

EFFECTIVE USE OF STORYTELLING  
IN THE ELEMENTARY ART CLASSROOM

By

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Summary of Project in Lieu of Thesis  
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Degree of Master of Arts

EFFECTIVE USE OF STORYTELLING  
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By

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Chair: Craig Roland  
Major: Art Education

This project-in-lieu of thesis explores how to effectively implement art lessons and content through original stories, in digital video form, as a resource for teachers to use in the elementary art classroom. I have created a six-minute animated video that explores two questions: (1) What is a drawing? and (2) How can student artists imbue a "mistake" into their work? The video features five fictional characters that demonstrate various artistic behaviors while participating in the two aforementioned animated lessons. An in-progress version of the video was shown to a fifth grade class in Gainesville, Florida. Using qualitative methods, I was able to observe the students' reactions and record their feedback. The video was an effective springboard for a lesson on mark making and drawing while it introduced the students to a group of fictional characters that approach art class like detectives.

*Keywords:* storytelling, animation, artistic behaviors, video, elementary art, drawing, sketchbooks

## CHAPTER 1

I enjoyed writing original stories when I was a child. Writing and illustrating stories was something I did as a hobby and yet never pursued seriously since I identified myself as being an artist and not a writer. After the age of twelve, I stopped writing down my story ideas and went on to pursue art in a magnet school from grades 7-12. Those childhood stories remain stored in a plastic bin in a closet in the house where I grew up. Three years ago, however, when I was hired as a part-time elementary art teacher, I came across certain art concepts that were difficult to explain to my students. I remembered my love of writing stories, and realized that the elementary school students enjoy listening to them as well. Therefore, it was the perfect time to begin writing again. I began creating rhyming stories, with illustrations, that explain specific art-related concepts I wanted to teach. I read the books to my students in class to introduce certain lessons. I found that the stories were an effective way to model, entertain, and teach students art-related concepts in the classroom.

Throughout my time at the University of Florida, I have experimented with various software programs and animation techniques to transfer stories into video productions. After uploading the videos onto a website, I found that storytelling through the medium of video rather than print has the potential to reach more students and educators around the globe with a simple click of a button.

Storytelling is becoming an important communication tool to use in the twenty-first century, especially in the classroom. Pink (2006) describes "six

essential aptitudes" needed to survive in today's world and how to achieve them. The aptitudes include design, story, symphony, empathy, play, and meaning, all of which he believes are the important assets needed in a world where analytical skills are typically valued the most. Further, Turner (1996) explains that the human brain organizes our thinking into stories on a biological basis, since "...the mental scope of story is magnified by *projection*—one story helps us make sense of another" (Turner 1996, p. 1). Pink and Turner are only *two* of many sources advocating the importance of storytelling for synthesizing and conveying information.

One area of storytelling that interests me in particular is children's literature in Art. In 2010, I conducted a pilot study in which I became keenly aware of a gap in children's literature about artists and art history (Savran 2010). In this study, I collected samples of children's books labeled under "art" in local libraries and museums and I found that a majority of the books focused on either *art appreciation, promoting self-esteem in artistic skills, or children drawing from their imaginations*. There were fewer books that featured characters that demonstrated behaviors similar to those exhibited by an art student in class. In an unrecorded interview, Dr. Kenneth Kidd, a professor in the field of children's literature at the University of Florida, has confirmed these findings. He said that, "...many of the art related children's books do in fact fall in the category of 'creating an imaginary place'" (Savran, 2010).

## **Statement, Significance and Limitations of the Problem**

A small number of art-related children's books show students demonstrating artistic behaviors in an art room. Therefore, I created an animated video for teachers to use as resource. The purpose of this project is twofold: (1) to explore how storytelling can be used in the art classroom as a teaching tool and (2) to fill a gap in existing children's literature in art.

This video was designed for teachers and students to use in school at the elementary level. The video will be a resource for teachers to introduce the following ideas to their students: (1) What is a drawing? and (2) How can student artists imbue a "mistake" into their work?

This project only covers a small introduction to the complicated process of drawing, and shows some of the many possible ways in which students can demonstrate using *artistic behaviors* in class. Within the time frame that I had to complete this project, I was not able to measure the effectiveness of the video on students' learning.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This project-in-lieu of thesis explores how storytelling can be used to deliver curriculum content in the elementary art classroom. The topic of storytelling includes a vast array of information, therefore, I have focused the literature research into three general categories: story and memory, artistic behaviors, and educational television. The information gathered from each of these categories was used to draw conclusions about how I can make the most effective stories to convey art content in an animated video format.

#### **Story and Memory**

Pink (2006), Turner (1996) and Heath and Heath (2007) all discuss reasons why we retain information most effectively through stories. Pink explains in *A Whole New Mind* that, “stories are easier to remember because in many ways, they are *how* we remember” (Pink, 2006, p. 99). He goes on to explain that, thanks to the Internet, facts are so easily accessible, it becomes even more important to “...place these facts in context and to deliver them with emotional impact” (p. 101). In *The Literary Mind*, Turner (1996) explains that the human brain organizes our thinking into stories on a biological basis, and it is necessary for all humans to be capable of understanding the world in stories. He says that, “the necessary biology and the necessary experience of any normal infant inevitably produce a capacity for story in the infant” (Turner, 1996, p. 14). Heath and Heath (2007) have conducted research on the effects of story and memory. In the book *Made to Stick*, they have compiled and reported data from many

sources to answer the question: “Why do some ideas thrive while others die?”

They found that the following principles should be considered when creating a “sticky” idea: simplicity, unexpectedness, concreteness, credibility, emotions and stories.

Although delivering information through the form of a story has been shown to be an effective method of communicating, there have been several studies that have tried to disprove claims that television, a vehicle for telling stories, is bad for children’s learning. In the process, however, studies have shown that children do have the potential to “learn” from television or video and retain the information later on. Anderson (1998) reported that in one study, for example, children were given either an audio narrative of a program, or an animated program to watch, both containing identical information. It was found that, “When asked to recall or act out the segments, preschoolers accurately reported more of the dialogue when the original presentation was animated. This study indicates greater attention to dialogue by young children when the medium of presentation is audiovisual rather than purely auditory” (Anderson, 1998, p.29). Likewise, O’Day (2007), a professor of Biology who makes educational animations, found that, “animations lead to greater long-term memory retention than simple graphics” (p. 223). He tested 393 students by having them view three different animations and two graphics to determine long term memory retention, and found that, “...animations lead to better memory retention regardless of the nature of the material that is being learned. This conclusion clearly needs much more in-depth research to validate it” (O’Day, 2007, p. 222). It should be noted,

though, that O'Day's animations are simulations of biological processes rather than stories.

Fuglestad, an Illinois elementary art teacher, creates original videos to teach art concepts as well. She uses them to highlight certain concepts she wants to teach as she lectures, and says that, "It seems to me that when fun and learning are combined that information is more likely to be stored in long-term memory. My students quote my videos, sing along with the lyrics, and get excited about learning while they watch" (personal communication, March 28, 2011).

### **Artistic Behaviors**

Within the video that I created, it was important that the fictional characters demonstrate artistic behaviors that are unique to how the art student works in a studio classroom. Various researchers have documented what they believe these behaviors include.

Four researchers, all affiliated with Harvard's Project Zero, have compiled a book on this topic. In an effort to identify artistic behaviors taught in the classroom, Hetland, Winner, Veenema, and Sheridan (2007), filmed 38 high school art classes in the Boston area. After reviewing selected clips, they went back and interviewed the teachers further, plus collected photographs of students working plus curriculum and program descriptions. They concluded that there are certain "habits of mind" that these art teachers and students engage in, including: (1) learning to develop craft; (2) learning to engage and persist; (3) learning to envision; (4) learning to express; (5) learning to observe; (6) learning to reflect; (7) learning to stretch and explore; and (8) learning to understand the artist's worlds. The authors are aware that these behaviors are similar to those that Elliot

Eisner has reported. They say, “the dispositions that emerged from our study bear some striking similarities to those identified by Elliot Eisner, in his book *The Arts and the Creation of Mind* (2002), including *learning to attend to relationships, flexibility, the ability to shift direction, expression, and imagination*” (Hetland, et al., 2007, p. 5). Even before writing that book, Eisner (1965) wrote an article on artistic behaviors that are taught through visual arts classes, which include: (1) boundary pushing or inventing; (2) boundary breaking; and (3) aesthetic organization (Eisner, 1965, p. 126).

Roland (1996, 2001) has also identified characteristics of artistic behavior in his list titled *Learning to Think Like an Artist*, which include: (1) doing something simply because it’s interesting and personally challenging to do, (2) persisting where others may give up, (3) arranging things in new and interesting ways, (4) looking at things in different ways in order to generate new perspectives, and (5) looking at things more closely than most people do.

### **Educational Television**

When I began my research for this project, I started by exploring the topic of educational television, since the medium is closely related to video. After reading about this topic, however, I have concluded that there may be more differences than similarities between my intended project and what is considered “educational television.” Nevertheless, I believe the following research is worth noting, if only to understand the way film was first used, as an educational tool, before the Internet and digital media were available in classrooms.

Educational television began in the 1950s. It was believed that "...by this time, many people associated with educational television initiatives believed the medium had the potential not only to teach children in the classroom but to provide in-home broadcast alternatives to commercial television..." (Levin and Hines, 2003, p.265). These early shows were more like broadcasted classrooms than the edutainment-type shows that are available for children today.

The turning point for educational television was *Sesame Street*, which changed the genre of educational television and became the prototype for educational television shows that followed. Anderson (2008) has authored several articles supporting the use of television for educational purposes. He is a faculty member at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and received his Ph.D. from Brown University in 1971 and has since contributed to the creation of many educational children's television programs, such as *Allegra's Window* and *Gullah Gullah Island*. In one article, Kirkoria, Wartella and Anderson (2008) explain how television can benefit children older than two years of age since "...early exposure to age-appropriate programs designed around an educational curriculum is associated with cognitive and academic enhancement" (p. 39). They found that program content keeps children's attention, rather than special effects, which disputes common misconceptions about the dangers of television. This article includes a summary of *Production Techniques to Maximize Educational Benefits of Electronic Media* in the categories of: attention, comprehension, repetition, viewer characteristics and transfer of learning.

The goal of this research was to create a resource for elementary art teachers to use in their classroom to help deliver information about drawing and various artistic behaviors. Overall, the literature that I've reviewed supports the notion that stories are a valuable and important method to use when communicating information. They are especially effective in multimedia when audio is effectively combined with visuals.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN

The goal of this project-in-lieu of thesis is to effectively implement art lessons and content through original stories in video form. The video, which will serve as a resource for teachers to use in the elementary art classroom, asks the viewers: (1) What is a drawing? and (2) How can student artists imbue a "mistake" into their work? The five fictional characters model various artistic behaviors throughout the video, which seemed to be a subject that is rarely seen in art-related children's literature.

In the design of this project, I created five fictional characters to carry out the action of the story. Although the art teacher is one of the main characters, I want the stories to be told from the children's perspective. I sketched ideas for the characters in a book that contained all of my notes and ideas for this project (Figure 3-1). These five artist-characters formed a detective club, and will go on to approach challenges in their art class as curious detectives.



Figure 3-1. The project book notes and sketches.

## **Animation**

Once I had developed the characters and the general content of the video, I wrote the screenplay and read its summary to a fifth grade class in a local school. We had a discussion session after the reading, where the class was allowed to give me their feedback. Students stated that overall they liked the story, but made suggestions that were peripheral to the main concept, such as the costumes the characters should wear and what the art room should look like. They also suggested that facial expressions should be exaggerated and the art teacher should wear loud, mismatched clothing.

While I value their opinions, I decided not to add too many extraneous details that might distract from the story. One biology professor who creates animations to deliver content in his classes supports this notion. O'Day (2010) says that, "overloading the learner with extraneous or confusing material in an animation can inhibit short and long-term memory retention" (p.3). Therefore, in this short time frame that I had to create this project, I focused on the story and did not spend time embellishing peripheral details.



Figure 3-2. The storyboard.

Next, I sketched a storyboard (Figure 3-2), which allowed me to visualize and arrange each scene. Once I had an idea of the composition for each scene, I photographed the backgrounds and people in the way that the story called for. I used models to pose in the particular way that the each character was drawn in the storyboard (Figure 3-3). I drew the images on paper with a pencil, and then traced the pencil with Sharpie markers (Figure 3-4). The rest of the process required a scanner, a photo-editing program, and a Macintosh® computer containing *iMovie*® and *GarageBand*®. After the drawings were complete, I scanned them into the computer, and added color with *Adobe Photoshop*®. Once saved as JPEG files, the stills were inserted into *iMovie*® (Figure 3-5) and finally, I recorded the voiceover and sounds in *GarageBand*®.

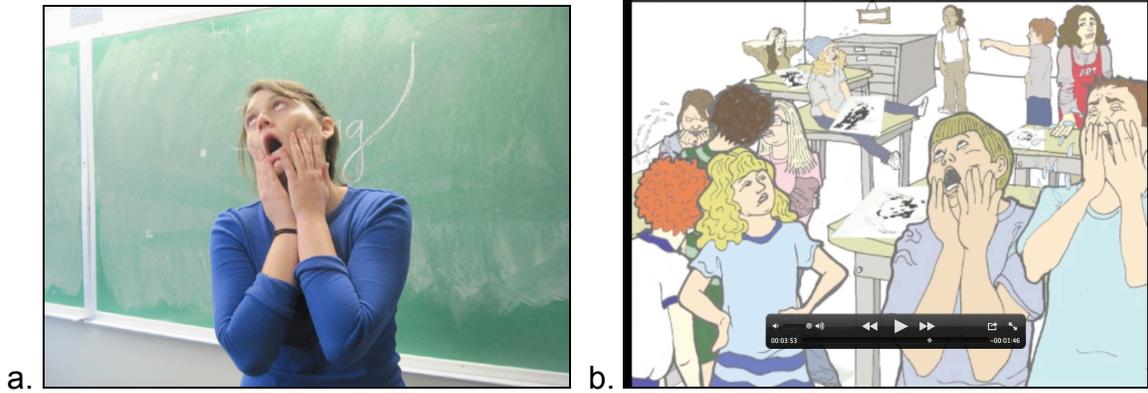


Figure 3-3a. One of the models poses for a reference photo that I looked at while drawing, Figure 3-3b.



Figure 3-4. A drawing before it was scanned and colored.

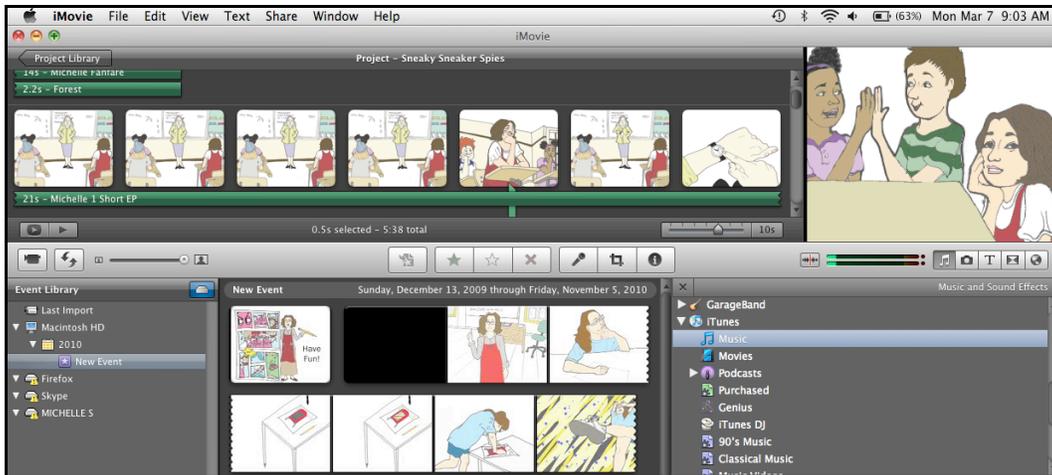


Figure 3-5. Stills are inserted into iMovie ®.

## Video Content Drawing

The drawing lesson that is demonstrated in the video involves students examining the meaning of what drawing is, and looking closely at the world around them for inspiration to create different types of marks and serves as an introduction to more drawing lessons to follow. I centered this project's lesson on drawing because it is an important aspect of the art curriculum in schools.

Students who engage in drawing are not only simply refining motor skills, but are engaging their minds in certain types of thinking. For example, “the state of mind required when drawing involves high and low focus thinking; alert, organized and rational in a preparatory sense, the ability to survey immediate time and space and interruptions and a continuous open mindedness to the particular situation” (Eames, 2008, p. 125). Drawing may also be an important step toward reading and writing skills. Thompson (1995), an advocate for drawing in schools, says that, “advocates of the writing process approach accept Vygotsky’s (1978) claim that children’s drawings figure prominently in the

“prehistory” of writing” (p. 8). The students are thought to add stories to their drawings naturally, and the visuals can be the catalyst for writing stories.

Selected content that I implemented in this video was taken from an activity I did in a drawing class here at the University of Florida. The scene in which students find and record drawings around the room is a recreation of an activity from Lauren Lake’s drawing class. Lake said that the lesson, which she referred to as “Found Drawings,” is intended to allow students to (1) become inspired, (2) begin to really look rather than simply notice what is around them, and (3) challenge the definition of drawing (personal communication, February 22, 2011). *Looking at things more closely* is a defining characteristic of artists. Eisner (2002) advocates for students to be able to differentiate information in their world by looking at things more closely. He says, “...what the child learns about the world is influenced by the way in which she explores its features” (p. 21). This lesson could be a great way to allow students to start looking closely at the world around them. Looking is an important prerequisite for drawing, which is a skill that should be included in all elementary school art curriculums.

### **Artistic Behaviors**

It was important that throughout the video the characters demonstrate various artistic behaviors in the story. After researching various sources of what artistic skills I wanted the characters to show, I chose to include the following artistic behaviors: (1) learning to observe, (2) learning to stretch and explore, (Hetland, et al., 2007), and (3) arranging things in new and interesting ways (Roland, 1996, 2001).

These behaviors are demonstrated throughout the video. For example, as they draw and problem solve throughout the class time, the characters demonstrate “learning to observe” when they look for found drawings in their classroom. They search for marks closely, and record them in their sketchbooks for documentation.

Later on when the students find their ruined drawings, they decide to create a collaborative work of art rather than give up completely and learn how to work through mistakes and accidents. This corresponds to what Hetland, Winner, Veenema, and Sheridan (2007) describe as “Stretch and Explore,” referring to when students are, “learning to reach beyond one’s capacities, to explore playfully without a preconceived plan, and to embrace the opportunity to learn from mistakes and accidents” (p. 6). It was important that I included this in the video to demonstrate how student artists can discover new ideas as they go along. Lake also commented on the notion of *accidents in art*, which is an aspect of the art-making process that the fictional characters in the video encounter. She says that working with unintended accidents throughout the artistic process is a positive and necessary obstacle for students to face since, “art is solving a series of problems” (personal communication, February 22, 2011). Selected dialogue from this interview is incorporated into the video.

Last, when the students are deciding what to do with their inked drawings, they agree to arrange their shapes in a way that they deemed interesting, which closely corresponds to Eisner’s (1965) idea of “aesthetic organizing” which, is characterized by the presence in objects of a high degree of coherence and

harmony. The individual who displays this type of creativity confers order and unity upon matters” (p. 129). Aesthetic organizing is one of the artistic behaviors that I included in this video to demonstrate to students that this is an important aspect of the visual arts. Students should be exposed to all of these behaviors in their elementary school art class so they can model these behaviors themselves.

### **Sketchbooks**

The art students in the video are expected to take their sketchbooks with them to art class and use them to document various marks around their classroom. Sketchbooks are an integral part of art education that does not usually show up in children’s art-related stories. Sketchbooks are, “...so often used by artists as a means of recording ideas related to personal vision...it is an appropriate arena for children to explore personal themes of their own” (Robinson, 1995, p. 30). Robinson also points out that, in addition to the many possible uses of the sketchbook, it, “...can be used for the collection of visual information by drawing from man-made objects and environments” as well as, “function as an arena for experimentation with new materials and techniques and with the formal elements of art...”(p. 39). In my video, there was only some verbal mention of sketchbooks, however viewers can see the characters in the video use them as an important part of the art curriculum. It is important for students to see other children their age use a sketchbook, even if they are only fictional since it is an integral part of the art-making process.

## Student Reactions

When the video was near completion, I showed it to the same fifth grade class that I consulted with in the beginning of this project. The video they saw was missing the segment where the characters were cutting out the positive space and arranging them on the wall. Before we started, the classroom teacher told the students that they could watch the movie if they wanted to, or they could continue to quietly finish the art project that they were working on before I arrived. After the movie started, all students were watching the video, even those who said they would rather finish their artwork.

As students viewed my animation, I stood in the back and took notes on their reactions. I noted that the students laughed when the video was intended to be funny, notably when (1) the teacher falls after writing the word “drawing” on the board, (2) the students are crying after they find ink on their artwork and (3) Darrell holds up the sign that says “mooster.”

After the viewing, we had a discussion session, where the students were given the chance to comment on my video. Below is a list of some of their comments:

- The apron should have more paint on it, and a better word on it than “ART”
- There should be different voices for the different characters
- The art teacher looked too serious
- The *Sneaky Sneaker Spies* should have a magnifying glass instead of binoculars

- When Ari and Shelby are standing back-to-back in the flashback, they should be wearing trench coats
- The art classroom in the video should look more like their art classroom, with more posters and paint on the tables
- The fictional students should take a field trip outside and look for textures on the trees
- I should make this into a series

After the discussion, the classroom teacher suggested that since we had extra time, the students could try out the found drawing lesson that they just saw in the video. We gave the students a clipboard and they each took a sheet of white paper and an ebony pencil. The students did not need additional instructions on how to look for marks. They immediately got to work looking closely at the floor, tables, and the array of “things” around their classroom. The students found very interesting marks (Figure 3-7), and some labeled where they found them (Figure 3-8).

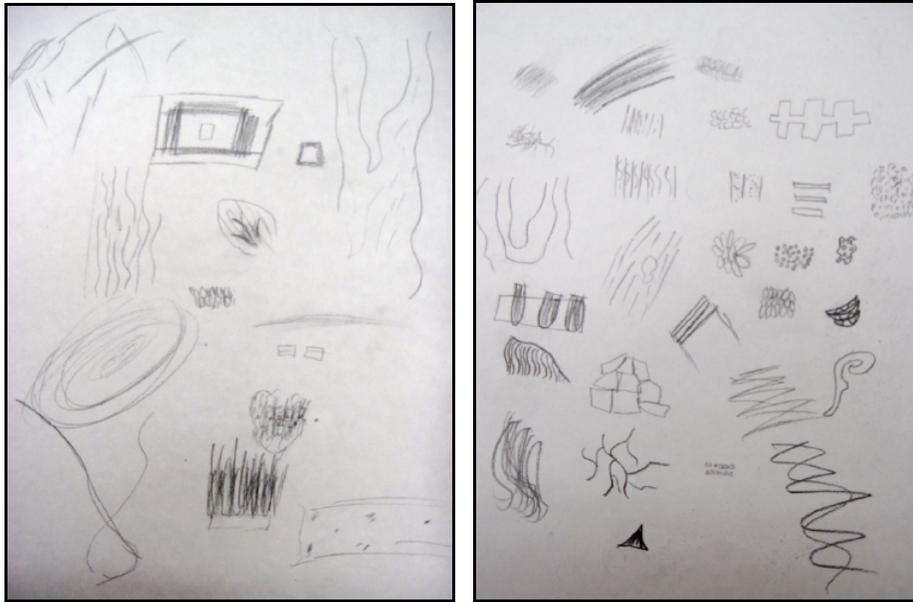


Figure 3-6. Student work.

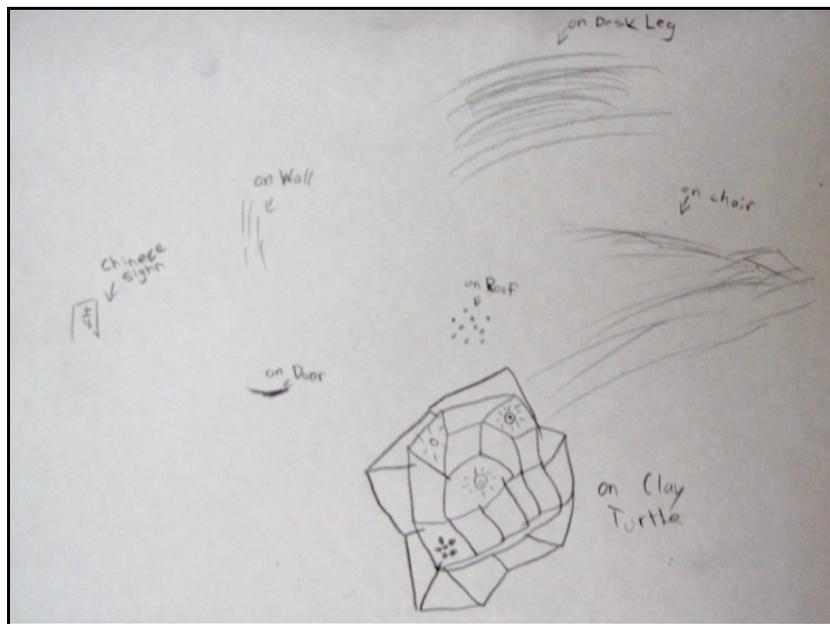


Figure 3-7. Student work with labels.

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION

The goal of this project-in-lieu of thesis was to effectively implement art lessons and content through original stories in video form. The video, which will serve as a resource for teachers to use in the elementary art classroom, asks the viewers: (1) What is a drawing? and (2) How can student artists imbue a "mistake" into their work? The five fictional characters model various artistic behaviors throughout the video.

The process of creating this video turned out to be a *structured chaotic endeavor*. Although I had written a screenplay to guide me in the process, I continually adjusted the content of the video as I discovered new information from interviews, articles, student focus groups, and art projects that I completed in graduate school in these past two years. For example, although I knew that I wanted to create a video about drawing, I did not know exactly what project the fictional "Ms. S." would teach until the professor of my drawing class assigned the "Found Drawing" assignment. I saw the possibilities of that assignment as a way to introduce the concept of drawing to students, and therefore I included it in the script.

A rewarding aspect of this project was watching the students go right to work on the "Found Drawing" assignment without any additional instruction from myself or from their teacher. Since the characters in the movie modeled how to do the assignment, the students understood the task. This demonstrates that the video can serve as an effective starting point for a lesson on drawing, and should

allow teachers more time for discussion on the importance of drawing, rather than using class time to focus on *how* to do go about the task.

After listening to the fifth grade students' suggestions for my video, they had specific pre-conceived ideas about what an art teacher should look and act like, which was different from the art teacher I created for the video. When the students said that the teacher in the video should have a "crazier" outfit on, I pointed out that their own art teacher doesn't dress in mismatched clothing, and neither do I (a future art teacher). That did not change their minds, and this brings up the question, *How do children come to know what an art teacher "should" look and act like? Where are they seeing or hearing about crazy art teachers, and does that contribute to the general perception that art is not a serious academic subject?* Although the video was intended to entertain and teach at the same time, I did not want to portray the art teacher as particularly "crazy" in order to present the art classroom as a place where serious learning takes place.

The students' comments led me to realize that by portraying a high quality art classroom to young students in this animation is important to how they will view the discipline of art. Hopefully while this video functions as a resource for teachers to use to introduce various projects and concepts, it also models for students how to think and behave like artists.

## Questions for Further Study

More research must be done on the topic of using animated stories in the elementary art classroom. Questions that arose throughout this project include:

- (1) How can we measure outcomes of learning from the animated video? and
- (2) What other art concepts are important to deliver to students through animations? I plan to answer the second question by investigating the issues, concepts and artists that are important to elementary school art education. I also plan to continue to develop the series as characters in the *Sneaky Sneaker Spies* address more art-related issues through memorable stories. A third question that developed throughout this project is: What other artistic behaviors could the characters model in order to set an example for art students? I will continue to investigate what factors contribute to running a successful art classroom and incorporate my findings into the rest of the series.

## APPENDIX: EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE

Hi Michelle,

What a cool project in lieu of thesis you've chosen!

Email me a link to your movie on vimeo so I can remember to watch it!

1. When you use animations to teach concepts (patterns, drawing, etc.), do you think your students remember the material better than if you had not used them? And how would you determine that?

My students love to watch the videos. It seems to me that when fun and learning are combined that information is more likely to be stored in long-term memory. My students quote my videos, sing along with the lyrics, and get excited about learning while they watch. When they realize that a classmate didn't know an art movie, they immediately begin explaining the content with enthusiasm and beg me to show it again. For example, during a pointillism project with 5th graders, I found that the enthusiasm for art creation draining from my students because of the tedious work. So I began composing a song as they worked called "What's the point of pointillism" We incorporated their bored voiced into the song along with a simple definition and masterpiece for reference. I worked on animated the video to the song as they continued to work from week to week. By the time they were done with their art, I had completed their animation. By this time, they had become very connected to the song and animation and proud of their artwork. A boy stopped in the art room after class and asked if he could show his mom his pointillism work. She said that she had heard so much about it that they had to stop in. She asked him to explain pointillism and he quoted word for word the lyrics of our song. (BINGO!)

2. Do you know any other art educators who make and use custom animations to teach art concepts?

Not really.

3. How do you reference the videos you show in your classes? For example, how do you introduce them, discuss them, refer to them, etc?

I teach digitally. So I usually put my lessons together in slides. As a concept comes up in the sequence of the lesson, I just add the video to a slide and use it to teach the concepts. I try to keep my videos really small and entertaining so that it fits nicely into the flow of my "lecture". For example, as I was introducing the concept of Monochromatic paintings to first graders, I showed them on one slide what the word meant and what that will look like in our artwork. The on the next slide I showed this movie. Then I quizzed them on tints and shades. Which lead to the next slide about the tints and shades we will be adding to their monochromatic paintings.

-Tricia

APPENDIX: SCREENPLAY

"Sneaky Sneaker Spies  
in:  
The Mysterious Black Ink"

By

Michelle Savran

### Premise:

Today Ms. Barz's third grade class has art with their favorite art teacher, Ms. Shaw. Ms. Shaw challenges the class to think like detectives and find examples of "drawings" in their everyday surroundings. Shelby and her four friends become intrigued and excited about this challenge. When Ms. Shaw asks them why they are so interested in this assignment, they explain that they started a detective club in third grade called the Sneaky Sneaker Spies, and are ready to take on another case. Shelby narrates the flashback explaining how the club was formed.

Mrs. Shaw asks the students: "What is a drawing? Does a drawing have to have been made by a person? Can we find signs of mark-making all around us?" She tells everyone to take a sketchbook, pencil and viewfinder, and look for anything that can be considered a drawing. When they return with their found drawings, they are instructed to use them as inspiration to begin their own artwork. After everyone leaves for the day, someone sneaks back into the art room and pours black ink over everyone's artwork.

When the class returns to find their artwork ruined, Ms. Shaw tells the class that a good artist can transform a "mistake" into a work of art. The Sneaky Sneaker Spies use their artistic skills to help the class figure out how to fix the destroyed artwork. In the end, they turn everyone's destroyed artwork into something even more aesthetically interesting than the originals would have ever been. They share their newfound technique with the entire class.

To Ms. Shaw's delight and to Sally's horror, the Sneaky Sneaker Spies save art class. The Sneaky Sneaker Spies use their detective skills to track down the culprit. When they discover the bottle of ink in Ms. Shaw's desk, they are shocked! Shelby keeps the discovery to herself, though, because she realizes that although you should never intentionally ruin anyone's artwork, Ms. Shaw gave them this problem to solve because it made them better artists and detectives.

### **Cast of Characters:**

MS. SHAW – Art Teacher, wears silly, mismatched clothes, has many contraptions and art supplies in her pockets.

MS. BARZ – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade classroom teacher, tall, stern but fair

SHELBY – The leader of the Sneaky Sneaker Spies. Artist, detective, and always strives to do the right thing.

ZEKE – Shelby's friend, talent is sculpture. Member of the SSS.

JENNY – Member of the SSS. Outgoing and bubbly. Best friends with Conch.

CONCH - Member of the SSS. Curly red hair, goofy. Best friends with Jenny.

ARI – Member of the SSS, Shelby's sidekick and best friend. African-American.

SALLY – Jealous of Shelby's art talent and the friends in her club. Was made fun of for her lack of art skills when she was younger and now makes fun of everyone who is good at art. Blonde, "fabulous," and stuck-up.

FADE IN:

INT. AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM- DAY.

MRS. BARZ

It is 1:00 - time for art class! Grab your sketchbooks and line up at the door.

Shelby looks at the camera.

SHELBY

Are you coming with us?

(Intro & Beginning Credits)

INT. THE ART ROOM - DAY.

Ms. Shaw is writing the word "Drawing" on the board as the students find their seats.

MS. SHAW

Hello class. Do you have your creative thinking caps on? Today we are going to talk about drawing. What is a drawing?

Hands are raised eagerly.

MS. SHAW

Yes, Sally?

SALLY

When you draw something real.

MS. SHAW

Okay. Yes, Zeke?

ZEKE

A drawing is a mark.

MS. SHAW

Yes, it is a mark. Does a mark have to be representing something like this?

Ms. Shaw holds up a portrait drawing.

GIRL

No, it can just be a mark, or a scribble.

Sally rolls her eyes.

MS. SHAW

Does a mark have to be created by a person?

Everyone takes a moment to pause and think. Everything becomes black and white, as some marks, scratches and lines all over the room are illuminated. Shelby looks on the floor.

SHELBY

There are scratches all over the floor from the stools. Are those marks?

MS. SHAW

Yes, Shelby, that is a mark made by an object. So is that a drawing?

SHELBY

Well, the stool didn't decide to make a drawing, since it was an accident, but I suppose it could be considered a mark, so yes.

MS. SHAW

I am challenging you all to think like **detectives** and find examples of "drawings" in your everyday surroundings.

The Sneaky Sneaker Spies giggle and whisper excitedly. Ms. Shaw looks at the group.

MS. SHAW

Why is this assignment of particular interest to you five students?

SHELBY

You see, Ari, Zeke, Jenny, Conch and I are already real detectives and we are excited for this new mystery to solve!

MS. SHAW

Oh, and what qualifies you all to be detectives?

SHELBY

Well Ms. S...

INT. A THIRD GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY.

SHELBY (VO)

One day in our third grade class  
We were studying science, like matter and mass

When suddenly I heard my classmate yell,  
"I can't erase! My eraser fell!"

He said it fell off his desk and went under his  
seat  
And when he realized this he jumped to his feet.

He was asking around if anyone knew  
But it had completely vanished without a clue.

Good thing Ari and I heard his loud cries,  
Because we started a detective team called the  
Sneaky Sneaker Spies.

SHELBY

"We'll find your eraser. Don't worry at all!"

Ari and Shelby take out their sketchbooks and pens.

ARI

"Just answer some questions...now, when did it  
fall?"

SHELBY

He said he last saw it in the beginning of  
spelling,  
But where is it now? Why, there is no telling!

ARI

We know you are worried that it might not be found.  
But leave it to us. We'll go look around.

SHELBY (VO)

We asked every kid in our entire school  
If they've seen an eraser that looked really  
cool.

We said it was blue with a big purple star,  
And one boy said, "I ate it! Wasn't that a candy  
bar?"

ARI

Um, listen, that was a not exactly a piece of  
candy.  
That was the eraser that belonged to Randy.

Shelby

Well, the mystery was solved but there was one  
thing left to  
do. Randy, we have some good news and bad news to  
give to you.

ARI

The bad news is that Evan ate your eraser for his  
snack.

SHELBY

The good news is I have an extra in my backpack.  
  
So I gave my extra eraser to Randy,  
Although it was one that did NOT look like candy.  
  
Randy was happy that we solved the crime,  
So we went back to our desks, until the next  
time.

CUT TO:

INT. THE ART ROOM - DAY.

Shelby faces the class.

SHELBY

So if you ever need help fighting bullies, crimes  
and lies,  
Don't run to your teacher...call the Sneaky Sneaker  
Spies!

SALLY

Ms. Shaw, all they did was ask people where it  
went!

CONCH

We've been practicing since then!

MS. SHAW

Yes, well, your detective skills will be helpful for this assignment. Let's find some DRAWINGS!

The Sneaky Sneaker Spies take out their red binoculars, sketchbooks, viewfinders and art boxes and disperse throughout the room with the rest of the class.

Shelby looks at the camera.

SHELBY

Do you see any "hidden drawings" around you?

Close ups and long shots of students collecting interesting marks around the room and recording them in their sketchbooks.

MS. SHAW

(In a sing-song voice) Let's return to our seats!

Students return to their seats while looking at each other's drawings.

MS. SHAW

Now let's use the neat marks that you've found as inspiration for us to create an original drawing.

The class gets out paper, drawing materials, some students work at the easels, on the floor, etc. Ms. Shaw walks around talking individually to students for the rest of the studio time. The camera watches Shelby work on using her found mark as inspiration for a drawing. Shelby is being watched by Sally who is not happy with her own work.

MS. SHAW

Okay everyone, it is cleanup time!

The students clean up, place their drawings in flat files and line up in front of the door when Ms. Barz arrives. Ms. Shaw shuts the lights and leaves the classroom too. An unidentifiable person sneaks back into the classroom and pours black ink all over everyone's drawings and sneaks back out.

INT. AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM- DAY. THE NEXT DAY

MS. SHAW

Hello class! Today we are going to finish working on our drawings!

The students excitedly walk over to the flat files, but as they open them they begin to realize that someone has poured black ink all over everyone's work.

SHELBY

Oh no! Someone destroyed my artwork!

ARI

Hey! My artwork is ruined too!

JENNY & CONCH

Ours too!

Sally takes her artwork to her desk, which only has a small amount of ink in the corner, and shrugs at everyone else as they scratch their heads and chatter in confusion. The class erupts into chaos.

BOY 1

Oh man, your artwork looks BAAAD!

GIRL 1

Yours was so ugly that the ink jumped out of the bottle on it's own!

BOY 2

A boy is throwing erasers at someone's artwork because the ink is shaped like a target.

Bulls-eye! Bulls-eye! HAHAHAHAHAHAAAA.

GIRL 2

Crying.

My mom is never going to hang this on the fridge now! Waaah!

MS. SHAW

Stands on her desk and waving her maulstick around to try to get the class's attention.

Class! Settle down! LISTEEEEEN!!! Any good artist can transform a "mistake" into a work of art. You just have to figure out HOW!

She walks away. Everyone looks confused.

SHELBY

Turns her drawing upside down and sideways, and takes out her art supply box. Zeke holds it up and Shelby stands back looking at it intensely with her binoculars and takes notes in her sketchbook. Then she begins to work on the drawing.

What if you just made some marks here and here,  
and turned this around, and added some gesso  
here, and paint here and...!

Everyone gasps.

Boy 1

Wow...that looks even better than before!

Girl 1

You never would have gotten such a texture if the  
paint wasn't there!

Conch

The composition looks more interesting with all  
of the layers added.

Girl 2

That's awesome Shelby. Can you show us how we can  
fix our drawings too?

SALLY

(Face turns green and red).

SHELBY

Sure! Let's get to work!

The class gathers around a table as Shelby demonstrates her technique. Montage of students working on their artwork.

MS. SHAW

Great work class! Shelby, thanks for showing us  
that a good artist will use a "mistake" to their  
advantage.

Everyone returns to his or her seats. Shelby whispers to  
Ari:

SHELBY

Even though we used the black ink to help us create our artwork, where in the world did it come from?

ARI

Someone has it in for us, and I think I know who that "someone" is.

They both turn and look at Sally who is angrily working on her art.

ZEKE

Alright team, start looking for clues.

The Sneaky Sneaker Spies take their sketchbooks and binoculars and begin to look around the classroom. Shelby sees how angry Sally looks and how happy everyone else is. Shelby is drawing the evidence she sees in her sketchbook.

ZEKE

I give up. It has to be Sally! She's been mean to us since Kindergarten!

ARI

And she has the least amount of damage to her drawing!

SHELBY

Sally, why did you pour ink on everyone's artwork?

SALLY

I did NOT! Just because I am the worst artist in the class doesn't mean I would do something like that!

SHELBY

Is that what you think? Your work isn't so terrible.

The other Sneaky Sneaker Spies look at Shelby like she's crazy.

SALLY

Rolls eyes and then says:

Back in 1<sup>st</sup> grade I drew a moose and Andy asked me why I drew a lobster. Am I so bad that he couldn't tell what it was? He still calls me Moose-ter (cut to Andy smiling and holding a sign that says "MOOSE-TER" in Sally's direction).

ARI

Well, in that case I guess you could join our detective club since we can help you with your artwork. You can help us track down the real culprit.

The rest of the Sneaky Sneaker Spies look at each other worriedly!

SALLY

HA! I wouldn't be a part of your club in a million years! Whatever, why don't you just Squeaky-Speaker-Fly away.

Shelby turns back to the group. The group just shrugs, sighs and walks away.

SHELBY

If Sally didn't do this...

JENNY & CONCH

Then who did?!

Shelby looks at the camera.

SHELBY

Got any ideas?

ARI

I don't believe Sally. She is the only one who has a motive.

They all sit slumped over looking hopeless.

MS. SHAW

What's with the sad faces kids?

SHELBY

Ms. Shaw, we want to know who ruined our artwork!

MS. SHAW

Oh, it doesn't matter now. You found a way to use the "mistake" to add more interest to your drawing because of it.

ZEKE

Yeah, but messing with someone's artwork is NOT OKAY!

JENNY & CONCH

YEAH!

As Ms. Shaw walks away, Shelby notices ink stains on Ms. Shaw's fingernails, and takes out her binoculars and sees some more black ink stains under the teacher's desk and she follows it back to a bottle of ink under the desk. She thinks back to how Ms. Shaw never seemed upset about the incident either. Shelby realizes that Ms. S. was the culprit all along. Flashback shows Ms. S. pouring the ink on the artwork. Shelby decides that the right thing to do would be to keep her knowledge to herself; it wouldn't be right to accuse the teacher of such a crime when it was all a part of the day's lesson.

INT. AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM- DAY.

MRS. BARZ

We have 2 minutes until the bell rings, so please stay in your seats.

The Sneaky Sneaker Spies huddle together with their backpacks on. Zeke is drawing in his sketchbook, Jenny and Conch are acting goofy.

ZEKE

Hah! "Moose-ter," that is classic!

ARI

Now Sally will NEVER stop calling us bad detectives!

ZEKE

Yeah, we HAVE to find out "whodunit".

SHELBY

Well, don't forget that we DID save art class today, so good work artists!

CONCH

Maybe we'll be better at solving the next case.

Shelby writes "Mystery of the Black Ink: SOLVED" in her sketchbook and looks at the camera and winks. She looks at the camera as she says:

So if you ever need help fighting bullies, crimes and lies, don't run to your teacher...call the Sneaky Sneaker Spies!

Bell Rings.

FADE OUT

THE END

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Michelle Savran is a graduate student at the University of Florida. She works as a Teaching Assistant for the lab component of “Teaching Art in Elementary School” to pre-service elementary school teachers. She is the Secretary of the University of Florida chapter of the National Art Education Association (NAEA). Michelle currently volunteers in a local elementary school art class, as well as in the Shands Arts in Medicine program in Gainesville, Florida. Her current research involves the study of how story and video can be implemented to teach art concepts at the elementary level. Michelle’s interests also include teaching drawing and sketch-journaling, specifically how they can be integrated into the elementary art curriculum.