Effective Motivational Strategies

Employed by Teachers of High School Beginning-Level Art Courses

by

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ABSTRACT

This study gathers the expertise of three reputable art teachers, through analysis of qualitative data collected during in-person interviews and classroom observations, as they share their experiences and insights regarding successful methods of motivating and engaging students in their beginning-level art classes. Various works of literature regarding educational motivation are reviewed, and this study begins to address the need for additional research involving this issue, as it applies to teachers of art. Commonalities between the motivational tactics of the participating teachers are discussed, as well as comparison of findings to existing literature. This may be useful to art teachers who are new to the field or who are seeking information regarding successful methods of encouraging motivation and engagement in their beginning-level art classes.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF FIGURES iv

CHAPTERS

1 INTRODUCTION 1

2 METHODOLOGY 5

3 REVIEW OF LITERATURE 9

4 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS 15

Teacher A 15

Teacher B 29

Teacher C 44

5 CONCLUSIONS 54

REFERENCES 58

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH 60

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1.	Student Mosaic Installation on campus (1), Teacher A	21
2.	Student Mosaic Installation on campus (2), Teacher A	22
3.	Student Mosaic Installation on campus (3), Teacher A	27
4.	Classroom Layout, Teacher A	28
5.	Student Mosaic Installation on campus, Teacher B	42
6.	Classroom Layout, Teacher B	43
7.	Classroom Layout, Teacher C	53

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

I recently had the opportunity to speak with an experienced art teacher who had taken courses from the Art Education graduate program in which I am currently studying. "Ah, yes, Multidisciplinary Art Education…" she proclaimed, with a hint of sarcasm in her voice. She went on to explain that students came to her class in order to make art, and that it wasn't practical to incorporate other types of art learning into her curriculum. To illustrate her point, she described students as becoming "resentful" when she had attempted to discuss aspects of art history with them.

After speaking with this high school beginning-level art educator, I began to feel a bit daunted. I began to consider, "So, if students are only comfortable with solving addition problems, should math teachers restrict their curriculum from anything beyond that concept? What if English teachers settled on allowing students to participate in only what they found innately enjoyable, rather than providing them with a well-rounded exposure to various types of literature, writing techniques, and other such things which we as a society have come to accept as being indispensable portions of the high school curriculum?" Should the marginalization of art education curricular concepts other than art-making activities be an acceptable practice?

Motivation has been identified by researchers as a key factor in determining the outcomes of educational input. For high school art students who have already identified themselves as being interested in art, their abilities to

understand and appreciate their art education may come with comparable ease. However, high school students who are not as attracted to artistic concepts often enroll in beginning-level art classes. They sometimes do this in order to fulfill a requirement for high school graduation or university admittance. According to include one credit (two semesters) of Fine Art or Career/Technical/Vocational courses. Competency requirements for all major state universities in Arizona state that Freshman entrants must have achieved a grade of 'C' or higher in one full year of Fine Arts courses.

Additionally, many students with preliminary artistic disinterest or indifference may enroll in a beginning-level art class due to their perception of the ease of earning a passing grade, or the prospect of socialization with other students. In this, lies the instructor's challenge of motivating these high-school students to learn, appreciate, and achieve throughout the course of their beginning-level art class. Is an atmosphere in which art is considered a valued area of study one that can be consciously created, regardless of the pre-existing characteristics and attitudes of any given classroom population?

Art teachers hold the potential power to motivate students to increase their understanding of artistic concepts and possibly even to alter their viewpoints toward art. If teachers of beginning-level art students do not work to motivate and engage each student, this will not only result in a lackluster classroom environment and wasted time, but also a lost chance for teachers to positively influence the artistic viewpoints of our future society. How can teachers expect those who were never taught to relate to art to see importance in the funding and

preservation of artwork and art education programs in the future, as students grow up to become voters and potentially even policy and decision makers?

Whether consciously or not, many high school art teachers may design instruction that is aimed toward the interests of their more artistically advanced students. While this should be of great importance in the selection of curriculum and methods, these choices should be made in order to target as many students as possible. It could be assumed that non-artistically oriented students who enroll in an art education course may not glean from the course quite all that high school art majors might, but this does not mean that less artistic students are unable to receive a quality art education, or that the quality of their art education is not important.

Students may not always come to class with a natural fondness for every topic that their teachers intend to address. In daily lesson preparation, it is essential for teachers to ponder methods of cultivating the interests of students while addressing the mandated academic content. I am curious to discover how experienced art educators have been successful in dealing with this issue of concern. Designing effective motivational tactics to engage under-stimulated high school students in art learning can present quite a challenge. It is the responsibility of high school art educators and educational researchers to determine just how this might be accomplished.

The intention of this research is to seek solutions to this challenge from those with art education teaching experience. I am seeking information which may help to answer the following inquiry: "How are experienced art educators of

Arizona working to motivate and engage students in their beginning-level art courses, including students who may appear to be disinterested or indifferent?" I believe that experienced master art teachers of beginning level art students use well-developed motivational strategies. My desire is to capture and share their valuable expertise.

Chapter 2

METHODOLOGY

Research Questions:

a. Do experienced and effective high school art teachers believe that: An atmosphere in which students consider art to be a valued area of study is always possible to create, regardless of the varying attitudes of students in their beginning-level art classrooms?
b. How are experienced art educators in Arizona high schools (within the greater Phoenix area) working to motivate students in their beginning level art courses, including those who may appear to be disinterested or indifferent?

In order to carry out research for these inquiries, I involved three participating high school art instructors who teach beginning-level art courses. I began by contacting the Arizona State University student teaching placement coordinator in order to obtain contacts for potential participating teachers. It was my assumption that those who would be recommended have been identified as high-quality master teachers, and this was confirmed by the student teaching coordinator. I felt that this approach would put me in contact with reputable art educators who have experience in effectively articulating their tactics to others. The student teaching coordinator was able to provide me with a list of nine accomplished teachers across the greater Phoenix metropolitan area. I narrowed down my search based on the goal of diversifying the sample of participating

teachers as much as possible. I was successful in gaining partnership with teachers from three different school districts within different cities (Peoria, Tempe, and Mesa). The participant sample also varied in art curriculum areas (Drawing and Painting, Ceramics, and Jewelry), demographical socio-economic status, and gender of teachers (one female and two males).

After explaining my research goals to these willing participants through email, I scheduled preliminary interview appointments with each of them. Prior to the scheduled interviews, I sent copies of my research questions to the participating teachers in order to give them an opportunity to plan their responses. I followed this series of scripted questions, but the in-person interviewing process allowed me to probe further and request clarification when needed. During these interviews, I inquired about motivational strategies which these teachers have discovered to be effective with students who do not exhibit pre-existing artistic interest or appreciation. I used an audio recording device to document the responses I received, in order for the interviews to be transcribed into text and analyzed. In addition to collecting demographic data, I posed questions of the following nature:

1. What formal degrees do you hold?
2. How long have you been teaching art?
3. What types of conferences/workshops have you participated in?
4. What sources (theorists, training courses, personal experience, etc.) have been most influential in determining your motivational tactics?

5. Students with varying levels of intrinsic motivation toward art learning are bound to enroll in your beginning-level art courses. What kinds of tactics do you use in order to motivate ALL students toward art learning?
6. What strategies would you use to inspire a student who appears disinterested in your art curriculum?
7. How can you tell that your motivational tactics are successful? (What evidence do you look for in students?)
8. What criteria do you use to determine student grades?
9. What are the consequences of having unmotivated students in an art classroom?
10. Do you believe that any student can be taught to value art learning? (If yes or no, request elaboration.)
11. How might the results of student motivation toward art learning reach beyond their experiences in your classroom?

Over the course of one semester, I also scheduled two additional visits in order to conduct classroom observations with each participating teacher. During these observations, I was able to document evidence of their motivational strategies in practice. My intention was to verify whether or not each teacher seemed to be implementing their cited tactics. I was also able to make sketches of their classroom layouts and take photographs of student projects. Additionally, I documented manifestations of motivation and engagement (or lack thereof) which seemed to be occurring in each classroom environment.

In considering the methodological choices for a study of this nature, I concluded that the inquiries lend themselves more toward qualitative data collection procedures. I considered attempting to also apply quantitative measures, based on observable displays of student engagement as defined within James Asher's Total Physical Response model. Although I felt guided in part by his theories, I was deliberate in my decision to adhere to a qualitative methodology. I deemed quantitative data to be unnecessary in accomplishing the goals of this study.

Through analysis of this collected data, I identified theoretical consistencies amongst participating teachers, as well as successful motivational tactics which could be shared with other educators of beginning-level art students. These findings might be particularly useful to pre-service or beginning art educators, or any art educators who feel they are struggling with the challenges of motivating and engaging their beginning-level art students.

Chapter 3

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A great deal of research has been conducted over the past two decades that addresses engagement and motivation as they relate to learning outcomes. The ability to motivate disinterested and lower achieving students should be considered an important factor in determining the success of a teacher. According to Sanders and Rivers (1996), "As teacher effectiveness increases, lower achieving students are the first to benefit. The top quintile of teachers facilitate appropriate to excellent gains for students of all achievement levels." Even those who function at lower levels of artistic development or who have little preliminary interest in art should be expected to work toward higher achievement, even if at varying rates of progress.

Students who are not motivated and engaged are unlikely to benefit from instruction. Deci et al. (1991) identified "conceptual understanding and personal adjustment as the most important educational outcomes," in their discussion of the "relation of motivation to these outcomes." It is well-documented that teachers can have the potential to drastically influence the viewpoints, outlooks, and attitudes of those whom they instruct.

Since evidence suggests that motivation and engagement are such powerful factors in the educational process, art teachers are now faced with the task of seeking effective methods of activating these factors. Teachers know that students come to us with quite a variety of prior life experiences, and that each

student will be somewhat unique in regard to their strengths and abilities, interests, and reactions to different methods of teaching. Research has shown us that teachers must be conscious of this as they select and carry out instructional methods. Gardner (2006) states, "By building on a child's interest and motivation, schools might have more success in carrying out what may be their most crucial task: empowering children to engage meaningfully in their own learning." He also notes that "an interpersonal relationship is critical in motivating students to learn" and advocates an "environment where school, children, and the community come together in a productive way." Gardner suggests that meaningful interpersonal involvement is a powerful motivator for most students.

A study conducted with 526 U.S. high school students showed that the student participants "experienced increased engagement when the perceived challenge of the task and their own skills were high in balance, the instruction was relevant, and the learning environment was under their control" (Shernoff et al., 2003). This study documented the results of different methods of instruction, and found that the high school students who were involved in the study showed evidence of higher levels of engagement when the students participated in individual and group work than students who listened to lectures or watched educational videos. Given the lack of multi-sensory involvement in one-sided lectures and video watching, this may not seem at all surprising.

Brewster and Fager (2000) remind us that students tend to become less engaged as they reach middle school, and that as they enter high school, teachers

and researchers are able to identify an increase in students who do not demonstrate adequate motivation for success in school. Brewster and Fager conducted research aimed to determine effective methods of increasing student motivation and engagement, or "time-on-task." They argue that methods of making coursework more engaging and effective for students at all levels is, indeed, possible. Brewster and Fager discuss the common differentiation between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and note that research supports the overall success of students who are more intrinsically motivated. Intrinsically motivated students are those who "actively engage themselves in learning out of curiosity, interest, or enjoyment, or in order to achieve their own intellectual and personal goals." These students are said to be able to engage themselves without the need for external consequences such as artificial rewards or punishments, as extrinsically motivated students may sometimes require. Teachers must be prepared to address students who function primarily in either realm. "As schools focus on helping all students achieve high standards," Brewster and Fager acknowledge, "reaching out to disengaged and discouraged learners becomes increasingly important. Clearly, students who are not motivated to engage in learning are unlikely to succeed." They conclude their study by reminding teachers that they (teachers) serve as a powerful factor in the motivation, or lack thereof, of their students.

The time that students spend in class each day should be considered valuable and indispensable to all involved. Deci et al. (1991) proclaim that, "Ideal school systems are ones that succeed in promoting in students a genuine

enthusiasm for learning and accomplishment and a sense of volitional involvement in the educational enterprise." Although the authors describe intrinsically motivated behaviors as representing the concept of self-determination, which they claim to speak for, they acknowledge that some extrinsically motivating factors can be designed to inspire self-determination.

Fay and Funk's theoretical approach known as *Love and Logic* encourages parents and teachers to rely on extrinsic motivators that either are natural consequences or which resemble natural consequences as closely as possible (1995). This would be an example of an intention to provide students with externally motivating factors that might direct them toward developing higher levels of valuable intrinsic motivation.

Hetland and Winner (2004) discuss the importance of art education in public school settings, and remind us that art education can increase academic achievement across subject areas. It could be argued that all students receiving art education should be encouraged to participate fully in order to receive this benefit, including those who may not seem as interested in art-related topics.

Teachers' approaches for motivating and engaging students with artistic tendencies should differ from approaches used with non-artistic students. Dorethy and Reeves (1979) conducted a research study which investigated the differences in activity of brain waves in 26 art majors and 33 non-art majors. They concluded that their research findings suggest "that the art of teaching needs to be matched with the functions and qualities of human performance," which

they acknowledge as varying greatly from individual to individual, even amongst those who are within similar interest groups.

Scott (1988) conducted a related study designed to compare personality, values, and background characteristics of artistically-inclined students verses typical students. One hundred two "Artistically Talented" and 125 "Average" 11th and 12th grade students were evaluated. Significant differences in personality were identified, and evidence suggested that Artistically Talented students tend "to be more reserved, detached, critical, aloof, cool, and impersonal," as well as "radical, liberal, experimenting, free-thinking, innovative…suspicious, self-opinionated, skeptical, and questioning" and "more forthright, natural, and unpretentious than the Average." Scott also states that, "The public education system need not be expected to teach students to be artists. Educators can, however, create an atmosphere in which art is considered a valued area of study and in which knowledge and appreciation of art and personal artistic expression are encouraged." That which remains, is the task of determining effective ways to accomplish this mission.

Researchers such as Pariser and Zimmerman (2004) have identified the importance of determining effective methods of teaching students who have been identified as being artistically talented. Research includes discussion of qualities which teachers should develop in preparation to teach talented students, as well as the determination of practices that may aid in cultivating the highest levels of achievement and success with this artistically-inclined group. Less discussed, is the topic of preparing art educators to motivate and engage *all* students who enroll

in their art classes, particularly the significant number of beginning-level art students who may not possess pre-developed artistic interests.

Chapter 4

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The three teachers who participated in this study came to me by recommendation of the Student Teaching Coordinator at Arizona State University. Each teacher had at least 11 years of experience working with high school beginning-level art students in Arizona's public school system. The sampling of teachers reflected variations in school socioeconomic levels, geographical location (within the greater Phoenix area), art curriculum, teacher gender, teaching styles, as well as teacher education and professional influences.

Prior to meeting with each teacher, I provided them with a copy of the interview questions I would be asking them. I wanted to give them an opportunity to reflect on the questions beforehand, and each teacher reported to me that they had done so. Some had even jotted down notes to refer to during the interview. In all three cases, I also conducted two classroom observations. The following narratives are based on information I collected during these interviews and observations.

Teacher A

The first teacher I interviewed, whom I will identify as Mr. A, is a Ceramics instructor at a high school in Tempe, Arizona. Mr. A has twelve years of professional teaching experience, a Bachelor's degree in Art Education, and a Master's degree in Secondary Education with emphasis in Curriculum and Instruction. Mr. A's students come from a wide range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The school boundaries encompass areas below the poverty

level, as well as areas Mr. A describes as being "fairly wealthy." Mr. A refers to his student body, many of whom commute from the neighboring Yaqui Indian town of Guadalupe, as being "quite a mix." His teaching style is formal, structured, and facilitative of applied concept representation.

Mr. A's school district is currently running a Professional Learning Community program. The program encourages collaboration with other department members, and is working toward common curriculum articulation across sites. Through this collaborative program, teachers are able to use electronic media such as Google Docs to share resources and find common modalities for student assessments.

Mr. A reports that he refers to Bloom's Taxonomy quite a bit in his teaching, as well as Rigor Relevance Framework. He describes an important aspect of the latter as "trying to build that relationship with your students in order to try to engage them and get them interested in what you're doing. So the idea is really that if you're addressing a subject that's engaging and relevant to what your students are interested in, that you're more likely to be successful."

During my opportunities to observe in Mr. A's classroom, I witnessed an environment where students seemed to be actively engaged for the majority of each class period. At any given point, there would be students throwing on the potter's wheels, hand building (generally coil or slab construction), or glazing their pieces. Mr. A would be working his way throughout the room at all times, assisting students in these various stages of their projects. During the dates of my observations, all of the students were working on a "series project." They were

required to complete three vessels that somehow tied together thematically. Some students were creating vessels that interlocked with one another when lined up, others repeated similar shapes or glazes, and a few students created pieces with thematic subject matter (such as animals or symbols).

At first glance, while his students are working at so many different stages, Mr. A's classroom can appear to be somewhat of a liberated environment. However, a more careful look reveals a highly structured system of specific requirements. As I made my way around the classroom, every student I encountered was able to explain the expectations of their project, and exactly how one should go about meeting those expectations. The exception was a student who was in the process of glazing a quite sizeable pot by submerging the entire vessel into a glaze canister by hand. After the student managed to pull the pot out of the canister, he held it there, dripping and spilling glaze all over the surrounding area. Mr. A approached, took a quick look at the overly-thick, handprint-smudged glaze job, then instructed the student to rinse off his entire project in the sink. Mr. A promised to show the seemingly embarrassed student how to glaze the pot by dipping it into a tray on the following day.

Mr. A had a very straightforward manner with his students, and expected them to be on track at all times. When he noticed that four students seemed to be pounding and wedging their clay for an unnecessary amount of time, he simply said, "That's not the way to earn points in here." Without a visible hint of defensiveness, the students quickly transitioned to the next step of their project.

I participated in various informal discussions with the beginning-level students throughout the course of my observations. Many admitted to taking the class because they needed the fine arts credit. "Art is pretty and cool," one student explained to me, "but I'm not an artist."

These beginning-level students were in a combined class with several talented advanced-level students. The more advanced students were working on creating a wooden frame for the ceramic wall mosaic they would soon be installing in the hallway of their school's fine arts building. Although he knew my interest was focused on his beginning-level students, Mr. A took every opportunity to showcase and elaborate on the achievements of his more advanced students while I was there.

During my final visit, I had the opportunity to attend a viewing of the school art show where most, but not all, of Mr. A's students had works of art on display. An empty classroom had been transformed into a gallery, with folding partitions exhibiting two-dimensional artworks and large tables lined with ceramics pieces. Before the show, I overheard two students discussing the event. They agreed that they "didn't care" about it, even though one girl had a piece in the show. I asked them to elaborate, and one student called the show "segregated, because you are supposed to vote for your favorite piece, but they are all good."

Mr. A doesn't feel that it is very difficult to engage students in ceramics curriculum, save for "a few kids who you have to kind of pull along." He explains that he makes each project engaging with his "active and interesting" delivery. Mr. A made many general statements, saying he has "a lot of

mechanisms in place," tries to "cultivate an atmosphere of productivity," and puts care into how he structures the curriculum and pacing. It became necessary for me to press for specific details, which were often still accompanied by additional generalized statements.

One specific example of how Mr. A attempts to make his demonstrations "engaging and fun" is his blind throwing lesson. He begins by showing a clip from the movie *Star Wars*, where Luke Skywalker puts on his blast shield and tries to learn how to use the light saber. Mr. A explains that, similar to using "the Force" to wield a light saber, throwing on a potter's wheel is not a visual activity. He then has students attempt to throw blindfolded, which is meant to teach them to surrender to their tactile senses.

Mr. A also noted that if there are students in his classroom who appear not to be working, he makes a point to cycle his way through the room, informally assessing each student and talking with them about where they are in their creative process and what their next steps might be. He will try to find out why they are not working, and offer specific solutions that are tailored to their situation. If Mr. A finds this to be ineffective, he admits he will sometimes need to resort to punitive measures. He will say, "Okay, well, if you'd like to volunteer to clean today, just go ahead and stay in your seat and don't get your work out." Most kids get interested on their own, he feels, but this strategy can be a good motivator for those who are unresponsive to his more positively-geared attempts to inspire.

At the time of our interview, Mr. A was working to encourage his students' appreciation of the societal value of fine art through collaboration with a professional community artist. They were in the midst of creating a large-scale mosaic installation on their school campus. "One of the things I'm doing here," he shared, "is I'm trying to get the students to understand what it means to be a real professional artist working in the community, to give them an idea of what kinds of projects you can do, and how it relates to the community." This particular artist also shared an interest in renewable resources, showing the students how to obtain used tiles and wood scraps in order to repurpose them for their artistic endeavor. The mosaic installation they were working on during the time of my interviews and observations is now hanging in the indoor hallway of the high school's Fine Arts department (see Figures 1 and 2 of completed mosaic installation). Mr. A added that the students selected to participate in this activity are his advanced students, as well as students who elected to participate in the school art club. However, these advanced students are working alongside the beginning-level students within the same class periods, and the beginning-level students have the opportunity to observe the entire process. This not only enriches the atmosphere of productivity within the classroom, but can also serve to inspire beginning-level students to continue in the art program in order to develop their own skills and potentially have the opportunity to participate in such projects.

Figures 1 & 2. Completed mosaic installation, displayed in the indoor hallway of the Fine Arts department at the high school (2011).



Figure 2. Continued



Mr. A feels that the first step art teachers must take, upon noticing student disinterest, is to take a careful look at their curriculum and to ask themselves if their assigned projects and instructional delivery are interesting enough. Mr. A claims to use a great deal of humor in his instructional delivery. Recently, he began including a newly-designed unit in his ceramics curriculum, based on the Macau culture in Peru. Mr. A has a lot of students who are either Native American or from Hispanic decedents, so he designed this unit to tie in with his students' cultural identity. He reports that students seem to have "have a little more buy in to" the material. During the course of the unit, Mr. A makes a point to discuss the culture and the history of the culture. While doing so, he is sure to accentuate the gruesome details about human sacrifice, which tends to be a successful way to catch his students' attention.

When he sees his students showing excitement about projects, Mr. A considers this to be evidence that his motivational tactics have been successful. He also enjoys witnessing when students who originally seemed defiant or indifferent demonstrate transformation throughout the course of his class. He described several students who he had identified as "potential problem children" at the beginning of the semester, who ended up becoming his "greatest allies in the classroom." He explained that it is important to work on captivating and turning those students around, because often times, other students look to them for reference. Mr. A feels that other students seem to think, "If this kid's not doing it,

then I'm not going to." When all students become active, interested, and focused on the projects, Mr. A feels that his motivational efforts have been effective.

Mr. A stressed the importance of making students aware of the "criteria for success" prior to beginning any project. For each assignment, he creates and distributes a written document of requirements that is directly aligned to the final grading rubric for that particular project. Each grading rubric usually has around five different categories, but varies depending on the assignment. Generally, there will be a category for craftsmanship, a category for responsible use of class time, and one for creativity. The additional categories will be more specific to each particular project. For example, one project might require elements such as use of texture or practical functionality.

At the end of each project, students are also expected to complete a self-reflection, composing short-answer written responses that explain how they feel they addressed each requirement. During an informal discussion, a student explained to me that she was glad Mr. A had them do the self-reflections because she felt it was an opportunity for students to give their own input into the grading process. She seemed to feel empowered by the opportunity to represent herself in this way. Mr. A reported that students generally are quite honest in their self-reflections, and that he rarely will find that they didn't evaluate themselves well. In the uncommon case that they do not, he will offer the student feedback, and adjust their grade accordingly.

Mr. A insists that he simply does not allow students to not be working during his class periods. He feels that even a single student who refuses to work

will bog down the rest of the class. If he has a student who is completely unresponsive to his motivational interventions, he will take the necessary steps toward having them drop his class. These students will usually then have to enroll in a "study hall" period, where they are required to study and complete homework assignments for other classes. Since every student must complete a fine arts course prior to graduation, students who drop Mr. A's class will still need to enroll in another art course in the future if they hope to receive a diploma.

Most inactive students, Mr. A explained, are "just kind of lazy." He described the need to continually remind a handful of students to move on to the next step of each project. He calls this "cultivating an atmosphere of culture within your classroom that dictates that apathy is not allowed, that you must be engaged. It's just as simple as that," he states. "It's a zero tolerance policy in effect."

Mr. A's ultimate goal is for his students to be interested and active in art throughout their lives. He seeks to identify students who "didn't know much about it and weren't really interested initially when they came in (his classroom)," and hopes that art "becomes an important part of what they do from here on out. And I'm not trying to make all of my kids ceramic artists," he adds, "but I would like them to at least be informed consumers, and to be actively able to appreciate and engage with the arts throughout their life." He went on to explain his desire for his students to look at an art museum as a comfortable place, and "not a scary place other people go." He hopes for his students to be able to understand and

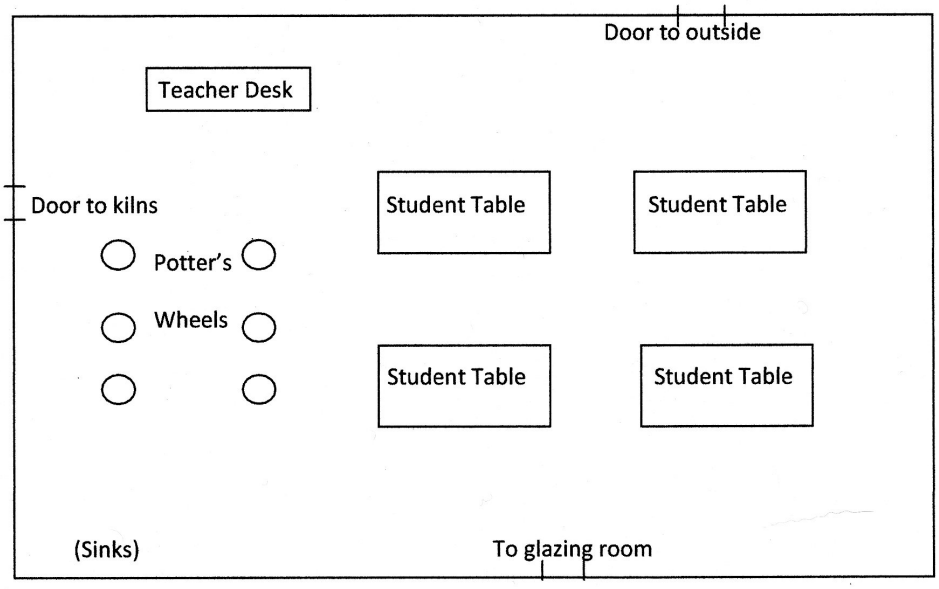
appreciate the arts on a deeper level, and for that to be an enriching force in their lives.

I asked Mr. A why he felt this was so important. He shared that he feels the arts are a basic need for society. "If you think about how we judge societies of the past, we look at their art," he explained, and went on to remind me of the ancient Greeks and Romans, and the way in which we viewed their art and architecture. "Art is the standard by which societies are judged by history, in many cases. It's one of the most important legacies that we leave as people, I think, the things that we create. It's a vital part of what we are as a species." Although he had been joking and conversing lightly with me prior to this question, Mr. A took on a much more serious tone when communicating his stance on the societal importance of art. It was clear to me that he considered this to be an important truth, and a driving force behind his teaching.

Figure 3. Mosaic installation previously created by advanced students, displayed on an outside wall of the school building (2011).



Figure 4. Diagram of classroom layout, Teacher A (2011).



Teacher B

The second participating teacher in my study, "Ms. B," holds a Bachelors of Science in Art Education, and has 27 post-graduate hours (21 hours toward a Master's Degree in Bilingual Multicultural Education, and six toward a Master's Degree in Art Education). Last year, Ms. B stopped taking classes when she became pregnant and had a baby, but she hopes to return to graduate school at some point in the future. She has eleven years of experience teaching Art. Her teaching style is somewhat democratic, and she encourages both rote learning and deeper conceptual understanding.

Ms. B teaches in an upper-middle class community in the city of Peoria, Arizona. His school does not receive any Title One funding, and do not have many students on free or reduced-cost lunch assistance programs. There are very few English Language Learners within the school community.

This year, Ms. B participated in various workshops designed to support use of Smartboard, Student Response Systems, and other technology in the classroom. Smartboard and the Student Response System are technological programs designed for interactive instruction. The version of Smartboard used in Ms. B's classroom projects the teacher's computer screen on a wall, and has a touch-sensitive "Slate" that can be carried by the teacher or passed around the classroom for student participation. The Student Response System provides students with small clickers, which they can use to answer multiple-choice or

yes/no questions. The system then provides the teacher with instantly calculated whole-class instructional feedback.

Such an efficient system is especially helpful when decreasing statewide educational budgets are forcing schools to cut teachers and increase class sizes. Ms. B has been informed that she can expect to have at least 36 students in each of her classes next year. She plans to use the Student Response System to check for understanding during lessons, as well as to administer quizzes and tests, which will eliminate her time spent on grading assessments. Students' scores can even be automatically exported to her electronic grade book.

Ms. B has difficulty imagining ever having to teach art without advanced technology again. "I don't know how I ever did it before," she shared. "I don't think I could ever go back to just drawing on a white board and trying to show them what's going on, or making a poster and trying to show them that." She takes full advantage of her ability to capture student interest by clicking a mouse and inviting images and videos from the internet to be displayed instantaneously on the wall of her classroom. She explained that in order to motivate and engage students in this current age, she relies heavily on these resources, which are expensive and are not available in all schools.

Ms. B cites the Comprehensive Art Education theory to be influential in her teaching practices. She begins each new unit by discussing selected topics from art history, and then has students move on to a related creative project. She also attempts to tie each unit into current events, artifacts, and phenomena of

today's art world. She is constantly seeking ways to "make it bigger" than just what students are doing in the classroom.

It is important to Ms. B that students know that topics within her curriculum are not just something she made up, but "that other artists who actually make a living making art as their life" have done, or are doing similar things. It is also important to her that when students are viewing mass advertising or observing other art forms in the public venue, that students realize

> ...those people out there that do this for real life have used some of these same principles or these same things that we're learning here in class. Because, I think it's one thing if you just teach them, 'Today we're going to learn about repetition and lines.' But then if you show them examples from the real world, that in buildings you see this, and in interior design you see this, in advertising you see this, it makes it a little bit larger for them, that it's not just something that they're doing in class that has no relation at all to what's going on outside the classroom walls.

Ms. B's teaching style has also been greatly influenced by the 21 credit hours she spent working toward a Master's Degree in Bilingual Multicultural Education. She believes that she is a more effective teacher as a result of having taken those classes, because she learned how to better reach students, regardless of their past experiences as learners. She explains that the tactics used to engage students who are not fluent in English are effective tactics for connecting with any and all students. Some of these approaches involve repetition, combining new

vocabulary with visual images or demonstrations, and engaging students kinesthetically.

Ms. B admits that the students who are usually the most challenging to motivate are many of those who enroll in her Art I class. A lot of of these students are taking the class simply because they need a Fine Arts credit in order to graduate, and they can vary in age from freshmen to seniors. Ms. B shares that some of these students naturally turn out to be "wonderful artists and love it and will go on to complete the program," while others will require a great deal of specialized attention in order to keep them on track.

Ms. B shared several ways in which she works to scaffold her curriculum for the benefit of all students. She tries to design all of her lessons so that someone with no experience can be successful, so that "they can follow the steps and come up with something that they can be proud of, that they can handle that isn't too overwhelming." She also makes sure to "leave that door open, so that students that do have that really creative edge and do want to take it further, that it's open enough that they can take it and go in their own direction with it, and make it more than what is just the minimum requirements of the assignment." It was evident in her teaching that she did, indeed, encourage stronger art students to push their projects further. As she circulated the room, she seemed to give equal attention to struggling students as she did to successful ones, and worked to push both. "I like how you're ____, but I'd like to see more _____," seemed to be one of her common response structures as she moved from student to student. She consistently provided a great deal of praise and positive encouragement, and her

students seemed to trust her judgement. They were comfortable approaching her with questions and advice.

In order to exemplify her style of breaking down lessons into manageable chunks for beginning-level students, Ms. B described how she would structure a colored pencil unit. She explained that she would begin with one or two lower-level assignments designed to teach them the basics of using colored pencils. She described a worksheet she has that shows students how to layer colors. "And even the kids that are more advanced enjoy doing that," she added. "It's good review for them." She would then give them an image to color in, using either warm or cool colors, as practice before having them launch into a higher level learning activity. "So by breaking it up into those small chunks, it allows them to have that chance to kind of practice and weed out how to work things out and how to use the medium," she explained.

During my final visit, Ms. B's class was in the midst of working on a still life assignment. Ms. B had arranged an elaborate collection of objects in the center of her classroom. Her students were expected to select a portion of the still life to recreate using the medium of their choice. They were able to select from any of the mediums they had been introduced to over the course of the semester. In order to ease the potential for frustration, she gave her students the option to photograph their chosen section of the still life. They would then enlarge the photograph on the computer and print it out. By laying a plastic transparency sheet over the photograph, they were able to trace the basic shapes within their composition, and then transfer the outlines onto the surface of their artwork. This

virtually eliminated the possibility for students to struggle with size ratio accuracy. Most of her students did elect to use this method.

In comparison to the other participating teachers, Ms. B seemed a bit more prone to engaging with her students as an elementary teacher might. Her behavior management style was carefully constructed. "I like the way group one is quiet," she would announce, hoping to cue other groups in to her expectations. She did a great deal of checking for understanding during her lectures, and made an evident effort to simplify concepts as much as possible. At each ten minute interval during my observations, whether during lecture or studio time, there were never more than two or three students who were visibly off task. Talking was allowed during studio time, as long as students were visibly working.

Ms. B also made sure to announce the amount of time students had left before they had to clean up several times during each period. She was very specific: "Five minute warning. If you're almost done, you can finish tomorrow. If you have more than ten minutes of work left, you should take your carving tool home tonight." She was consistently very clear when communicating her expectations to students, and they seemed to know precisely what they needed to do in order to be successful.

The final exam for Ms. B's Art I class is a multiple choice assessment with 50 questions. The exact questions to be included on the final exam are given, one per day, via daily bell work. The question of the day would be projected onto the wall for students to respond to, and Ms. B would confirm the correct answer before moving on to the day's lesson. In doing so, she

purposefully made it easy for any student who was willing to take quick daily notes to have the entire contents of the final exam in their hands when it came time to study.

Ms. B did not demonstrate rigidity with the expectations she required of her students. When she noticed that two students were signing each others' yearbooks after she had asked the class not to open them, she simply asked that they be put away after the students were done with their signatures. When a student asked her which medium would be "fastest" for their final project, she answered the question honestly and directly, without any show of disappointment in their desire to choose a medium based solely on the speed at which they could complete the project with it. In general, she seemed not to openly bestow judgments upon her students, and they, in turn, seemed very honest and open with her. While she praised students who experimented beyond her set requirements (such as one student who attempted to combine sharpie, watercolor, and colored pencils for her final project), she did not express disapproval of those who selected the simplest routes to complete their work.

Despite her relatively relaxed attitude regarding whether her own students develop into accomplished artists themselves, Ms. B feels quite invested in developing their appreciation of the societal value of art. She makes an effort to consistently be showing them how art is used in their favorite movies, or even in students' own clothing. She mentioned a recent experience she had when a student entered her classroom wearing a t-shirt with Magritte's *Son of Man* painting on the front, except that instead of an apple hovering in front of the

figure's face, there was a smiley face. "Do you realize that shirt is inspired from a famous piece of artwork?" she asked her student.

Citing another recent experience, Ms. B told me about a figure drawing lesson she had given. She had projected images of artwork by Peter Max onto the wall as she discussed contemporary figurative art with her students. The next night, it was Steven Tyler's birthday on the popular television show, *American Idol*. For his birthday, Steven Tyler was publically presented with a portrait of himself, done by none other than the artist Peter Max. Ms. B had been thrilled to return to work the next day to find out which of her students had seen the show and recognized the work of the artist they had discussed in class. "I try to teach them about artists that aren't just dead artists that were from a long time ago," Ms. B explained. She feels that students are more open to connecting with current and updated material, rather than curriculum discussing artists and movements from long before their birth.

When I asked her how she works to inspire students who appear to be uninterested in her curriculum, Ms. B had several strategies to share. "Let them choose their own images," she advised. She feels that students who feel they have the power to connect their own personal interests to her assignments tend to become more invested in them. At the beginning of the semester, Ms. B gives her students a brief overview of the assignments that they will be doing over the course of their time with her. She then takes them to the computer lab, where they are given the opportunity to surf the internet and print out several images of

their own chosen subject matter. They are then allowed to store these images in her classroom for use on their projects throughout the semester.

Akin to the practices of Mr. A, Ms. B recommends that teachers make an effort to give personalized attention to students who appear not to be interested in the art curriculum. She will approach an unproductive student and ask, "Is it that you don't know how to do this, or that you don't want to do this?" She explained that students are usually pretty honest in their responses, and that their answers can lead to the best route toward getting them back on track. "Alright," she might say to a student who is overwhelmed by the requirements of a project, "We have 15 minutes left of class. What do you think you can get done in the next 15 minutes? How about you do this part?" She would then continue to break down the steps of an assignment in order to make it seem more approachable for that student. "So keep on them," she suggested. "Sometimes, even at the high school level, you have to be a little bit of a mom. Just keep roaming the room and come back. Make them accountable, keep checking up on them." Ms. B did exactly that throughout the course of my observations, and the only time I witnessed her sitting down was during our interview session.

I asked Ms. B how she is able to tell that her motivational tactics are successful. She responded by telling me that evidence can be found in each final product that her students create. "So if they have successfully completed the project," she went on, "they have thought of something really unique and original, then I definitely know that they've been successful. Also, for the students that maybe struggle more, that they've turned in more, or that they seem more excited

about something then maybe they did at the beginning of the semester." Ms. B explained that she knows her motivational tactics have been successful when she sees progress and improvement in the quality of student work samples.

As did Mr. A, Ms. B described a series of rubrics that she uses to determine student grades. Each rubric has five criteria that are specifically designed for each different project that students complete throughout the semester. Also parallel to the practices of Mr. A, Ms. B requires students to complete a self assessment prior to her own assessment of their work. In general, the rubrics tend to contain questions along the lines of the following topics: unique and original design, composition, how well the artwork fit the project criteria or the medium that was being used, and overall technique, as well as a few reflection questions.

When I asked Ms. A why she felt it was important to encourage motivation in her classroom, the intensity in her voice heightened. She had much to say regarding this topic:

> Everyone that comes through here is going to be a member of society, and I just want them to recognize that art is a big part of our society. And I think that it goes back to art advocacy, too, that if they realize how much you see all of these things that we're learning in a basic art class in our society, that maybe they'll become a little bit more appreciative of the arts. And that they will see the benefit of the arts, and that art isn't just something that people do for fun and that isn't necessary, that learning how to think critically and see things in a different kind of way, how much

it really is out there. And maybe they'll become more supportive of it, and maybe they'll just have an appreciation of it when they're adults, and that they'll support the local art programming. Especially the art in schools, with the standards-based education and with everything being cut and slashed. We just heard the legislature is cutting millions of dollars from our funding next year. I think in Peoria, we're losing four million dollars.

Ms. B went on to discuss the issue of art not being on the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) statewide assessment, which every high school student now must pass in order to receive a regular diploma. She fears, as do many, that art programs will continue to be cut further and further, as funding is redirected to increase support to the academic areas that are assessed by the AIMS test.

Whether art is to be included on the AIMS test is a current topic of interest amongst Arizona art educators. Many Arizona school districts have begun to make cuts to art programs, reducing staff and splitting art teachers between two and three schools, and shortening and/or reducing frequency of art classes. Some elementary schools have even removed their art programs completely. Since there are still art standards in the required curriculum, administrators expect classroom teachers with little or no experience in art to include art instruction in their teaching. Ms. B described her knowledge of the situation: "They basically have a folder with the little lesson in it where you can teach the primary colors and secondary colors and those kinds of things. But it's not getting taught the same way that an art teacher would teach it, and it's watering down the

curriculum." Ms. B admits that although she dislikes the notion of standardized testing in general, she wouldn't mind seeing art added to the AIMS test. She feels that those in decision-making positions rely on test scores and data to drive funding decisions, and that adding art to the AIMS test would serve to protect art programming.

Ms. B's school district is planning to begin tying teacher compensation directly to test scores. She wonders how this will affect art teachers, and fears that art teachers may be expected to teach aspects of other curriculum in their classes. While she acknowledges that art can naturally reach across the disciplines, she doesn't feel it would be fair to require this of art teachers. "I don't think it should be dictated that I'm teaching someone else's standards. I have my own standards. There are art standards," she insisted. "I think it wouldn't be a bad idea to have it on the test, for the long run." However, Ms. B does not feel that adding an art component to the AIMS test would result in an increase in the motivation of her students, and she sees the situation as an unfortunate dilemma.

Ms. B feels that the most impactful thing that she can do, aside from having her own public art shows and advocating for the arts independently, is advocating for the arts within her own classroom. She tries to encourage her students to appreciate the arts on a higher level than they would have, had they never enrolled in her introductory art class. Ms. B feels that if she is not successful at motivating them and helping them to see the importance of the arts,

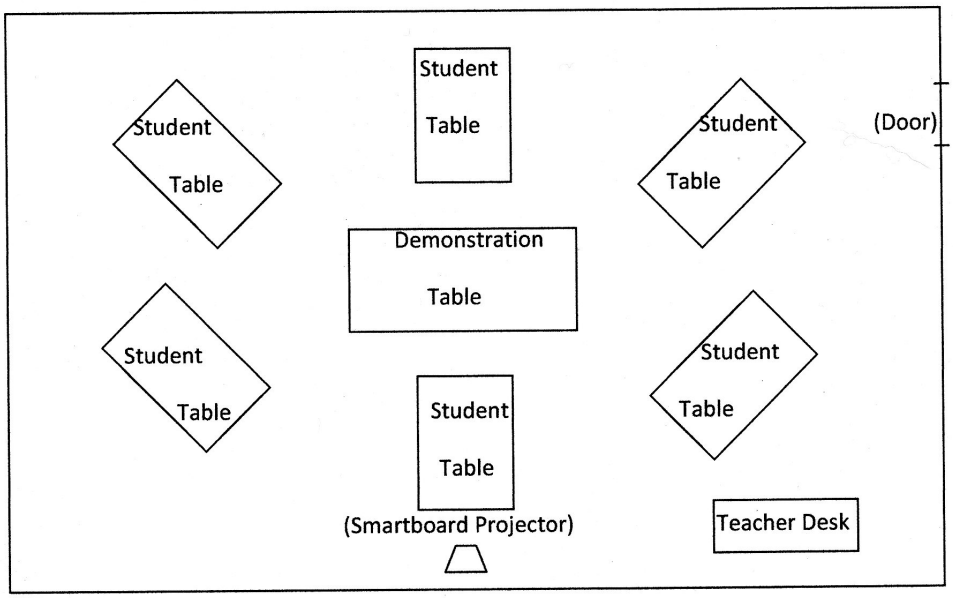
that this would be a greater failure than having her students not pass, or her program not "look good." She would consider this to be "the ultimate failure."

In addition to understanding the importance of art and becoming future supporters of art programs, Ms. B describes her desire for her students to develop the capacity to "see the bigger picture" regarding how art is deeply infused into their daily lives. "My final goal would be just that when they finish with the art class, even if they never paint on their own, even if they never draw, that maybe when they're done with school and they're walking down the street, they're going to recognize some of these things that they've learned in my class that are out there in the world." She described recently watching famous designer Candis Olson on TV, and hearing her recommend the use of rhythm, which is one of the basic principles of design. She also mentioned other occasions of noticing artistic principles applied in public spaces, such as symmetrically designed billboards. Ms. B wishes for her students to be aware of the extensive applications of these principles that they witness in their daily lives.

Figure 5. Mosaic installation previously created by advanced students, displayed on an outside wall of the school building (2011).



Figure 6. Classroom layout, Teacher B (2011).



Teacher C

"Mr. C" teaches Jewelry courses at a high school in Mesa, Arizona. He has a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with a concentration in Painting and Drawing, and earned his teaching certification following his graduation from that program. He has been teaching art for 16 years. Mr. C describes the high school where he works as having "a large mix of minorities." He estimates that approximately 80 percent are Hispanic, and 10 percent are African American. About five percent are Native American, and the remaining five percent is made up mostly of European American and Asian American students. This high school where Mr. C teaches is located in a lower income level area. His teaching style reflects aspects of both facilitation and delegation, and he relies on cooperative grouping.

The most recent workshop Mr. C has participated in is Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID). AVID is a program designed to support students who indicate that they are first-generation college-bound, who come from lower-income families. About 300 students who attend the high school where Mr. C teaches are in the AVID program. Mr. C's Jewelry class is cited as a participating AVID course, so he has been attending related classes and trainings. He has also been taking International Baccalaureate (IB) training classes. The aim of this program is to promote global perspectives of art and learning, in order to produce world-wide learners.

Mr. C cites Fred Jones' Positive Discipline theory as being most influential in his teaching. He attended a Fred Jones seminar at the beginning of

his teaching career, and has continued to refer back to the book he received for the past 16 years. Fred Jones is an educational theorist who advocates for highly-structured, front-loaded classroom management systems. This influence did seem evident in Mr. C's teaching style.

In order to motivate his students, Mr. C tries, "to set up their projects so that they have some sort of personal buy into it." All of the lessons he teaches are process-based, so he must first teach them processes such as soldering, metal cutting, and wax casting. However, the projects students work on are each personally designed by them. Mr. C explained that he sees many students put great care into their work when they have a personally-derived vision.

All of Mr. C's classes are mixed-level, meaning he has beginning, intermediate, and advanced students during each period. He believes that this can work as a motivating factor. While beginning-level students have their own prescribed series of projects, the more advanced students are simultaneously working on higher-level projects. Many of these projects have the potential to impress beginning-level students, and can pique their interest in continuing through the program.

Mr. C has a highly energetic personality, and is constantly moving around the classroom. He tries to keep demonstrations as entertaining as possible, by telling jokes and making light-hearted comments about safety to, "kind of lighten things up a little bit." As I observed him giving a demonstration to several students who were waiting to use the kiln, Mr. C waved his hands around, making

faces and singing, “la, la, la” as he worked. His energy level did not visibly decrease at any point during my observations.

Mr. C had a distinct way of showing his expectations to students. He would act as though he expected compliance in a friendly way, never seeming to show a stern side. Shortly following the beginning of a class period, every student seemed to be on task except for one, who was lying with her head on her backpack. Mr. C acted as if he assumed she wasn’t working because she didn’t know what to do, and he politely explained the directions to her. “So now you know what to do, and you can go ahead and start working!” he declared in a joyful tone. The student immediately retrieved her sketchbook and began working on a project design. This same student was later able to answer my casual questions about the process she was embarking on, using appropriate technical terms.

When I asked him what art teachers can do to encourage students’ appreciation of the societal value of fine art, Mr. C mentioned that he offers extra credit to students who attend community art exhibitions. He added that he teaches about important periods throughout the history of art, which he often utilizes PowerPoint presentations to address. Mr. C believes it is important to discuss the monetary values of different metals, as well as the monetary increase in value that occurs once the metal is shaped into a product.

Mr. C also believes that it is impactful to have students participate in art shows themselves. He tries to enter students in two to three shows per year. Usually, there is a school-wide show, a district-wide show, and a state-wide show

(at the Arizona State Fair). He has also entered his students in national shows in the past, but noted that student shows don't always carry a jewelry component. Shipping issues have also negatively impacted his decision to enter three-dimensional artwork in national shows.

As do both of the previous teachers I interviewed, Mr. C resorts to interviewing students who seem unmotivated. He might ask a particular student what they enjoy doing in their spare time, and then encourage them to incorporate their interests into their projects. "So I walk around the room, and if anyone seems particularly stuck, I talk to them specifically and ask them what they need help with, or ask them about their interests, or their life, or what they want to do, or things like that." From time to time, Mr. C will come across students who are putting off a project because they are afraid to work with torches. He has allowed those students to write reports in lieu of assignments that would require them to work with fire. Mr. C calls this "adapting the curriculum," a plan which he describes as being flexible to meet student needs.

Another issue that can be problematic in Mr. C's classroom is the requirement for students to pay a 30 dollar material fee. Many students change their schedule and drop his Jewelry class because they can't pay the fee, or they may attempt to sit in the class and not do anything. When asked about a scholarship program, Mr. C explained that the school has the capability of carrying between 10 and 20 students on art fee scholarships per year. This is not an adequate arrangement, considering the rate of income shortage within the school boundaries. Mr. C notes that students who cannot pay the fee will

occasionally “act out and become disruptive,” or sometimes just not show up to class at all. During the first month of school, Mr. C spends a lot of time lecturing and acquainting students with tools and safety procedures. This provides some students the opportunity to save up for the class fee, if they are able to. Other students may have to resort to writing reports to earn their grades in his class, if they do not opt to transfer out.

The high school where Mr. C works has developed a plan of action to reach students who are not successful at school. Every two weeks, teachers check student grades, and every three to four weeks, they print out progress reports. Teachers then meet to discuss students who are failing or near failing, and try to determine the causation and develop a plan of action for addressing each student’s case. Teachers use a computer program called Genesis to access personal information about their students, and will sometimes call parents to find out whether there is anything going on at home that the school can help out with. Sometimes teachers will assign student mentors to those who are struggling. This is particularly effective with move-in students, of which there are many. Mr. C describes the school population as being transient, and changing fairly frequently. This can be a challenge, when students move in who haven’t received the background knowledge that Mr. C covered during the first few weeks of the course. Peer mentors can assist new students in class, as well as provide them with someone they may feel they can connect to in their new and unfamiliar environment.

When I asked Mr. C about his grading practices, he began at the very beginning. "We talk about, at the beginning of the semester, what they think jewelry is. So we have them define what jewelry is all about, what makes a good piece of jewelry, what makes it valuable, why would they buy it? And so, when we talk about the characteristics of that, we talk about not having scratches, and having things be measured correctly, and things fitting correctly and being comfortable." He uses the criteria they come up with during this guided discussion to create a checklist of requirements for their future projects. This way, students may feel more "buy-in" to the reasoning behind his grading process.

Mr. C breaks down student grades for each unit into three parts, each of equal value. The first component is a requirement for students to create three preliminary sketches of potential project ideas. The second is the project itself, which is graded using the aforementioned checklist. The third is a self-evaluation. As did the previous two teachers, Mr. C requires students to rate themselves according to a checklist, and answer some reflection questions about each project they complete.

I asked Mr. C what consequences might arise as a result of having unmotivated students in his classroom. "They drag everybody else down," he told me. "You can have a nice little class running nice and smoothly, and if you get a couple of kids that decide they don't want to do anything, other kids don't really care why they're not doing anything. They see them not doing anything, and I don't know why they don't associate the fact that that person's getting an F and

they're getting an A or a B, but they jump to the conclusion that, 'Hey, if he doesn't have to do anything, why am I doing anything?' And so it's kind of cancerous, and it starts to spread, and the people that are closest to them stop working first. And then it goes around, it starts spreading and spreading and spreading." In order to prevent this phenomenon, Mr. C is constantly working to ensure that every student is active and productive. In addition to its effect on other students, having unmotivated students in a Jewelry classroom can also become a hazardous situation. "They tend to play with stuff when they're not working on things, and a lot of this equipment is dangerous," he explained, gesturing to the torches.

Another worry of Mr. C's is that if his students know he is allowing them to sit unproductively in his classroom, he is afraid they may believe he doesn't care. "So I try to show definite interest in their success in the class, a definite interest in making them successful," he informed me. When making his way through the room, Mr. C will ask students if they need help with anything, offer advice, and "give them specifics of what they're missing so they know where they need to put their focus." During my observations, he also made many friendly teasing remarks, and made a point of telling several different students, "That's why you're my favorite." He feels it is important for him to get to know each student personally, which he admits can be a challenge. "I'd prefer if they all wore a nametag, but they don't, so just getting to know them, just what they do on the side...you know, if they're in sports or something like that, and then talking to

them about that." Mr. C certainly puts substantial effort into cultivating a positive and encouraging atmosphere in his classroom.

Mr. C hopes that his influences will reach beyond his students' experiences within his classroom. His desire is to "teach them about being intrinsically motivated about everything." He feels this can be done by starting to get students thinking about greater meanings, rather than simply focusing on grades. He tells students, "You're doing this to become better at making jewelry. We are going to make you a professional jeweler at the end of this semester...that's the plan. We're going to have you making jewelry that's sellable, that's giftable, that's wearable, that you like. And so you're not doing it for me. None of this stuff is for me. It's for making you a better person and being better at what you do." Instead of thinking they need to turn in a particular project because it's due for a grade, he wants them to think, "I want to make this ring, and I need to make it really nice because it's for my mom and it has to be perfect." He hopes that once they develop this attitude, that it will carry over into other parts of their lives, and "that they start recognizing that they have to do things for themselves. That they don't have to get a reward, that they don't have to get a thing from somebody else to say, 'Do this.' Do this for yourself. Maybe it's just because you need to do it for somebody you care about."

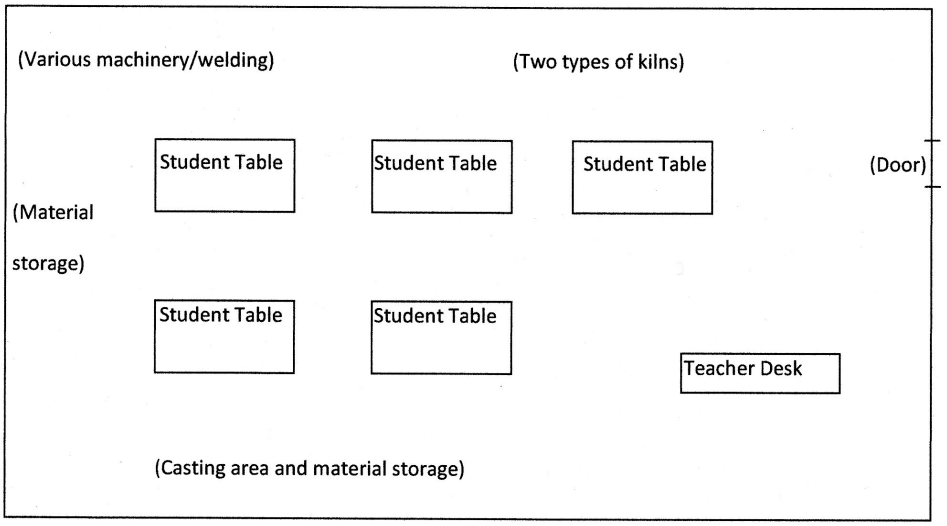
Mr. C has walked by other classrooms and seen students sleeping on their desks, but this is never something he would allow in his classroom. "The most important thing is to keep them working all the time," he stressed. "I need to see them progressing towards an end, doing something all the time." Like Ms. B, he

does his best to break project requirements down into small steps to make the end goal seem more achievable to students who seem overwhelmed.

Mr. C recognizes that the technical terminology and specialized tools used in his class are new to most of his students. "They're used to paintbrushes and pencils and things like that," he explained. "They walk in and there's a bunch of power tools, a bunch of files, and a bunch of machinery." Mr. C is constantly reminding students that they're capable of using every tool in the classroom successfully. "I tell them that they're the best of the best all of the time," he shared confidently. He tries to boost their confidence, while keeping their natural cautiousness intact. Sometimes, that means standing next to them and helping them through the processes, which he did often during my observations.

At the end of his class periods, Mr. C walks around the room, tapping students on the shoulders and assigning each table to a section of the classroom that they will be responsible for cleaning up. His movements and mannerisms are purposefully jolly and comical as he takes care of the business of managing his classroom. He seems to do it with success, as I rarely caught sight of a visibly unproductive student during the course of my observations.

Figure 7. Classroom layout, Teacher C.



Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS

Although they differ substantially in personality, student population, and art curriculum, the teachers who participated in this study share many commonalities regarding the methods they use to successfully motivate and engage students in their beginning level art courses. They unanimously view this issue to be of great importance, both for its immediate benefits within their classrooms, as well as the long-term societal value of encouraging others to see the importance of art and art programs within communities. After analyzing the results of this study, the discovery I found to be most surprising was that: Despite any personal or situational differences, these master teachers adhere to several similar beliefs and practices within their classrooms in order to accomplish these objectives.

One common practice is frequent cycling throughout the classroom and conducting informal interviews with students who seem to be encountering periods of non-productivity. All of the participating teachers constantly work their way through the room, stopping often to offer individual students feedback and support. When they sense a lack of motivation, these teachers will probe further, hoping to pinpoint underlying causes. They have found that student responses can reveal which strategies teachers should utilize in order to remedy individual situations, which can range from students facing a lack of ideas for subject matter, to feeling fear about using the tools required for a particular project, or even unrelated issues such as lack of sleep. All of the participating

teachers consider themselves to be flexible and accommodating in order to meet differing student needs. They all showed interest in creating positive learning and art-making experiences for each of their students, and admitted that there are often differing paths to accomplishing this goal. This practice of differentiation in order to meet varying student needs is consistent with the findings of Dorethy et al. (1979), who studied the practice of matching teaching styles with different qualities of human performance. Additionally, as these teachers work to create personal connections with their students, they are putting into practice Gardner's (2006) theory that the development of interpersonal relationships plays a critical role in motivating students to learn.

There were also several consistencies across the grading systems implemented by each participating teacher. All of the teachers provided detailed rubrics which delineated requirements for each project, and shared these rubrics with students prior to having them embark on each assignment. The teachers intend for each student to fully understand what is to be expected of them before they ever begin working. Additionally, all three teachers ask their students to complete self-evaluations after finishing each project. In doing so, they provide their students with an opportunity to represent themselves as artists, and share a part in their own assessment process.

All of the participating teachers expressed a belief that students are more successful when expectations are clear and they understand exactly how to accomplish each step toward meeting requirements. These teachers share a common practice of breaking down large projects and assignments into a series of

smaller, more easily-achievable tasks. The teachers agree that there is always a need to "string some students along" by continuing to prompt their participation and help them transition from one stage of each project to the next. They understand that to many beginning-level students, the tasks at hand may appear complicated and overwhelming. The method of breaking projects down into a series of more approachable tasks is reminiscent of the findings of Shernoff et al. (2003), who stated that increased student engagement occurs when the perceived challenge of tasks and student skills are high in balance and they feel that the learning environment is under their control.

All of the high school art programs in which these teachers work combine beginning-, intermediate-, and advanced-level students within each class period. The participating teachers consider this to be yet another way to inspire beginning-level students to develop high aspirations. The situation provides an environment of intrigue for many less-experienced art students, as they have the opportunity to witness the possibilities that may come with their further development. Beginning-level students work alongside advanced students whose skills have progressed, and who often are given more power to dictate the course of their own projects. On occasion, these participating teachers offer special art-making experiences to advanced students, such as opportunities to work on public installations. These advanced students may be utilizing different tools and materials to accomplish tasks which can impress beginning-level students. This piqued curiosity can inspire them to increase their efforts, and possibly even continue through the program to discover their own artistic potential.

As is evidenced by this study, these participating master teachers do not wish to separate artists from non-artists, and focus their energies solely on students who may one day become professionals in the field. They work tirelessly to make their classes a valuable experience for each student they encounter. Their practices coincide with the theories of Scott, who affirmed that, "The public education system need not be expected to teach students to be artists. Educators can, however, create an atmosphere in which art is considered a valued area of study, and in which knowledge and appreciation of art and personal artistic expression are encouraged" (1988). In addition to improving the atmosphere within their own classrooms on a day-to-day basis, these teachers work to inspire generations of future voters and policy-makers who may one day advocate for the welfare and vitality of art programs for decades to come.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Erica Clark was born and raised in Arizona. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Special Education and a Master of Arts in Art Education, both from Arizona State University. Erica has been working as a public education teacher for seven years. She also draws and paints, and occasionally has her artwork displayed in public venues. During her free time, Erica enjoys traveling, hiking, gardening, and spending time with her two cats.