the collection of curriculum documents (i.e., lesson plans).

Interviews

Data collection began with conducting individual interviews with all participants in order to gain insight about his or her instructional practices and perceptions of art integration's effect on student learning. Each interview was approximately 30 to 45 minutes in length and followed the interview protocol (Appendix C). All interviews were digitally recorded and downloaded on my password-protected computer. Each participant was coded with a letter pseudonym to protect participant confidentiality. The interviews consisted of 10 open-ended questions designed to gain insight and understanding into the teachers' perceptions about using art integration in their classrooms, the practices teachers found to be the most effective in integrating art into the curricula, and the impact

art integration has on the students' learning and level of engagement. The interview format allowed for the participants to freely provide additional input regarding their personal beliefs about art integration, their definition of art integration, their feelings concerning the school's administration pressure and/or support for using art integration as well as their preferred practices for integrating art into their classrooms. I transcribed the recorded interviews within 3 days of being conducted and a summary of findings created (Appendix F). To ensure accuracy in representing the participants, communications were established through email to provide each participant an opportunity to clarify and validate my findings based on the interview transcriptions. Additional questions were asked through email (Appendix G) to clarify and expand data gathered through the individual interviews. The interviews served as an integral component of the research, providing insight and understanding into the practices concerning art integration in the elementary classroom.

Classroom Observations

Classroom observations provided the second form of data collected in this study. Following the interview process, I observed the classrooms of four of the participants: Participant A, Participant B, Participant C, and Participant D. With a verbal invitation from the participant, I entered classrooms to observe an entire class period, ranging from 45 minutes to 90 minutes of uninterrupted instruction. All observations allowed me to witness firsthand art integration being used in the classroom to teach the curricula. During the observations, I followed the observation protocol (Appendix D). I made detailed field notes on the classroom setup and arrangement, classroom operations,

teachers' procedures, instruction, teaching strategies, art integrated activities as well as the students' activities, levels of engagement, and participation.

From the content analysis of the observation data, I constructed major categories in relation to each of the four observations. These categories are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Categories Constructed From Observational Data

Criteria	Definitions	Categories
Physical setting	Use of space	Direct instruction Whole group Collaborative small group
	Instructional resources	Teacher prepared presentations Music Visual documents and artwork
	Technology	Computers LCD projectors Overhead projectors
Participants	Number of students	12 – 28 students per class
	Number of adults	One certified teacher
	Gender and race	Generally balanced
Instructional activities	Lesson objectives	Aligned to county and state standards
	Instructional strategies	Whole group instruction Questioning and summarizing Small group collaborative work
	Art integration	Document based questioning Drama Visual art production Writing musical lyrics
	Assessment	Questioning and summarizing Rubrics Art production
Student activity	Class participation Engagement	Active listening and responding Collaboration Art production
Conversations	Teacher to student Student to student	Teacher directed Collaborative planning and discussion
Researcher	Location in room Assumed role	Back of room Nonparticipant observer

Curricula Documents

The third source of data gathered in this study came in the form of lesson plans provided by each participant through email following the interview. Multiple sources of data provide contextual detail, allow for triangulation, and create a more complete image (Creswell, 2003; Hatch, 2002; Yin, 2009). The lesson plans provided an organizational plan for how the teachers used art integration to teach the targeted curricula. I used content analysis to review the curricula documents, which included a description of the document as well as the identified purpose, organization, and content. I also reviewed the curricula documents for a description of art integrated activities. Data collected from the curricula documents were analyzed, and descriptive were coded to allow for comparison and support of the identified themes found from the analysis of individual interviews. Glesne (2011) suggested documents such as the curricula documents and lesson plans raise questions and support or challenge interview data, while providing pattern and content analysis. Through the lesson plan documents, I was able to understand the organization of the instruction, learning targets and objectives addressed within the instruction, teacher and student activities, and materials needed to implement the lesson. Using lesson plans as the curricula documents provided a third source of data to allow for triangulation of all data gathered in this study. The lesson plans also provided insight to assist in analyzing the classroom observations that were conducted.

Tracking Data

Glesnes (2011) called for researchers to play an active role in the recording of data through the questions they ask, not the mere collection of data they may find. I

recorded each of the individual interviews using a digital voice recorder. Using a digital voice recorder allowed the capability of saving the recording on both a flash drive and my personal computer. Moreover, using a digital recorder helped to facilitate the transcribing process. I made an electronic folder for each participant, using the assigned pseudonym, in order to organize the data and facilitate easy retrieval. All hand-written field notes, completed observation protocols, and reflective journaling were scanned and saved in the designated data file for each participant stored on my personal, password protected computer. The curricula documents received via email from each participant were also saved into the designated participant data folder. The original paper copies of data are locked in my personal file cabinet to maintain data security. As per Walden University policy, all data will be stored for 5 years and then destroyed.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study followed a systematic approach to code and organize the data in a search for meaning that could provide insight into an elementary classroom that integrates art into the curricula (Glesne, 2011; Hatch 2002). Data for this study were gathered across multiple sources to include interviews, observations, and curricula documents. Individual interviews were digitally recorded and downloaded onto my password protected computer. Transcription of the interviews, field notes taken during observations, and lesson plans sent by email from participants were also downloaded and saved on my computer. For the analysis phase of the research, all participants were assigned pseudonyms in order to protect their anonymity. In preparation for data analysis interview transcriptions, field notes and typed notes from document reviews were

organized into a spreadsheet (Appendix F) to facilitate the identification of commonalities and themes.

Data analysis for this qualitative study followed a systematic search for meaning illustrated by the themes and patterns identified through the data coding process (Creswell, 2003; Glesne, 2011; Hatch, 2002). I used open and axial coding of data gathered from the interviews, content analysis of data gathered from observations, and descriptive coding of the curricula documents collected. Following a thematic analysis approach to data analysis allowed me to carefully examine and code each participant's response to the interview questions regarding his or her use of art integration in his or her classroom. I compared the insight gained from the interviews with my personal observations made from the classroom observations and then double checked my observations with the instructional outline provided by the curricula documents. Processing the coded data from the multiple sources allowed me to identify patterns and themes while maintaining a focus on the research questions as suggested by Hancock and Algozzine (2011). I began the initial stage of data analysis by transcribing each of the eight individual interviews. As the researcher, I transcribed the interviews by first listening to the interviews and then transcribing the recorded response verbatim. To ensure accuracy in the transcripts, I then listened and reviewed each recorded interview while comparing them to typed transcriptions. By transcribing the interviews and listening to the interview data repeatedly, I gained a familiarity with the data and a clearer understanding of the responses. As suggested by Glesne (2011), I continued through the coding, categorizing and theme searching process as a way to reflect on the data I

collected in order to gain new insight and make connections. During the next stage of data analysis, I coded the data using an open coding process. Through the review of each phrase and sentence recorded in the transcriptions, I color coded words, phrases, or concepts that participants consistently repeated during the individual interviews. The identified word or phrase was documented in order to accurately identify possible emergent themes. In the next stage of data analysis I applied axial coding. I searched for patterns within the coded data by applying axial coding, in which the text will be reread and reviewed in order to identify text that supports the concepts and categories identified through the open coding process. Hancock and Algozzine (2011) suggested themes must evolve from the detailed analysis to reflect the purpose of the study, and answer the questions under investigation. Through axial coding, the following themes were identified to address the research questions guiding this study. Theme alignment is as follows: (a) art integration is an effective teaching strategy, (b) effectively integrating art requires expansive time and planning, (c) art integration increases student engagement, and (d) art integration has a positive impact on student learning. Theme development was guided by constructivist theory, and MI theory as the conceptual framework of this study. I analyzed participant responses to the interview questions for data related to facilitation of student learning, dissemination of content, student engagement, and assessment of student knowledge. These themes are presented in Table 3 and will be discussed further in the findings of this study.

Findings

Art integration has been suggested as a way to improve student learning and achievement while enhancing the students' learning experience (Baker, 2013; Burnstein & Knotts, 2010; Nelson, 2008; Rabkin & Redmond, 2006; Raudonis, 2011). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to gain insight from the teachers responsible for implementing art integration strategies and ensuring their students' academic success. Through individual interviews, classroom observations and curricula documents I sought to gain the teachers' perceptions of art integration as well as insight into how they implemented art integration into their classroom curricula. For this qualitative case study, I conducted eight, semistructured, individual interviews, that were guided by 10 open-ended questions. (Appendix C). Participants were K–5 school teachers and included an EIP teacher, a gifted teacher, and a visual arts teacher. During each interview, I used specific questions to seek information in order to understand the instructional practices of art integration and perceptions of art integration's effect on student learning. The research questions guiding this study were as follows: (a) What are the teachers' general perceptions concerning using art integration in the elementary classroom?, (b) What practices have the teachers' found to be effective in integrating art into their elementary classroom?, (c) How does art integration support student learning?, and (d) How does art integration provide a focus on student learning instead of standardized test scores?. Through axial coding, I was able to create themes to address the research questions. The following themes emerged from the data and were aligned to the research questions guiding this study; (T1) art integration is an effective teaching strategy, (T2) effectively

integrating art requires expansive time and planning, (T3) art integration enriches the students' learning experience (T4) art integration has a positive impact on student learning through increased engagement, and (T5) art integration may or may not impact standardized test scores. Insight was gained into the teachers' perspective of using art integration within the elementary classroom through the participants' responses to the research questions (Appendix F).

Findings From the Research Questions

Ten interview questions were developed to explore the effect art integration has on improving student learning as well as the instructional practices believed most effective in implementing art integration in the elementary classroom. According to Hancock and Algozzine (2011) qualitative case study research requires the summarizing and interpreting of data with a focus on addressing the research questions. The data collected revealed information that addressed the four primary research questions: (a) What are the teachers' general perceptions concerning using art integration in the elementary classroom?, (b) What practices have the teachers found to be effective in integrating art into their elementary classroom?, (c) How does art integration support student learning?, and (d) How does art integration provide a focus on student learning instead of standardized test scores?.

Research Question 1

The first question was the following: What are the teachers' general perceptions concerning using art integration in the elementary classroom? This question set the general tone for the study. Every participant stated art integration has a positive impact

on his or her classroom instruction, and student learning. Participant 3 stated that “art integration increases student engagement, and helps to facilitate learning. It takes time to do it but it is worth it.” Participants E and G acknowledged how art integration addresses the “learning styles” of students while creating an engaging learning environment. Participants credited art integration for P1 “helping the struggling students”, P2 “facilitate learning”, and P3 “facilitating differentiation”. Both Participant 1 and 8 shared a concern for the difficulty involved in implementing art integration into the classroom instruction. Participant 1 stated “art integration is hard to do sometimes because of the required focus on the content.” Participant 8 believed the art content to be the struggle stating “teachers do not feel comfortable enough with teaching the art content needed for true art integration.” Teacher participants expressed a belief that art integration was a valuable and effective teaching strategy, one that was worth the time and effort needed to effectively implement in the elementary classroom.

Research Question 2

The second question was the following: What practices have the teachers’ found to be effective in integrating art into their elementary classroom? and sought to gain insight into how to successfully integrate art into the elementary classroom. The responses from the participants suggested art integration provides many opportunities to enrich the students’ learning experiences. Participant 1 said “art integration allows for hands-on activities that make real life connections”. Participant 2 named specifically the visual arts and music make the biggest impact and enhances student learning by increasing the students’ memory and recall of content material. Participants 3 and 7

named the collaborative learning opportunities to be one of the most effective practices provided through the use of art integration.

To gain further insight into the teachers' practices the following sub question was asked during the interviews; "how has art integration shaped your instruction?" The responses were varied. Participant 1 explained "stressful". Where Participant 5 said "it makes me a better teacher and increases my ability to differentiate", Participant 6 stated art integration makes the instruction more purposeful and thoughtful. Participants 2, 3, 4, and 8 commented how he or she tries to incorporate art integration at least weekly into the instructional practices.

Data gathered through the observations supported the data gathered through the interviews. I observed teachers incorporating both the visual arts and music into the instructional piece of the lesson. In all classrooms, Students were engaged throughout the class period in whole class discussion, working collaboratively in both discussion and in hands-on production activities. In the review of data collected through the curricula documents it was evident that every lesson plan gathered incorporated multiple opportunities for the students to engage with the arts and learn through the arts. Lesson plan collected from Participant 3 illustrated a class period that began using music as the opening hook to the instruction and as a teaching strategy to foster student memory and recall. The same lesson progressed to direct, whole group instruction using visual art to illustrate the content and allow the students to make connections and facilitate class discussion. The assessment component of the lesson allowed students to choose either the visual arts or music to illustrate his or her understanding of the content taught.

Research Question 3

The third question asked was the following: How does art integration support student learning? Overwhelmingly, every participant stated art integration supports student learning. Participant 1 stated art integration creates learning that relates more to students, allows the students to be more interactive, leading to improved memory of content. Participant 2 stated art integration not only provided students with more opportunities to explore the content, but also made teaching easier and more exciting. Participants 3, 4, and 5 attributed art integration for increasing student engagement, making real-world connections, and making abstract concepts more concrete. Participants 5 and 6 credited art integration allows their students to gain a deeper understanding of the content and leads to improved test scores. Participants 7 and 8 endorsed art integration as a means for increasing student engagement, addressing all learning styles and improving student performance.

Research Question 4

The fourth and final guiding question addressed the issue of standard testing and the possible use of art integration to serve as a viable assessment. The question asked was the following: How does art integration provide a focus on student learning instead of standardized test scores? Seven out of the eight participants all credited art integration for increasing student achievement and student learning. Only one participant stated a belief that art integration improves student learning, however the test scores did not reflect an increase in student achievement. The responses regarding standardized testing varied among participants. Participants 2 and 3 expressed a desire to teach in an environment

that did not use standardized tests as a measure of student learning. Where Participant 4 saw standardized testing as a measure of accountability and needed in schools.

Theme Findings: Defining Art Integration

Through conducting the individual interviews with each of the eight participants, I found it beneficial to have each participant give his or her own definition of art integration. The responses are similar in concept and meaning. Some examples of the responses are as follows: Participant 2 stated: “Arts integration is teaching the content and an area of the arts simultaneously, allowing students to internalize the learning in multiple ways.” Participant 4 defined it as “Arts integration is when art is embedded in teaching and learning.” All participants believed successful art integration required teaching both the curricula content and the art discipline together simultaneously within the instruction. The definition for art integration provided by the participants is supported by Goldberg (2001) who suggested the arts remain a core subject, offering an integrated approach of learning about the arts, learning with the arts, and learning through the arts. This approach led to one of the areas that most teacher participants acknowledged as a challenge which was learning the prior background knowledge of the art discipline necessary to effectively integrate the art into the classroom instruction. The need for research and self-learning contributed to the number one challenge named by all participants, which was the time needed to plan and prepare for teaching an art integrated lesson.

Thematic analysis requires the researcher to focus on searching through the coded data for themes and patterns (Glesne, 2011). The data retrieved from the eight individual

interviews, classroom observations conducted as well as the curricula documents gathered were coded and emerging themes were developed to demonstrate the participants' perception of art integration's effect on students learning. The eight participants are certified teachers within the same elementary school, spanning across grade levels kindergarten through fifth grade, to include an EIP teacher, a gifted teacher, and a visual arts teacher, all were identified by the school administrations as successfully integrating art into the curriculum. The demographics of each participant are displayed in Table 1. From the participant responses gathered through the individual interviews, classroom observations, and supported by the curricula documents it was clear that each teacher understood what art integration is and all shared a commitment to implement art integration into their own classroom curricula on a regular basis. Having reviewed the data and addressed the research questions guiding this study, the following themes were developed. The observational field notes and curricula documents were triangulated along with the individual interviews to substantiate these findings. The remainder of this section will look deeper into the identified themes as describe in Table 3.

Table 3

Theme Alignment to Research Questions

Research question	Theme
RQ 1: What are the teachers' general perceptions concerning using art integration in the elementary classroom?	T1: Art integration is an effective teaching strategy to improve student learning and meet the needs of all students. T2: Art integration requires time and planning in order to develop classroom activities that allow the students to learn through with and through the arts.
RQ2: What practices have the teachers found to be effective in integrating art into their elementary classroom?	T3: Art integration provides opportunities enriched learning experiences, through hands-on learning, collaborative learning, real-world connections, and a deeper level of learning through the arts by making the abstract more concrete and visual.
RQ3; How does art integration support student learning?	T4: Art integration has a positive impact on student learning through increased engagement, and a variety of learning experiences that address the varied learning needs, and styles of the students.
RQ4: How does art integration provide a focus on student learning instead of standardized test scores?	T5: Art integration has a positive impact on student performance and learning, but may or may not impact standardized test scores.

Theme 1: Art Integration Is an Effective Teaching Strategy

The first major theme stems from the purpose and goal of education, which is to successfully and effectively teach each and every student. Every participant named several ways art integration improved their classroom instruction and provided an effective method for teaching their students. Participant 1 described student learning that is more interactive and hands on, which was helped her students remember the content

being taught. Participant 2 stressed that art integration “works at every level of education and with every type of learner, allowing some students to explore; while at the same time pushing others.” Participant 2 continued to express the benefits of art integration:

I have seen students, who have previously shut down, stopped trying,
And feel defeated begin to attempt work that is actually above their
Achievement level in order to participate in an arts integrated lesson.

I have seen kindergarteners verbalize deeper thinking than their peers through arts integration. Most importantly, I have seen non-English speakers communicate knowledge and understanding through this avenue.

Participant 3 stated that art integration promotes collaborative learning among her students. Participant 4 expressed “art integration engages my students; it helps to differentiate instruction and assessments”, and “makes learning fun” for both her and her students. Participant 5 saw art integration as a teaching strategy that made the content more concrete and less abstract to her students. She also saw her students to be more engaged and achieving higher test scores. Participant 6 named creativity, a sense of community within her classroom, increased student interest, and a deeper knowledge of the content to be results of art integration. Participant 7 said art integration allows her to “more effectively incorporate the many learning styles represented by her students.”

Participant 8 recalled how her students came into her classroom already knowing art content and vocabulary learned from the regular education classroom, and that the students’ showed an increased interest in arts as well as the overall quality of art production was improved. The participant’s responses to the questions asked during the

individual interviews echo those researchers who advocate art integration as a means to increase student learning.

Data and field notes gathered during the classroom observation support the teachers' perceptions and belief that art integration is an effective teaching strategy to improve student learning. It was recorded in every classroom observation that students were actively engaged and participating in the learning activities. The only record of off task behavior came during transition from whole class instruction to individual activities in which additional art materials were needed and collected. During the observation of Participant 1's classroom, I observed students interacting with a visual art document in order to take notes in his or her journals, also referred to as a cite-to-evidence workbook, make connections to curricula content, and to answer questions for an end of unit assessment. Students appeared willing and confident to share their thoughts and responses after viewing the visual art documents. Classroom observations of Participant 2 provided evidence of students engaged in small group discussion and collaboration to create art products that demonstrated their understanding of the content. Classroom observations of both Participants 3 and 4 provided evidence of students interacting with the visual arts as an instructional method to increase memory and recall of the content. In all classrooms observed a form of visual art was used to introduce the lesson and to gain the students' attention. In participant 4's classroom the visual art was in the form of animation. In Participant 2's and 3's classroom both music and the visual arts were used to introduce the lesson and then again as the assessment piece of the lesson.

Theme 2: Implementing Art Integration Requires Time and Planning

Along with identifying the benefits of implementing art integration into the elementary classrooms as a way to improve student learning, teacher participants were open about the stress and time requirement that comes from implementing art integration. Participant 1 found it hard to provide substantial focus and time on the art content due to the elevated level of attention required on the curriculum content. Participant 6 saw teaching the art content as a challenge requiring research and more personal exposure to the arts. Through the interview process open-ended questions probed into the methods and steps teacher took to design and implement an art integrated lesson. Participants 3, 5, and 6 stated their approach to developing an art integrated lesson began first with the curriculum content, knowledge and skills required. They would then research possible ways to integrate the arts. Participant 5 did suggest using the resources provided by ArtsNOW and the local school visual arts teacher. All teachers stated they conduct extensive research on their own in the developing of art integrated lessons. Participant 2 made the suggestion to identify your comfort zone with the arts and begin there. The need and desire to develop a deeper understanding and knowledge base of the arts was shared by all participants.

Findings from the interviews were supported in both the classroom observation and curricula documents. In all of the classroom observations I observed teachers using elaborate and extensive teacher prepared resources; to include teacher prepared presentations, power point presentations, and classroom visuals, in addition to extensive modeling and questioning strategies. Implementing art integration also presented a time

requirement for students. It was noted in classroom observations of Participant 1, 2, and 3 that the students ran out of time during the one class period, and were unable to complete the art production component of the lesson as initially determined in the lesson plan. The lesson was extended into the next class period.

Theme 3: Art Integration Provides Enriched Learning Experiences

Learning through the arts is an active participatory learning experience that engages the students at multiple competences (Cunnington, Kantrowitz, Harnett, & Hill-Ries, 2014). During the individual interviews, the participants in this study discussed the learning experiences art integration made possible for students. Participant 1 credited art integration has “creating learning that relates more to the students, thus the students are more interactive with the learning process and experience deeper understanding and improved memory”. Participant 3 credited art integration for changing the students’ learning because “students are more engaged, and are making connections to the real-world”. Participant 5 described the art integrated learning experience as one where “The students are more engaged. The visual representation makes what would be abstract now concrete, thus leading to a deeper understanding and improved test scores”. The theme of student engagement was evident throughout the data sources.

Data gathered through the classroom observation and field notes taken support the theme that art integration provides an enriched learning experience. In all classrooms observed the students were actively involved in the learning experience. In classrooms of Participant 1 the students began the instructional period watching animated curriculum content, but within minutes began moving, and dancing along as they recited the content

knowledge being taught. Students were then given the opportunity to illustrate their own understandings through drawing. Students in Participant 3 language arts class were observed singing and writing lyrics that illustrated figurative speech.

Theme 4: Art Integration Has a Positive Impact on Student Learning

Despite the acknowledged stress and time demands on implementing art integration into the elementary classroom, teachers were committed to using art integration because of its positive impact on student learning. The benefits and positive effects of art integration identified and supported through all data sources were increased student engagement, facilitated instruction that meets the learning needs of all students, and the opportunities for collaborative learning.

Student engagement. Unanimously, all participants stated student engagement as one of the positive impacts art integration has on student learning. Participant 6 credited art integration for “increasing her students yearning for knowledge.” Participant 4 specified art integration makes learning fun for her students, and they demonstrate better recall and memory of the content taught. Participant 5 described the engagement as “excitement in the classroom.” Participant 6 stated “students gain a deeper understanding of the content with more interest and expression.” Classroom observations provided evidence of students engaged in the learning process. I observed all students were actively participating in class discussions and hands on learning activities. Also noted in the field notes, the students appeared to enjoy singing and listening to music related to the curriculum content, students expressed excitement about using the paints and oil pastels

to create and illustrate the learning, and students appeared tentative and interested when viewing artworks.

Meeting student learning needs. An effective and worthwhile teaching strategy must demonstrate that it meets the learning needs of the students. All eight of the participants expressed during the interviews a belief and perceptions that art integration is an effective teaching strategy. Participant 2 believed art integration facilitated a way for her struggling students to grasp the concepts and experience success in school. Participants 3 and 5 both were adamant that art integration had a positive impact on student learning as evident in their students' test scores. Participant 4 stated art integration helps to facilitate differentiation in the classroom instruction to meet the needs of all students." Participant 7 credited art integration for creating instruction that addresses the many different learning styles of the students. Data gathered through the interviews suggest that art integration offers a multifaceted approach to instruction that meets the diverse learning needs of all students.

Collaborative learning. Classroom observations also revealed classroom environments conducive to student collaboration and a sense of community through the use of small group discussion activities, small group art production activities as well as seating and desk arrangements that allow for small group interaction. Students were observed discussing the curriculum content and brainstorming with other students on how to best illustrate their learning as an assessment component of the instruction. It was noted during classroom observations a sense of acceptance and freedom for the students

to express their individual ideas. Participants 3 and 5 credited art integration for fostering and facilitating collaborative learning opportunities for their students.

Theme 5: Art integration's Effect on Standardized Test Scores

Each teacher participant believed art integration brought value to his or her classroom instruction and had a positive impact on student learning. When talking about testing during the individual interviews the perceptions of art integration's effect on standardized test scores were mixed as was the teachers' opinions about standardized test in general. Four of the eight participants believed using art integration in their classrooms enabled their students to score better on the standardized test. Participant A saw art integration as a tool to help prepare her students for success on standardized tests. Other participants were not convinced due to the test scores not being at a satisfactory level as required by both the school administration and school district. One participant exclaimed, "I believe art integration helps our students learn, but our test scores are not good." Interviews revealed the participants' belief in the value and benefits of art integration as a teaching strategy outweighed any unknown or unproven effect on standardized testing.

Data gathered during classroom observation support the uncertainty of art integration's effect on standardized test scores. Prior to a classroom observation, in an informal conversation with the Participant 3, I observed an elevated level of stress and frustration due to test scores. The participant shared that the grade level had just returned from a meeting with the district area superintendent regarding the recent test scores being low and not meeting the county's expectation levels.

In posing the interview question, can art integration help to shift the focus away from standardized test scores and back on student learning, the answer were again mixed. Participant 3 responded with a decisive “yes”, and suggested a project base learning verses testing. Participants 3 and 5 both viewed the current standardized test as an accountability tool, and could not be replaced by art integration. Participant 6 took the stance that success on a single test is not the ultimate goal, stating student learning is what matters.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to gain insight concerning the use of art integration in the elementary classroom from the teachers’ perspective through individual interviews. Through the interview process the teacher participants had the opportunity to share his or her perception of art integration’s effect on student learning as well as provide insight into how to successfully integrate art into the elementary classroom. A summary of the teachers’ perceptions of art integration is provided in (Appendix G). Data gathered showed the teacher participants considered art integration to add value and depth to the classroom instruction. Most participants acknowledged the increased amount of time and planning needed to integrate art successfully; but believed the value added to the students’ learning experience made the time and effort worthwhile. All participants saw art integration as a way to differentiate instruction and to meet the needs of all students. Participant 1 stated; “Art integration provides hands-on learning with real life connections”. Participant 2 stated art integration allows her as the teacher to “spark imagination, interest, and motivation in students which helps them learn.” Participant 4 sited art integration provides “student engagement, differentiation, and

makes learning fun.” Participants acknowledged the resources and support available to them through the school administration and the ArtsNOW organization; however, many of the teachers conducted research on their own in the planning of art integrated lessons, and appreciated a less pressured approach from the administration.

In follow-up interviews, via email, each participant was given the opportunity to share what they believed to be crucial information to the study’s findings. The general perception of all participants was that art integration had value as a teaching strategy, and was effective in improving student learning. Participant 2 stated art integration works at every level of education and with every type of learner. Participant 4 responded “I believe art integration in the classroom is necessary in order to effectively meet the needs of our diverse student population by engaging all students in their preferred learning style”. Participant 3 responded “art integration is an effective instructional practice and worth the effort to implement in the classroom to improve student learning”. Participant 1 suggested first implementing art integration at a basic level, one of comfort for the teacher and then build. Participant 1 further stated “the simplest activities can be the most beneficial for students.” Participant 3 warned school administration should not force the implementation of art integration with high demands and expectations; but rather, stress the value to students. Participant 5 suggested the training for art integration should begin at the college level and taught as one of the best practices in classroom instruction. Collectively, participants expressed a desire to see art integration used in other elementary classrooms and shared what he or she believed to be essential to successful integration.

Discrepant Cases and Nonconforming Data

Identifying and analyzing discrepant data is a key part of establishing validity and credibility in qualitative research (Creswell, 2003; Kaplan & Maxwell, 2005). Through the data analysis process there were some discrepant cases and nonconforming data identified. In this qualitative case study all participants provided his or her perceptions about using art integration within their own classroom instruction. However, the perceptions of some participants may differ or be contradictory. According to Kaplan and Maxwell (2005) the best solution is to report the discrepant data and allow the readers to draw their own conclusions. During the study data were gathered that did not support the belief that art integration had a positive effect on standardized test scores. Although these cases did not have significant impact on the findings of this study, the insight revealed other possible areas of study regarding art integration in the elementary school setting.

ArtsNOW Impact

The research site for this study was selected in part for its participation, training, and collaboration with the ArtsNOW organization. Nonconforming data gathered from this study suggests that the teachers do not utilize the instructional support offered by ArtsNOW in planning and preparing art integrated lesson. One of the interview questions asked teachers to share their or her approach to planning lessons that integrate the arts. The participants in this study seemed to rely more on strategies and ideas discovered through personal Internet searches. Participants outlined the planning process as first identifying the content standard to be taught, then an Internet search would be conducted to find activities and or art productions that supported the standard. Teachers

acknowledged looking for art integrated activities that not only meet the students' needs but also meet their own comfort level and personal interest. Only Participant 5 stated they utilized the lesson plan data banks furnished by ArtsNOW. It also was noted that this participant has also been involved in writing and developing art integrated lessons for ArtsNOW.

Art Integration's Impact on Standardized Test Scores

Discrepant data were also uncovered pertaining art integration's effect on students' levels of performance on standardized tests. Participants, when asked in the interview process about the focus on standardized tests and art integration's effect on student achievement as measured by standardized tests, made broad general statements that the effect was positive. However, the detailed responses demonstrated the evidence of art integration's effect on improving student achievement came during in class activities and assessments. Participant 3 when asked stated "students score better on assignments like classwork and even assessments when they are art based. Participant H expressed uncertainty stating "the students seem to be learning and engaged but the test scores do not show it because our scores are low". Data collected through the interviews revealed the participants' held varied perceptions of standardized testing. Three participants viewed standardized tests as an accountability tool and needed in education. Participant 7 called for project based learning instead of test. Participant 6 suggested that no test matters, only student learning is what matters in education. During the interviews two of the participants expressed a desire to leave the pressures and testing of public school pressures for the private school sector that does not fall under the same state

standardized test requirements. These perceptions, though taken into account of the general findings, were offset by the overwhelming perception of participants that art integration as a positive effect on student learning and achievement.

Evidence of Quality

This qualitative case study explored the teachers' perception of art integration's effect on student learning. Validity and trustworthiness establish the strength of this qualitative research. Yin (2009) outlined four tests that should be applied throughout the study to establish the quality of the research conducted to include (a) construct validity using multiple source and evidence gained through the data collection process, (b) internal validity conducted through the data analysis process to match patterns and build explanation, (c) external validity incorporated in the research design through the use of theory and finally (d) reliability established during the data collection process through the use of protocols and establishing database to store data.

Validity Through Multiple Sources

For this qualitative case study, I used eight teachers spanning across grade levels within a suburban elementary school as the principal source of data. In this study I collected three forms of data to include; individual interviews with each participant, classroom observations, and the collection of curricula documents (i.e., lesson plans).

Internal Validity

Internal validity was achieved through the use of axial coding, in which the text was reread and reviewed in order to search for themes and identify text that supports the concepts and categories identified through the open coding process. The presentation of

data through the use of direct quotes by the participants helped to establish validity and trustworthiness.

External Validity

External validity was established within the conceptual framework of this study, that combined the constructivism approach to student learning coupled with the Theory of MIs. The external validity was further supported by previous research in the areas of art education, art integration, and learning styles. Throughout the research process, the conducting of both interviews and classroom observations followed the approved protocols to ensure validity and quality.

Reliability Through the Data Collection Process

The data collection process for this qualitative case study followed the research guidelines as established by Walden University and the school district's research review board. A research protocol (Appendix E) was created to guide the research and collection of data. Individual interviews of participants followed the Interview Guide (Appendix D), as did the classroom observation followed the guidelines established in the Observational Guide (Appendix D). The data collection process did not begin until receipt of signed Consent Forms (Appendix B) by the participants. All individual interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed by the researcher, and then stored on the researchers password protected computer. Data gathered in the form of curricula documents and observational field notes were coded to allow for triangulation of data sources. The coded data were stored in the same computer protected files.

Accuracy of Data

To ensure accuracy in representing the participants, communications were established through email to provide each participant an opportunity to clarify and validate my findings based on the interview transcriptions. Additional questions were asked through email (Appendix G) to clarify and expand data gathered through the individual interviews. Establishing member checks ensures accuracy and trustworthiness of the interpretations (Glense2011). Additional steps were taken to ensure accuracy through the triangulation of data from multiple sources. Yin (2009) suggested the researcher should be constantly checking and rechecking the consistency of findings from different sources. Triangulation for this study was established through the converging of evidence gathered from individual interviews, classroom observations, and curricular documents.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to use interviews and observations of teachers in a suburban elementary school to inquire about the instructional practices of art integration and his or her perceptions of art integration's effect on student learning. The overall findings reveal that the teacher participants overwhelmingly believe art integration has a positive effect on their students' learning. The participants; shared many of the same identified benefits to students; to include increased levels of engagement, better memory of the curriculum content as well as a deeper understanding of the concepts taught. Participants saw art integration as a way to differentiate instruction, address varying learning styles and intelligences, and foster a community of

collaboration. All participants shared their increased levels of stress in planning and implementing art integration into their elementary classrooms, citing time and need for research and self-learning to be major contributors to the stress. Throughout the interviews the participants acknowledged that the pressure and stress they originally felt from the school's administration had been reduced substantially, Relief from the pressure and expectations has freed teachers up to willing plan and implement art integration into their classrooms. Findings illustrate that the participants have mixed perceptions concerning art integration's effect on tests scores. Despite the stress, and time requirements of implementing art integration into the elementary classroom participants overwhelmingly hold the perception and belief that art integration is beneficial to their students' learning and is an effective and worthwhile teaching practice.

Section 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

Teachers are challenged and charged with the task of ensuring that each and every one of their students is successful and demonstrates adequate academic success as measured by standardized tests. Both Gullatt (2007) and Stronge (2007) suggested that the real challenge is to create meaningful learning experiences for students. In this qualitative case study, I explored the use of art integration to create engaging and creative instruction as a viable solution to address this problem.

It is because of this challenge that teachers, like the participants in this study, search for and use research-proven effective teaching strategies to get the most out of the classroom instruction. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to use interviews and observations of teachers who integrate art into the curricula to inquire about the instructional practices of art integration as well as the teachers' perceptions of art integration's effect on student learning in the elementary school setting. For this study, I collected data from eight elementary teachers, spanning across grade levels from kindergarten through fifth grade, to include an EIP teacher, a gifted teacher, and a visual arts teacher. The school used as the research site for this study encourages and holds the expectation that all teachers will employ art integration as a method of instruction to improve student learning, thus making it an ideal stage for conducting this study. The school's stance on art integration is evident in the school's vision statement posted on the school's website (GCPS, 2014). It reads,

The researched school provides quality-plus instruction through the use of hands-on, active, and engaging lessons while incorporating authentic arts integration in all content areas. (Homepage)

In addition to holding teachers accountable for integrating the arts throughout the instructional process, the school is supported by the ArtsNOW organization through lesson plan data banks, in school training sessions, and through professional development opportunities offered during the summer.

Qualitative data were gathered from multiple sources to include individual interviews, classroom observations, and a review of curricular documents (i.e., lesson plans). This research was guided by four research questions designed to gain insight into the teachers' general perceptions concerning using art integration in the elementary classroom, what practices the teachers found to be effective in integrating art into their elementary classroom, how art integration supports student learning, and finally how art integration provides a focus on student learning instead of standardized test scores. Glesne (2011) identified qualitative research as a valuable method for gaining a greater understanding of perceptions, attitudes, and processes. Using only teachers who implement art integration in the classroom, the intent of this qualitative case study was to gather data that demonstrated the teachers' perceptions of art integration and answered the why and how that only such a teacher could insightfully answer. Yin (2008) identified the case study as the preferred approach for answering how and why questions.

The conceptual framework for this study has its basis in two theoretical sources: constructivism and MI theory. Each in its respective way provides a conceptual lens to

examine art integration in the elementary classroom setting. The constructivist approach sees learning as an active process where the student constructs knowledge through three stages: first, enactive or action based information, second, iconic or images, and third, through symbolic or language form (McLeod, 2008). Marshall (2007) characterized constructivist theory as an interactive process of learning and further suggested that image making and visual imagery play a vital role in constructing new insights and learning. Both McLeod's (2008) and Marshall's definition of constructivist theory supports implementing art integration into the elementary classroom setting as an instructional practice to improve student learning.

The second theory framing this study comes from Gardner's (1983, 1999) theory of MI in which he originally identified seven forms of intelligences. There was verbal-linguistic that encompasses an awareness and understanding of written and spoken language. Logical-mathematical describes learners who engage in analyzing and solving problems. Spatial intelligence is the strength and tendencies to recognize and manipulate patterns. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence is having the ability to command and use one's body as a tool. Musical intelligence comprises the talents and ability to compose and play music. Interpersonal intelligence is a person's awareness of other people, and intrapersonal describes a person who demonstrates self awareness. Gardner (1999) expanded his list to include naturalist intelligence that encompasses the ability to recognize components of nature and existential intelligence that embraces the unknowns of the universe. Art integration allows the teachers to tap into each of these intelligences and thus meet the varied needs of their students. To address the MI of students, teachers

must incorporate a variety of stimulating learning experiences that cultivate each student's combination of intelligences and encourage the intermixing of intelligences to yield meaningful learning (Armstrong, 2009; Moran et al., 2006). Research in the areas of education, cognitive learning, and art education support the value of art integration as a teaching strategy.

The problem that prompted this qualitative case study is the need for teachers to effectively teach each student in a method that not only meets the individual needs but pushes students to perform at higher levels of academic achievement. Instruction must be meaningful and engaging in order to lead the students to a higher level of thinking and understanding of the curriculum content. Goldberg's (2001) position is one for broadening the potential of the arts in the classroom to serve as a methodology or strategy for learning that allows for creative exploration of subject matter. Goldberg (2001, 2006) further called for the use of art integration to accommodate the learning of all students, especially second language learners, and those from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, citing art integrated activities promote creativity, foster collaboration, and develop the students' critical thinking and communication skills. Sherman (2010), representing the American Federation of Teachers (2014), called for art integration as the means to enliven the curriculum and transform individual students and entire schools. It is this belief that the arts have educational value and hold inspiring possibilities that led me to conduct this study in an elementary school that is committed to using the arts as an effective instructional practice to improve student learning. Through the data gathered from conducting individual interviews of teachers who have been identified as

successfully integrating the arts, observing art integration in action within the classrooms, and analyzing the curricula documents and lesson plans that lead the instruction, I was able to answer the questions of why these teachers integrate the arts and how they successfully integrate the arts into their classroom. As stated by Participant 4, the why answer is as follows:

I believe that art integration in the classroom is necessary in order to effectively meet the needs of our diverse student population. Art engages all students in some way, and if students are not engaged they will not learn. Students have different learning styles and art is one of the best ways to meet each of those styles of learning.

It is my intent to share this information with other elementary school teachers and school administration with the hope of increasing the expanse of art integration into other schools. The how question was answered by Participant 1 in the following statement: “Just jump right in and give it a try! I do not know every art or musical vocabulary or terminology, but I am not going to let stop me from doing something that is engaging, beneficial, and enjoyable for all students.” Insight shared by the participants in this study serves to guide and encourage other elementary schools teachers to implement art integration in their own classrooms.

Interpretation of Findings

The focus of this qualitative case study was to understand the teacher’s perception of the effect of art integration on student learning as well as to gain insight into the art integration practices found to be most effective in the elementary classroom. Hancock

and Algozzine (2011) identified the goal of qualitative research as understanding the case being investigated through the participants' perspectives. In this study, teachers expressed a desire to provide effective art integration strategies as a part of their own classroom instruction to improve student learning, increase student engagement, meet the needs of the students, and raise student achievement. Each participant was committed to consistently and pervasively integrating the arts throughout the curriculum on at least a weekly basis. The participants shared the definition of arts integration to mean teaching both the curriculum content and an area of the arts simultaneously, a collaboration of subject matter that allows the students to learn in and through the arts, making connections across curricula, and providing students a variety of engaging learning experiences. Sharing the vision of art integration, Burnaford et al. (2013) stated art integration to be a well-designed fit that occurs when teachers find the right methods and practices to deliver curriculum content, with art serving as the unifying agent in the curriculum, and when students are engaged in the learning process. The proceeding subsections provide conclusions drawn from the combined data sources to address the research questions guiding this study.

Research Question 1

The first research question was the following: What are the teachers' general perceptions concerning using art integration in the elementary classroom? Responses from the individual interviews and supported by both the classroom observations and curricula documents reinforced the perception that art integration is an effective teaching strategy that is used to improve student learning and meet the needs of all students.

Participants referred to meeting the needs of all students, addressing MI and learning styles of the students, and making real world connections to the content as some of the benefits of art integration. Participant 2 shared,

Arts integration works at every level of education and with every type of learner.

While all learners are different, art integration allows some to explore while pushing others, and allows all students to build background knowledge and experiences that will benefit them far beyond the classroom.

Silver et al. (2000) called for an integrated approach using the arts, fusing Gardner's (1983) MI theory and Jung's (1927) learning styles together to form an effective approach to create practical, feasible, and enjoyable learning experiences that address the diversity in student needs. Fowler (1996) shared the perception that interdisciplinary learning can lead to a more cohesive curriculum, and the arts, unlike other subjects, can cut across disciplines.

Research Question 2

The second question guiding this study was the following: What practices have the teachers found to be effective in integrating art into their elementary classroom? The data gathered identified a variety of commonly used art integration practices that the teacher participants applied in their classroom instruction. Art integrated practices were used at all stages of instruction, from the introduction, whole class discussion activities, individual student activities, to the final assessment used to measure the students' understanding and knowledge of the content. Through classroom observation, I observed how Participant 3 used music as a means to introduce figurative language to fifth grade

students. In a class discussion, students shared examples of idioms that were heard in the song and were encouraged to think of other examples they knew of. The lesson plan outlining the instruction allowed for an individual activity and assessment where students were then given the opportunity to engage in the creative process to generate and visualize their own ideas choosing from art music and drama to demonstrate understanding. The conceptual framework for this study embraced the constructivist approach of the learner as being actively involved in constructing their own knowledge. Marshall (2007) characterized constructivist theory as an interactive process of learning and further suggested that image making and visual imagery play a vital role in constructing new insights and learning. Other art integration practices observed in this study included the following: (a) Students observing works of art as a source of visual imagery and documented evidence used to construct written responses to questions, (b) students listening, singing, and writing songs to help facilitate memorization and understanding of content, (c) students viewing artwork that portrayed the curricula topic in order to evoke student responses and class discussions, and (d) students creating artwork that demonstrated their understanding of the content material.

An additional theme emerged from this research question that was expressed by all participants and thus warrants attention in this study. Each participant declared a higher level of stress due to the time requirement needed to effectively plan and prepare for art integrated instruction. Research conducted by Ingram (2007) shared similar concerns naming the challenges in implementing art integration into the classroom. Some of the challenges include finding time for collaboration, getting more teachers to

participate, making sure the arts are truly integrated and not just add-ons, budget restraints and cuts, overwhelmed multiple initiatives, and intense pressure to make adequate yearly progress and improve standardized test scores. Fowler (1996) cautioned that pre service education leaves classroom teachers inadequately prepared to teach within an integrated model, creating additional stress to an already overburden teacher. Participant 5 shared Fowler's concern and encouraged art integration to be taught at the college level as an effective teaching practice. Successful art integration is not without demands and challenges; however, the participants in this study believed the rewards and benefits toward improved student learning worth the effort.

Research Question 3

The third question was the following: How does art integration support student learning? Data gathered supports the stance that art integration has a positive impact on student learning through increased engagement and a variety of learning experiences. Through the individual interview process, Participant 2 shared how teaching through arts integration she is able to “spark imagination, interest, and motivation” in her struggling students and that teaching with the arts helps them learn faster and at a deeper level. Participant 4 stated, “Art engages students, it helps differentiate instruction and assessments, and it motivates students, thus increasing student achievement.” Data gathered from classroom observation showed all students engaged in the learning activities, students were actively participating in class discussions, and students shared their excitement for their learning and art productions. Other research has also suggested the arts contribute to student achievement in many ways, including student engagement,

motivation, and social skills (Catterall, 2009; Unrath & Mudd, 2011). Snyder (2001) stated meaningful integration of the arts offers links to other disciplines to enhance student learning through connections, correlation, and integration. DeMoss and Morris (2002) identified ways art integration affects student learning by improving the learning environment, serving as a stimulus for student engagement in the learning process, and creating broadened learning communities.

Research Question 4

The final research question was the following: How does art integration provide a focus on student learning instead of standardized test scores? The evidence and data gathered did not provide a decisive answer to the effect art integration has on standardized test scores. When participants were asked what evidence they have observed that demonstrates art integration is effective in improving student achievement, many responses involved how students were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding through artwork and how students scored better on classwork assignments and art-based assessments. Only two participants clearly stated that increased test scores were the evidence they observed. The qualitative data gathered in this study suggest art integration has a positive impact on student performance and learning but may or may not impact standardized test scores. Additional studies may be needed that gather quantitative data in addition to the qualitative data to fully understand the impact art integration has on standardized test scores.

In summary of the findings, practices of art integration were evident in all three data sources, which included individual interviews, classroom observations, and curricula

documents (e.g., lesson plans). Teachers employed a variety of art integration practices to include whole group instruction, small group, collaborative opportunities as well as individual student activities. Classrooms were setup to help in the facilitating of art integration, and student collaboration. Art integration practices observed include viewing a visual art document in order to answer document base questions, viewing artwork to inspire class discussion, listening to music to illustrate curriculum content, creating art to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the content taught. It was evident across the data sources that the teachers had to plan and prepare a vast amount of materials to facilitate teaching with art integration. The teachers shared a high level of stress associated with planning and preparing art integration lessons, naming the major cause of the stress to be caused by the time needed to effectively implement art integration into the classroom. Despite the stress and time demand of implementing art integration, all teacher participants overwhelmingly believed that art integration had a positive impact on student learning and enriched the learning experience, thus making art integration a worthwhile instructional practice.

Implications for Social Change

In this research study I explored a suburban elementary school that has made a commitment of time and resources to integrate the arts into every elementary classroom and across all curriculum areas. Through individual interviews, classroom observations, and curricula documents this study provides knowledge and insight from the teachers that successfully plan and implement art integrated lesson into the curricula in order to understand the instructional practices, how to implement art integration into other

elementary classroom, and to realize the many benefits art integration provides to the students.

Findings from this research study can contribute to positive social change in the fields of elementary education and art education as well as make a positive impact in other elementary classrooms in several ways. The first implication is establishing the belief that art integration does have positive effect on student learning and achievement and can be successfully implemented in all elementary classrooms. Teachers in this study provided descriptions of art integration practices that can be implemented successfully in other elementary classrooms. An examination of the data may prove to be helpful at the district level as a means to provide a deeper understanding of art integration practices and an awareness of the benefits art integration brings to the student's learning experience. With a better understanding of art integration, teachers may be more inclined to implement art integration into their classroom. With awareness and understanding of the positive effects art integration offers, art educators can become active participants in improving student learning across other content areas. The art educator can serve as a local school resource for all teachers in developing and planning art integrated lessons.

Findings from this study also have the potential to create a change that is beneficial to students by providing art integration practices that have been proven to enrich the learning environment, increase engagement, deepen understanding, and improve student learning. Implementation of strategies documented in this study will allow students to experience learning that addresses the differing learning styles and intelligences, participate in collaborative learning groups, interact with a variety of art

forms, engage in hands on learning, and make real world connections that last a life time. The benefits of such social change can led to an elementary school where teachers love to teach and students love to learn.

Recommendations for Action

In this section, I provided recommendations that can help to increase the awareness of art integration practices and the positive impact art integration can bring to the elementary classroom. The recommendations are based on the findings of this study. Dissemination of the study results along with recommendations will be provided to the administration and teachers at the local school, principals and teachers at other elementary schools within the district, the school district's board of directors, and research review board, and the school district's fine arts department. The sharing of results will occur during school leadership meetings, faculty meetings, and professional learning opportunities for fine arts teachers. The following actions are suggested: (a) Teachers from other elementary schools within the district should have the opportunity to observe art integration in action and to ask questions of the teachers who have been successfully integrating art into the elementary classroom, (b) Training from the ArtsNOW organization should be made available, through the school district's support, to all interested elementary schools within the district, (c) School administrations should encourage and support the implementation of art integration based solely on the benefits to student learning, and not apply pressure or demands for a set number of art integrated lessons to be taught within a school day, (d) School administration should provide teachers time and opportunities to plan art integrated lessons collaboratively within the

grade level, in order to reduce the time required and to share the work load among teachers, and (d) Fine arts teachers should have the opportunity and time to plan collaboratively with classroom teachers to help facilitate art integrated lessons.

Recommendations for Further Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to use interviews and observations of teachers in a suburban elementary school who were identified as successfully integrating art into the curricula to inquire about the instructional practices of art integration and their perceptions of art integration's effect on student learning. This case study was bounded by the one research site, a suburban elementary school within one of the largest school districts in the state of Georgia. Since providing excellence in education through the use of quality, effective teaching practices is a district-wide initiative, future research regarding art integration should be conducted in other elementary schools also trained in the ArtsNOW program to collaborate and expand on the findings of this study. Additional research on the potential application and benefits of arts integrations should be conducted at both the middle and high school levels. It is also suggested that a mixed method study, gathering both qualitative and quantitative data may be needed to fully understand the effect art integration has on student levels of achievement as measured by standardized tests.

Reflections on the Researcher's Experience

As an art educator and a teacher leader within my local school, I hold the desire to make meaningful contributions to improving student learning. My belief that the arts are a valuable part of education and can possibly hold the key to transforming the students

learning experience into one that is engaging, interactive, creative and thought provoking sparked my desire to conduct this research study. I chose to use a qualitative approach to focus on the experience and perception of teachers using arts integration and to move away from the quantitative data that currently inundates educational policy and decision making. The use of one-on-one interviews allowed me the opportunity to learn from the teachers' experiences, practices, and challenges with implementing art integration. Through the interviews and observations process a positive and trusting relationship was formed between me and participants, as evident by the participants' willingness to sit down and share with me their perceptions of art integration. The trust was further demonstrated by the participants' willingness to allow me access into their classroom to observe his or her instructional practices as well as the students' participation and reaction to art integration. I appreciated the participants' candid responses and desire to share the good and the bad of his or her experiences with art integration, and to open up their classroom to me. During the interview process, a conscious effort was made to set aside any type of bias, viewpoints, or personal opinions about art integration. As suggested by Glesne (2011), to address researcher bias, I continuously explored my subjectivity by writing down my own preconceived opinions both before and following interviews and observations. This written exercise allowed me to address and reflect on any biases. To ensure objectivity, I refrained from focusing on my own experiences with art or my desire to help facilitate art integration.

As the study developed, I gained a better understanding of what successful art integration entails within the elementary classroom. I also gained an understanding and

appreciation for the effort on the part of the teachers to effectively implement art integration. In summary, I appreciate the opportunity to have conducted this study. The participants' perceptions, practices, and beliefs concerning art integration, along with the tireless efforts to implement art integration within the classroom underscore the potential value and benefits art integration could have in improving student learning.

Conclusion

In a time of accountability and high stakes testing, the teaching profession is one of challenges, stresses, and long workdays. As teachers strive to create a learning experience that not only meets the needs of all students, but also promotes higher levels of academic achievement, fosters creativity, and prepares students of the future, it is necessary to employ highly effective teaching practices. Findings from this study, and the participants commitment and dedication to using art integration, supports expanding the use of art integration as an instructional practices to enrich and deepen students' learning experience.

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Appendix A: Letter of Cooperation

Community Research Partner Name

Contact Information

Date

Dear Lynn M. Fagan,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled The Effectiveness of Art integration on Improving Student Learning within _____ Elementary School. As part of this study, I authorize you to recruit teacher participants, conduct data collection through interviews, classroom observations and curricula documents, results dissemination will take place through publications of study. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: providing access to classrooms, providing space and time to conduct interviews, and provide copies of lesson plans observed being taught. 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,
Authorization Official
Contact Information

Appendix B: Teacher Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research study of the effectiveness of art integration on improving student learning. The researcher is inviting teachers who integrate art into their elementary classroom to be in the study. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Lynn M. Fagan who is a doctoral student at Walden University. You may already know the researcher as an art teacher within the school district, but this study is separate from that role.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to inquire about the instructional practices of art integration, using teachers that integrate art into their own elementary classroom.

Procedures:

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

Participate in an individual interview lasting approximately one hour and taking place in a private space within the research site.

Participate in classroom observation lasting throughout an entire class period of instruction.

Provide curricula documents; such as lesson plans

Here are some sample questions:

What are the teachers’ general perceptions concerning using art integration in the elementary classroom?

What practices have the teachers’ found to be effective in integrating art into the elementary classroom?

How does art integration support student learning, and present opportunities to rethink current standardized notions of academic achievement?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at _____ Elementary 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 later. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as additional time demands to allow for interviews, uncomfortable feelings or stress due to the presence of an outsider coming into your classroom. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

Potential benefits from this study may lead to social change through an increased awareness of the instructional applications the arts bring to elementary classrooms and subsequently lead to more expansive art integration.

Payment:

There will be no payment or compensation given for participating in this study. A letter of gratitude for your participation will be sent to your school.

Privacy:

Any information you provide will be kept anonymous. The researcher will not use your personal 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 the study reports. Data will be kept secure by the researcher and stored in a secured data base. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. _____ She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is _____. Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB #06-13-14-06-13-14-0101332** and it expires on **June 12, 2015.**

The format for this study is a qualitative case study inquiring into the instruction practices of art integration through participant interviews, classroom observations, and collection of curricula documents:

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 consent", I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant _____

Date of consent _____

Participant's Signature _____

Researcher's Signature _____

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Time of Interview: Start Time:

Stop Time:

Date:

Place/Location:

Interviewer:

Participant: A B C D E F G

Grade Level: _____

Years of teaching experience in the elementary classroom: _____

Prior experience with the arts since childhood: _____

Research Questions:

What are the teachers' general perceptions concerning using art integration in the elementary classroom?

What practices have the teachers found to be effective in integrating art into their elementary classroom?

How does art integration change classroom instruction and student learning?

How does art integration present opportunities to shift the focus back to student learning and away from standardized test scores?

Interview Guide

Tell me about your general perceptions concerning using art integration in your elementary classroom?

1.1: How feasible is it for you to integrate art into the curricula?

1.2: What are the challenges in implementing art integration into your classroom curricula?

1.3: How has implementing art integration changed the learning environment in your classroom?

1.4: Tell me about your approach to planning lessons that integrate the arts?

What practices have the teachers found to be effective in integrating art into their elementary classroom?

2.1: What practices have you found to be most effective in implementing art into your classroom curricula?

2.2: What practices have you found to be the most feasible to implementing art integration in your classroom curricula?

2.3: What art integration practices do you believe have the biggest impact on enhancing student learning?

How do teachers believe art integration has changed their students' learning?

3.1: How has art integration influenced your students' learning?

3.2: How has implementing art integration changed your students' learning experience?

3.3: How do you believe art integration has influenced your students' levels of engagement and participation?

3.4: How do you believe implementing art integration has raised your student's learning?

Are there any areas of art integration that you feel you have not received sufficient training in and your ability to implement is limited?

How do you perceive art integration has shaped your instruction, selection of classroom activities and assessment tools?

How do you perceive art integration has changed your students' levels of achievement?

How do you continue to expand your learning about art integration strategies?

How do you intend to continue implementing art integration into you classroom instruction?

How do you feel about the level of support by the district and school administration for art integration into the curriculum?

9.1: Can you tell us how it could be improved and what would enhance your overall instructional capacity for art integration in your subject area and across the curriculum?

9.2: What kind of instructional support or professional development by the district could improve the practice of art integration into the formal curriculum program?

.How can art integration refocuses curriculum and instruction on learning and away from the dominant tendency to teach to the test?

10.1: How does it prompt rethinking current notions of student achievement?

Appendix D: Observation Guide

(Classroom organization, arrangement, and management; introductory strategy and activity; content instruction ; class and student activity; summarizing strategy as well as evidence of art methods, art skills, art production and art content being integrated into the lesson; visual references and examples; essential questions guiding instruction; standards being taught, teacher's role in facilitating instruction, and student participation)

Observation Guide	
Date, time and location of observation:	
Description Notes	Reflective Notes
General: Subject area: ELA Social Studies Sciences Math Essential questions: Standards being addressed	
Classroom Layout:	

Time activity began:	
Introduction strategy and activity:	
Content instruction :	
Class and student activity:	
Summarizing strategy:	
Evidence of art integration: Art method: Art skill: Art production:	

Art content:	
Time Activity ended:	
Observation: Teacher role in facilitating instruction	
Observation: Student participation	

Appendix E: Research Protocol

***“Perception of Elementary School Teachers as to
The Effectiveness of Art Integration on
Improving Student Learning”***

*Lynn M Fagan, researcher
Walden University*

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1. Synopsis

Teachers face the challenge of closing the achievement gap exposed by standardized testing; as such, teachers are looking for effective teaching strategies to improve student learning. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to use interviews and observations of elementary school teachers identified as successfully integrating art into the curricula, to explore both the instructional practices of art integration and the perceptions of art integration's effect on student learning. Constructivist Theories and the Theory of Multiple Intelligence provide the conceptual framework of this study whose findings add to the body of research addressing the value of art integration. Research questions focused on the participants' perceptions concerning the use of art integration in the elementary classroom, practices found to be effective in integrating art into the curricula, how art integration supports student learning, and how does art integration provide a focus on student learning instead of standardized test. Data collected from 8 interviews and 4 classroom observations were analyzed and coded until common themes emerged inductively and conclusions could be drawn as to the meaning participants attribute to using art integration in their classrooms. Key findings reveal teachers credit art integration for higher levels of learning through increased student engagement. Successful art integration enriches the entire learning experience from content delivery, student interaction with content and final assessment. Art integration provides hands-on activities, real-life connections, document based inquiry, and collaborative learning opportunities that proved most effective strategies. Study findings may lead to positive social change by an expansive use of art integration, and improved student learning.

2. Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAA: Arts for Academic Achievement

AI: Art Integration

CAPE: The Chicago Arts Partnership

CEP: Center on Education Policy

CETA: Changing Education through the Arts

EIP: Early Intervention Program

ESOL: English Speakers of Other Language Learners

GCPS: Gwinnett County Public Schools

IRB: International Review Board

M.I.: Multiple Intelligene

NCLB: No Child Left Behind Act

P: Participant in study

PCAH: President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities

SPECTRA: Schools, parents, Educators, Children, Teachers Rediscover the Arts

3. Introduction / Background *

Teachers are held accountable for closing the achievement gap exposed by standardized testing. Student learning and achievement levels are measured by standardized, high stakes tests that not only drive classroom instruction but determine if a student will advance to the next grade level or graduate. Government mandates have created a culture in education that is focused on raising student tests scores. The CEP (2007) findings suggest NCLB has increased the time spent on testing Language Arts and Math by 62%, significantly reduced time for other subjects, and has a higher level of impact on school districts with identified areas of improvement. Resulted changes in the curricula reflect a greater emphasis placed on tested content and skills, leaving the remaining curriculum areas battling for instructional time and resources (Armstrong, 2009). This imbalance between tested and non-tested curricula creates significant gaps in student learning (Goldberg, 2008; Holzer, 2009).

Educators and administrators are searching for creative alternatives to constructively deal with this trend. The real challenge is to create meaningful learning experiences for students (Costa & Kallick, 2000; Gullatt, 2007; Stronge, 2007). Research in the fields of Constructivists, Multiple Intelligence, and Educational Practices addresses the need for classroom instruction that accommodates the varied needs of all students. Bruner, (1996) suggested teachers should facilitate student learning through the encouragement of thinking, problem solving, and discovering principles by themselves. Efland (2002) applied constructivist theories to art education and asserted that integrating knowledge from many subjects through art creates a learning experience that cultivates a deeper understanding while activating the cognitive potential of the learner. Multiple Intelligence theory has a direct impact on practices within the classroom by changing instructional practices and expanding learning opportunities for students to address the different intelligences (Armstrong, 2009; Gardner, 2011; Lemov, 2010). The value of art has received some attention as a possible means to facilitate student learning. Eisner (2002, 2004, 2008) suggested that the arts foster critically important cognitive skills, such as sensibility, imagination, representation, problem solving, and a way of knowing. Burnaford, Aprill, and Weiss (2001) stated the arts deepen the level of instruction and student learning through authentic interaction with the content.

The aim of this research study is to explore the teachers' perceptions of art integration effectiveness on improving student learning. Through individual interviews and classroom observations of teachers who successfully integrate the arts into their classroom, I will be able to explore the process of art integration in depth within the instructional setting where they are practiced. Findings from this case study may provide insight into the practices of art integration that may benefit other teachers and lead to opportunities for more enriched student learning through art integration.

4. Objectives *

- *The nature of the study is to examine the basic instructional principles and processes involved with art integration in the elementary school curriculum from the perspective of teachers. It is also the intent of this study to gain insight into the teachers' perception of art integrations impact on enriching the learning environment, and improving student learning.*
- *What are the teachers' general perceptions concerning using art integration in the elementary classroom?*
- *What practices have the teachers found to be effective in integrating art into their elementary classroom?*
- *How does art integration support student learning?*
 - *How does art integration provide a focus on student learning instead of standardized test scores?*

5. Study Methodology *

- *This study used a qualitative case study approach to explore the use of art integration in an elementary school program. The case study approach is the preferred method to focus the research on a phenomenon, bounded by space and time, and within the real-life context (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011; Yin, 2008). Yin (2008) identified case study as the preferred approach for “(a) answering how and why questions, (b) when the investigator has little control over events, and (c) when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context” (p. 312). This case study is bounded to one elementary school that incorporates art integration in their curricula. The real-life context of art integration was explored through interviews and classroom observations with the intent to answer how the teachers' integrate the arts and why the teachers use art integration as an instructional approach.*
- *The intent of the research is to develop an in depth description of how teachers view and understand the implementation of arts integration in an elementary school program as well as the effect teachers believe art integration has on improving student learning. It is also the intent of the researcher to gather insight into effective instructional practices of art integration that can be shared with other elementary school teachers and subsequently lead to the expanse of art integration within the elementary school setting.*

6. Study population

➤ Site

- *The research site is a suburban elementary school in the southeastern United States. The school and teachers were chosen based on their participation in the ArtsNOW (ArtsNowLearning Org., 2013; Creating Pride, 2007) training program that emphasizes the integration of the arts into the classroom curriculum and their successful use of art integration within their own classroom. In 2010 the elementary school site had a population of 1399 students, with 40% Black, 34% White, and 17% Hispanic students (Gwinnett County Public Schools, 2011).*

➤ Subjects

- *Participants in this research study are a representative sample of the teaching staff at one school and consist of eight teachers spanning across grades kindergarten through fifth grade, including regular classroom teachers, an EIP teacher, a gifted teacher, and one fine arts teacher. The number of participants allowed for balance with depth of inquiry per individual.*
- *The participants were identified by the local school's principal as teachers who successfully integrate the arts into the curricula as an effective instructional tool for teaching their students. A letter of invitation was sent to all recommended teachers and eight teachers were selected to participate in the study. Selection criteria included the following: years of teaching experience, post graduate education and professional training, grade level assignment, and experience in art integration.*

7. Study procedure *

- *Accessing research site to conduct study begins with gaining IRB approval from Walden University (#06-13-14-0101332), and the approval from the school districts research review board (#2015-17), I asked the principal of the suburban elementary school via school email for permission to conduct this qualitative research study (Appendix A). As a part of the initial correspondence, I asked the principal to provide a list of potential participants that were identified as successful in integrating art into their classroom curricula. Upon gaining approval to conduct research from the principal of the elementary school research site, I contacted each potential participant through school email and invited him or her to participate in the research study. Each potential participant was provided a description and purpose of the study, along with the consent form*

(Appendix B) as an attachment to the school email. Having receipt of each signed Consent Form, I contacted each participant via email to schedule the time, date, and location for the individual interviews. The data collection process will extend over the time period of one month, and consist of individual interviews, classroom observations, and the collection of curriculum documents (i.e. lesson plans).

➤ *Data collection **

- *Data will be collected from individual interviews and classroom observations of participants. The data collection process will occur between August 1, 2014 and August 30, 2014. Field notes and transcribed notes from the audio recorded interviews, along with field notes taken during classroom observations, and curricula artifacts will be gathered as data.*
- *Interviews*
Individual interviews will be conducted with each participant. Each interview will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes in length, and followed the interview protocol (Appendix C). All interviews will be digitally recorded and downloaded on my password protected computer. Each participant will be assigned a letter pseudonym to protect participant confidentiality. The interviews consists of 10 open-ended questions designed to gain insight and understanding into the teachers' perceptions about using art integration in their classrooms, the practices teachers found to be the most effective in integrating art into the curricula, and the impact art integration has on the students' learning and level of engagement. The interview format allowed for the participants to freely provide additional input regarding his or her personal beliefs about art integration.
- *Classroom Observations*
I will observe the classroom of 4 participants after conducting interviews and gaining participant permission to enter. A broad sample will be selected across grade levels.. The plan was to observe each of the teachers' classrooms through one complete class period (approximately 45 minutes). The intended focus is on introductory strategies; content instruction, class and student activity, and summarizing strategies (See the Observational Protocol, Appendix D).
- *Curricular Documents*
For this case study, the third form of data collection involved collecting curriculum documents (i.e. lesson plans) from each of the participants, which was gathered at the conclusion of the interviews.

8. Data Management *

- *Data is going to be stored in an electronic folder for each participant, using the assigned pseudonym, in order to organize the data and facilitate easy retrieval. Each individual interview will be recorded using a digital voice recorder. Using a digital voice recorder will allow saving the recording on both a flash drive and my personal computer. All hand-written field notes, completed observation protocols, and reflective journaling will be scanned and saved in the designated data file for each participant stored on my personal, password protected computer. The curricula documents received via email from each participant will also be saved into the designated participant data folder. The original paper copies of data will be locked in my personal file cabinet to maintain data security.*

9. Adverse Event Reporting

- *Any and all adverse events will be reported immediately to the Walden University IRB.*

10. Statistical Analysis

- *Analysis plan*
 - *Data analysis for this study followed a systematic approach to code and organizes the data in a search for meaning that could provide insight into an elementary classroom that integrates art into the curricula*
 - *Statistical methods to be used include open and axial coding of data gathered from the interviews, content analysis of data gathered from observations, and descriptive coding of the curricula documents collected. I will follow a thematic analysis approach to data analysis to carefully examine and code each participant's responses.*
 - *I will serve as the key instrument of data collection. I will thoroughly examined all documents; observed behaviors, and interviewed participants as means of immersing myself in the case.*

11. Quality assurance, monitoring & safety

Approval will be gained from the research site's school district and Walden University's International Review Board (IRB) before requesting participation of the teacher participants in the research study and before conducting interviews and observations. These approvals will ensure that the study is a low risk to the

participants in the study. In addition, the IRB has certified there were no ethical issues that would harm the participants in the study.

12. Finance and resource use*

There is no financial compensation or financial resources used in conducting this study

13. Dissemination of Results and Publication policy

Dissemination of results will occur with the publication of the completed research through Walden University. Completed research and findings will be shared with all participants and the school's principal who facilitated the access to the research site and participants. Educational stakeholders to include area school district, teachers, school administrators, and those responsible for curricula design will be informed as to the potential value of art integration in the elementary classroom.

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- Appendix A: Letter of Cooperation
 - Appendix B: Teacher Consent Form
 - Appendix C: Interview Guide
 - Appendix D: Observation Guide
 - Appendix E: Research Protocol

Appendix F: Table of Findings

Research question	Participant	Data from interviews
What are the teachers' general perceptions concerning using Art Integration in the elementary classroom?	P:1	Hard to do because of focus on Content A.I. helps struggling students grasp the concepts.A.I. helps facilitate differentiation
	P:2	brings excitement into classroom
	P:3	Increases student engagement, helps to facilitate learning. Takes time to do but it is worth it.
	P:4	A.I. increases student engagement
	P:5	Increased engagement and addresses different learning styles
	P:6P:7P:8	A.I. creates a learning environment students enjoy More effective teaching strategy incorporates many learning styles. Teachers do not feel comfortable enough with the art content.
What practices have the teachers' found to be effective in integrating art into their elementary classroom?	P:1	Hands-on activities that make real life connections
	P:2	Integrating the visual arts and music makes the biggest impact and enhances student learning Providing collaborative learning opportunities.
	P:3	
	P:4	
	P:5	Provides many opportunities for student learning experiences
	P:6	Both whole group instruction as well as collaborative groups
	P:7	Modeling for students and creating a balance of all A.I. Strategies
		Using all A.I. strategies to include visual arts, music, drama, movement and dance.

(table continues)

Research Question	Participant	Data from Interview
How does art integration change classroom instruction and student learning?	P: 1	Creates learning that relates more to students, students are more interactive, improved memory of content
	P: 2	A.I. has provided my students more opportunities to explore the content. Made teaching easier and more exciting.
	P: 3	Students are more engaged, making more connections to real-world.
	P: 4	Students are excited about learning. Learning is “fun”.
	P: 5	Students are more engages. The visual representation makes what would be abstract now concrete. Improved test scores
	P: 6	Students gain a deeper understanding of content.
	P: 7	100% engaged and addresses all learning styles
	P: 8	Kids are getting better at creating art, more engaged
How has art integration shaped your instruction, and selection of class activities and assessment?	P:1	Stressful
	P:2	Add A.I. weekly and try to address different intelligences
	P:3	Try to add it in every week
	P:4	Use it every day. A,I, provides many ways for the students to demonstrate what they know, and to work with the content being taught.
	P:5	Makes me a better teacher and increases ability to differentiate.
	P:6	More purposeful and thoughtful
	P:7	Changed greatly
	P:8	I try to integrate into classroom content

(table continues)

Research Question	Participant	Data from Interviews
How does art integration shift the focus on student learning instead of standardized test?	P:1	Increases student achievement
	P:2	A.I. absolutely increases student achievement.
	P:3	Absolutely increases student achievement
	P:4	A.I. does increase students' level of achievement and understanding.
	P:5	Yes, there is an increase in student achievement.
	P:6	Test scores do show increased student achievement.
	P:7	Increased student learning
	P:8	Test scores do not reflect an increase in student achievement.
What are the challenges in implementing art integration?	P:1	The time required to plan and prepare for the activities.
	P:2	Learning my own art knowledge and art vocabulary.
	P:3	Time to research lesson and prepare.
	P:4	No real challenges that was not easy to overcome.
	P:5	Time to prepare lessons
	P:6	Teaching the art content
	P:7	Time
	P:8	None. I would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with classroom teachers

Appendix G: Summary Responses

Summary Responses

Why do you take the time to integrate the arts into your classroom?	<p>P:A “I take the time to integrate the arts into my classroom because the students enjoy it and it is engaging. Plus I just enjoy art. I believe that students learn best when they are exposed to many different variations of the same content standards. Also, I feel that students take more ownership of their learning and are able to form a deeper understanding of the material.”</p> <p>P:B “My students are typically below grade level, which means that they are already discouraged and frustrated. By teaching content through the arts, I am able to spark imagination, interest, and motivation in students which helps me teach them at a faster rate than if I attempted to teach them without the arts.”</p> <p>P:C “I integrate the arts because it keeps my students engaged and because it is a personal passion of mine. I try to encourage things I personally enjoy into my teaching, which is why I integrate a lot of reading as well.”</p> <p>P:D “Art engages students, it helps differentiate instruction and assessments and it motivates students, thus increasing student achievement.”</p> <p>P:E “It is enjoyable for the students and it teaches them to think critically.”</p>
What evidence have you observed that demonstrates the benefits of art integration?	<p>P1 “We recently made drawings with oil pastels where the students were asked to draw a visual representation of an early explorer (no words) and the students really got into the detail so that the explorer was well represented. They were able to visually demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the life of the early explorer that they chose to draw.”</p> <p>P:2 “I have seen students who have previously shut down, stopped trying, and feel defeated begin to attempt work that is actually above their</p>

achievement level in order to participate in an arts integrated lesson. I have seen kindergartners verbalize deeper thinking than their peers through art integration. Most importantly, I have seen non-English speakers communicate knowledge and understanding through this venue where previous teachers had identified them as not being capable.”

P:3 “Students’ attention and understanding both greatly increase when I use art integration. They also score better on assignments like classwork and even assessments when they are art-based.”

P:4 “I have noticed an increase in student engagement and achievement.

P:5 “Students enjoy the lessons, they rarely miss class, they are highly engaged in their learning.”

What advice would you give to another teacher who wanted to use art integration?

P:1 “Just jump in and give it a try! I do not know every art or musical vocabulary or terminology, but I am not going to let that stop me from doing something that is engaging and enjoyed by all the students. Even my students who say “I can’t draw” always end up with something on their paper. Also, no matter how silly I sound or look when singing a song, I know that it is making a difference and I sometimes will see students doing the motions when taking a test. Our world is so full of multimedia that we have to bring it into our classrooms because it is what our students relate best to.’

P:2 “ Begin with your area of comfort, admit to your students if you make a mistake, and ask for support from the specialists in your school.”

P:3 “I would tell them to borrow as many ideas from other teachers as they can; talk it out! That is where my best art lessons have come from. I would also say not to go too crazy. Introduce it a little at a time and only as much as you can handle. If you are a mess trying to do this, your students will not benefit like they would if you were cool, calm, and collected.”

What do you want to make sure is included in the study findings?

P:4 “I would tell the teacher that art integration can be a natural part of teaching and learning each day and should not be viewed as some separate task to complete. It does require additional time and materials depending on the lesson, but the results are worth it.”

P:5 “if another teacher wanted to use art integration, I would suggest they try it. Start slowly and build from there.”

P:1 “My perception of art integration in the elementary classroom is that it does not have to be difficult or some elaborate masterpiece. The simplest activities can be the most beneficial to our students.”

P:2 “Art integration works at every level of education and with every type of learner. While all learners are different, allowing some to explore and pushing others outside of their comfort zones will allow all students to build background knowledge and experiences that will benefit them far beyond the classroom.”

P:3 “Make sure you include how valuable I truly believe art integration is, but the importance of not shoving it down people’s throats. I think that sometimes when administration making changes like this it could tend to come with extremely high demands and expectations. Teachers being stressed and overwhelmed about this could lead to negative impacts and resistance as well.”

P:4 “I believe that art integration in the classroom is necessary in order to effectively meet the needs of our diverse student population. Art engages all students in some way. If students aren’t engaged they will not learn. Students have different learning styles and art is one of the best ways to meet each of those styles of learning.” P:5 “Instruction in art integration needs to begin in college as best practices.”

Appendix H: GCPS Research Approval

August 1, 2014

Lynn Fagan

Re: File ID 2015-17

Dear Ms. Fagan:

This is to advise you that your research application, ID Number 2015-17, "The Effectiveness of Art Integration on Improving Student Learning," has satisfactorily met GCPS Research Standards and was approved by the Institutional Review Board. Per the schedule specified in Section C6 of the application, this approval is valid August 1, 2014 through September 12, 2014.

Please note the following comment(s) by the IRB:

- This study may heighten awareness of interdisciplinary strategies for enhancing student learning.
- The proposed case study approach may be appropriate to answer the first two research questions listed in Section B.2. of the application, but not to answer the last two. Consider withdrawing RQ 3 and 4 from the current study or articulating to prospective participants how the planned methodology will address them.
- Research Question 4 references "standardized notions of academic achievement," but does not elaborate on the meaning of the phrase either in the research question or in the subsequent definition of terms. This phrase should be defined for principals who are asked for their approval for their teachers' participation.
- Since the improvement of student learning is the desired outcome of interest posed by the study's title, consider including actual measures of learning or achievement in the collection and analyses of data.

Please note that schools and teachers may elect not to participate in your research study, even though the district has granted permission.

Important: When contacting schools regarding this research, it is your responsibility to provide a copy of this approval letter to the principal. In addition, it is your responsibility to provide your sponsors and project officers or managers with a copy of this approval letter. Be sure to use the file ID number issued above when contacting schools or district level personnel regarding this research study.

Please forward a copy of your results to me when they are completed.

Best wishes for a successful research project. Please call me at [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] if I may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,
[REDACTED], Executive Director
Research and Evaluation

cc: Lynn Fagan at GCPS email
Dr. Billie Andersson,