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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

THE INFLUENCE OF GUIDED DRAWING CURRICULUM ON
DRAWING DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

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This paper presents a case study of three first grade visual art classes over the course of one school year. In order to gauge the effectiveness and degree to which a visual art curriculum that embeds guided drawing experiences will accelerate the natural developmental stages of drawing, all classes engaged in various guided drawing experiences as well as three independent self-portrait drawing experiences. The study also examined the opinions of art educators regarding the effectiveness of such instruction. The study showed that although guided drawing can be an influential factor in children's artistic development, there is not a causal relationship between guided drawing instruction and drawing development. There are also many other influential factors in the artistic development of children.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I have been teaching visual art at the elementary school level for almost eight years. In my work, I find myself astounded by the drawing abilities of children. Sometimes I am amazed at how detailed and complex their drawings are, and other times I find myself surprised by how simplistic they are. I have noticed this at all grade levels, but it has been particularly striking to see how children of a very young age approach their artwork. It has been interesting to notice how some students seem to embellish their work and take a considerable amount of time developing every part of the picture plane. In contrast, there are students who seem to scribble an image and say it is finished in less than two minutes. Through these experiences, and through trying to better myself as an art educator, I became interested in how my approach to direct drawing instruction met with the students' natural development in drawing abilities. It was fascinating how the natural artistic development of students influenced their work, as well as how my specific drawing instructions influenced their growth as artists.

Formulating the Research Question

My investigation began because I wanted to explore if teaching drawing was a necessary part of the art curriculum, if development in drawing accelerated because of that instruction. In other words, is drawing a skill that is learned. These questions have been important to me in my classroom every day when I have attempted to guide the art

experiences of children and they are of importance to the profession of art education as a whole matters in terms of how we find the best possible ways to guide those experiences.

I have spent a considerable amount of time in my art classroom developing methodical drawing instructions for young artists so they are able to see the connections and relationships between lines and shapes with very predictable results. I believe this offers students an opportunity to build their basic skills in constructing drawings of everyday subjects. In the last eight years, I have experienced a variety of positive results because of this approach to instruction. Children seem to feel successful when charged with a difficult task that they can accomplish with some support, and they feel successful if they can “copy” an example and make their drawing look “real.” I feel that these are not the most important aspects of drawing instruction. The most important thing to me is that they learn the basic drawing skill of seeing the lines and shapes; no matter how complicated they may be, in order to grow as artists and develop their overall level of skill in drawing. It is important to allow freedom for young children to explore art in different ways but the questions remained; when I guide them through the creation of a drawing, am I really teaching them how to draw? What else will influence their learning in my art classroom?

Does guided drawing curriculum in the classroom influence drawing development in children? This is the guiding question of my research study in my art classroom at Chappelow K-8 Arts Literacy Magnet School in Greeley, Colorado. The study included several different research methods including group and individual instruction in drawing, informal assessments of experienced art teachers, and independent student rendering of a self-portrait. Each method provides insight into the drawing

development of first grade students over the period of one school year. All students participated in normal studio activities and curricular requirements during the course of the study. However, as young students navigated through the art making process I provided several opportunities for students to learn how line and shape configurations can be arranged to form a representation of an object. I intentionally designed and built into my curriculum guided drawing experiences to foster the development of skills in using the artistic principles of representation, proportion and elaboration. I presented these opportunities in a structured, teacher-guided format for the purposes of exploring how students responded to such a format, as well as building the learning environment so that each student could experience success with the depiction of the chosen subject. At the beginning of the year, before students had exposure to these guided experiences, I instructed them to draw a self-portrait. At midyear students were asked to complete the same independent assignment without reference to their first attempt, and finally to create a third drawing at the end of the year in order to gauge their overall improvement in representational skill. The independent drawing experiences were designed to give students an opportunity to demonstrate their learning and artistic growth.

Simultaneously, local art educators commented on their personal viewpoints about the benefits or drawbacks of guided drawing instruction. Through these methods, I anticipated that students would be able to move forward with the creation of more realistic drawings, thereby advancing their general artistic development and skill. In other words, I hoped I would see a change in drawing style based on their progression between independent drawings with the direct instruction having a clear influence. I also

anticipated that this idea be corroborated and explored with deeper understanding by art educators as they provided their personal input on the subject.

Limitations of the Study

The study at hand provides a window into a very specific art-making situation where I have observed students making their artwork and discussed it with them. I wanted to examine if there was an effect of my direct instruction on their independent artwork. The intention of the study was not to provide a statistical measure of student growth; but instead, to provide a comprehensive picture of what types of changes could occur when direct drawing instruction adequately supports students' natural progression of symbolic representation. The study does not recommend a method or curriculum for delivering such instruction. There are various curriculums currently available to the teacher who needs direction in implementing guided drawing concepts in the classroom. The concept of growth in artistic development is paramount to the study, but the study does not provide an in depth analysis of historical or theoretical changes and influences in the field of art education, and suggests only a framework of historical findings regarding artistic development. Given that the study is about a specific population of first grade students, there will be some, albeit limited discussion of progression through later stages of artistic development. By examining a specific group of students in a specific drawing situation, it was my hope that I would be able to gain more insight into how drawing curriculum can be influential in a child's art making experience and overall progression as an artist.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There has been extensive research in the field of art education on drawing development and instruction in visual art. The research spans a variety of developmental theoretical perspectives including cognitive and behavioral theories, as well as a variety of artistic theoretical perspectives including the perception and production of art. All of the research explores the variety of ways that children experience and engage in art making.

Artistic Development in Children

One of the leading authorities on drawing development in children is Rhoda Kellogg. She has conducted numerous studies around the world. Her research has examined over 1 million drawings from children in the United States and 30 other countries. Kellogg's research is based on the idea that there is an artistic impulse in humans that is universal and that all children begin the creative drawing process in a relatively similar way, regardless of their environment. In "The Psychology of Children's Art," Rhoda Kellogg and Scott O'Dell (1967, p. 13) stated that, "In the natural course of learning to draw, from their very first lines to their later pictorial pieces, all children pass through the same stages of development. These stages may vary from child to child or overlap like waves in the sea." These stages of development occur naturally without adult intervention, which leads to the conclusion that drawing is an innate human

process that takes place in a relatively predictable sequence. Kellogg outlines a specific progression of developmental stages, with distinct markers for recognizing each phase of drawing.

It is clear through Kellogg's analysis that although there are simple structures in the drawings of children, the sequence of development is not necessarily a progression from simple to complex. Rather, it constitutes a non-linear progression of symbolic representation that is self-taught and based purely on the child's own aesthetic sensibilities (Kellogg, 1969). For example, the mandala or sun form arises in cultures worldwide as a link between scribbling and pictorials. This form provides a stimulus for human forms to develop, and is used more often in a symbolic way than in a pictorial way. The pictorial of the human is an aesthetic composition evolved out of earlier spontaneous work. Although her work delves into the details of the impulsive drawings of children and she has identified several stages of aesthetic production, it is important to note that those stages are not characterized as linear; she also states that "Child art is so rich and varied that no meaningful classification system can be absolutely precise" (Kellogg, 1969, p. 86).

A classification system that is directly applicable to the artwork of children is difficult to pinpoint because there are so many factors that affect the artistic production process. Howard Gardner (1990, p. 3) said that "[Artistic] growth reflects a complex interaction between genetic predisposition and environmental opportunities, the results of which may be realized in somewhat different forms in different settings but will in any event manifest certain core properties." These certain core properties of design and representation in children are mediated with the values of a culture, the means for artistic

production that are available, as well as the individual students themselves. Artistic development does not exist in a vacuum; there are accepted universal patterns of symbolization. As children reach school age, their artwork becomes complex, varied, and influenced by the adults in their lives, their own personal style and aesthetic preferences, as well as common cultural conventions (Arnheim, 1974). For these reasons, Kindler and Darras (1997) created a “Map of Artistic Development,” which accounts for diversity in artistic production, social learning variables, and does not imply value judgments for any type of artistic production. Their concept of artistic development centers on the range of possibilities that can occur as a result of artistic production, such as relationships among the artist and the marks created, or relationships among the marks themselves, strategies for communication, as well as abrupt changes in drawing style due to accidental discovery. It also emphasizes the idea that there is a constant interplay between what is universal and what is individual in art, and that pedagogical practice should support and maintain this relationship while developing the interests and talents of young artists (Kindler and Darras, 1997). This means that although there is a natural inclination in the child to produce art, there are also outside influences which should be accounted for in the instruction of art. Indeed, artistic development is a complex and varied part of the human experience.

Artistic development can be characterized in a variety of ways, from being an indication of intelligence to being either a rudimentary or sophisticated form of play. Jean Piaget and Barbel Inhelder (1969) stated in their work, “The Psychology of the Child,” that drawing begins as movement and sensori-motor activity. It is not until a child reasons that there is a relationship between their actions and the results on paper that

intention and image become part of the process. In this way, drawing can be characterized by a process that develops in stages and reflects an aspect of overall human intelligence and behavior. Artistic development can also be characterized as a process of increased awareness and perception on behalf of the child.

Children begin understanding the world around them with generalizations, and their drawings are inclusive of those generalizations. Early drawings suggest that children perceive and render prototypes or graphic equivalents to real objects in the world, and do not try to differentiate those schemas into specific objects or experiences until they have reached that level of perception (Gardner, 1980). The idea that children begin drawing and engaging in art-making simply for its own sake and the motor stimulation it provides, then move forward into understandings of the communicative power of their drawings has been adopted by many developmental researchers. Claire Golomb (2004, p. 93) agrees that “the desire to make designs, and to create purely decorative effects independent of meaning, emerges concurrently with the ability to represent objects.” Once children discover the language in the pictures they are making, they begin to explore it fully. Children are constantly working to solve the problem of how to represent three dimensional objects, as well as personal thoughts, feelings, and understandings about them, on a two dimensional surface. This process of differentiation that occurs in a child’s artistic development reflects the levels of visual thinking and perception that have been reached (Arnheim, 1974). Although artistic development is very complex and there is no defined set of stages agreed upon, researchers do agree that developmental changes in artistic production happen, and can reflect mental, social, and emotional growth in a child.

Guided Art Making

Mona Brookes is a researcher who began to examine children's drawings and develop her philosophies about drawing and artistic ability. She created a method for drawing with children and adults that emphasizes the knowledge of five elements of shape, thereby providing a foundation for representational drawing (Brookes, 1986). The method is such that students will engage in preliminary abstract activities, and work toward realistic representations using more specific practice exercises with both images and real objects as models. She was not aware of theories stating that teaching drawing was stifling to creativity and she developed a drawing curriculum that was put into place in several schools and situations in the early 1980's, with immensely successful results. She found that guided drawing exercises enhanced the creativity of students, and improved their mental flexibility as well as problem solving and risk-taking behaviors in the learning environment (Brookes, 1986). Although the "Monart" method for drawing employs basic systematic direction and guided instruction, it is supportive of individual style, and encourages students to reach their full potential and be creative in the process. Mona Brookes (1986, p. xxii) stated, "I continue to find that we are capable of drawing, and much more, when we can relate to a simple learning method that eliminates judgment and competition." The purpose of this type of guided drawing is to give students the opportunity to build their skills with representation and know when they are using them versus when they are playing or scribbling. It is important that students internalize the skills taught so they can apply them in the future. In guided learning situations, the teacher has the ability to manage what the focus skill is and how the student masters it.

Adequately supporting the student's effort is paramount to successful teaching (Marzano, Norford, Paynter, Pickering, and Gaddy 2001).

Developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky thoroughly explored the idea that learning and development relate to one another in a dynamic process. His theories about teaching and learning still influence current educational practice (Wink and Putney, 2002). It is important to note that Vygotsky believed teacher instruction at the appropriate level could accelerate and enhance the tasks and skills children can acquire on their own. The term scaffolding refers to this level of support as a child grows toward independent problem solving. The Zone of Proximal Development refers to the levels of development that a child can attain with suitable scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978). Guided drawing is essentially a way for the art teacher to scaffold the art making process, nudging the advancement of a student's artistic potential to a level that the child is capable of reaching more quickly with guidance than without. Although the activity is teacher- directed, the learning gives the student purpose and direction and they are able to experience a level of success that may not have been possible on their own.

The Influence of Adults and the Educational System

Artistic forms of knowledge are more holistic, organic, dynamic, and less sequential in nature than other forms of knowing (Dewey, 1934). Many art educators believe that the natural intuitive process of art making should be left to develop on its own and that art instruction should not impede a student's natural impulse toward creative expression and exploration of art materials. "In the arts, the best teacher is the one who, with the wisdom of a good gardener, watches, judges, and helps out when help is needed" (Arnheim, 1989, p. 58). The production of art and the appreciation of art are

intuitive processes, and art in turn can cultivate the same types of intuition in human beings. Rudolph Arnheim (1989) believed that art is not teachable because reasoning about an intuitive process makes it labored, and endangers spontaneous creative invention on the part of the artist. Furthermore, he believed that art education should reinstate the priority of artistic experience as an intellectual and intuitive endeavor. He reasoned that the art of early childhood shows the root principles of visual art more clearly than art influenced by teachers or ideas of cultural correctness. This means that the art that is produced in early childhood shows a freedom of expression and basic understanding of the creative process more than the art of children who have experienced instruction and training from sources outside of their own instincts. When children are asked to make art that conforms to adult schemas of realism and representation their development of creative tendencies can be hindered, because “When art classes feature only adult art ideas and artists, children conclude that they have little to contribute” (Szekely, 2006, p. 176). It seems that art production in children can be very delicate and change in response to the slightest negative influence. However, a positive influence can be a welcome addition to a child’s art experiences and may be a necessary part of the growth process.

There is a point in artistic growth when if left to proceed without direction, the art stagnates and the student or child cannot progress into more advanced stages of art production (Freedman, 1997). There are benefits to good art education; it contributes to students’ overall cognitive functioning, and builds competence in the skilled use of a valuable symbol system, as well as allows the acquisition of knowledge through feelings and aesthetic qualities (Wilson, Hurwitz, and Wilson, 1987). Art allows students to explore everyday experience, as well as a variety of imagined experiences, and pictures

can provide information that is more flexible and often more immediate than verbal language.

Spontaneous drawing efforts are just as important to drawing development as structured drawing experiences. Good art instruction offers a balance between child-like expressive art production and “school art.” Drawing instruction is an important part of education, and accepted cultural models are necessary when children learn how to communicate symbolically. Children’s independent drawings utilize graphic sources from culture as models of production and purposes for making art. “The cultural styles that most children attempt to achieve demand that they overcome many of their intrinsic biases. In the absence of good instruction, students often become discouraged and, as a result, stop most of their drawing activity” (Szekely, 2006, p. 21). Although drawing instruction is important for development, it is necessary to place it in the right context at the right time in order to be most effective. Pushing concepts or techniques upon the learner if they are beyond his or her stage of conception is not an effective method of instruction (Vygotsky, 1978). Howard Gardener (1973) stated that it is reasonable that one will not develop their full potential in learning to read and write verbal language without support, and it is just as reasonable that one will benefit from assistance in learning to read and write in the various languages of the arts. Instruction in art can benefit a young artist if it is applied appropriately and with sensitivity toward the student’s natural developmental process.

Summary

Artistic development is a natural process in human beings, and occurs in children across cultures without direction or encouragement from outside sources. The nature of art making is flexible and dynamic, so distinct markers of advancement in pictorial representation often occur in a series of hundreds of progressions, or can overlap and change abruptly. For the purposes of discussion and analysis, this study implicitly held that children progress through development in artistic production, though the progression may or may not be linear and may or may not look the same for every child.

Several strategies for the art education of children point to communication and expression in artistic language as a means for understanding the world that is fundamentally different from verbal or numerical language systems. However, researchers disagree about the role of adults in artistic development, and about what is the best approach to art instruction. These conflicting perspectives on what the role of education in art is and should be helped me remain cautious with my study. I was aware of the need to be cognizant of children's artistic goals as well as my own pedagogical and research goals as I continued.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

Before conducting any research studies in the area of artistic development in children, I had to consider a variety of things. What follows is a complete description of the research design and the details surrounding the decisions made in order to create what I believed to be the most effective study design.

Procedure

I turned to my own classroom in an attempt to answer the question I had about how my direct instruction influenced the development of children. I had at my disposal an environment that I was responsible for and an environment where I could exercise a relative amount of control over some unpredictable variables. Once I had made the decision to conduct a research study within that environment, I decided to work with first grade students because changes in drawings and indicators of artistic development at the first grade level are more obvious in their artwork than with older students (Gardner, 1990). In addition, the types of art experiences that were an established part of the curriculum at the first grade level were of a teacher-guided format, which made it an appropriate place to explore the influence of such activities. I determined that there was no need to modify or change the instructional approach already in place. The focus was on how the independent drawings might change because of prescribed instruction. I also knew that I had not delivered this type of instruction for this group of children in previous

school years, so I anticipated that they had not had much experience with it up to this point. For a measure of how students' drawing style would change throughout the year, it was important to keep the independent activity standardized. I considered a variety of subjects for students to draw, and settled on the idea of a self-portrait as the independent drawing measure. I attempted to keep the process sequential in nature by using multiple self-portrait drawings placed at varied intervals throughout the year.

I also conducted a survey of District Six Elementary Art Teachers in an effort to extend the research study into a larger community than my own classroom. I hoped that the survey would provide information about the types of instruction other teachers felt to be valuable, as well as their perceptions and instructional practices with guided and independent drawing in classrooms across the school district.

Once I had determined the research design, I applied for approval with the Weld County School District Six Department of Planning and Accountability, as well as the University of Northern Colorado Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A for research documents and study approval). I asked all parents and students for their consent to participate in the study in my classroom, as well as other District Six art teachers for their consent in filling out a brief survey. At the beginning of the study, the total number of consenting student participants was sixty-eight. As the year progressed, several students who were absent on self-portrait days had to be dropped from the study, which brought the total number of students in the study to fifty-seven at the conclusion. When we were ready to begin, it felt rewarding to engage in a process of purposefully measuring students' drawings, recording observations and conversations, and

experiencing the art making process of children in a more focused way than I had previously.

Classroom Environment

My own classroom provided the perfect resource for conducting my study. I had time before I began the independent and guided measures of drawing development to structure the classroom art making experience with consistency. I established procedures for entering the classroom, obtaining art materials, seating and listening before I began to introduce the drawing activities. Each class entered the art room in two lines, and while standing in line I gave simple directions about what the day's activity was, and what materials they needed on the way to their seats. Once students took their seats, I cued them to give me a signal that I had their attention, at which point I would proceed with directions. This procedure repeated every day so that I could ensure an environment with reasonable consistency for all students.

I have found that the creation of a classroom environment with consistent expectations on a daily basis is very effective. The comfort level of students is increased, the quality of relationships between student and teacher improve, and the level of productivity rises (Wong, 2005). Although a consistent classroom environment was established and expectations for student behavior and participation were clear, the group dynamic of a class is something that is difficult to regulate. In general, my primary goal for maintaining a predictable classroom environment was to help the students feel safe in their artistic endeavors, which I believe I was able to accomplish.

Guided Drawing Activities

Throughout the duration of the school year, I conducted my research within the normal activities of the art classroom. All first grade students participated in regular classroom instruction, with an emphasis on learning how to draw objects using simple lines and shapes. Students recognized all research activities as part of the typical art classroom experience because they integrated into the normal art curriculum. I spent my research time during guided activities structuring students' work time and observing their drawings, as well as talking to students about their thinking process. The guided art activities involved direct, systematic, teacher-guided instruction in the creation of a specific image and scaffold students' drawing experience. I designed activities that guided the art making practice to a predictable result, to support students' efforts. The teacher-guided activities included drawing, as well as collage and painting. Although drawing was the focus of the study, the focus of the general art curriculum was on basic technical art skills, the formation of images, communication, and creativity. Exploring several media and concepts in an effort to develop artistic skills that can transfer to independent work is a valid endeavor because artistic skills and processes can mirror each other, as well as constitute a reflection of the child's overall learning and development (Conrad, 1964). The guided experiences helped develop the basic skills that then transferred to an independent attempt by the student. Through focusing on constructing images using lines and shapes, as well as exploring several different media and concepts, I implemented teacher-guided activities with consistency and purpose. I anticipated that the independent measures would be a good reflection of the overall skill level and improvement of each first grade artist.

Independent Drawing Activities

The independent drawing experiences were designed to give students an opportunity to demonstrate their learning and artistic growth. Young children know the most about themselves, their lives, and their interests, and a picture of the self allowed for elaboration of the figure, the environment, and the story that accompanies it. In keeping the classroom environment and the student's encounter with research practices safe and consistent, I developed an open set of parameters for students to follow. I designed the guidelines and the measure of creating three self-portraits at different times throughout the year in order to maximize the effectiveness of the drawing as a measure of growth. They created each portrait without reference to their earlier attempts so they would not copy their old work, or rely on previous ways of depicting bodies or images. I also kept the materials and the delivery of instruction as consistent as possible for each of the three self-portrait drawings. Through comparing students' self-portraits from different times in the school year, I hoped to learn that their experiences with a variety of art materials, and particularly their experience with directed image construction would yield a more attentive approach to the drawing process in general. For the independent self-portrait experiences I chose to have students create their drawings with only crayons because most young children are familiar with them (either within the school setting or within the home), and because crayons are developmentally appropriate tools in terms of gross and fine motor skills in young children.

The structure of all self-portrait drawing sessions was similar in each of three first grade classes. I informed the students that although I was their teacher, I was also a student in college. This caused them to gasp with amazement and ask questions about

college. I answered some of the questions and I continued with instruction, asking the students if they would help me with my research. First, I had to obtain verbal assent so I followed a script for each class:

“Hey boys and girls, this year we are going to draw a lot! I am going to teach you how to use lines and shapes to draw pictures of things. Sometimes we will draw together and sometimes you will draw by yourself. This is a normal part of what happens in art class, but I would like to take pictures of your artwork and I will sometimes write down what you say about your art. I will do this so I can write a report for college. If you say it is okay, I might put your artwork or your words into my report. Your parents have already said it is okay for you to help me but you only need to help if you want to. You will do everything all of the other first graders will do, except I will not take pictures of your art or write down what you say. Your choice will not change how well you do in art class, and I will not ever use your name in my report. If you decide you do not want me to use your pictures or your words, you can tell me and I will respect your choice. Do you have questions about my report? If you want to let me use pictures of your artwork and your words show me thumbs up!”

Almost every student very enthusiastically agreed to help me, with the exception of students who were absent on that particular day. They were eager to begin, and I directed them to take one piece of white paper and one black crayon to their seats. With directed instruction, I would typically break the directions down into small steps for them to follow at intervals throughout class, but for an activity that was independent and creative in nature, I did my best to deliver clear guidelines for the entire activity before the students began drawing. There were essentially five directions that I wanted to

emphasize to students for each of their individual self-portrait drawing experiences, they are as follows:

- Use the entire page; draw the body from head to toe
- Add as many details as possible
- Use materials appropriately; draw first, and then add color
- Additional subject matter and ideas may be included in the background
- Put forth the best effort possible

I wanted to give the students a broad assortment of parameters to inspire their best effort, rather than allow them to achieve success by following prescribed steps. For the purpose of independent drawing experiences, it was my intention to guide the students just enough to understand the activity without explicitly teaching them how to draw a human figure. In this way, I would gain an understanding of what each student was capable of in terms of individual artistic development.

“Today, you are going to draw a picture of yourself from top to bottom. That is a self-portrait. Say self-portrait. (Self-portrait.) Say self-portrait again. (Self-portrait!) What are we doing today? (Making a self-portrait!) That is right we are making a self-portrait! Now, close your eyes, go ahead and close your eyes, and imagine what you look like from head to toe.” Even at a young age, I wanted the students to engage in all parts of the artistic process so I asked them to start by visualizing what they looked like.

“When you begin to draw, try to fill up the whole page with your body, draw big. Are you going to draw yourself super small? (No!) That is right you are going to draw big! Think about all of the parts of your body and add everything you can think of to your artwork. Also add to yourself all of the things that make you different from

everyone else. Those things are details. Can anyone share an example of what a detail is? (Hairstyle, necklaces/ jewelry, striped shirt, eye color). Right, those are all things that make you a little different from everyone around you.” I wanted to make sure students were not rushing through their drawing, so I encouraged them to think about what their bodies looked like in order for them to represent themselves successfully as human beings.

“Please use your black crayon to draw yourself first, and then you may add color to your picture to help things stand out. If you finish drawing yourself, add a background to your picture. What is a background? (Sky, trees, it is what is behind you.) Yes, a background is the place you choose for yourself to be in your picture. Do you have any questions about your directions for drawing a self-portrait? Boys and girls, can you do your best job on your self-portrait if you are scribbling or going super-fast? (No!) Please take your time and do your very best on your artwork. Please begin your best self-portrait drawing.”

I wanted to get a sense of what each student was capable of in terms of their personal artistic development. For this reason, if students asked me questions about how to draw a specific body part, object, or idea, I would not directly give them an answer. Instead, I asked them questions that would allow them to determine what shapes to use and what details to add so that I could better understand their personal framework for imagery. I did not want them to depend on me to know if they placed specific shapes appropriately, or to think about how they were representing the intricacies of the human figure in their drawings. In this way, I also tried to stay conscious of imposing my own adult paradigms of art onto their figure drawings.

I chose the independent self-portrait to be a good measure of changes in drawing skills over time for a variety of reasons. For my classroom study, the self-portrait would reflect students' artistic development through the expanded use of detail and realistic representation of the figure, the use of proportion in the figure itself as well as the proportion of the figure within the picture plane, and finally the overall elaboration of the pictorial image including background objects and coloring application. I chose to examine these areas for specific study because they relate to the overall design of the image, which is a dominant feature in the work of children (Freeman and Cox, 1985).

Teacher Surveys

In addition to the classroom component of the study, I also collected information from other elementary level art teachers in Weld County School District Six regarding their opinions about the pedagogical effectiveness of explicit drawing instruction. I provided each of my colleagues with a brief questionnaire (see Appendix A) asking if and how drawing instruction is implemented in art classes across the school district, as well as what their personal opinions were about the benefits or drawbacks to this type of approach in an art classroom. This was an important component to the study for several reasons. By conducting surveys, I hoped to discover that art educators in practice believed that the same types of art instruction are valuable as they work to encourage students to learn how to draw. In effect, I wanted to obtain honest information about how the practice of guided and independent drawing instruction looks in the average art classroom and get opinions from professional art teachers regarding the importance of such instruction.

Summary

Through a variety of pedagogical approaches, I worked to create a predictable, safe, and effective research situation. By carefully planning and creating procedural consistency in the classroom, I attempted to regulate students' experience of the art-making environment. Although the art classroom setting did not account for every art experience the children had, I regulated the experience as much as possible. All art activities fit the curriculum already in place, and there was an intentional effort to create a standardized sequence of research events in order to keep the longevity of the study sequential. I presented guided activities with consistency regardless of the types of materials and concepts in place, and individual self-portrait drawings were conducted with conformity. The self-portrait was decided on as a reliable measure of student growth in light of research in the field, for the wealth of information it provided about the students, and because it gave the first graders an opportunity to demonstrate their transfer of artistic skills.

In studying a large group of first grade students over the period of an entire school year, I expected to see many changes in their artwork as a result of increased dexterity with art materials and overall development (in both guided and individual formats). It was my hope that by explicitly teaching students how to use lines and shapes in their drawings that they would transfer those techniques to their personal drawing efforts. It seemed likely that their experience with direct instruction and explicit teaching would have a clear influence on changes in students' progression between individual drawings. I also sought the opinions of my professional colleagues to substantiate my anticipated

outcomes as well as create a larger dialogue and deepen the understanding of drawing pedagogy.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Guided Drawing Activities

Over the course of the study, students engaged in several guided art-making experiences many involving a variety of media and processes in addition to drawing. What follows is a discussion of three such activities that students experienced, specifically designed to teach them about intentionally constructing images using shapes and lines.

Before I began the guided instruction process with students, I made it very clear that all I expected of them was their best effort, not an exact copy of the example artwork. One of my favorite ways to explain this idea was by asking, “Are we all exactly the same?” (No!) “So, do you think all of our drawings will look exactly the same?” (No!) “If you try your best, and you work hard, you are following directions.” I tried to keep the emphasis on their personal effort, and their art making process, not the product. It was my feeling that if they tried their best through the process, their effort would reflect in the finished art piece. In this way, I encouraged all students to be confident, even if they felt like they made a mistake with part of the task.

Students and I created the cheetah face drawing (Figure 1) through the process of directed instruction where I would draw a single line on the board and they would follow. Each line and shape goes in succession, with special attention paid to the relationships between shapes, the triangle nose right in the middle of the large circle, for example. It

was fun to ask students questions about where things belonged so I could see how they were thinking about the location and size of parts of the cheetah face. After drawing together as a class students had freedom to color their drawings as they chose, with the directions to color neatly and add something in the background.

As students and I went through the directed drawing process, I occasionally walked around the room to see how they were interpreting the instructions and applying them to their drawings, checking for their understanding of the directions without correcting their interpretations. Most students were completely satisfied with their results and felt like their drawing matched the example closely enough to proceed. A few students felt unsuccessful because one piece of their drawing did not match the example. Those students chose to either continue drawing or start over, or change a line in the drawing and keep going. Overall, the students who felt unsuccessful at some point ended up with a drawing they were proud of and I emphasized that they should be proud for not giving up on their artwork.



Figure 1: Cheetah Face Drawing

Students and I also created an elephant drawing (Figure 2) through the process of direct instruction, and included the addition of a jungle collage to fill the background space. We again paid attention to the relationships between shapes and lines. For the artwork students had to think about those relationships when drawing the elephant, when cutting their jungle pieces, and when gluing the entire collage together. The addition of the collage presented some new challenges for students. They had to layer their pieces and more intentionally think about the overlapping shapes. In order to achieve success here, I directed the students to arrange their shapes without glue first. That way the elephant remained the most important part of the design.

The students and I continued the direct instruction process throughout the year, I would always check for their understanding of the directions. In general, the levels of student engagement in the artwork and student satisfaction with their work were prominent. Students were feeling successful in their abilities to accomplish the tasks I had set for them with direct instruction, and they were able to experience success with the results. Some students required additional scaffolding to ensure their success, but I continued to see students who were proud of themselves and their work.



Figure 2: Elephant Drawing with Jungle Collage

The monkey collage (Figure 3) was another artwork that the students and I created together through a process of directed instruction. We began by learning about different types of lines and drawing them on the background paper with marker, and then we added a sequence of cut out shapes to form the monkey in layers. Students again had to pay attention to the relationships between shapes when gluing the collage together, as well as how the layered shapes would overlap. As with the elephant, I again directed them to arrange their shapes without glue first. The monkey collage was a little different from the other activities because it involved drawing and cutting all of the shapes, and it was a larger artwork, which meant that students had more challenges when they were making and manipulating the shapes to create the final piece.

As with the other guided artworks, the overall levels of student engagement and success were notable, and only a few students had difficulty with the construction of the piece. I noticed that with this type of collage the difficulties seemed to arise in the same places. The arms and legs were a challenging part from the tracing and cutting all the way to their placement on the larger page. I think this was because they were not simple shapes. Not only did I give students some extra instruction, but I also noticed them helping each other in positive ways. This was interesting because it allowed me to support them, but it also allowed me to see how they offered support to others. I continued to check how students were interpreting and applying their instructions, and this time they were able to experience success not only with the results of the art-making process, but with their peer interactions as well. Throughout the entire process of direct instruction, I kept encouraging students to do their best and they kept experiencing success following a set of prescribed steps.



Figure 3: Monkey Collage with Line Painting

Although I explicitly instructed each of these three activities, I also allowed students an opportunity to be creative and make their own choices with each experience. Inclusive of all students and guided projects, I believe that instruction for these guided activities was developmentally appropriate and followed the same set of achievement goals. I also believe that I supported each student in the best way possible to ensure his or her self-confidence as an artist throughout the process.

Independent Drawing Activities

As students started their self-portrait drawings, I saw the majority try very hard to follow the directions and work carefully. Some students moved very quickly through their work and it seemed sloppy, but I knew that it was because of their motor skills, so I did not encourage any slowing or control of the drawing materials. The way a student approached a drawing or art making experience also related to the development of an individual style. The first drawing was the baseline so I could see if there was an improvement in all of the drawing activities throughout the year. I tried very hard not to interfere with the natural inclination of a student to draw with a certain speed, or in a

certain direction. I asked students questions about their drawings, particularly if I saw that they had added details or background elements that they could discuss. In order to reserve my adult paradigms purposefully, I started my discussions about their decision making with, "Tell me about this..." This gave students the opportunity to explain their thinking and artistic process to me first. Then I could ask questions that encouraged them to expand their own ideas.

It was very interesting to observe all of the various ways in which students negotiated their picture plane. Some students had drawings that were small, and others were so large it looked like they had been compacted on to the paper. Some students began drawing by placing the head at the top of the paper, and others began with the feet at the bottom or started in the middle of the paper. I reserved my opinion and did not ask students if they thought they would have enough room for the rest of their bodies, or if they thought they were filling their space correctly and they developed their drawings within their own personal constructs. In addition, I allowed them to decide when they were finished without giving them suggestions for additions or expansions to their work. In the end, they had complete ownership of their drawings because they were responsible for all of the choices made.

As the drawings were taking shape, I noticed that many of the first grade students had already developed a basic set of drawing skills, exceeding the expectations I had for their level of symbolic representation. All of the drawings showed a distinct head and body separation (Figure 4a, 4b, and 4c), I had expected to see a number of drawings with arms shooting straight out of the sides of the face, but there were none. There were many stick figures and stick arms, and relatively few students used shapes like rectangles or

ovals to create the arms and legs. Many of the stick arms ended with a circle surrounded by lines to represent a hand shape. Some did not have a circle, and only showed three fingers. Attached to some of the stick legs and oval or rectangle legs I saw circles or ovals that represented the feet. Some students drew body shapes before adding clothing and some clothing formed the body shapes. Many female students used a triangle to show a dress that then became the shape of the entire body (Figure 5a, 5b, and 5c). It was surprising to see the variety of lines and shapes students were using to form the human figure.



Figure 4a, 4b, and 4c: Self-portraits with separation of head and body



Figure 5a, 5b, and 5c: Self-portraits showing body and clothing shapes

Once the framework of the figures was completed and students started attending to their background space, I noticed that there was an even larger variety of representations. Some students had an acute awareness of the scale of objects in space and placed objects on their paper in a very realistic, correctly proportioned way. Other students showed objects surrounding the figure, or overlapping each other, and the idea was much more important than the representation (Figure 6). The use of color added to the aspects of the stories students wanted to share with their work, and color filled some drawings while others remained mostly black and white.



Figure 6: Self-portrait with background objects surrounding figure

It seemed that students' personal narratives and experiences were the most important part of their drawing experience (Brown and Korzenik, 1993). My original intention was to observe how students were representing their appearance through their drawings. As I engaged in discussions with students about what they were drawing, I saw that instead of drawing their self-portraits to represent themselves visually, they were more concerned with conceptually representing themselves. Many drawings included a

specific story or event that had meaning for the student because it occurred in the past, was in anticipation, or was completely imaginary. Stories about home and family, pets, and friends were quite common, and there were many stories about favorite items or activities, memories, and dreams. Some students drew their human self, and then changed into an imaginary creature or something from a television show or game (Figure 7). It was becoming clear that the life experiences of students were of paramount influence in their artwork. They were sharing their life experiences with me by narrating their way through their self-portrait drawings.



Figure 7: Self-portrait as an imaginary creature

Each self-portrait was unique and entirely reflective of each individual student. Talking with them about their work gave me the opportunity to get to know them and share their experiences with them. I also noticed that each group of students was unique. The drawing exercises were repeated with three different first grade classes at three different times throughout the school year. Although it is not the focus of the study, the dynamics of each group of students were influential on the quality of the work produced.

For the second self-portrait drawing experience, students had some difficulty listening and contributing appropriately during instruction. The middle of the school year showed an increase in behaviors that were disruptive to the classroom-learning environment and this affected the second drawing session for all three classes. In addition, first grade students had two days of inside recess and had not had the normal opportunity to release their energy. In general, this caused the students to demonstrate less concentration and effort in their artwork. They were very talkative in their table groups, and their body language was restless. Overall, in response to student behaviors, the second self-portrait drawing sessions were less structured. The materials, drawing activity, and instructional delivery remained consistent.

Although the atmosphere was not optimal during our second session, I saw students who were more confident in their approach to drawing, and I perceived an overall improvement in drawings. Students did not hesitate or worry about mistakes because they knew the expectations of the activity; furthermore, they knew the ultimate expectation was for them to show their personal best. The way students were determining how to use their picture plane had changed, and it was apparent that they had increased their understanding of how different parts of their picture would fit on to the paper (Figure 8a and 8b). It was interesting to see that some students were purposely manipulating the scale of objects in the background for narrative emphasis, not because of miscalculating the amount of space they had on their paper (Figure 9a and 9b). There were still students who did not seem to have an awareness of the scale of objects in space, but many students were able to represent themselves in their environment in a more visually realistic way than with their first attempt.



Figure 8a and 8b: Self-portraits showing improvement in use of picture plane



Figure 9a and 9b: Self-portraits using space for narrative emphasis

The representation of the human figure also improved slightly from the first drawing experience. Several figures were reproductions of the first, but it is the small details that can be indicative of a change in development (Goodnow, 1977). Some students used different shapes for arms or legs, or added the correct number of fingers to stick arms. Some stick arms and legs turned into shapes, which showed more dimension on the figure as well as an improved awareness of how the body existed in space. Some of the drawings appeared more controlled, with an improvement in fine motor skills.

There was a considerable amount of elaboration on many drawings both on the figure itself and in the background (Figure 10a and 10b). The reforming of the human body and the additions of eyelashes, new hairstyles, different shoes and clothing, as well as an expanded use of color and all pointed to an improved level of representation (Goodnow, 1977).



Figure 10a and 10b: Self-portraits showing improved level of representation

It was still apparent that the personal narratives of each student and the experience of telling the viewer who they were, rather than just what they looked like was very important to children as they represented themselves and their world. Many of the background designs related to the personal stories that students wished to share through their artwork, and showed an increased elaboration of ideas (Figure 11a and 11b). There were students who began labeling parts of their picture or adding arrows to make sure their ideas were clear. Thought and word bubbles also started to appear in the drawings for the same reason. Several students used similar themes as they had in the first self-portrait such as family, friends, favorite things, and imaginary subjects. I saw the emergence of holiday themed stories due to the time of year, and I found myself

frustrated with the inclusion of those topics but I reserved judgment. Including ideas about Christmas trees or Santa Claus did not truly affect their ability to represent the human form or their drawing skills. On the contrary, I recognized that students were displaying what was important to them and creating personal meaning in their artwork. By observing the way students were navigating through the artistic process, it was again evident that individual stories were central to their drawing experience, regardless of how their drawings looked.



Figure 11a and 11b: Self-portraits showing elaboration of personal story

Although there was an overall improvement in the way students used their space, formed the human figure, and added details to tell the story of their artwork, there were also some notable regressions. I had a small number of students who showed no improvement, as well as some who exhibited a decline or stasis in their drawing ability (Figure 12a and 12b). Other portraits had the exact same body configurations with changes in color or background, and some even had a little less detail than the previous portraits. I also had one student who was in a bad mood that day. At the end of class it was clear that she did not put her effort into the self-portrait, but she had drawn a very

detailed and well-thought out picture of a reindeer on the back. Several students also determined that their artwork was finished, then returned to it and said they had forgotten something. The unsettled environment that was somewhat characteristic of the second drawing session for all three classes had a noticeable effect on the students' ability to concentrate, which in turn affected the quality of some of their drawings. I would say that even though the first drawing session was better in terms of the students' behavior, it was still exciting to watch most of the students drawing skills improve in the second session.



Figure 12a and 12b: Self-portraits showing no improvement

It was impressive to see how many students remembered specific directions for their artwork at the start of the third and final self-portrait drawing. Students were able to recall and explain all directions, as well as describe the importance and meaning of each idea. The third session was both similar and different from the first two experiences for a variety of reasons. It mirrored the first session because the majority of students were very focused and able to concentrate, so the level of effort and active participation was very positive, in contrast to the second session. It was expectedly different from the first

session in terms of the quality of drawings that many students produced (Figure 13a, 13b, and 13c). There seemed to be only a few drawings that had little to no improvement between the first and third independent drawings.



Figure 13a, 13b, and 13c: Self-portraits showing overall improvement

The use of space in the drawings this time reflected a much more realistic representation of proportion and placement of objects. Many students who had previously squished and smashed the figure onto the page, or who had drawn a figure that was too small to fill the space were able to better judge how their figure fit onto the page in order to create a full body portrait. The use of background also reflected a better understanding of the body in space, with more details and the addition of baselines or horizon lines. Many students showed a clear representation of how the body fit into the background (Figure 14a, 14b, and 14c). The use of space to make the figure appear more realistic was not the only improvement in the drawings. There was also an increased level of detail and elaboration, expanded use of color, and clearer depiction of stories and ideas in most artworks.



Figure 14a, 14b, and 14c: Self-portraits showing improvement in use of picture plane

The details used in many of the final self-portraits were quite significant because of the level of elaboration compared to the initial drawings (Figures 15a, 15b, 15c, 16a, 16b, and 16c). Several girls were able to think about how they adorned themselves in reality and added hair bows, earrings, fancy socks and shoes, and detailed clothing to their drawings. Several boys also created detailed clothing and elaborated on the objects in the background. Overall, there were detailed facial features including the addition of eyelashes, lips, teeth, eyeglasses, and nostrils. Several girls incorporated new knowledge into their self-portraits by drawing lips that they had learned from older siblings or other students. One student told me that the lips were her favorite part of her drawing because without lips, she could not talk. The increase in elaboration and detail that I observed during the final drawing experience is significant when thinking about drawing development in children. It points to an enhanced awareness of self, as well as an improved level of the translation of that awareness into the artwork for most students (Golomb, 2004).



Figure 15a, 15b, and 15c: Self-portraits showing increased detail (female)



Figure 16a, 16b, and 16c: Self-portraits showing increased detail (male)

Expanded use of color is another aspect of the drawings from the final session that showed artistic development. Many of the initial drawings from both the first and second sessions had copious amounts of black and white spaces, where color seemed to be unimportant, unnecessary, or unnoticed for the students. Even within the same time constraints and with the same activities awaiting them when finished, students used more color to help describe the figures, objects, and backgrounds in their work. One student's use of color creatively related to the story he told. He divided the figure in half, then colored one side dark red and one side dark blue. When I asked him to tell me why he

had made that choice, he said that he was outside running so he was in the sun where it was hot, and he was exercising which made him sweat. The blue represented the sweat, and the red represented the sunburn he got while running (Figure 17). In the other two sessions, I had observed that the stories students were telling in their artwork were the most important thing to them. This session was similar because the story was still of the utmost importance to the students, but it was also different because they had new ideas about how to represent their stories with images, and they were also more vocal about why they were making certain choices.



Figure 17: Self-portrait using colors to express personal narrative

The development in the representation of the human figure was very significant for the final self-portrait; idea development and translation were also significant, and perhaps indicated another type of artistic development for the students. There were several examples of stories and ideas that became a focal point for the artists. One student put himself on stilts in his drawing because “[He was] *not* afraid of heights.” Another student told a story about walking through a city at night, and added some dark skies and shaded the face in his drawing. There were several stories about playing games

or sports, or doing extra activities like basketball, ballet, and wearing costumes. The themes of family, friends, favorite things, and imaginary subjects were still present, but far more noticeable were themes of current events in the students' lives. "Tell me about the bees in your artwork," I said to one student who I observed drawing a bee right on top of her head. "There are so many bees in my picture because it's spring, and there are so many bees outside that are waking up to smell the flowers" (Figure 18). It was a wonderful part of my experience to see the students involved in their artwork, and I believe their investment was partially due to their inclusion of personal stories.



Figure 18: Self-portrait showing personal narrative of current events

When accounting for all independent self-portrait drawing experiences, I felt like I kept the instruction and environment as consistent as possible. Each student had the opportunity to demonstrate their own level of drawing skills and they had the opportunity to display their personalities in their work. Overall, I saw an improvement in the students' abilities to represent the human figure realistically. I also noticed an improvement in students' use of details, proportion within the figure, the use of the picture plane, and an elaboration of personal stories. Overall, regardless of what

students' individual artistic development looked like at the beginning of the study, I felt that most students showed an improvement in their drawing skills over time (Figure 19a, 19b, 19c, 20a, 20b, and 20c).



Figure 19a, 19b, and 19c: Self-portraits showing overall improvement



Figure 20a, 20b, and 20c: Self-portraits showing overall improvement

Teacher Surveys

The survey that was created and distributed to my colleagues asked a series of questions about what constituted a comprehensive art curriculum, how students' artistic development can be influenced, and how guided drawing related to the overall art

education of elementary aged students (see Appendix B). I had ten completed surveys that I used to gain a better understanding of how other art educators defined, interpreted, and utilized direct drawing instruction in their pedagogical practice. Overall, the responses to the survey questions suggested parallel practice in art classrooms across the district.

According to the surveys, the components of a complete art curriculum included: the production and creation of art, experimentation with media and experience with various technical aspects of art production, development of creative thinking and problem solving, interaction with cultural art forms and historical approaches to art, art criticism and vocabulary, and innovations in art. Suggested influences on artistic development included a comprehensive curriculum, experience, practice, experimentation, freedom of expression and decision making in art production, problem solving, and success. Overwhelmingly, the surveys also pointed to the art teacher as an influential element on the artistic and creative growth of students.

Teachers defined guided drawing as a sequential process of forming an image of a specific subject by drawing large shapes and lines then adding details. In other words, the modeling of artistic thought processes and skills necessary for learning to draw, which included the observation of shapes and forms, and the recognition of how they relate to each other and how they relate to the picture plane. It is an interaction between the student and teacher to explore examples of specific subjects with a “Simon says” approach to creating a drawing. Many teachers stated that they had little or no explicit instruction in drawing in their own art education experiences, but they valued it as an instructional approach to teaching drawing to students in their classroom. Many teachers

believed that if they had experienced such drawing instruction in their own education that they would presently be more successful as artists.

Art teachers across District Six agreed that guided drawing was a useful tool for teaching drawing skills, and they frequently used it in their classrooms in a variety of ways. It was used most commonly when taking turns with the students and drawing together. Then students could build successful experiences with drawing simple lines and shapes and could gain confidence in representing a specific subject. Some teachers used it to instruct students about specific styles of art or drawing techniques such as hatching and stippling. A few teachers have also used a worksheet with steps to show students the relationship between shapes or parts of a composition. Some teachers employed the use of guided drawing to model good observational skills or artistic thought processes, and many teachers agreed that they would have used this approach to teaching even if it had not been part of the prescribed curriculum. Many of the reasons teachers were using this instructional approach directly related to its perceived advantages.

Explicit instruction in drawing helped students increase their observational skills and recognize the proportional relationships of shapes in space, and modeled the artistic thought process for students. The most significant advantage that teachers agreed on is that this approach to drawing instruction could build confidence. When students followed a set of directions to create an image, they produced a successful representation of that image the majority of the time, which boosted their self-efficacy. With an increased level of confidence, students felt less intimidated when approaching difficult subject matter because they had gained strategies to break a subject down into smaller pieces and draw it one shape at a time. This provided artistic independence and allowed

them to have a willingness to take risks and try new things in their work. Art teachers noted that sometimes it was difficult for students to transfer their knowledge to other subject matter, which was one disadvantage to guided drawing instruction.

District art teachers said that other disadvantages of guided drawing were that students who already had advanced drawing skills were unmotivated by this type of activity and it limited the opportunity for personal expression and creativity in student artwork. Students may have also become discouraged if they produced something that looked dissimilar to the original or the teacher example. These were important considerations, but it was extremely clear in the survey responses that teachers agreed explicit drawing instruction was not the only type of drawing experience that students should have. Teachers said that frequent, purposeful use of guided drawing experiences in combination with other teaching practices would be an effective approach to art education.

District art teachers also discussed their opinion about student directed independent drawing and described its advantages and disadvantages. Teachers characterized independent drawing as a more personal and imaginative approach to art making that built confidence and pride in students. It provided an opportunity for individual experimentation and problem solving. When students experienced success in drawing independently, they became empowered to make individual creative choices. On the other hand, sometimes drawing without a lot of guidance was frustrating for students and they gave up in confusion or discouragement. It stifled their desire to take risks and make artistic choices in their work, which lead to poor quality products or non-realistic representations of subjects. This is not to say that unrealistic drawings were of

poor quality, or that the product was the most important piece of the artistic process, but in the mind of an elementary school student these things were essential enough that if they did not feel successful in their efforts they could become discouraged easily. Art teachers agreed that the skills learned through a guided approach and an independent approach to drawing were different, but that both were necessary in order for a student to navigate through the artistic process successfully. It is clear that art teachers wanted to develop in their students a fundamental set of skills necessary for the creation of art, and the ability to think originally and create personal meaning through their artistic endeavors.

Summary

Throughout the entire research study, I tried to remain consistent in my expectations for student behavior and participation and I tried to maintain a positive and encouraging demeanor so that students would feel successful in their artistic endeavors. I took this approach with both guided art instruction and independent art instruction. I implemented guided activities over the entire course of the school year and implicitly designed them to allow students an opportunity to gain experience and feel successful with the construction of specific images. Although every student created essentially the same piece of artwork, the guided experiences also allowed students some freedom of choice in order to support students taking ownership of their work and letting their personality show through the process.

The independent self-portraits implemented at intervals throughout the year, allowed students to have a lot of personal freedom within a set of directions. This design helped to gauge whether or not students were developing artistically, and to see how the

skills they learned in the directed activities were transferring to their personal work. I was working with three different groups of first grade students, and each group had a slightly different approach to their overall art experience. For instance, a group of twenty-five first grade students behaved differently after they had been denied recess time for three days due to the weather versus a class that had just come from lunch and had time to go the bathroom. In my best effort to control the art environment for students, naturally there were still situations that were out of my control.

It is important to note that the descriptions of how students entered the room and engaged in the instruction of directions for the assignment were part of the way I chose to manage the learning environment. I imagine that if I had said to students, “Draw yourself on this paper,” without additional direction or criteria the end results would have been quite different. It is possible that expectations that are more lenient for behavior would not have encouraged the students to take a purposeful approach to their work, and that a more limited set of directions would not have allowed for the elaboration of personal stories. It is also important to note that while I was observing students’ independent work and discussing it with them I intentionally did not answer questions about how to draw specific objects or ideas. Instead, I tried to turn the question around and give it back to the student in a way that allowed them to create their own meaning. Similarly, if students made a mistake, I tried to ask them questions that would motivate a reasonable solution to the problem, instead of solving the problem for the student. In terms of art pedagogy, I tried to give students the opportunity to meet the established curriculum goals while still allowing for meaningful research of their development.

The teacher surveys provided a broader perspective of what types of skills are necessary to include in an elementary art curriculum, as well as practical reasons why guided drawing and individual drawing should be included. I initially anticipated that the surveys would support the idea that guided drawing has a positive effect on drawing development and skills in children, which they did. However, like other research in the field, the surveys also cautioned against too stringent of an approach to something as flexible and personal as art making.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

My goal at the beginning of the study was to examine a specific group of students in a specific drawing situation in order to understand better the relationship between guided drawing instruction and drawing development. I hoped to see changes in their drawings throughout the year that indicated growth in their overall progression as artists. In Chapter II, I examined the ways that young artists may progress through stages of artistic development, as well as discussed several theories about what pedagogy in drawing and the visual arts should emphasize for children. In developing my classroom study, I carefully considered how to balance these theories as I worked to meet the needs of students in the most effective way possible. I delivered art instruction consistently and systematically in both teacher-directed and student-directed activities so that I could ensure the maximum possible opportunity for artistic growth. I believe that my effort to keep the research situation consistent and systematic was important and effective to a degree.

I cannot say with absolute certainty that guided drawing instruction causes students to accelerate in their artistic development. I can say that if one takes into account the complexities of drawing as a childhood activity and artistic development as a demonstration of learning in the visual arts, that guided drawing can have a significant influence in a child's approach to their artwork. The influences outside of that specific guided drawing situation are also significant. Guided drawing cannot be isolated as the

most effective or influential aspect of witnessed development. First grade is a time when many different types of learning are happening in a child's life, and their social and emotional development can encourage flexibility of thought in their artwork. Their interest in the subject matter or the activity itself can also influence their performance on any given task, even if the instruction and situation is consistent. The most prominent factor that I noticed in the independent self-portrait drawings was the personal narratives of students. Their own artistic goals and personal stories were far more important to them than any set of directions I could give, no matter how open-ended. Outside of the school, a child's culture and environment can also have a prominent influence in their artistic growth. Based on the study at hand, there is not a causally defined relationship between teacher-directed drawing instruction and demonstration of artistic development in independent drawing activities. Other influences on drawing development are difficult to isolate and control for in a real world educational setting such as the one exemplified by my classroom.

Future study would continue to isolate the multitude of influences on drawing development. It would be beneficial to determine the most significant influences and how that relates to utilizing guided drawing activities in the art curriculum. The further exploration of personal narrative and storytelling may also help in determining the place for guided drawing as part of the art curriculum. Development and refinement of art instruction and curriculum that strikes a balance between teacher-direction and student choice would benefit the practice of art education in the classroom. I would also recommend the formulation of additional instructional strategies to enhance learning in art and drawing development.

Although the current study cannot definitely point to guided drawing instruction as a way to advance development in children, I did see improvements in students' artwork. I believe guided drawing does help give students strategies for learning how to draw and how to engage in the artistic process. In my classroom, I will continue to use guided drawing as an instructional tool, and I will continue to balance its use with highly individual experiences, problem solving and choice-based activities for students. Based on the research of art teaching, and based on the opinions of art teachers, this type of instruction yields results by providing students with support for their individual artistic style and creativity, as well as with successful engagement in the process. I agree with Howard Gardner (1973) when he states that children are naturally fluent communicators through visual symbol systems, but without adequate support from instruction and other outside sources, there is a possibility that a sensational child artist will not pursue their potential. I think that it is important for students to experience success and support in their artistic activity, and I believe that guided drawing is a way to accomplish this.

The students that participated in this study as first graders are currently in the fourth grade and I have seen the longevity of effective instruction in drawing techniques both independent and teacher-directed. Out of the original fifty-seven students in this study, forty-five participants still attend school at Chappelow. It is a privilege to see how the majority of those students are not afraid to take risks or make mistakes in their artwork. I get to see them happily pursuing their own artistic goals and meeting curricular requirements through the process of individual art making. I get to see how their own stories come alive in their artwork, and how they have developed the skills to represent those things in their own way, but also in a communicative way. I am fortunate

to work with kids and encourage their potential in making personal choices and put meaning into their artwork, and I am happy to see them take pride in their creations. This is the most convincing evidence of success for which I could hope.

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APPENDIX A

RESEARCH DOCUMENTS

- I. Weld County School District Six Study Approval
- II. UNC Office of Sponsored Programs IRB Study Approval
- III. Informed Consent to Participate in Research (parent)
- IV. Debriefing Form for Participation in Research (parent)
- V. Assent to Participate in Research (student)
- VI. Informed Consent to Participate in Research (art teacher)
- VII. Survey Questions (art teacher)



Greeley-Evens
Weld County School District 6

1025 NINTH AVENUE | GREELEY, COLORADO 80631
970-348-6000 | WWW.GREELEYSCHOOLS.ORG

DIVISION OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT
Planning | Accountability
Direct: 970-348-6265
Fax: 970-348-6231

July 6, 2009

Alison Mishler
3026 17th Avenue #9
Greeley, CO 80631

Ms. Mishler:

I am pleased to inform you that your request to conduct your master's research through the University of Northern Colorado and Weld County School District 6 has been granted conditional approval.

The stipulations for approval are:

1. That the principals at any given school give his/her unconditional support to the proposed research project.
2. That all students who are to be included in the study do so only after you receive active informed consent from the parents of the students. A copy of all signed active informed consent forms shall be submitted to the Director of Planning and Accountability for the Greeley-Evens School District.
3. That all students who are included in the study express their willingness to do so via personally signed active informed student consent.
4. That research activity at any school not impinge upon academic instructional time in any way.
5. That District 6 be provided with an advance copy of your findings.
6. That publication of your findings be approved by District 6 before such publication.

If you agree to these stipulations, please respond as such in writing to:

Colleen O'Neil
Director of Planning and Accountability
1025 9th Ave.
Greeley, CO 80723

Under no circumstance shall research activity begin at any District 6 school until the district is in receipt of your acknowledgement of the above stated stipulations.

I wish you the best in your research and please let me know if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Colleen O'Neil, Director
Planning and Accountability
Weld County School District 6
Greeley, Colorado

School District 6 provides a quality education for every learner
within a system of high expectations and rigorous, focused instruction.



July 28, 2009

TO: Mark Riddle
Sociology

FROM: Gary Heise, Co-Chair
UNC Institutional Review Board

RE: Expedited Review of Proposal, *The Influence of Guided Drawing Curriculum on Drawing Development in Children*, submitted by Alison Mishler (Research Advisor: Connie Bethards)

First Consultant: The above proposal is being submitted to you for an expedited review. Please review the proposal in light of the Committee's charge and direct requests for changes directly to the researcher or researcher's advisor. If you have any unresolved concerns, please contact Gary Heise, School of Sport and Exercise Science, Campus Box 39, (x1738). When you are ready to recommend approval, sign this form and return to me.

I recommend approval as is. Mark Riddle 1 Sept 09
Signature of First Consultant Date

The above referenced prospectus has been reviewed for compliance with HHS guidelines for ethical principles in human subjects research. The decision of the Institutional Review Board is that the project is approved as proposed for a period of one year: 6 Sept 09 to 6 Sep 10.

Gary D. Heise 6 Sept 2009
Gary Heise, Co-Chair Date

Comments:

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College of Performing and Visual Arts
School of Art & Design

Informed Consent for Participation in Research

University of Northern Colorado

Project Title: The Influence of Guided Drawing Curriculum on Drawing Development in Children

Researcher: Alison Myers, Art Instructor, Chappelow K-8 Arts Literacy Magnet School
(970) 348-1282

Research Advisor: Connie Bethards, University of Northern Colorado, Department of Visual Arts
(970) 351-2804

Dear Parents,

Throughout the school year I will be conducting research within the normal activities of the art classroom. This research is for my Masters Degree in Art Education and I have been granted permission by Cheryl Lee and Deb Hodson to conduct this research in my classes. The students will participate in regular instruction, with an emphasis on learning how to draw objects using simple lines and shapes. It is my hope that by teaching your student how to use lines and shapes in their drawings that s/he will be able to use those techniques in their personal drawing efforts. Students will independently create three self-portrait drawings throughout the year so I can see how they are using the skills I will be teaching them. I will be guiding students' work time and observing their drawings, as well as talking to students about their thinking process. I will also document their efforts with digital photographs and in writing.

There are no risks to students beyond those that are normally encountered in the art room. This research will be integrated into the normal art curriculum, and your student will recognize it as a typical part of their experience in my classroom. Be aware that if you elect not to grant permission for your child to participate in this research, they will still participate in the lesson but their work, words, and photographs will not be used as part of my report. The only difference in your child's experience will be the presence of a camera and my writing down observations during the class period. This research will in no way prevent your child from learning or enjoying art activities, and not participating will not affect their grade in art.

All photographs and written documentation are for research purposes only. I assure you that I intend to keep the contents of your student's data private unless you give me permission to include it in my graduate thesis. To further maintain confidentiality, each individual example of student work will be referenced by number or pseudonym, and names of students will not appear in any professional report of this research.

If you would be willing to allow your student to participate in this research, please sign and date the following form and return it to the front office as soon as possible.

Thank You,

Alison Myers
Alison Myers

_____ (Parent's Initials-page 1 of 2)

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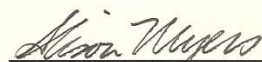
College of Performing and Visual Arts
School of Art & Design

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 the Sponsored Programs and Academic Research Center, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1907.

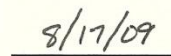
Child's Full Name (please print)

Parent/ Guardian's Signature

Date



Researcher's Signature



Date

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Debriefing Form for Participation in Research

University of Northern Colorado

Project Title: The Influence of Guided Drawing Curriculum on Drawing Development in Children

Researcher: Alison Myers, Art Instructor, Chappelow K-8 Arts Literacy Magnet School
(970) 348-1282

Research Advisor: Connie Bethards, University of Northern Colorado, Department of Visual Arts
(970) 351-2804

Dear Parent,

Throughout the school year I have been conducting research within the normal activities of the art classroom. Your first grade student participated in regular instruction, with an emphasis on learning how to draw objects using simple lines and shapes. The artwork attached to this form is the result of their use of techniques in their personal drawing efforts. Students independently created three self-portrait drawings throughout the year, and you can see how they are using the skills they have learned.

All photographs and written documentation are for research purposes only. I assure you that I intend to keep the contents of your student's data private unless you have previously given me permission to include it in my graduate thesis (consent form sent out at the beginning of the school year). To further maintain confidentiality, each individual example of student work will be referenced by number or pseudonym, and names of students will not appear in any professional report of this research.

If you wish that your child's artwork not be included in my study, please contact me and their data will promptly be removed from any records I may have.

If you have any questions about your child's participation in this research study, please feel free to contact me or my faculty research advisor at the phone numbers listed above. If you have any concerns about your child's selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Sponsored Programs and Academic Research Center, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1907.

Thank you for your participation, it has been of great help to me!

Sincerely,

Alison Myers

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College of Performing and Visual Arts
School of Art & Design

Assent to Participate in Research (verbal assent script for children under 10 years of age)

University of Northern Colorado

Project Title: The Influence of Guided Drawing Curriculum on Drawing Development in Children

Researcher: Alison Myers, Art Instructor, Chappelow K-8 Arts Literacy Magnet School
(970) 348-1282

Research Advisor: Connie Bethards, University of Northern Colorado, Department of Visual Arts
(970) 351-2804

First Grade,

This year we are going to draw a lot! I am going to teach you how to use lines and shapes to draw pictures of things. Sometimes we will draw together and sometimes you will draw by yourself. This is a normal part of what happens in art class, but I would like to take pictures of your artwork and I will sometimes write down what you say about your art. I will do this so I can write a report for college. If you say it's okay, I might put your artwork or your words into my report.

Your parents have already said it's okay for you to help me but you only need to help if you want to. You will do everything all of the other first graders will do, except I won't take pictures of your art or write down what you say. Your choice won't change how you do in class, and I won't ever use your name in my report. If you decide you don't want me to use your pictures or your words, you can tell me and I will respect your choice.

Do you have questions about my report? If you want to let me use pictures of your artwork and your words show me thumbs up!

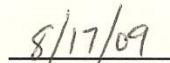
Names of Students NOT providing verbal assent:

Witnessed by First Grade Classroom teacher:

Classroom Teacher's Signature

Date


Researcher's Signature


Date

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Informed Consent for Participation in Research

University of Northern Colorado

Project Title: The Influence of Guided Drawing Curriculum on Drawing Development in Children

Researcher: Alison Myers, Art Instructor, Chappelow K-8 Arts Literacy Magnet School, Greeley/
Evans Weld County School District Six
(970) 348-1282

Research Advisor: Connie Bethards, University of Northern Colorado, Department of Visual Arts
(970) 351-2804

Dear Colleague,

Throughout the school year I will be conducting research within the normal activities of my art classroom. All research will be used for the pursuit of my Masters Degree in Art Education. My first grade students will participate in regular instruction, with an emphasis on learning how to draw objects using simple lines and shapes. Students will independently create three self-portrait drawings throughout the year so I can see how they are using the skills I will be teaching them. I will be guiding students' work time and observing their drawings, as well as talking to students about their thinking process.

In addition to this classroom study I would like to collect information from you regarding your opinions about the pedagogical effectiveness of explicit drawing instruction. On the questionnaire that follows, I will ask if and how you use such instruction in your classroom and what you feel are the benefits or drawbacks to this type of approach in an art classroom. If I have additional questions or need to clarify your responses, I may contact you for a personal follow-up interview.

There are no anticipated risks to you if you choose to answer the questions included with this form. Your participation will require a minimal amount of time, approximately one half hour or less to answer all questions. All of your ideas will be used for research purposes only, and will be kept confidential. If you would be willing to assist me in this endeavor, your completion of the questionnaire constitutes your consent to participate. Please be as thoughtful and as complete as possible in your answers. If you choose to participate in this research, please return your completed survey to me at amishler@greeleyschools.org, or mail to 2001 34th Street, Evans, CO, 80620.

Thank You,

Alison Myers

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. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Sponsored Programs and Academic Research Center, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1907.

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Survey Questions

The questions that follow are designed to elicit information regarding your personal opinions and experiences with explicit drawing instruction in the art classroom. Although my study will be conducted in the first grade, I welcome responses from visual arts teachers at all grade levels. This information will help me gain a deeper understanding of the use of drawing instruction in the art classroom, as well as the positive and negative implications of such an instructional approach.

- 1.) In what grade level(s) do you currently teach art? Do you teach specific courses?
- 2.) What components do you think constitute a comprehensive art curriculum for elementary students?
- 3.) What do you feel is the most influential component on the overall artistic and creative growth of students?
- 4.) How would you define and interpret the concept of guided drawing?
- 5.) Have you experienced guided drawing instruction in your own education?
- 6.) Do you use guided drawing activities in your instructional approach with students? If so, how?

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- 7.) What, if any, do you believe to be the advantages of guided drawing activities for students?
- 8.) What, if any, do you believe to be the disadvantages of guided drawing activities for students?
- 9.) What if any, do you feel are the advantages of student directed drawing activities?
- 10.) What if any, do you feel are the disadvantages to student-directed drawing?
- 11.) Do you have any additional comments about guided drawing instruction or artistic development in students? Is there anything that was not addressed that you would like to add?

Thank You for your participation! Your responses will be kept confidential, and will only be used to get a better picture of your individual perspective about the use of directed drawing instruction.

APPENDIX B

CATALOG OF INDEPENDENT DRAWINGS

The following pictures represent all of the independent self-portrait drawings collected from students over the course of the study. Each set of three drawings constitutes each student's participation in all three self-portrait experiences. The first self-portrait is on the left, the second self-portrait is in the center, and the final self-portrait is on the right.



