Artistic Process Over Product: A Portrait of the High-Achieving High School Student

Kelly Pack-Scott

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ARTISTIC PROCESS OVER PRODUCT:
A PORTRAIT OF THE
HIGH-ACHIEVING
HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENT

This Action Research Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Kelly Pack-Scott

College of Performing and Visual Arts
School of Art and Design
Art Education

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Action Research by: Kelly Pack-Scott

Entitled: Artistic Process over Product: A Portrait of the High-Achieving High School Student

has been approved as meeting the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in College of Performing and Visual Arts in School of Art and Design, Program of Art Education.

Accepted by the Research Committee:

______________________________________________
Connie Stewart, Ph.D., Chair

______________________________________________
Donna Goodwin, Ph.D., Co-Chair
ABSTRACT


Using surveys, interviews, and student art work, this study explores the relationship between art curriculum and female students in a private, college preparatory environment. I worked with a fine and digital art course to determine if encouraging students to make more artistic choices would impact the educational priorities of these high-achieving students. Subsequently, art students were introduced to a process-based style of assessment in the hopes they could make stronger connections to art education and their future goals. The research results illustrated that, within the participants in this study, older art students prefer classes that bring them enjoyment or personal fulfillment, while the younger students gravitate toward classes that are less challenging.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To say I am an artist, teacher, and now researcher means I must acknowledge the people in my life who have supported me while I worked to become more than I ever thought I could be.

To my husband, Stephen: *strength* does not begin to describe what you’ve helped me to discover in myself. Making sure I’m always hydrated and not standing on things I shouldn’t be are just perks of our partnership.

To my art professors, Connie Stewart and Donna Goodwin, due to your support, I am a formidable, educated, and accomplished art teacher, working to make a difference in the lives of my students. I will make you proud.

My students, colleagues, and friends at school, I never considered I too would benefit from the traditions of the Sisters of St. Joseph until I met you all, worked with you all, and you changed me.

And lastly, to Amy Poehler, Michael Schur, & Greg Daniels, without Leslie Knope, driven, dedicated and passionate women would have one less bright and shiny example of having all the strengths.
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CHAPTER I

Yes, straight A students master cramming information and regurgitating it on exams. But career success is rarely about finding the right solution to a problem — it’s more about finding the right problem to solve. (Grant, 2018, p. 6)

Preface

Students in our all-female college preparatory academy are driven by academic excellence. Any grade short of the expected 100% is viewed as an act of war, and our expansive campus is the battleground where wars are won and lost. Parents fall into the two standard categories of allies and axis, working hard to support their students in the form of emails and phone calls, hoping to tip those fickle scales of academic justice. As a teacher, I am lucky to work for an administration that waits to make final rulings until all parties have been called to convene at a dark-stained, rectangular table in a dimly lit war room — I mean conference room. I’ve won and lost battles, but I’m learning in my fifth year of teaching, these head-to-head clashes over points and percentages can be prevented if we recognize they stem from a shared anxiety.

The art classes I offer vary in media and fall under the elective umbrella. The students who sign up are generally excited to be in class. I think a majority of high school students who enroll in an art class at the secondary level can pinpoint a moment where they’ve been identified as ‘artistic’ by an influential individual, usually a parent or teacher. Whatever the reason for enrolling, self-deprecation and often times indifference creep their way into our art room, sometimes even on the first day of school. Usually in
the form of “I’m not good at this” or my least favorite, “Hers looks better than mine.” As someone who loves art education, I struggle to hear such self-deprecating declarations. In my fifth year of teaching art, I wonder about the origin of these feelings. Why is there a lack of artistic confidence in art students in our community? Could that explain the disregard for art and design homework?

Five years multiplied by a 40-minute commute from my parking spot at school to my spot in the garage, gives me roughly 6,400 quiet minutes to reflect on what works, what doesn’t, and the dismissive comments from students about their artwork and themselves as artists. Admittedly, in the early years, I spent many of those minutes trying to figure out what I was doing wrong, or how I could create a more engaging environment. Sagor reminds us that “guilt syndrome” is a common experience among teachers and gently soothes, my worried art teacher heart, “[it] isn’t the result of a lack of commitment, caring or intellect” (2011, p. 2). New to teaching, I assumed art’s inability to compete with the attention and dedication a student gave to math or science was a personal reflection on my lack of experience. Even after five years of experimenting, researching, feeling the impact of teacher burn out, rallying and presenting new units to my students, I’m met with much of the same attitude: “my math test next period is going to be brutal; would you mind if I studied during our class?” (Student 19, March 2019).

Heart-felt, earnest students overloaded with advanced courses and extra curriculars, creep quietly up to my desk before class. As she straightens herself the best she can, she attempts to wipe faint tear streaks off her face while pushing unbrushed hair out of her eyes, she pleas to use class time to study. I can’t help but wonder how this
thirst for the perfect grade point average is impacting these young women. Adam Grant, in a *New York Times* opinion piece, explores what straight-A students are getting wrong. Citing a 1962 study, a group of America’s architects were compared to their equally skilled but less original peers. “One of the factors that distinguished the creative architects was a record of spiky grades” (Grant, 2018, para. 5). Students who had lower grades in school were able to demonstrate more creativity in their field than their straight A earning peers. This topic, worth studying since the 60’s, is amplified in the secondary environment when the girl sitting next to you at lunch is celebrating her full-ride scholarship to an Ivy league school.

Trapped in a high-stakes cycle, the standard practice in a college preparatory academy of using grades, points, and rubrics to assess students inadvertently teaches them to prioritize the courses that reward them those with points and percentages. According to Kohn (1993), as a society, our parenting and structure of curriculum is built around the idea that the most effective way to get something done is to pass out rewards to people when they act the way we want them to. This phenomenon, known as behaviorism, offers some insight into why high-achieving students are so hesitant to let curiosity drive their decisions in the art room when grades are at stake.

Anxiety in females ages 14 to 18 presents physically and emotionally, as students are so desperate to provide the single, correct solution to their school work, including art work, they often turn to misbehavior, plagiarism, or indifference. When grades are at stake, students succumb to a paralyzing fear of losing points and can’t seem to summon the courage to take crucial and creative risks. Students often remark, “I have this idea, but
I’m not sure it will get me an A.” As their art teacher, I do them a disservice engaging in battles about grades when the more important issue is gifting students with a style of art curriculum that teaches them allows them to develop as artists.

**Definitions**

This study explores the relationship between female students in a private, college preparatory environment and their artwork. For clarity, definitions of commonly used terms are provided below:

In our school community, *High Achieving* refers to those students who take multiple advanced courses as well as participate extracurriculars and clubs, while maintaining a respectable grade point average. In this high-stakes environment, students are fueled by the expectation of good grades, multiple college admission letters, and high test scores. The class of 2019 earned a 99% college acceptance rate and were accepted into over 150 collegiate institutions across the world (L. Baker, personal communication, May 18, 2019). In the art room, the term applies to the student-athlete who, in her senior year, finds herself needing an art credit to graduate and she must graduate because she’s committed to be a collegiate student athlete. The term also applies to those students who have grown up in art classes and plan to pursue an artistic path in a prestigious collegiate art program. And finally, high achieving applies to those students who simply want to try a new skill, find themselves in the art room, determined to be as successful in their creative pursuits as they are in their chemistry and calculus courses. I love the perspective each type of student brings to the art room, but I’ve struggled to develop a program
where students are more concerned about what they’re making and why as opposed to the grade it will get them.

In response to serving all types of students, an integral part of my teaching philosophy is incorporating choice. This allows students to take ownership of their education and develop as artists. Although we don’t follow a traditional choice-based model, where media centers are set up around an art room and students decide how to spend their class time — both styles encourage students to adopt an authentic artistic process as they take responsibility for their learning by practicing Artistic Behaviors. These behaviors are “a list of things artists do in order to create art” (Sands & Purtee, 2018, 83).

Process over Product refers to a shift in focus in our art department where we emphasize the steps a student takes to create something as opposed to the final product. Students were given a project example created by an art student graduated long ago and then asked to complete something similar based on the guidelines of a rubric. After the work was complete, the teacher assigned a letter grade to the student’s work. Encouraging students to prioritize the artistic process above product promotes creativity and risk-taking without the fear of academic repercussions, especially for students at the secondary level. Because grades are fuel, I hope switching the type of assessment we use will help to make the art curriculum more accessible. Closely related to process over product is Process Based Assessment — where the rubric given to students emphasizes the brainstorming, sketching, and revision stages of the project, these are the aspects of art that I hope artists and non-artists will see translate to their lives (see Appendix A).
And finally, STEM defines the science, technology, engineering, and math courses as well as the advanced certification our school recently earned.

**Research Question**

This semester, I observed my students while they considered the relationship between art class and their busy lives. This topic of observation stems from working within a college preparatory environment for the last five years and noticing that the priorities and obligations of students tend to lie outside of their artistic assignments. A majority of my students enroll in art courses under the assumption the skills to gain are only those technically related to painting and drawing. While those hard skills are an important part of our curriculum, I have growing concerns as I observe students working toward good grades, but watch them struggle to make their own choices, defend those decisions and feel confident when presenting something they’ve made. Often deeming technical skills in art media as less important than other schoolwork, students often ask permission to use our class to complete assignments for their STEM courses. In my experience, high-achieving students fail to recognize the opportunity they have in our catalog of art electives to develop style, communicate, address issues, solve problems — all skills that will translate into adulthood.

Our school community spent the last year working toward our National STEM Certification meaning we afford all students an opportunity for advancement in the career fields of science, engineering, technology and math. While this is an opportunity for our community and our students, I couldn’t help but smile that the timing of the application for certification lined up with my research in art education. Eisner (2002) states,
“although the arts in American school are theoretically among the so-called core subjects, and although school districts and indeed the federal government identify them as such, there is a huge ambivalence about their position in the curriculum” (xi). Art, specifically our fine and digital courses, have become according to my students, a fun class that gives them a break from math. Are grade-focused high school students making connections to the prevalence of the arts in their lives? Are they just products of a school system that prioritizes STEM? As Dissanayake states, that despite knowledge of technical skills, we are all participating in the arts (2013).

**Rationale**

I started my teaching career as a part-time graphics art teacher and my goals were simple: create a class that students enjoyed in the hopes of maintaining enrollment for the ultimate goal of staying employed. I drew from my own experience as a designer and assigned students the projects given to me in art school. I had no justification for my actions other than I loved art school and the challenge and freedom design presented. Thankfully challenge and freedom were two aspects of art curriculum that translated to a younger audience. After three years of increased enrollment, I transitioned into a full-time position. Excited, but now responsible for fine and digital art, I continued to deliberately intertwine opportunities for students to use artistic voice into my pedagogy. This time, supported by research objectives and able to make purposeful observations, I implemented a modified choice-based pedagogy. Giving students the opportunity to take ownership of their work, I noticed that although engaged and hardworking, the girls were still unable to make aesthetic decisions without first asking permission.
What began as a ploy for successful course registration quickly evolved into creating a purposeful and deliberate art program. I find that my high-achieving students struggle in our new modified classroom environment. Often, after staring at her project, a student will look up at me and ask, “Will I get an A on this?” This is a common question I struggle to answer. My research will explore the following questions: How can I, as an art teacher and artist, help students make connections to art education? How can I encourage artistic behaviors in my students? Will artistic behaviors translate to student’s future careers in and outside the realm of art? How do I motivate grade-oriented students to value ideas and process over product?
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

People pigeon hole creativity as belonging to a single individual or a group of geniuses. They don’t realize that each and every human has this incredible capacity to imagine and to change things (Fuentes in Jerome, 2017, p. 6).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore whether choice in an art classroom impacted the relationship between high-achieving high school students and art education. From the data gathered, I hoped to identify methods to effectively deliver art curriculum to grade-oriented students. My goals included emphasizing to young artists the importance of the artistic process and how it can prepare students for a variety of futures. For my high school students, this included a process-based assessment style that highlights the planning, design, and revision stages of a project as opposed to the final product (see Appendix A). I believed that a process-based curriculum would encourage artistic behaviors and create an environment where the arts can be valued for the opportunities given students. I hope my students will be able to see the correlation between taking creative risks and the impact that style of learning or mental habits have on their future endeavors (Hetland, Winner, Veenema & Sheridan, 2013).

Art for Art’s Sake

Since the 2002 No Child Left Behind legislation, schools continue to operate as if tests scores are the primary measure of success. In our school, as in most, test scores are the primary data point for school success. In an environment where tuition escalates the pressure to be successful, students and parents find comfort and familiarity in an
academic system where regurgitation of information is the key to good grades. This phenomenon is illustrated in attendance rates at parent-teacher conferences in the fine arts courses compared to math, science, as well as teachers of Advanced Placement or AP courses. I regularly have parents from previous semesters stop by for a hug or just to tell me how much their daughter loved me or my class, but I usually fill my time standing in the hallway helping parents find the locations of these STEM classrooms, Vanna White style.

If we consider only what products students have after completing an art class, we fail to acknowledge the skills learned during the artistic process. Pinch pots, canvas painting or costumes from a musical are kept as mementos or given as gifts but are not academic representations of how a student learned to think or the mental habits they were allowed to develop (Hetland, Winner, Veenema & Sheridan, 2013). In my experience, a shift in focus is needed among high-achieving students and the institutions that promise them success in college as well as the professional world. Although having varying opinions of adolescent development, notable child psychologists Carl Jung and Victor Lowenfeld both believed the arts are means of human development (Eisner, 2002). How are art teachers encouraging grade-oriented students to develop by assigning letter grades to reproductions of past projects?

In our school community, as we enter each new semester with the renewed promise of educating the whole person, we continue to set professional development and school improvement goals, using an analysis of SAT and ACT data. Winner and Hetland (2007) state, “If our primary demand of students is that they recall established facts, then
the children we educate today will find themselves ill-equipped to deal with problems like global warming, terrorism and pandemics” (p. 11). I hope by studying the priorities of high school students, I can create a method of instruction in which art students find purpose and value in spending as much time on sketches and brainstorming as they do on their calculus homework.

**Choice-Based Art Education**

Choice-based art education is a method of curriculum gaining popularity among schools across the United States. In a choice-based art classroom, responsibility is shifted from the teacher to the student. By providing students with boot camps—short lessons in which student are given instruction on materials including capabilities and limitations—and mini lessons — where students get to practice their new skills — art teachers are encouraged to take a dramatic step back as students explore materials and create their own projects.

The responsibility of the art teacher is to teach students to make art. However, for the Open Art Room model to be truly successful, a paradigm shift in thinking is required. The Open Art Room teacher stops focusing on making art and concentrates on making artists. (Sands & Purtee, 2018, p. 27)

In a choice-based art room, “students learn about art and the art world by assuming the role of the artist and directing their own learning” (teachingforartisticbehavior.org, 2019, para. 1). When the goal is to have students take risks, learn from mistakes, and develop the perseverance to try multiple solutions, infusing choice into their art education allows students to evolve as planners, designers,
revisers, and reflective individuals, skills that will help them make cross-curricular connections to art class.

**Classroom Management**

Hetland, Winner, Veenema & Sheridan (2013) suggest that globally, students are taking art courses for a variety of reasons. They state, that in the United States, students considered academically weak are advised to take lower-level or support courses but not advised to enroll in art courses. In our school community, students are ushered into remedial English, math and summer courses, and in the five years that I have worked in our art department, I’ve fielded only three requests from students for Advanced Placement in digital or 2D art electives and they all occurred this school year.

Furthermore, in our high school, students are required to complete one fine art credit to qualify for graduation, and up until the 2019 school year, speech class also fulfilled this credit.

In my experience, those students who receive higher numbers of detentions often feel more comfortable in the art room, electing to spend more of their free time in the open studio, sometimes even asking if they can serve their detentions with me.

Subsequently, it is these students who rebel against traditional class structures and teachers, who find themselves to be more successful with the freedom the art room offers.

From my observations and supported by data generated by the school, students who seek out art electives may deal with more behavioral, emotional, or domestic issues and find comfort expressing themselves through art. These students seem less comfortable in a
classroom with rigid and specific rules, such as math (Baker, L. Personal Communication June, 2019).

**Assessment in the Art Room**

By the time a student sits in my classroom, they’ve had an average of ten years working under a standard model of grading in core classes. “In the traditional system, students acquire points for various activities, assignments and behaviors, which accrue throughout a grading period. The teacher adds up the points and assigns a letter grade” (Marzano & Heflebower, 2011, 34). Students come to me preprogrammed, ready to produce a product and earn the corresponding grade outlined on a rubric. Similar to a sliding scale, students often use the rubric categories to calculate how much time they will need to invest in an art project to earn the grade that will support their overall grade point average. Working with high-achieving students in a secondary art classroom, their expectations are no different than that of a science or math class, students often remark, “According to the rubric, this project is done.” A grade school art teacher working in a nearby Catholic school noted,

I keep quality work from previous students to use as a sort of guide for expectations. As I get to know what individuals are capable of, I adjust expectations. I also tie behavior and treatment of others into my grades. I guess there is no real sure way to assess art. Being a Catholic school teacher I have major freedom to create my own lessons and change the curriculum from year to year (P. Casey, personal communication, May 21, 2019)
While there is some overlap in methods, it seems regardless of where these young artists attended grade school, they are hesitant to make choices without the safety of a rubric guiding their steps, leaving little room for experimentation and creativity for fear of academic repercussions. Douglass & Jaquith (2018) explain that rubrics are the most common type of assessment for busy teachers. Although we can create and distribute them quickly and provide feedback that we can use to show students, parents and administrators, they’re not the perfect tool. “The problem with rubrics is that, for every item they tally, equally important criteria are left out” (Douglass & Jaquith, 2018, p. 74).

Rubrics have become such a crutch in our college preparatory environment, our categories of measurement seem to be rewarding students who are motivated by grades. Olivia Gude notes assessment in art education as a pressure shaping the space of our classrooms and in my experience, the size of our classes. “This is the pressure that threatens to flatten and distort the spaces of art education, a pressure that could potentially undermine the very attributes of arts education that we most value” (Gude, 2014, p. 7). Many freshman expressed frustration with the inconsistencies in grading across media areas of their art educators, citing past grades as the reason students did pursue advanced art courses.

In order to eliminate the frustrations students associate with art, we moved to a process-based model of assessment, in the hopes these young artists would find some consistency and, more importantly, find value in developing as artists. This is a new system for underclassmen, so it tends to be the upperclassmen who feel more comfortable with the amount of choice the art room offers. One senior noted, “I feel most confident in
this class because it gives me a place I can try different ideas and see how things work out, overall use my creativity which I cannot do in math class” (Student 4, April 2019).

Data from our registrar’s office illustrates that enrollment in the 2014-2015 school year for the art department totaled 50 students a semester compared with the 90 students a semester I worked with during the 2018-2019 school year (K. Walters, February 15, 2019). *The Open Art Room (2018)* supports this student’s reflection and explains the low numbers of students signing up for art electives under the previous model.

In a teacher-directed class, completed teacher examples replace most of the ideation phase is the design process. Although students can make low-level decisions, for the most part, both teacher and student understand what the finished product is expected to be. (Sands & Purtee, 2018, p. 41)

If we purpose throwing out insufficient rubrics, then we must replace them with a system that truly measures student learning of a developing artist. Throughout my research, I gathered that students’ choices, behaviors, and conversations before, during, and after class are just one way to accurately assess student progress. Douglass and Jaquith (2018) state, “self-directed learning provides considerable information to assess students’ making and thinking skills (p. 69). Much like similar resources, assessing students through artistic behaviors can replace some of the inefficiencies when assessing student work. In our school, art education has fallen victim to a data driven trend however, Jaquith and Douglass (2018) state, “Teachers assess constantly while moving among students, setting up for the next class, and going through portfolios of work after school” (p. 70). Overall, the goal of art teachers tends to be the same, despite working
with different age groups and media, the type of assessment we use is just as important as the curriculum we teach.

I am always mindful that the variety of students who enter our art room have different objectives, but in my experience, the way to persuade students to complete quality work is unfortunately through grades, offering points for menial tasks. Growth mindset (Dweck, 2000) is a principle that explains, “when students believe they can get smarter, they understand that effort makes them stronger. Therefore, they put in extra time and effort, that leads to higher achievement” (mindsetworks, 2017, para. 1). I support the notion that more effort a student devotes to a project, the more likely the student is to receive a good grade, even by a rubric’s standards. However, Kohn (2015) states the issue with growth mindset lies within asking students to adjust their effort and attitude when the system we’re asking them to participate in is broken. How can I expect more effort from students who don’t see the benefits of completing a painting, when they don’t get to make artistic choices concerning that piece of art? To make matters worse, how can students find value in the artistic process when we give them what Kohn (2015) describes as a patronizing pat on the head just for putting their name on their painting?

As in most college preparatory environments, we advertise an autonomous learning climate where students are responsible for many aspects of their education. While this is a model of education that has served our school for 150 years, Kohn (2015) states that what students need from us is a three-part mixture of nonjudgmental feedback, guidance, and unconditional support. Kohn plainly and passionately continues, “even when a growth mindset doesn’t make things worse, it can help only so much if students
have been led—by things like grades, tests, and, worst of all, competition—to become more focused on achievement than on learning itself” (2015, para 13).

Switching from a teacher-directed model to student-centered curriculum allowed our art program more flexibility but didn’t seem to solve the lack of motivation or excitement from students. While the young artists enjoyed designing their own projects, they interpreted this new found freedom as being able to submit underdeveloped art work and then turn to studying for other tests. Determined to understand this behavior, I decided that first I must understand the academic and career priorities of these young women.
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH STRATEGIES, METHODS, AND PROCEDURES

Action Research Design

A majority of students in our school community seem to dismiss homework and
the crucial planning and developing stages for art and design projects; often they cite a
lack of time to complete these assignments due to the other demands of a college
preparatory academy. In this observational action research study, I acted as teacher and
researcher observing students while they completed a unit designed to help them foster
connections to art education. Students practiced artistic behaviors in this unit and were
then asked to reflect on their future goals. Observing the struggles, frustrations, and
breakthroughs of these students, I was able to examine the relationship between my over-
extended young students and their art class. I worked to create a complete picture of their
priorities and relationship to art education, documenting our journey with student survey
results, photos of student projects, and interviews.

Sagor’s *The Action Guidebook* (2011), encourages educators to ask themselves
three questions when determining the best methodology in which to conduct research.
The first question, “Is the focus on your professional action?” (Sagor, 2011, p. 5).
Question two, “are you empowered to adjust future action based on the results?” (Sagor,
This study was forged from frustration. Observing these high-achieving students worked
so naturally with the framework of action research as I wanted to improve my understanding of their needs, implement changes based on their reflections and work to improve our classroom community. As I noticed student considering the artwork as an afterthought, I became determined to investigate how I could make our curriculum more prevalent in their lives. Within the span of a unit, students focused on the artistic behaviors outlined in Sands and Purtee’s (2018) *The Open Art Room*. An element to the study was any similarities or differences between the priorities of older and younger students as well as the comparison between mediums: drawing and digital media.

**Methods and Procedures**

Research was conducted in the spring semester 2019 school year in a Drawing I class, made up of mostly freshman, and a more advanced Graphic Design class comprised of junior and seniors. Permission forms and a research proposal was submitted to the University of Northern Colorado’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) and approved. Consent and assent forms were distributed to both classes (See Appendices B and C). Out of 18 students enrolled in the Graphic Design class, eight students agreed to participate; four juniors and four seniors. The Drawing I class was made up of 26 students, and 11 students returned forms, eight freshman and three sophomores.

**Data Collection**

The timeline for collecting student-generated data lasted the length of a unit, where students were responsible for planning, sketching, designing and revising a response to a class project. The data I collected consisted of (a) a survey administered to
students before the unit (b) photographs of student work (c) commentary from student interviews, and (d) a second survey administered to students at the end of the unit.

The first survey (Figure 1) was administered through Google Docs and then formatted into an Excel sheet. Results were color coded based on class as to keep the data organized. Students were assigned numbers based on the time they completed the survey. While most students completed this as they came to class, the students that were absent were assigned numbers outside the numerical groups of their classmates. Surveys and interview documents were kept on a school-issued, password protected laptop. All IRB permission forms were kept in a locked drawer in the desk of the researcher. The photos that appear in the research were taken with student and parent permission. Faces of students were blurred to protect their identity and privacy. After having the opportunity to design, research, implement, edit and submit their art work, students were asked to consider which artistic behaviors they practiced and how those behaviors could aid them in future goals (see Appendix D).
**Figure 1:** Pre-unit questions given to participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-unit survey questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are your future goals/career plans at this point?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please list five skills we practice in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the amount of time you spend in the research and brainstorming phase for a project impact the outcome?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does sketching and planning have a positive or negative impact on the outcome of your art or design project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does being able to make changes to an art or design project impact your artwork?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you more satisfied with your final product when you spend more time planning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On average, how much time do you spend on your art and design work compared to your other core classes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your most challenging class? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your most easiest class? Why?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1.* This table documents the pre-unit survey questions given to both groups of participants.

**Drawing I Participants**

I chose my Drawing I class as participants for this research study because of their energy, attitude and the opportunities afforded them as they navigate new classes in a new school. Making new friends and finding their strengths in more rigorous courses, these students are starting to form individual identities. Students in our community find themselves at the intersection of quality vs. quantity of work load, where quantity seems to be a currency, with the busiest most high-achieving students earning notoriety among their peers.
From conversations with the girls, it’s unclear whether all students followed the same style of art curriculum in their respective grade schools; however, from observations of our first semester together, these students were easily frustrated when faced with having to make a choice that would impact their final product. The frustration and discomfort generated from participating in a new pedagogical system made them an important group to observe.

**Graphic Design Participants**

The other group of students I was excited to include in my research was the upperclassmen in the more advanced Graphic Design class. In contrast to the freshman, these older students have formed more concrete identities as students and artists and have previously completed at least one class with me. Familiar with making artistic choices, these upper-classmen are more confident but were equally distracted as we moved closer to graduation and making plans for graduation parties and college.

For this study, these participants completed a marketing and branding assignment where students created the concept, logo, truck design, and a packaging piece for a mobile business or food truck. This project was purposefully saved for this study as Graphic Design students were considering college majors and historically, the personal interests of students are displayed in the design concepts of the business they create. Students were provided with a template for the truck design but encouraged to change the template to meet the needs of their company and product.
Figure 2. Students in the Graphic Design course are given a blank food truck template. Depending on the company and product they’re selling, students are encouraged to change the template to meet the needs of their business.

In the brainstorming portion of this project, students are asked to consider their clientele, location, and concept as these decisions affect all design choices students will make (see Appendix E).

Limitations

Spring semester was littered with eight snow days making the semester a non-continuous setting for lesson planning and project development. The weather left our semester feeling rushed; however, I was proud of my students for dedicating themselves to the time we were given. Usually the food truck unit given to the Graphic Design class requires more pieces to be submitted, but due to snow days, students and I agreed that a
logo, truck design, and a packaging piece would be the only submissions required. Some students opted to complete an additional menu.

One aspect that made this research study topic personal is my relationship with my students. In a small school, where siblings and cousins often attend high school in the same time frame, I am afforded the opportunity to get to know more members of individual families. This close relationship and teaching all 2D and digital art courses allowed me to spend multiple semesters with students. While these relationships create an open and familial classroom environment, it was important that students felt like they could be honest about their relationship with art education without the fear of hurting my feelings or their responses impacting our teacher-student relationships.

My family and I also decided to relocate to Chicago starting in the 2019-2020 school year. As a possible limitation to this study, I was cautious to break this news to my students as I didn’t want my leaving to impact their responses about me and how they felt about our course.

Other limitations include our predominantly Caucasian female population as well as the average income of the students. While 46% of our students accept either need based or merit-based scholarships, this study completed in a lower-income school may gather different results about student’s relationship to art education.

The last limitation was an unfortunate vehicle accident involving members of our swim team in our Graphic Design class. Thankfully, no students sustained life-threatening injuries; however, many received concussions during the accident and were instructed by medical professionals to limit their exposure to screen time and bright
lights. To accommodate the needs of these students, I offered them the opportunity to turn in fewer than the required number of submissions. In some cases, students refused the accommodation and instead asked whether I or a classmate could help them construct their ideas based on sketches they’d completed earlier in this process.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

“I confiscated these sketches today from a student working during my math class. I trust you can get these back to her” (Fisher, M. April 2019).

Data Analysis

In this action research, I observed my high school students as they considered their relationship with art education. While college admission and test scores weighed heavily on their minds, they often exclaimed they couldn’t afford to devote time to their art-work while their professional goals include medicine or law. As one student says, “My easiest class is Drawing 1 because it helps me destress.” While I can appreciate the relief a drawing class can bring an overworked freshman in a college preparatory environment, I feared my young artists were assessing our class at face value, considering painting and drawing the only skills we’re practicing. While there were a handful of girls set art or design school who would use those technical art skills, our art program needed to serve and benefit our entire student population.

Participants were asked to reflect on their goals, priorities, and which courses they felt were the hardest and easiest; students were also encouraged to explain why (Figure 1). During the course of the units, both groups of students were given the opportunity to practice artistic behaviors—“a list of things artists do in order to create art” (Sands & Purtee, 2018, 83). As their teacher and researcher, I paid special attention not to answer
the types of questions in which students were asking me to make artistic choices that would directly impact their final product. Younger art students were accustomed to sitting with their hands in the air waiting for direction on size, color, or other aesthetics. After a couple months, of refusing to answer these questions directly, they began mimicking me as they answered each other with my signature catch phrase, “well, if it were me, I’d try both ways and see what you like better.” Older students, knowing I don’t entertain that line of questioning, used their class time collaborating with their classmates on artistic decisions.

Before my research, I assumed that students weren’t devoting as much time to their art and design work because they didn’t see it as relevant among a STEM curriculum. Thankfully, research proved this to be incorrect. Results and interviews showed that my dedicated and creative students feel a compulsion to complete core course work and often wish they had more time for their art and design work. Furthermore, students who have identified their passions and interests report they would rather spend more time working in those areas—art and design included!

**Drawing I Participants**

At this stage in their high school career, freshman students seemed to be most frustrated with the courses that supply new or unfamiliar material and appreciate those classes that aren’t as academically challenging. Results of the freshman survey (Figure 4) reported that this age group favors those courses that require less effort. Young students, already stressed with acclimating to a new environment and finding social groups,
appreciated the ease of classes where memorization was a key component in the curriculum.

**Drawing I Process**

For this unit, the Drawing I students were asked to research an artist and create a self-portrait using inspiration from an artist of their choosing. Students spent two class periods, in a lecture style format, familiarizing themselves with famous portraits, including the work of male and female artists such as Kahlo, DaVinci, Picasso, and more contemporary artists such as Kehinde Wiley (see Appendix F). We had vibrant debates over the concept of the works of art based on the artist’s posture, time period, facial expression, clothing, and technique. While students were decoding the message of each example, they began to converse about what artists with whom they would use for inspiration and what elements they would combine with their own.

Encouraged to follow lines of inquiry, students were intrigued by the texture and properties of the impasto technique where thick applications of paint are applied to a canvas, showcased in the work of Van Gogh. Students also gravitated toward the alla prima technique — translated to mean wet on wet — showcased in the works of practicing contemporary artist and art therapist Kate Longmaid PhD., (see Appendix G). Although the official name of the course is Drawing I, it’s not uncommon for the students to see a style or technique in a different medium request demonstrations or further information. Therefore, the researcher was not surprised the students requested a painting bootcamp.
We practiced both painting techniques using plastic fruit. Students were asked to complete at least one rendering of fruit in both styles, alla prima and impasto. Surprisingly, all Drawing I participants chose to try multiple pieces of fruit in multiple colors and styles. From personal observation, the freedom of creating without being assessed allowed students to try new skills and work together to become comfortable with new techniques.

**Figure 3.** Drawing I class learning new painting techniques.

*Figure 3. Students were drawn to the impasto and alla prima painting techniques. In our inquiry based environment, students felt encouraged to request a painting bootcamp to see whether it would be an appropriate solution for their own self-portraits.*

I was surprised at how incredibly brave and uninhibited this age group was with color choices, size of their practice pieces, and how many times the girls attempted their test subject. In my experience, high-achieving art students allow themselves the time to create one sketch or rendering before they must move on to the next task. Drawing students willing to spend the entire class period attempting multiple impasto pears in
several colors was surprising, wonderful, and entertaining. Students who typically prefer control loved the “messiness and texture the tool gives” (Student 10, April 2019).

With the painting bootcamps done, students completed a planning worksheet where they were asked to create a plan for their portrait as well as consider how they would incorporate their collaborating artist into their work (see Appendix H). Students were excited, and many decided to look beyond the provided classroom resources and research contemporary artists with whom to draw inspiration. Another surprising element was many students chose two artists for their collaboration, resulting in some conceptual and technically beautiful works of art (Figure 9). This planning sheet asked students to consider all aspects of their projects, including research of their artist, brainstorming, sketching, materials needed, such as any costumes, lighting, and whether they would provide the photograph of themselves or rent lighting equipment from our art studio.

After submitting their planning sheets for my review, Drawing I students worked quickly to collect materials, sketch, and set up stations for themselves. For the most part, students were dedicated to their work, and only two students required a space to work independently to utilize their full class time. Overall, there were no behavioral issues. One participant even remarked that in this unit, she learned that she is able to focus better by herself.

“[It] felt like a moment to relax, a moment of peace. Connecting with myself, taking time to myself. I am anxious to be alone don't like to be by myself. I've learned that if I really want to get something done, I need to be alone. I knew that before, but it showed on this project” (student 18, April 1, 2019).
Student 18, who is interested in becoming a motivational speaker or an event planner, felt as though the inspired self-portrait had connections to her future goals. She reflected that she’s harder on herself and her work than she should be. When I asked her whether she was happy with her final project, she responded with a thoughtful no, but added that if she were planning an event and was unhappy with the progress, she could take some alone time to focus and keep working.

**Drawing I Results**

In an effort to analyze whether these young students were making connections to their goals and solidifying their identity as artists, I asked them to state their future careers plans as well as the class they perceived to be the most difficult, least difficult and why (Figure 1). From the Drawing I participants, only broad career fields emerged as they are still taking core classes required for graduation. I noticed that art classes of any kind were absent from the “most difficult” list. After analyzing the data, I saw students spending most of their time on the classes that are difficult, not because they enjoy the work, but because these classes require more of their time as they move at a quicker pace. Student 13, noted Advanced Algebra as being her most difficult class, “because there is only one correct answer to everything, and it takes a lot of time to learn” (survey, April 1, 2019).
Figure 4: Goals and course preferences of Drawing I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Intended career</th>
<th>Most difficult class</th>
<th>Least difficult class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Medical Field</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>World History</td>
<td>Drawing 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Medical Field</td>
<td>Advanced English</td>
<td>Drawing 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Medical Field</td>
<td>Advanced Algebra</td>
<td>Advanced English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Fashion Designer</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Criminal investigator</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Well paying job</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Veterinary</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Drawing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>To be successful</td>
<td>Theology</td>
<td>Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Medical Field</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Theology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. Students 10-19 and 21 answered a Google survey before beginning an inspired self-portrait unit. Most students exclaimed they didn’t see a connection between the nature of the questions and the self-portrait project. I told them to trust the process by answering honestly.

Drawing I Time Management

The other line of inquiry worth exploring was the amount of time Drawing I participants spend on their art and design projects compared to their other courses. Out of the 11 students surveyed, 100% reported that they spend more time on other courses compared to their artwork (figure 5). In a school culture where students are encouraged to
problem-solve, become self-sufficient, and think critically, I found that these underclassmen were swept up in the competitiveness of our college preparatory environment. Acting like the busier they seemed, the more important the work they were completing. Students at this grade level often brag about the quantity of homework they have as opposed to the quality at which the work is completed.

**Figure 5.** Drawing I participants’ evaluation of time spent on artwork

![Pie chart showing time spent on art & design projects compared to other courses]

- More
- Same
- Less
- Much Less

*Figure 5.* Out of the four freshman and four sophomores who participated in this survey, zero students reported they spend more time on their artwork than other courses.

**What Skills Did We Learn In Drawing I?**

In our college preparatory community, where students yearn for the correct answers, the responsibility of being given more choice was frustrating for some. One student, taunted me as she walked into class late, “Are you going to bother to teach us anything today?” Inviting her out into the hallway for a conversation, she immediately apologized and broke down in tears, citing she’d just failed a math test and was having a bad day.
In the initial survey (Figure 1) the research participants of the Drawing I class were asked to list five skills they felt we practiced in class. Consistent with the nature of our class, students were frustrated by the vague question, but student 15 in particular was not happy. “What do you mean five skills?!” “What do you think I mean?” I responded with genuine curiosity. “I want to put what you want me to put down!” I shrugged and smiled at her as I walked away. Without turning around, I could feel her irritation and I made a mental note to check her responses to corroborate the patterns in the data. As she usually does when she’s not being directly instructed, she began shrugging, sighing, and distracting her neighbors but eventually settled down and began pounding out answers to the questions on her keyboard. Student 15 interestingly enough noted “color, cross hatching, drawing hands, drawing still life’s and how to use different materials (pencil, markers)” (Student 15, April 2019). As a researcher and her teacher, I was determined to forge ahead in our new choice-infused environment, hoping this frustrating moment would come to mean something to her. While we’d never used class time to address drawing hands, I hoped she would one day connect her frustration to working through a problem, finding her voice and her future goals of wanting to play collegiate soccer and then be a criminal investigator.

Based on the results, young students recognized our time in the art room together as a space to practice 25 art skills (Figure 6). While most students noted technical skills, only recorded five times were soft skills, such as self-work/self-love and thought process as something we practice in art. It was evident that students were developing as technical artists, citing the opportunity to practice technique and while using a variety of materials.
However, these young artists who prefer easier classes, where movies and snacks are a part of the curriculum, may not be able to assess any of their classes as having an impact on their futures.

**Figure 6. Skills learned in Drawing 1**

![Skills learned in Drawing I](image)

*Figure 6. Students reported practicing mostly technical art skills*
Many students were physically unable to begin drawing themselves because they didn’t think they could do a good job. I encouraged students to utilize their observational drawing skills, creating their portraits from photos or using mirrors. Students were relentless about tracing their photos, so I ultimately told them they should make artistic decisions based on the artists with whom they were using for inspiration. I was not surprised at how quickly students could justify tracing photos of themselves based on inaccurate interpretations of artist statements from different painters. Some reasoned that because Kate Longmaid is an art therapist, she sees a true version of her patients, so Longmaid would rather the portraits be proportionally accurate, therefore the students decided to trace.

**Figure 7.** Student traces photo of herself.

![Figure 7. Student traces photo of herself.](image)

**Figure 7.** Student is hesitant to begin drawing her self-portrait. Visibly frustrated, she stared at it awhile before beginning.
“What happens if you mess up?” I asked a group of students huddled around a lightbox. Without looking at me, they each mumbled a version of, “Well, I don’t have time to do this more than once.” Figure 7 illustrates one student’s choice to use the window as a light source to ensure correct proportions. “What about practicing your observational drawing skills?” I casually suggested. “I don’t want it to look bad,” student 15 grinned at me and waited for me to walk away before she began tracing.

Once students were happy with their renderings, they began to make conceptual decisions based on their own style, and culture, referencing the artists they’d researched less and less. Figure 8 illustrates a drawing student who used inspiration from Van Gogh and the painting bootcamps to help her process the bombing in Sri Lanka that occurred over Easter weekend in 2019. Had she not included this personal reflection in her artist statement, I would have never known the personal and emotional reasons behind her conceptual choices. She noted:

The painting is colorful with the background colors which are red, yellow, green, and orange. These colors were chosen because of the Sri Lankan flag. The palm trees signify that the country is more of an island than a country and that Sri Lanka has a tropical landscape. They are painted black because Sri Lanka was struck with bombs from ISIS recently. I painted this drawing because I want to show people that I am proud to be born within a beautiful culture. I want to show my happiness through this painting even though Sri Lanka is going through a rough time. (Student 14, May 2019)
Although none of her family members were injured, she was passionate about including the colors of her country’s flag as well as the palm trees to express her cultural roots. I appreciated how this student positioned herself among the colorful elements of the background, almost cementing herself within the Sri Lankan culture of which she fondly spoke. The photo she used as a reference was taken in front of fall tree foliage, but in her conceptual interpretation, this student immersed her hair and folds of her sweatshirt among the color of her country’s flag, surrounded by the black palm trees. Even though reflecting on an act of terrorism, this student paints a smile, proud of her heritage.

**Figure 8.** Student makes conceptual choices

*Figures 8. Shows student 14 using her self-portrait to apply an impasto painting technique.*

As students were finishing up their portraits, I administered a final survey to the freshman and sophomore participants. Asking them to be honest, I provided students a
list of artistic behaviors (Sands & Purtee, 2018) and asked them to consider which behaviors they’d been able to practice during this unit and whether those traits would serve them in the future. Figure 9 illustrates which behaviors the Drawing I participants identified.

Interesting data emerged from the results. Just as important as the number and specific behaviors students identified are the behaviors that students noted as not practiced. “Students steal” received no recognition even though we worked to create self-portraits using techniques or concepts from other artists. Because of the research, writing, and project-based aspects that the school curriculum offers, the concepts of plagiarism and copyright infringement are ingrained into their classes and our behavioral system. Also missing from their list was “artists impact their communities” and “artists make a difference.” Having just completed our school art show, and seeing their work displayed in our school galleries, no students recognized this as having an impact on our community. However, at the school’s Fine Art Showcase, I was greatly impacted as I watched as parents force their children to stand in front of these portraits and take multiple pictures, pleading with their students to smile. Finding a connection to themselves as artists and a connection to their artwork may have been a big enough task for the freshmen and sophomores, for the time being.
Figure 9. Artistic behaviors from Drawing 1

Artistic behaviors from Drawing 1

- artists create temporary art
- artists are entrepreneurs
- artists transform
- artists question
- artists develop a style
- artists have a global awareness
- artists communicate through work
- artists develop art making skills
- artists create original art
- artists observe
- artists curate
- artists work with what they are given
- artists play with materials
- artists are attuned to their environment
- artists reflect
- artists develop a flow
- artists are self promoters
- artists explore a theme
- artists share themselves
- artists see
- artists take risks
- artists document/record
- artists educate
- artists make a difference
- artists persevere
- artists repurpose
- artists make their viewers think
- artists experiment
- artists research
- artists collect
- artists support other artists
- artists are global
- artists impact their communities
- artists have style
- artists engage
- artists synthesize
- artists are self-learners
- artists seek inspiration
- artists communicate
- artists tell stories
- artists collaborate
- artists use non traditional materials
- artists solve problems
- artists steal
- artists make their viewers think
- artists document/record
- artists educate
- artists make a difference
- artists persevere
- artists repurpose
- artists make their viewers think
- artists experiment
- artists research
- artists collect
- artists support other artists
- artists are global
- artists impact their communities
- artists have style
- artists engage
- artists synthesize
- artists are self-learners
- artists seek inspiration
- artists communicate
- artists tell stories
- artists collaborate
- artists use non traditional materials
- artists solve problems
- artists steal

Figure 9. Drawing I students were asked to note which artistic behaviors they practiced in the self-portrait unit.
From these survey questions and the self-portraits completed by the freshman and sophomore participants, I began to see patterns of connection and reflection developing in our classroom. Figure 10 illustrates one student’s finished product. Referencing Kate Longmaid PhD., and Picasso’s cubism movements, student 11 stated an interest in art school. “I have a blurry vision towards art. Not sure what form of art yet” (Student 11, April 2019). Only a sophomore and an outstanding artist, I was grateful she made time for an individual interview. My main question for this student was what her completed self-portrait communicated. “The colors are wild. It shows how I can be really monotype at times, once you get to know me” (Student 11, May 2019). This student referenced difficult times in her life of which classmates, friends and teachers were not aware. With both of us crying, the student hugged me, then sat back down and added:

I also have the words “speak yourself” on there and those have really impacted me. No matter who you are, where you're from, skin color, gender and identity, just speak yourself and that was really powerful. It’s from a band that I like. And it's something I live by and I used to be afraid to be myself, [but this] made me more confident to be myself. I didn't realize how much meaning the words or my portrait actually had. (Student 11, May 2019)
Figure 10. Self-portrait from student 11 titled *Face Colour*
Student responses show these young artists noting researching, creating original art, playing with materials, sharing themselves, taking risks and having style. From a group of students developing as artists in a community where time is valuable currency, I am so inspired that students noted taking risks and playing with materials as practicable skills. These students recognized that the skills practiced during this unit would aid them in future art courses, math courses as well as any job field they entered. “These [skills] will help me figure out how I like to create art in certain ways and help me to understand myself as an artist better” (Student 19, April 2019).

Graphic Design Participants

Graphic Design Process

In our school, the semester-long Graphic Design class is an upper-level course requiring a prerequisite. Previously, I’ve had most of these students, so they are more familiar with the freedom the class allows and therefore more comfortable in our new environment. Questions such as “What color should this be?” are more rhetorical as students are comfortable collaborating with their peers and are not usually looking for artistic direction from me. There is less frustration when I redirect their questions with further questions or suggest a gallery walk—a critique-style activity where students give a comment, suggestion, or critique to their classmates.

For this unit, students were invited to develop their own concept for a marketing and branding campaign in response to a food truck template. Although the students refer to this project as the “food trucks,” I often receive a variety of businesses plans ranging from food, flowers, and even equipment rentals. Much like the Drawing I class, these
students were presented with a lecture-style lesson where we looked at food trucks from a variety of locations, including Kansas City (See Appendix I). In this instance, students were given some student examples from previous semesters but were encouraged to think outside of the box. The other limitation presented to the digital artists was their truck design had to feature more than just their company logo—a natural transition into how the principles of design can be applied to their work.

Next, students were asked to complete a planning worksheet illustrating a backstory for the owners, location, and concept of their business (See Appendix E). Students spent two class periods deciding on a client profile and then began creating inspiration boards—a collection of images, color palates, and type treatments on Pinterest, OneNote or Google Drive.

Because of their experience and maturity, these students operate at a more independent level, asking me only the occasional questions about software glitches. More often than not, these students worked while listening to music and would take breaks as needed to walk around the room and look for inspiration or get a drink of water. Students also completed a midway gallery walk where they gave each other feedback in the form of a comment, critique, or question. Finally, students submitted to me a final pdf and Illustrator file of an 18-by-24 inch art board containing their truck design, logo, and packaging piece. Figure 11 shows one student’s submission, a surf themed food truck AKAW! selling acai bowls in Hawaii.
Figure 11. AKAW! Acai bowls

Figure 11. This student spent many free periods in the art room, working on this detailed & conceptual submission. While students were not required to complete a menu, this student included a surfboard shaped structure to display on her truck.

**Graphic Design Results**

Working with upperclassmen comes with its own set of challenges; however, the more insightful conversations about their work, themselves, and their place in the world leads to rewarding mentor-mentee relationships after these students graduate. When I asked this group of participants to record their future goals and their reflections on their easiest and most difficult class (figure 12), their responses were more specialized as they’re considering collegiate majors and get to take more specific elective courses based on personal interests.
**Figure 12.** Goals and preferences of students in Graphic Design.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Intended career</th>
<th>Most difficult class</th>
<th>Least difficult class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Videographer</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Graphic Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>College Pre-Calc</td>
<td>Personal Fitness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Elementary Education</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Create and Run Business</td>
<td>Engineering Design</td>
<td>Graphic Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Criminal investigator.</td>
<td>College Pre-Calc</td>
<td>Genocide in the Modern World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I want to be a NICU or neonatal nurse. I don't want to take any serious classes through, so I am going to shadow a graphic designer.</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Advertising &amp; Marketing</td>
<td>AP Literature</td>
<td>Graphic Design</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 12.* Graphic Design students noted intended career, most difficult class and their least difficult class.

**Graphic Design Time Management**

Compared to the Drawing I students, more of these advanced artists noted our design class as their easiest. Specifically, student seven who is considering a major in graphic design reported, “because I'm familiar with illustrator and photoshop and it's easy to do the things I'm passionate about” (Student 7, April 2019). Similarities emerged in
student reflections, as students who found enjoyment, confidence or fulfillment in a particular subject noted that as being their easiest course.

**Figure 13.** Graphic Design students record time spent on art and design work

![Pie chart showing time spent on art and design projects compared to other courses]

**Figure 13.** More advanced graphic design students reported the amount of time spent on their designs

During this unit, a math teacher approached me with design sketches she confiscated from a student who was supposed to be completing an in-class assignment for her class. As students often spend their class time trying to finish homework for other courses, I saw no change in behavior. Instead, this student found enjoyment in the design concept she was developing, and so pursued her artistic lines of inquiry during a core class!

Juniors and seniors were facing decisions regarding their futures, so it was not uncommon to find some of the young women, in this case, students eight and nine, to express total confusion about what to do after high school. Student eight in particular,
found little excitement while working on this unit and often responded to questions about her work with, “well, it’s good enough” (May 2019) and returned her attention back to the text book propped open in her lap.

After student 8 submitted her final project, her situation posed an interesting question in the midst of this process-based assessment research. I realized I was unable to determine if she completed any research, brainstorming, sketching or planning, as she had failed to turn in the planning worksheet. While student eight student expressed an attitude of disengagement throughout the unit, she clearly worked to complete a wonderful example of marketing and branding in the form of a mobile library complete with specific and charming details (Figure 14). In this case, taking off points for this design felt as if I was prioritizing a worksheet over her technical Illustrator skills, reinforcing the old philosophy of quantity over quality. I realized that an incomplete artistic process does not necessarily mean that this student failed to practice artistic behaviors, ultimately confirming, that process alone may not suffice as the only category for needed for assessment. In the end, this student received a final grade less than 100% as she did not submit all materials required.
Student eight piqued my curiosity and I investigated her attitude toward her other school work. She noted, “My easiest class would be English because it’s a laid-back class and you will pass as long as you pay attention” (Student 8, April 2019). She also recorded a passionless response when asked what she was interested in studying beyond high school. “I’m struggling with life right now because I feel extremely mediocre in everything I do and I don’t find joy or interest in one particular subject so I’m going to college and we’ll see where it goes from there” (Student 8, April 2019). I see a lack of passion and interest as a pattern that emerges among students who do not spend much of their time on any of their school work. Student nine said, “My easiest class is Genocide in the Modern World because the concepts are really easy to understand since it’s just history/memorization and we watch lots of fun videos/movies for context, which is fun”
(Student 8, April 2019). While the concept of this class, does not sound “fun,” I came to understand that this student appreciated the class time spent watching movies and the snacks provided to her from the teacher.

**What Skills Do You Learn In Graphic Design?**

Reported in Figure 15, older students were able to make stronger connections and more defined selections between the skills they perceive we practice in class, blurring the lines and emphasis between the traditional definitions of soft and hard skills.

**Figure 15. Skills practiced by Graphic Design students**

![Percieved skills practiced by Graphic Design students](image)

*Figure 15. Graphic design students recorded the skills they perceived they practiced in the Food Truck unit*

Graphic design students record 19 skills as being practiced in our course. While this is fewer than the Drawing I students, there are more soft skills represented. These translate
across curriculum and beyond high school. Self-sufficiency, flexibility and creativity were skills they’ve been able to cultivate while making their own choices in an artistic setting. Interestingly, students cited the principles of design as one of the most practiced skills in the class and while this is a technical skill, having the opportunity to express and apply these principles in their work demonstrates the ability to think critically and developing a style, both softs skills. Huffpost.com published a survey from Career Builder saying, “In a 2014 study of over 2,000 Human Resources professionals led with the finding that 77% of those surveyed believed soft skills are just as important as hard skills and 16% think they are more important” (Russo, 2015, para. 2). As the job market changes and students consider the role of art education in their lives, it is important students are able to make connections between our class and their interests and strengths. Just as in the Drawing I class, at the end of the unit, Graphic Design students were asked to reflect on their projects and record which artistic behaviors they touched on in the last two weeks. Figure 16 shows these digital artists connecting 43 artistic behaviors to our marketing and design projects. Students reported “artists are self-learners” as being the most practiced artistic behavior. In reflecting about materials provided to students in this unit, students received an Illustrator boot camp, a food truck template and a planning sheet. Students were asked to research, create and execute original and personal concepts, leaving a vast amount of room for older students to teach themselves soft and hard skills. They fact that these students recognize that they’re able to teach themselves will possibly be an entry point for connection. Where student can begin to see that being developing as a self-sufficient learner will serve them beyond high school.
Figure 16. Artistic behaviors in Graphic Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graphic Design Artistic Behaviors</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>artists steal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>artists solve problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>artists use non traditional materials</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists collaborate</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists tell stories</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists communicate</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists seek inspiration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>artists are self-promoters</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists are self-learners</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists synthesize</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists engage</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists have style</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists impact their communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>artists are global</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists support other artists</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists collect</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists research</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists experiment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists make their viewer think</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists repurpose</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists persevere</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists make a difference</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists educate</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists document/record</td>
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<tr>
<td>artists take risks</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists see</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists share themselves</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists explore a theme</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists are self promoters</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists develop a flow</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists reflect</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists are atuned to their envirnment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>artists play with materials</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists work with what they are given</td>
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<tr>
<td>artists curate</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists observe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>artists create original art</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>artists develop art making skills</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists communicate through work</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists have a global awareness</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists develop a style</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists question</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists transform</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>artists are entrepreneurs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>artists create temporary art</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 16. Graphic Design students noted 43 artistic behaviors.
CHAPTER V

Conclusion

Grade Oriented Students Thrive When Focusing On Their Artistic Process

Although these units did not follow the traditional full choice-based model of art education, students practiced inquiry-based learning, which resulted in the opportunity for students to make more artistic choices and grow as artists. Because my students are product oriented, I was wary of changing their style of assessment. After implementing the process-based rubric (see Appendix A), students began to appreciate the stages of their work and took notice as they began to develop as artists. Because of this curricular change, students were able to defend, critique, and discuss their work like artists. These changes were evident in our midway and final critiques, as students worked hard to help each other’s artwork to become stronger and more conceptual. Students were able to give critical and thoughtful responses about their work based on the artistic behaviors they were practicing.
Figure 17. Drawing I Midway critique in progress

Figure 17. Freshmen in the Drawing I class leave thoughtful notes on the projects of their peers.

**All Students Can Find Benefits In Art Education**

I can support all high school students, despite technical artistic talents, in the secondary art room. Only seven graduating seniors planned to study in art and design beyond high school. While most students will not use the technical skills we practiced in class, students are misinformed if they believe how art teaches a student to think will not aid them in law or medical school. To make a name for themselves or find success in any career or personal pursuit, these young women will have to think critically and creatively,
hopefully referencing the artistic behaviors made stronger by our art class. “In the case of artistic inquiry, learning entails active construction of knowledge through hands-on exploration and experimentation, which are interwoven with and shaped by creative thinking” (Marshall, J. 2010 p. 16). An authentic curriculum encourages students to follow lines of personal inquiry and make artistic choices. It’s important that young artists benefit from being able to document and processes the events in their own lives through art.

**Implications**

After making changes to our 18-year-old curriculum, enrollment and interest grew, but the students remained the same; they continued to devote most of their time to the core classes. What this researcher did not take into account was the personal interests of these 14-18-year-old young women. As their teacher, I accept that my informed role is to support each student individually and deliver the curriculum to them so they can make timely connections if they chose to, but be able to reference their art education when they need to. While our school mission is to educate the whole student, it is important to keep in mind that our school is populated with strong and independent women encouraged at every turn to follow their passions.

**Comparison of Two Focus Groups**

Some participants recognized that they could become better artists or more reflective, however some others were only able to make connections to artistic behaviors and their future STEM careers. I feel that both perspectives are valuable, as high-achieving students feel like what we’re doing is worth doing correctly, even if that means
they cannot see themselves ever needing to know how to paint or draw. For the students who do not note art or design as being a personal passion, I must respect that there are some students who are just looking to learn a new skill, and out of all the electives offered in our school, they picked something artistic. A win in this researcher’s book.

When asked about their artistic process, students in all courses noted that brainstorming and research, planning and sketching, and editing, as positively impacting their final product. Despite artistic medium, shifting emphasis of our program to process over product is a choice that students support. Only one student, in the drawing course, reported not knowing if planning and sketching was beneficial. She noted herself as being ‘in between,’ she said, “If I feel good about my final sketch, I feel good about my final [product] but If I don’t feel good about my sketch, I don’t feel as great with my final” (Student 13, May 2019). This student illustrates the connection between planning and product. She seems to be unaware that through process, her end result can evolve if she’s willing to give it enough time.

**Future Research**

Moving forward, I’d like to include the perspective of grade school teachers in this research. Understanding a student’s artistic foundation will allow me to create an environment that pushes them in ways that are academically and personally challenging. Additionally, by investigating more closely the intersection of inquiry based learning and incorporating choice into art curriculum, I hope to continue to connect students to their artwork. “Framing art as research presents a new vision of art practice; making art is understood to be less about producing aesthetic objects and images, and more about
exploring a topic or idea, responding intellectually and emotionally to it, and interpreting one’s impressions artistically (Marshall & D’Adamo, 2011, p. 13).

In the spirit of continuing my research, I would like to create opportunities for students to work more closely with other artists. Potentially their classmates in a more collaborative sense, but also, I will reach out to community members and artists with whom students find personal connection. After I completed this study, I contacted Kate Longmaid, PhD., the artist with whom so many of my girls connected. I sent her some of the self-portraits my students created and thanked her for the strong female representation and beautiful technique. While I wait to hear back, I am already excited about forging a potential connection. In our school community, it is said that a daughter of the tradition of the Sisters of St. Joseph has “eyes open, ears attentive, spirit alert, sleeves rolled up to attend to the community here and the community beyond. In her face there is joy of spirit” (McCormick B, personal communication, May 2019). While I work to refine my teaching practice, I turn to the needs of my students and our community, determined to be of service and support students as realize their full potential as artists.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A
Process Based Rubric

Name: ________________________________

Class: ________________________________

Project: ________________________________

lecture material & building a foundation: /15
assignment: ____________________________
notes:________________________________

research & brainstorming /15
assignment: ____________________________
notes:________________________________

sketches and planning /15
assignment: ____________________________
notes:________________________________

critique & edits /15
assignment: ____________________________
notes:________________________________

Final Submission /15
notes:________________________________

Craft & Technique /15
notes:________________________________
Hello Artists!

My name is Kelly Pack-Scott, yes your art teacher but also a graduate student at the University of Northern Colorado. Currently, I am researching the benefits of grading the process of student artists as opposed to the process in a choice based classroom. Essentially, I am curious if grading the steps you take to complete an art project will allow you to be more curious, motivated and happy with your project. If you’re interested, I’m hoping you’ll participate.

If you want to be apart of my research, I’ll use a new ‘process’ based rubric to grade a project from a unit we complete in class. There will also be a survey at the end of the unit asking about your thoughts as you as an artist, your work you created and why you felt compelled to spend the amount of time on a project. It’s important to reiterate that all work you do in our class can be resubmitted after you’ve received feedback from your peers or me. It’s also important to mention that your answers in the survey will have no impact on your final grade, as I won’t be writing down your names, only what you say to include in my research.

Participating in this study won’t help or hurt you. I have received permission from your parent or guardian, but it’s important to have your permission as well. If at any time you feel like you wish to stop using the process based rubric, please let me know as soon as possible and we will return to the traditional way of grading.

If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to ask. If you’re ready to sign up, sign your name below, include the date and return this form to Mrs. Pack-Scott.

Thank you!

______________________________  ________________________
Student                      Date

______________________________  ________________________
Researcher                    Date
APPENDIX C
Assent Form

CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Project Title: Grading the Process in a Choice Based Classroom
Researcher: Kelly Pack-Scott
Phone Number: (816) 501-0011 ext. 308 E-mail: Kpackscott@stteresasacademy.org

With the help of several of my students, I am researching assessment in a choice-based art classroom. This year, with the help of graduate level research, I’ve made some changes to the way the fine art and digital art classes are structured. My focus remains on teaching your daughter the technical skills required to draw, paint and design, but now the type of material they choose to use, the way they use the material, and the concept of their project has become their artistic responsibility. Based on feedback I’ve received from students, the changes to our program have been positive and are helping our students become more independent and curious artists. While I too, am happy with the change in pace, I still wonder if assigning a grade to the projects they submit discourages many of the artistic behaviors we use in class. Therefore, my research will involve a change in assessment. My hope is that by grading the process students adopt to create a project, as opposed to the final piece, the art students will become more confident, curious, motivated, and sure of themselves as artists.

If you grant permission and if your student indicates to me a willingness to participate through a signed form they will participate and create in class as they’ve always done, but their work will be assessed using a new rubric (attached). It’s important to mention that first, your student always has the option to resubmit work after receiving feedback from me or her peers. If at any point she is unhappy with a grade, she has the option to resubmit the project to be graded with the original rubric. This study will not impact your student’s final grade in a negative way.

The second part of the research study is a survey at the end of the unit where I will ask your student about the process, whether she liked the work she created, and what motivated her to work on her piece.

I foresee no risks to students beyond those that are normally encountered in an art or design classroom. Your student’s participation will not be solicited during her free or activity periods. This study is not designed to cause your already stressed student more work, but to help me understand how to create an art classroom where all types of students can gain authentic experience working like artists.

Page 1 of 2
(Parent’s initials here)
I may take photos of your student working or of the project she creates to include in my final research. Be assured that we intend to keep the contents of these photos private unless you give permission below for their use as an instructional aid in my graduate level courses at UNC. To further help maintain confidentiality, student’s names will be replaced by numerical identifiers. The names of subjects will not appear in any professional report of this research.

Please feel free to call or email me if you have any questions or concerns about this research and please retain one copy of this letter for your records.

Thank you for assisting me with my research.

Sincerely,

__________________________________________________________________________

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Nicole Morse, Office of Research, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910.

Child’s Full Name (please print)     Child’s Birth Date (month/day/year)

Parent/Guardian’s Signature     Date

Researcher’s Signature     Date

If you give permission for Kelly Pack-Scott to use the images of your student working or their final project in her final graduate research or promotions, please initial below.

Initials
APPENDIX D
Post-unit survey

1. Please list any artistic behaviors you practiced during this unit.

artists create temporary art  artists document/record
artists are entrepreneurs  artists educate
artists transform  artists make a difference
artists question  artists persevere
artists develop a style  artists repurpose
artists have a global awareness  artists make their viewer think
artists communicate through work  artists experiment
artists develop art making skills  artists research
artists create original art  artists collect
artists observe  artists support other artists
artists curate  artists are global
artists work with what they are given  artists impact their communities
artists play with materials  artists have style
artists are a tuned to their environment  artists engage
artists reflect  artists synthesize
artists develop a flow  artists are self-learners
artists are self-promoters  artists seek inspiration
artists explore a theme  artists communicate
artists share themselves  artists tell stories
artists see  artists collaborate
artists take risks  artists use non-traditional materials
artists solve problems  artists steal

2. Please provide an example of how these skills may or may not help you with your future goals.
APPENDIX E
Graphic Design planning sheet

PROJECT 3: Packaging and Logo Design
(Use extra paper if you need it. The more details you include the better your project will be)

NAME: ____________________________________________

OVERVIEW:
I am giving you total creative freedom to come up with your own food truck empire. Therefore, you will need to brainstorm and research your ideas fully. Think about short vs. long names, number of words, style, feeling, more and food puns. Work as if you were designing this creative logo and package for your very own company.

ELEMENTS:
1. Full color logo with color swatches
2. Packaging piece for your company
3. Food truck design
   Optional: Menu Design

Name of Truck:

Company History: Creativity is mandatory include who what when why where!

Who is/are the founders of the truck? (Where did they meet? how old are they? is this a first career? Do they have families?)

Who is your clientele? Who are you marketing your food truck toward? (Be Specific)

What city/state/country is your truck located in?
What is the mission statement of your company? How will you reflect the mission in your logo?


What are 5 adjectives that describe your company (5 & 4 letter adjectives will not suffice...for example, nice, cool, fun, new etc.)


Name two principles of design you’ll focus on while creating your logo.


What color scheme will you incorporate into your logo and truck?


## APPENDIX F

### Drawing I lecture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self Portraits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Picasso</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Van Gogh</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frida Kahlo</strong></td>
<td>The Reading corner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frida Kahlo</strong></td>
<td>Self Portrait with Roses necklace and Cigarettes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Salvador Dalí</strong></td>
<td>Self Portrait with Gloves and Flowers</td>
<td>Expressive use of color and form, reflecting the artist’s dreams and visions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Michelangelo</strong></td>
<td>Dying of the Sistine Chapel</td>
<td>Use of chiaroscuro and perspective. Depicts Michelangelo's final moments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Albrecht Dürer</strong></td>
<td>Self Portrait with St. George</td>
<td>Depicts Dürer in high stature and heroism at the height of his career. Dürer’srogue use of perspective in this work is considered one of the most significant in the history of art.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rembrandt</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kathrina Wiley</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amy Sherald</strong></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Exploration of personal interaction. After time spent in the creative process, Van Gogh believed that only the viewer could interpret.*
APPENDIX G
Work by Kate Longmaid PhD.,

APPENDIX H
Drawing I planning sheet

Your Name:

Collaborating artist(s):

In great detail, please explain the research you discovered on the following topics:

Your collaborating artist:

Time Period:
What else was happening during the time your artist was working?

Technique, medium and Inspiration:
What aspects of the artist are you planning on incorporating into your self-portrait? Why?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Based on your plan, what is the concept of your self-portrait? What are you saying about yourself through your work?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

**Next Steps:**
What supplies do you need? Do we need to take a photograph? What size will your finished piece be? How will we display your final piece?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

**Sketches and doodles:**
APPENDIX I
Graphic Design Presentation

3. WRAP INSTALLATION.

2. PRODUCTION AND PRINTING.

1. CREATING A FOOD TRUCK WRAP DESIGN.

- Menu layout
- Vehicle dimensions and proportions
- Color palette
- Branding elements
- Positioning

- Full-color printing
- Matte finishes
- Metallic inks
- Spot colors

- Concept sketches
- Design iterations
- Final design

- Digital mockup
- Printed samples
- Proofreading

- Installation:
  - Alignment
  - Secure attachment
  - Weather resistance

- Maintenance:
  - Cleaning
  - Repairs
  - Updates

- Troubleshooting:
  - Visibility
  - Visibility in different lighting conditions
  - Visibility from different angles

Illustrated Packaging
Photoshopped Packaging
Packaging doesn’t need to be the obvious choice:
Think about personal touches