

**ART FOR AT-RISK STUDENTS:  
A STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHING ART TO AT-RISK  
STUDENTS**

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Summary Of Capstone Project  
Presented To The Graduate School Of The University Of Florida  
In Partial Fulfillment Of The Requirements For The  
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Chair: Craig Roland  
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As more and more students are being identified as at-risk, schools could benefit from a more “at-risk” tailored curriculum. Addressing the definition of “at-risk” through art could provide the self-correcting, self-mentoring, long term planning, thinking outside of the box, personal capital that art education does best. At this time, at-risk students who have been failed by the current methods of instruction are typically removed to separate day schools that offer none of the arts and none of the benefits the arts provide.

This project explores the definition of “at-risk” students and the possibilities that involvement in the arts can aid these students to navigate the dangerous pathways away from failure and risky behaviors. The aim of this project is to place art as a strategic part of the learning process and to show that the skills that at-risk students glean from the art experience have an impact on both the individual and the whole school culture. Because art can be both expressive and personal, the topics that are discussed and acted out in the form of art production, makes Art the perfect vehicle for discovery and reflection.

For this project I collected responses from at-risk school students regarding their art interests and created a sampling of lessons to show how the at-risk approach can be neatly articulated with current art curriculum planning. There has been a lot of discussions and research

about art and at-risk students and many after school programs that rave about their success. Even with so many indications of benefits of art for the at-risk student, the connection between art for at-risk has slipped away from the public schools and is now only available in community after school programs. Although many of the research projects focused on the use of art as therapy, I suggest art education can be used as an expressive experience that allows students to examine their environment and community and build a relationship with the at-risk school that encourages success and personal growth while discouraging dropping out of school and failure.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*At-risk* is a term often used to describe students who are struggling in school, but a closer look at the multi-facets of at-risk shows us there are much deeper and more far reaching effects of such an abbreviated term. The at-risk person we all think we know is the students with risk factors such as low socioeconomic status, perhaps with a dysfunctional family, or language barriers, who live in disadvantaged neighborhoods and struggle in school. These students who are struggling in school are also more at risk of incarceration, teen pregnancy, suicide and dropping out of school not just failing school (Johnson, 1998). At-risk conditions begin early in a child's educational career. It would seem hard to imagine some of the more severe effects of being at-risk in early grades, but there is testing that can be done as early as Kindergarten and predictors of dropping out as early as fourth grade (Donnelly, 1987). Once these children fail in regular class and move into being classified as delinquent, they may be removed to separate day schools. With that move, all arts education experiences are left behind for the "good children" in regular schools (Martin & Calabrese, 2011).

So the at-risk student goes from a fully challenging school to a program of sterile necessity at an alternative school. I do not mean to imply that those students that arrive at the alternative sites do not need the change of location, rather, I believe that those students who are at-risk need arts enrichment not impoverishment, the situation that put them at-risk in the first place (Pallas, 1998). Statistics show that 25% of all arrested students in the halls of the Department of Juvenile Justice are gifted (Silverman, 2004), a higher percentage than any public school! Silverman observes that these at-risk students often have a more spatial learning style. High visual-spatial versus auditory-sequential learning styles are found among high-risk gifted youth. Traditional classroom situations appear to suppress these students' abilities (Silverman,

2004). Although a little misbehavior in the classroom and weak grades seems like curable growing pains, the full extent of being at-risk accumulates over time with repeated exposure to detrimental risk factors. Not all children who are at-risk will fail and drop out, but if intervention does not occur to help these students develop coping strategies, the possibility of dire consequences increase (Wallace-Digarbo & David, 2006).

Being classified as *at-risk* is impressive enough that the term is defined by Washington state legislature (see HB1660 in the references). Because the results of a child's at-risk situation is shown in school, I am suggesting we look to the cause of the behavior of failing and dropping out and address that in the art room. This study shows how one might do so. I have examined definitions, statistics and programs relating to at-risk students, and I have interacted with at-risk students to create and examine opportunities for intervention through art. I have collected data and synthesized information into a series of art lessons and recommendations that may help at-risk students acquire coping skills, rationalize risky behaviors and develop strategies that may help them have a more successful school and life experience.

### **Statement of Problem**

This capstone research project explores the definition of "at-risk" students and the possibilities that involvement in the arts can aid these students in navigating the dangerous pathways they face, pathways that are riddled with risky behaviors and failures. My research seeks to answer the questions: "Can involvement in the arts make a difference in at-risk behaviors?" and "How can art education be used to positively affect educational outcomes for at-risk students?"

### **Key Terms**

The following terms are used in this paper:

**At-Risk:** Being “in danger of negative future events” such outcomes include depression, educational failure, addiction, unemployment, poverty or death (Camilleri, 2007).

**Alternative School:** A public or private school that is designed to serve students with learning or behavioral exceptionalities, apart from regular public schools.

**In need:** A term used in conjunction with “at-risk” and in the realm of providing therapy.

**Interventions:** Term used to describe an activity that could cause a positive modification in behavior.

**Diversions:** An activity that diverts or amuses.

**Emotional Behavioral Disorder (EBD):** A classification that identifies an individual as having an emotional disability such that the individual lacks self-control.

**Felonies:** A legal term of the US judiciary system involving the committing of a grave crime.

**Title 1:** A federal food program in the public schools that offers free and reduced meals to students meeting classification standards such as low-income or poverty.

**Marginalized children:** Children who because of personal circumstances or because of particular undesirable behaviors are disenfranchised from cultural, educational, and institutional opportunities and resources, and who may as a result be disadvantaged and discounted by some people as unimportant.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Robert King penned in his *Supportive Therapies for the EBD and “At-risk” Students* that “children suffering from stresses in the home and school accounts for the immediate need to promote emotional well-being in the school-age child” (1995, p. 1). He goes on to ask if a child is unhappy, defiant or destructive, “what is more logical, punishment or help?” (p. 1). Many authors and researchers insist on providing help for the at-risk students who will fail and finally quit school if there is not intervention. But before we can truly help or assess at-risk students we need to clarify what is meant by the term “at-risk”. Authors have tried to define *at-risk*, but the definition seems monumental, spanning the home, the neighborhood, the schools and mental health.

Margarita Donnelly (1987) describes the characteristics of the at-risk student as low academic achievers, with low self-esteem, who experience little school success. She tells us there are a disproportionate number of males from lower socioeconomic status who are at-risk. At-risk students tend to not participate in school activities and they lack identification with the school; many of these students have disciplinary and truancy problems which lead to poor grades. Many at-risk students also exhibit impulsive behavior, have problematic peer relationships, and often there are family problems, drugs addictions and pregnancies. Donnelly suggests that the identifiers of being at-risk begin in elementary school when students exhibit patterns of low achievement, high absenteeism and poor self-esteem. In order for the courts to assist the families in care of at-risk youth, there has to be concrete definitions of the at-risk to ensure possible corrective assistance for families. Washington Statehouse Bill HB1660 (2005) provides an official government definition of at-risk: An at-risk youth is defined as a juvenile,

- Who is absent from home at least 72 hours,

- Who is beyond the parents' control such that the juvenile's behavior endangers health, safety or welfare of the juvenile or any other person,
- Who has a possible substance abuse or mental health problem but no pending criminal charges pertaining to the possible substance or mental health problem.

This bill helps the courts establish a method to assist families of at-risk students to resolve home conflicts. Note that item 2 of the above definition is the one that most often gets expanded and accommodates most of the at-risk behaviors we see in the schools, such as truancy and disruptive behaviors. The court can order students identified as at-risk to regularly attend school, receive counseling, participate in substance abuse or mental health outpatient treatment programs, report on a regular basis to the Department of Social and Health Services or any other designated person, and impose any other condition the court deems appropriate, including employment, anger management programs, and refraining from alcohol and drugs use.

McCann & Austin (1988) took the definition of at-risk even further and divided students who are at-risk into three categories: The first include students for whatever reasons are at risk of not achieving the goals of education, i.e. failing system standards, not meeting graduation standards, not acquiring knowledge and skills to be a productive member of society. The second category includes more behavioral matters such as: not attending school, not engaging in classroom activities, not succeeding on measured tasks, using drugs and alcohol, being disruptive and delinquent, becoming pregnant and caring for a baby, and attempting suicide. McCann and Austin felt that in the third category, not only economic status and language proficiency were issues contributing to a student becoming at-risk, they expanded at-risk factors to include some factors that rest in the home and family as indicators for at-risk: premature birth, born to a

teenage mother, parents who are not married, single parent household, blended families resulting from remarriage, not a participant in head start and are latch-key children.

The U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, one of the players in grant making for at-risk projects, suggests at-risk factors fall into four identifiable areas (1998). The first area is community: availability of drugs, guns, violence, mobility, community disorganization and poverty. The second area is family: history of behavior problems, parents who favor criminal activities and family management problems. The third area is school: early antisocial behavior, academic failure in elementary school and no commitment to school. And the fourth area is individual and peer risks: alienation and rebelliousness, no bonding to society, friends who have at risk behaviors and biological and physiological factors. The number and severity of these risk factors over time will impact the well being of the child. Some children have multiple dimensions of risk presenting additional challenges (DiGarbo & Hill, 2006). Many unidentified at-risk children are in every classroom. Recognizing the attributes of the at-risk student should be in every educator's tool kit, making sure accommodations are in place to help them learn.

At-risk literature is brimming with facts and indicators of at-risk stressors along with repercussions from risky behaviors. Astonishing numbers of children are experiencing at-risk stresses every day that in the end affect personal education goals, student successes, school cultures and quality education. Bradford Venable (2005) reports that youths who drop out of school are three and a half times more likely to be arrested than their graduating peers, He states that learning disabilities make up 35% of the school drop-outs and 70-80% of incarcerated youth suffer learning and emotional disabilities. The dropout rate nationwide in 2008 was 25% with Florida resting at 30 % (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2008). A report by McCann

and Austin (1988) contains some other shocking statistics: 18% of White children, 47% of Black children and 39% of Hispanic children under 15 live in poverty. 1.2-1.7 million children have limited English. 14% of students, ages 14 to 17 are arrested annually. 13% of all births were to mothers under 20. 56% of teen births were to unmarried mothers and for every teen suicide death there were 50-60 attempts. Silverman (2004) tells us that 15% of incarcerated youths score in the top 3 percentile in standardized intelligence test and 25% of incarcerated youths are gifted. While Pallas (1989) reports that nearly 13 million children under 18, mostly Black or Hispanic, live with mothers who dropped out of school and nearly 40% of school-aged children are considered at-risk. Finally, Americans for the Arts report shocking figures on youth and crime indicate that 2,833 children drop out of school every day, youth account for 18% of all violent crime and 33% of all serious property damage, and across the U.S. 135,000 children carry a gun to school. With so many stressors actively affecting at-risk children the picture of student's educational success looks grim.

### **Art Programs for At-risk Students**

Art programs for at-risk students are typically available after school, in community centers or shelters. There are a lot of materials available that contain relevant statistics and information on how to establish after-school programs to act as diversions for the latch key teens that might otherwise pursue unacceptable activities, such as robbery and sex, to fill afternoons while guardians are at work. The Federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJPD) sponsor numerous programs in local communities. Relying on data from the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System, OJJPD reports that 1 in 5 violent crimes committed by juveniles, happens in the first four hours after school, between 2 and 6 p.m. They believe that structured safe art activities are the solution to a safe, secure community. By fostering protective

factors such as temperament-management, healthy beliefs, clear standards, and bonding with others, students may develop strategies to resist risky behaviors. OJJDP states students who participate in their art programs experience significant positive outcomes in self-image and self-esteem. These programs offer a positive stimulus that can interrupt a student's drift toward a negative lifestyle. Goals of OJJDP's art programs include learning in the arts, occupational art skills, interpersonal communication skills, conflict resolution and developing a positive bond with families, schools and the community. This initiative demonstrates experiences in the arts can help students develop discipline, problem-solving and communication skills while fostering creativity, team building, and self-esteem. OJJDP (1998) offers grant funding titled "Art and At-Risk Youth Programs" showing their commitment to addressing the problems of the at-risk through the arts.

Americans for the Arts are another major agency involved in at-risk art programming (2003). They have several ongoing programs in major cities such as Atlanta and San Antonio, and since they have history they can track many of the benefits and outcomes of their programs. The Americans for the Arts web site provides handbooks and support information to guide other agencies that might want to participate in creating at-risk art programs in their communities. Americans for the Arts supports three of their own programs with funding. These include: Art-at-Work, Urban smarts, and Youth Arts Public Art. These successful programs serve as models for others to adapt to their own locations.

According to Americans for the Arts, one of the challenges of designing programs for at-risk students is learning the language of schools, at-risk program partners, social services, and the juvenile justice system (2003). Another big challenge to designing a successful at-risk art program has been adapting program design and evaluation methodologies to the "risk-protective-

factor” framework, and creating a program that impacts skills, attitudes and behaviors (Americans for the Arts, 2003). Despite these difficulties, the Institute for Community Development and the Arts and Americans for the Arts (2009) have identified exciting results for at-risk students that participate in arts programs. Findings indicate that youths who participate in the arts increased their ability to express anger appropriately, and they learned to cooperate and communicate better with peers and adults. They have a decrease in delinquent behavior and show improvement in attitude toward school, self-esteem and self-efficacy. The attending youths seem to have fewer court referrals and newer offenses are less severe. In the institute’s studies, the students that participated exhibited significant cognitive and developmental benefits that resulted in higher grades; higher scores on standardized tests, increased community service activity and lower dropout rates.

The National Crime Prevention Council (2000) cites the work of The National Youth Network for its Arts and Performances for Prevention Programs as model at-risk art programs. These arts and performance programs consist of music, drama, dance and the visual arts that draw attention to problems in communities. The students participate in skits, plays, raps, and operas, plus they create posters, sculptures, murals and musical compositions, all to increase awareness and prevent crime and violence. Programming includes activities such as *Stop the Violence* and *Do the Write Thing*. These are nationwide programs intended to combat violence in the community. By reaching new audiences with displays and performances the anti-crime message of these programs is refreshed, not only for the performing artists but also by presenting the message to the youth in the community in the form of multiple arts. These programs operate on the belief that students who participate in the arts are significantly less likely to drop out of school, be arrested, use drugs or engage in drinking.

The National Crime Prevention Council offers additional examples of programs that work for at-risk students. *Bells of Love*, a children's musical group in Syracuse, NY, that promotes awareness for missing children and *The African Heritage Dancers and Drummers*, of Washington, D.C., a program that offers classes in dance and drum and supports research, provides mentors, teaches life skills, advises on pregnancy prevention, equivalency diplomas and offers stipends for community service. The Administrative Office of Courts/Juvenile Services in Kenton County, KY offers professional acting classes, visual arts and set designs, training to become junior facilitators, technical production staff and creative writing classes. And the *City of Peace* in Washington, D.C. uses performing arts for conflict resolution training to aid students in addressing their problems in their lives through original musicals based on their own life experiences.

Bilchik (2000) describe ways to plan, start, finance and maintain your own programs, suggesting a partnership between high schools, universities, youth organizations, churches, businesses, local artists, community theater and health agencies, insisting collaboration is the key to successful programming. As a result of their programs they have found children can learn new ways to settle arguments peacefully and adults can learn to help establish crime-free communities and recognize the importance of taking a stand against drugs. Because the arts cross all cultural and language barriers, all students can be recognized for their talent and build a positive relationships regardless of their culture. These community programs use creative expression to encourage teamwork, civic awareness and citizenship.

Gibbons (2010) in her *Creative Approach to Conflict Resolution* explores the school classroom as an opportunity to integrate art therapy into the curriculum. She observes that children who have experienced violence outside of school bring it into their classroom. Gibbons

suggests that violence, stress-induced response and poor conflict resolution skills can increase in-school violence and negatively impact academic success. The increase in the amount of time teachers spend on disciplinary issues is an indication of a need for conflict resolution education. Gibbons indicates that infusing the school curriculum with conflict resolution, anti-bullying and pro-social skill strategies can be the catalysts for change and model fresh options. She used the ‘push-in’ method of delivery in a regular classroom using art therapy. Her program was based on the book “*Touching Spirit Bear*” a required reading for many middle schools. All of the art therapy activities followed the book’s progression: community, friendship, trust, balance, communication, self-identity and integration. Each lesson was followed by a creation of a personal mandala that was finally displayed as a totem pole. Gibbons explains that it took four weeks of sessions for students to engage in a serious manner in the program but by the last lesson everyone was excited and involved. Gibbons’ students gained an understanding of different points of view, a new appreciation of their own personal expression, a sense of bonding, expanded knowledge of trust, forgiveness and positive consequences. She concludes that creativity is crucial to developing positive coping skills because it creates new ways of thinking, addresses different learning styles and heals the effects of cultural trauma. She further insists future creative arts intervention related to conflict resolution is crucially important to the future of students everywhere.

Sutherland, Waldman, and Collins (2010) explored using art therapy to encourage troubled youth to stay in school. They noted that most schools do not have funds to provide psychological support for all the students who are in need of support. Many of the students with emotional, behavioral or anti-social behaviors drop out of school. Sutherland, Waldman, and Collins observe that experiences of constant threats, chronic exposure to violence, neglect and

sexual and emotional abuse, have an adverse effect on the children's learning. They also suggest that early intervention helps children acquire social interests that enable them to manage anger and resolve conflicts peacefully and show empathy to others. These researchers sought out students that exhibited behaviors such as poor grades, truancy, withdrawal, unusually sad, inattentive, defiant, negative, disrespectful, aggressive, or attention seeking. Working cooperatively with the classroom teachers, a therapist executed an art program that offered a successful and rewarding experience that encouraged students to stay connected and in school, modify their attitudes, and participate more in their group. Sutherland et. al. (2010) observe that change is a combination of many factors, but that the relationships developed in the art therapy is the glue that encourages student connection and social interest.

Few at-risk art programs are carried out in the school that are not therapy driven, but Randal Boldt and Catherine Brooks (2006) took a creative art program into a charter school residential program for at-risk students. Examples of their creative classroom activities included composing a rap song illustrating the bill of rights, writing, performing, displaying and publishing creative writings, rewriting and acting classic plays with modern idioms. Boldt and Brooks found that art, music and story-telling can be both empowering and healing. In this program the students designed, preformed and wrote plays, and they created three-dimensional papier-mâché metaphors for expressing themselves in self-imagery. The researchers offered a cafeteria-style array of materials in an after-school workshop, where the students could self-select their art activity. The final arts project was a wall mural, in which the authors noted that the students increased awareness of art skills, developed self-confidence, self-discipline, leadership skills, strengthened academic achievement, cultural awareness and community connections. Based on their findings about their creative arts program, Boldt and Brooks

conclude that that creative arts foster positive relationships, academic motivation, responsibility, a climate of respect, and promotes social, cognitive and self-management skills. Boldt and Brooks further observe that an arts-integrated curriculum improves grades, increases standardized test scores, improves attendance and increases community service activity. They argue that creative arts should be integrated into the classroom, the community and after-school programs. According to Boldt and Brooks if academics are recast into creative activities then at-risk students will thrive.

As this review indicates, this literature about at-risk students is impressive. The definitions of at-risk expanded with every article, revealing unexpected issues and showing the vulnerability of at-risk students as they are impacted by a plethora of stressors. With this massive volume of negative opportunities it is surprising that any student escapes the effects of at-risk conditions. The statistics only re-enforced the image of the slippery slope at-risk students must navigate. Thank goodness for community art programs, offering instructive, fun and safe places for those at-risk students who strive to escape the havoc and frustration of their at-risk world. I only wonder what happens when the community centers close and the students must travel home to difficult surroundings.

The creative arts and art therapy-oriented approaches that have been discussed in my literature review hold great promise. It would be wonderful if these approaches could be applied everyday to the whole student body and not just occasionally to a selected few. The arts support and encourage better coping skills for life's negotiations, entertain and offer diversions, intrigues and educates when applied in a comprehensive program. Despite these promising possibilities and findings, this literature review only touches a small part of a much bigger issue, even though these writings were powerful and informative there is still more to explore.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN**

For this capstone project, I created and taught a series of art lessons for at risk students in three different alternative educational sites that serve at-risk students. My research is based on the belief that by recognizing and activating the intervention qualities of art through the art classroom, we may help at-risk students acquire coping skills, curtail risky behaviors and discover positive behavioral strategies, thereby helping them to be more successful at school and in their life experiences (Winner & Hetland, 2008). I am suggesting that for at-risk students art may offer them solutions to issues they face, these issues include problems involving personal space, patience, planning, self-esteem, completion of work, and complex thinking. My view is also that art as a form of positive intervention in the lives of at-risk students does not always have to be therapy, rather it may also a guided creative exploration of feelings, expression and personal reflection. The purpose of this research project, then, is to create and field test a series of creative art lessons that can be used in an art classroom as a form of positive intervention with at-risk students. Many school systems have established separate day schools to sequester at-risk students and they offer curricula that are content rich and adjusted to help the students cope with individual challenges. In many of these curriculums, however, the arts have been removed. In my research project I explore how art can be used as an effective curricular intervention for the at-risk student.

### **Data Collection**

My research project included both curriculum research and development, and program evaluation. In preparation for my project, I collected information and ideas about programs for at-risk students from several sources including websites, journals, textbooks and other print publications. In my capacity as an Educational Coordinator I also discussed my plans for this

project with several staff members at the center where I work with at-risk students. In seeking relevant information on the Web, I did several key word searches using phrases like art and at risk, arts for Department of Juvenile Justice, arts for therapy, arts for alternative schools and arts for academic improvement. All the sources I consulted were within the last 15 years and came from areas like, art education, education research, juvenile justice, art therapy, school instructional research and criminology.

Using categorical data analysis, I found two categories for this study: Art as Intervention required within the school day and Art as Diversion or voluntary community-based activities. Placing the readings in two groups allows us a way to compare and contrast both approaches to art for the at risk student (see Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1: Art for At-risk Students**

Arts as diversion/community based		Arts as intervention/in schools	
<b>Americans for the Arts (2011)</b> About Youth ARTS	Engage youth, set high standards Constructive relationships, teamwork, better decisions	<b>O'Brien, A. et al. (2008)</b> The arts and youth at risk	Intervention with art, risky business project, participation, enjoyment, social connection, meaningful study, mentoring
<b>Hawkins, D. et al. (2011)</b> Mobilizing communities	Address behaviors, set goals, develop shared vision, evaluate success	<b>Sikes, M. at al. (2009)</b> AEP analysis of NAEP	Bridge achievement gap, safety net for the disadvantage, identify marginalized students
<b>Americans for the arts (2009)</b> Art programs for at risk youth	Sense of value, motivate, learn skills, express emotions, communicate thoughts, save costs, community recognition	<b>Winner, E. (2009)</b> The arts and academic improvement	Music improves reading, music improves spatial reasoning, drama improves verbal skills, reinforces culture
<b>Office of Juvenile Justice(1998)</b> Arts and at risk youth programs	Diversions, after school, keep busy, crime prevention	<b>Venable, B. (1981)</b> At risk and in need	Personal healing, insight, increase self-awareness, cope with stress and traumatic experiences, enhances cognitive abilities.
<b>King, R. et al. (1995)</b> Supportive therapies for EBD and at risk	Coping skills, book therapy, expressive arts, dance, drama, poetry, stress reduction	<b>Boldt, R. et al.(2006)</b> Creative arts	Self expression, empowering and healing, community building, ritual, mutual commitment
<b>Heise, D. et al. (2011)</b> Implementing an art program for children in a homeless school	Redefine success, manage behaviors	<b>Sutherland, J. et al. (2010)</b> Art Therapy connection	Build social skills, group identity, belonging, self esteem, group cohesion, cooperation, better attendance, improve grades
		<b>Cho, M. (2000)</b> Building esteem	Reduce gang involvement, reduce drug use, raise self-esteem, learning skills.

Both Art as Intervention and Art as Diversion approaches have successful activities and produce similar results. The school-based activities listed in the right column of Table 3.1 seem to be more intense and more productive, even though the community-based activities on the left appear to offer many of the same results. The school-based activities address a lot of the in-school problems of the at-risk and the poor behavior that is characteristic of alternative day school students. Several of the authors I examined mentioned established programs that have

operated in numerous cities and are here still today. For example, Youth ARTS and Risky Business are two such programs. These programs along with those discussed in my literature review informed by own curricular development programming for my study.

### **Participants**

This research project includes student populations from three alternative educational sites. None of these schools currently offer art classes at their site. To protect the anonymity of these sites and their participants, I have used general names to differentiate each site.

- The Academy is a small day school of sixty students for Emotional Behavioral Disabled (EBD) students only.
- Alternative Learning Center (ALC) is a small day school of thirty students, who are placed there because they have some kind of felony conviction and expelled from regular school.
- Adult Education Center is a day school that takes students at sixteen years old, who can no longer be successful in a regular high school. The school contains eighty students. Attendance is optional, failure can be a choice. All classes are delivered through in class on-line programs.

These schools address different at-risk problems, but none of these schools offer art education. The first school is an Academy for Emotional Behavioral Disordered (EBD) students only, enrolling sixty students. The second is the Alternative Learning Center (ALC), students who attend this school have been expelled from regular school because they have criminal records. This school houses thirty students. The last school is the Adult Education Center. This school is the last chance school for students who have dropped out or who cannot survive in

regular school settings. These students must be at least sixteen years old to attend. The Adult Education Center has an enrollment of 150 students.

In accordance with the University of Florida regulations concerning human subjects research, the principals of all three schools were asked and consented to permit my study before any child could be approached. Once their approval was received the consent and assent forms could be distributed to the students and parents. All IRB paperwork was submitted and approved to the UF IRB office. In my IRB form, I noted that there were no immediate benefits to the students for their participation (see Appendix 3). If they did not want to participate, they could decline; it was totally optional. Only students whose parents signed a consent form could participate. I distributed 150 questionnaires and received back 26, a few from each school so that all populations are represented. Students at these three schools were in the age range of 11 to 18 years of age. Race and gender information was not collected. The art student volunteers were self-selected and only participated if they felt they wanted to. All of these students fit the definition of at-risk by attending these schools.

### **Student Art Interest Questionnaires**

In order to plan the curriculum to be offered to students, I decided to collect some data from at-risk students to see what their art interests are and to help me plan art lesson that would interest them. After applying for and receiving approval from the University of Florida's IRB committee, I distributed my Art Interest Questionnaire containing a list of art activities to my students. (See Appendix 4). The principals at the three at-risk schools delivered the questionnaires to any student who wanted to participate. On my Art Interest Inventory the students could circle as many art activities as they would like to try and if there was something they did not see, they could add that to the list. This questionnaire contained a list of forty-five

art activities could help me and other teachers working with at-risk students, many of which do not have art, to design lessons that would appeal to students' interests. I created this list based various art activities that are usually offered to public school students in the regular art curriculum. The questionnaire only took a few minutes to complete since it was simply a checklist. I compiled students' responses into a single list to discover the most common art interests for those at-risk students (see Appendix 4). Of the 150 at-risk students that were asked to fill out this Interest Inventory of art projects, I received back 26 inventories.

I was surprised at some of the results that appeared on my inventory. These students were ages 11-18 and eight of these students wanted to do finger painting, an activity that is usually only offered to kindergarten classes. Another interesting response was woodworking circled on twelve of the returned forms, almost half of the students who responded. I had expected books, journals and pop-ups would be popular, but these choices all fell below the ten requests mark. I considered those projects and materials selected by the student to be important to include as a part of the lessons I would deliver to the participating students. I will also include these in my recommendation for future lessons.

After I collected the scholars' and educators' recommendations for appropriate topics for art projects from the literature and after I combined this information with the students' input, I then consulted a licensed mental health counselor for his expert input. With his assistance, we co-planned lessons that were both at-risk friendly and correlated to the Florida Sunshine Standards in Art. To field-test the lessons we delivered four of them to eight students ranging in ages from eleven to eighteen from the subject schools. The group of participants grew as the questionnaire was read by the students' parents and I had a much bigger turnout for art than first

expected. The lessons were first taught at a community group home for children. It was not a traditional classroom setting and there was little interference from other students that might cause distraction or disruptions, but many of these students had behavioral disorders. Although the lessons were planned for one hour, because of the location, the students took as long as they needed to finish their work. At the end of the lessons we collected our documentation of the students' conversations, comments and artifacts, took photographs of their work, photographs and the students then took home their work. In developing my curriculum for my final study, I combined three forms of data: the published literature, the questionnaire, and the students' art interactions as my curriculum unfolded. I taught my curriculum and utilized action research methods to examine its results.

### **Art Activity Planning**

I wanted to create art lessons tailored for the at-risk students using their selections of activities and important at-risk issues that I culled from the at-risk art literature. I developed a list of 27 issues, from the readings, that if used to establish positive behavioral goals might help develop protective factors in at-risk students when explored in the classroom (see Appendix 5). By using the two lists, Art Interest Inventory and the literature's At-Risk Issues my mental health consultant and I were able to create art lessons that are choice-based activities (meaning students had some choices and input over what they would do). We believed that this approach reinforces positive behavioral goals.

To plan my lessons I developed a lesson framework that was driven by specific behavioral goals that I wanted to achieve based on the at-risk issues list. After deciding how I would teach toward these behavioral goals, I selected an art activity derived from the student responses on the art inventory, activities that I believed would be a vehicle to teach the art lesson

and reinforce specific positive student behaviors. I devised two sets of goals for each project, the behavioral goal that would drive the lessons and the arts goals as defined by my state's art standards. Because I was teaching in a community center and not a traditional school, there were other considerations for my lessons. I do not have a classroom and the lessons had to be delivered in the dining hall or the computer lab, so I knew the classroom management would be different than in a school. I also had a wide range of ages 11-18, maturity, and art skills within this group. Most of these students who attend at-risk schools have never had art, since many of these special schools do not offer art. Since we are not a school, we have limited resources for art materials. Because these lessons were driven by behavioral goals, the assessment had to be observable so that teacher intervention may be given when students exhibit an inappropriate behavior. The topics for the projects include: "Tolerance using Digital Photography", "Self Esteem using Life Size Drawings", "Family Connections using Handmade Journals", and "Self Identity using Drawing".

#### **Framework for At-Risk Art Lessons** (see Appendix 6)

##### **Lesson 1: Tolerance using Digital Photography**

Behavioral Goal (at-risk issue): Tolerance, give and accept compliments, responsibility, teamwork.

Art Activity (Interest Inventory): Digital Photography

Art Goal (State Art Standards): expose student to digital photography and aesthetics.

Project title: Something You Think is Beautiful

Considerations:

- Time: 1 hr
- Student Skills Level: limited

- Materials: inexpensive digital camera, printer, laptop, mats, markers, glitter, stickers
- Location: computer lab
- Students age: 11-18

Directions: Students will take 26 pictures, download and print favorite image, and then mat and enhance the chosen picture with mixed media.

Pictures will be displayed in a group and discussed.

Assessment: Behavior will be observed during class and critique.

## **Lesson 2: Self Esteem using Life Size Drawings**

Behavioral Goal (at-risk issue): Self esteem, self-confidence, teamwork

Art Activity (Interest Inventory): Life size drawing

Art Goal (States Art Standards): Understand portraits, feature placements and develop drawing skills.

Project title: Wonderful Me

Considerations:

- Time: 1 hr
- Student Skills Level: limited
- Materials: roll of brown paper, crayons, color markers, tape
- Location: Dining hall floor
- Students age: 11-18

Directions: Students will lie on brown paper and be outlined in black crayon. Students will share materials and create an imaginary super image of themselves.

Pictures will be hung in the hallway and discussed.

Assessment: Behavior will be observed during class and critique.

### Lesson 3: Family Connections using Handmade Journals

Behavioral Goal (at-risk issue): connection with family, give and accept compliments, teamwork, craftsmanship

Art Activity (Interest Inventory): Book making

Art Goal (States Art Standards): appropriate use of materials and tools, skilled craftsmanship

Project title: Handmade Journals

Considerations:

- Time: 1 hr
- Student Skills Level: average
- Materials: cardboard squares, mats, markers, glitter, stickers, specialty papers, white paper, scissors, thread, glue, brushes, beads, bamboo, stamps, books, samples
- Location: Dining hall
- Students age: 11-18

Directions: Students will create handmade journals to explore the concept of family.

Journals will be used for additional digital projects.

Assessment: Behavior will be observed during class and critique.

### Lesson 4: Self Identity using Drawing

Behavioral Goal (at-risk issue): Self-concept, personal space, self-identity, pre-planning.

Art Activity (Interest Inventory): Drawing with markers

Art Goals (States Art Standards): show understanding of balance and scale, practice good craftsmanship.

Project title: Door sign: Hello it's Me!

Considerations:

- Time: 1 hr
- Student Skills Level: limited
- Materials: foam core panel, markers, pencils, white paper, Velcro.
- Students age: 11-18

Directions: Students will plan and create a sign for their room's door that illustrates who they are.

Signs will be displayed and discussed.

Assessment: Behavior will be observed during class and critique.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There was a time factor that limited the number of individuals that I could contact and the number of art lesson that we could complete. All of the information and data gathered for this project cannot be tracked into the future and neither can the art projects be tested for long term effects. Although students produced artifacts and lessons, the study was adjusted to fit into the eight-weeks time frame. Our computer lab was under construction so we were all forced to work through one computer and one printer. Because the art lessons were delivered outside of the school day the students did not receive grades on their work, performance was optional and participation and completion to be self motivated, thus, not all students completed all the lessons.

The schools indicated that some of the parents were sensitive to the term “at risk” and did not want their children labeled at-risk, so they were not included in this study. It appears the at-risk topic has been studied for some time, but usually outside of the classroom in after-school community programs. There is little research for art with the at-risk in the regular classroom. It could be the sensitive nature of the term “*at-risk*” has caused the in school-based research to be focused more on art therapy and not art education.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The following descriptions and findings are based on my observations and field notes taken during each art lesson that was taught. The lessons are described in the order that they were taught

### **Something you find to be Beautiful** (Digital photography project)

Once the students were told we were going to use digital cameras and the computer, they sought me out until we finally got our approval and parent permissions in hand. I brought in my laptop from home and loaded the needed software on to it. The cameras are inexpensive \$10 digital cameras available from Wal-Mart and the Dollar General store. The cameras run on two AA batteries and have limited functions. They are point and shoot cameras with no flash or moving parts, making them ideal for students with limited skills. I wanted the lesson to be simple enough that students could use the camera on their cell phones, which most students have. I bought a small footprint copier/printer/fax that can receive images wirelessly from a laptop, cell phone or a cloud. Each student came to me alone and unpacked their camera, inserted the batteries, turned it on and discussed how to turn it on and off and how to take a picture. The cameras can shoot 26 pictures at one time (and make small videos that we will attempt at another time).

The assignment was to take 26 pictures of things that they thought were beautiful, bring the camera back to me, print one image, mat it, and embellish the image. There was a restriction of no pictures of body parts, skin or anything naughty. The students took several days to shoot 26 pictures. Some took the cameras everywhere, one student wanted to photograph the creek behind his school. One of the student's aunts was pregnant and she wanted a picture of her because she thought that was a beautiful image.



Figure 4.1: Student Work Sample 1

As the students finished their 26 pictures they labeled their cameras with their name and dropped them off with me. We slid boxes together making one long cardboard workspace. We placed all of the art materials there using it as a table. We offered students all kind of materials to decorate their pictures: glue, mats, tape, glitter glue, markers, glitter stickers, scissors, colored pencils, colored paper and plastic jewels. Because two of the students arrive before the others, I used them as helpers and trained them first on the computer. By the time the rest of the student arrived my two helpers had finished their pictures and started downloading all of the photos into named files onto the computer's hard drive (Figure 4.1).

The students took turns on the computer and picked out their favorite photo and sent it to the printer. Several students took the time to try out some of the computer effects and altered the colors or added frames. Once everyone had matted their pictures (most had never matted anything before) they were to decorate and enhance the picture, using art materials, making it even more beautiful. The students shared and made recommendations to each other while finishing off their own work. We hung the matted pictures in the brightly light dining room in a

grouping. The students were really excited about seeing all the work together and moved in asking how others got their images.

I was surprised at the maturity of the images, one was a big oak tree with a tire swing, another was of a cemetery, and both images were very serene with shadows and hanging moss (Figure 4.2). I had not expected that they would be able to support each other's work with so much positive energy. Since it went so well and the students have been asking, we will do more digital camera work at a later date. I know they are proud of their work, every time there are guests in the building the students make them look at their pictures. Two of the male students are making a gift of their pictures, one is giving his picture to his grandmother, and the other student is sending his in the mail to his family up north.



Figure 4.2: Tire Swing

### **Wonderful Me (Life-Size Portrait Drawing)**

A week later we had time to complete the next lesson. These students do not draw much or doodle, but the interest inventory showed drawing to be the most requested item. The next project was meant to be a fun oversize, big-ego drawing of themselves (Figure 4.3). Several of

the male students see themselves as prime athletes and super heroes and I expected some bigger than life images.

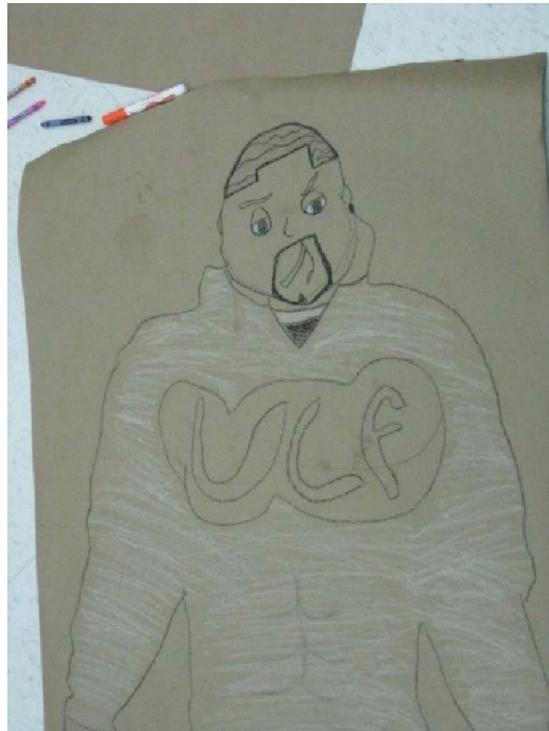


Figure 4.3: Cartoon Face

For this lesson, we discussed what makes us wonderful and unique. I precut brown packaging paper into seven-foot long sheets. I had the students lay on their paper in a position that represented their personalities. Some jumped like a basketball player or kicked a soccer ball. One of the girls wanted to be the body outline from a crime scene (she wants to be a police officer). I outlined everyone in their preferred position and they were to fill in all the details, naming themselves super heroes and such. One of the girls flipped her paper over and drew herself free handed in a shapely bikini. Some students didn't start in with the beginning, waiting to see what the others were going to do. This made them finish last and they had to be encouraged to complete their picture.

The students were very self-conscious about this drawing and added modest comments on their pictures, no superman or princesses. Some drew cartoon faces on their face and added mustaches and wild hair and a six-pack abs. Some of the students jumped in and helped the slower ones finish their work. When they were done I wanted to hang them in the hallway as a group, but the students wanted to hang them out on the dining room walls where there are bright lights and can be seen all day. These were big pieces and these students are used to drawing on copy paper. Most of these children attend schools where they are no art classes and drawing on such a big space was a new experience for them. I had trouble getting them to color in all of their images, since the paper is brown and most of the students were African-American, they wanted to leave most of the paper naturally brown, even the clothes. Pastels would have been a nice choice to work with but since we were on the floor I was afraid it would get crushed into the floor.

I think this project was too big for students to stay focused, they seem to run out of creative juice fast. The paper was too big to be on a table (7 ft. long) so we worked on the floor. Perhaps if it had been up higher and more accessible they would have been more comfortable. Over the weeks I caught some students stopping and looking at their pictures, admiring their work.

### **Handmade Personal Books** (Handmade Bound journal)

Our Mental Health Counselor requested this project. He wanted the students to have a beautiful object (Figure 4.4) to record their thoughts and images about “family.” What is a family? Can you have a family who are not blood relatives? Many of these children have parents who are deceased.



Figure 4.4 Handmade Journal

I started the class with my two early students who served as helpers. We used the tables in the dining room because it was bright and there were plenty of tables. I pre-cut cardboard from Post Office mailers all in the same size so finding two matching pieces would be easy. I brought in books on book making and personal samples I had made. I set up three workstations, one for glue, one for paper and one for embellishments. I demonstrated making a book alongside my two helpers so they could help when the rest of the group got there. The girl students were the only ones who arrived and looked over the samples and scanned the books for ideas. They also asked to make bigger books.

There was a real mix in the skill-level of the groups. Everyone was 6<sup>th</sup> grade and up but some students had trouble guessing the next step or even where to start. It's a pretty basic project but several students had trouble staying with the project to its finish. Some of the male students were doing a lot of chatting and not paying attention, even with sitting next to them steps had to be repeated several times. Once the male students were done they were pleased with the product, but the girls were the ones who added details inside and out. Many of these students have

behavior disorders and paying attention is often difficult for them. There was a lot of talking and movement that in their school would not have been tolerated. I suspect if this were a “sitting project” they would have been better tuned in.

### **Hello it’s Me! (Personal Sign)**

Many children post pictures and signs on their door to mark a room as theirs. Having a defined space of your own is important to us all. Knowing it’s a space that is all ours and safe, gives us a place to run to and hide, sleep or have personal down time alone away from noise and a place to keep our stuff safe. Sometimes kids write on their doors with crayons or put up signs on sticky notes declaring ownership. This project is for the students to create a durable sign (Figure 4.4) that would stand up to time and still have the personal meaning.

The students were asked to plan and create a new sign (Figure 4.5) that could be hung on their bedroom door describing the occupant of the room. I precut foam core rectangles and placed markers, pencils, colored paper and glitter glue out for them to choose and incorporate in to their signs. The students were to use scratch paper to create their personal images and then transfer it to the foam core. The image was supposed to be about who they think they are.



Figure 4.5 Hello It’s Me Sign

Most of the students seemed shy about adding color to their sign, they chose to not preplan and drew right onto the foam core taking the risk that they might make a mistake and they cannot erase. The images were very faint and most students created line drawings in color pencil that were not colored in. Several students wrote “keep out” signs that had no images or maybe a weapon drawn out. Only two students followed directions, by planning and making a sign with images. The craftsmanship on most was poor and the signs were unfinished, lacking details and color. Only the students that completed their signs chose to put them up on their doors, the remainder of the signs disappeared. The students were quiet when they were working and there was a lot of activity in the room by staff that may have been too distracting for some students to concentrate. Although we discussed ideas for the signs, I didn’t want to create a sample because I was afraid they would only copy mine, and some of the students did copy each other’s work. Once one student started writing keep out on his sign, it swept through the room and many others added it to their work too.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This capstone project has opened some new insights about at-risk art education for me. I thought it would require just a few adjustments to accommodate the students' needs, but I have found it is a lot more than that. Just the few lessons I did with my at-risk students showed me that the method of assessment currently emphasized in school would need to be adjusted to accommodate at-risk behavior objectives.

I discovered that most of the students who participated in the project did not have basic art making skills because they have always been in special schools or classes. Many of these students need extra supervision in the use of scissors and simple art room tools. It would be unfair to assess them on grade level expectations knowing they do not have the same background information or school experiences that regular students have.

Putting emphasis on the personal social needs of students such as self-esteem and effective communications can easily be addressed in art lessons. But the question remains: How can we evaluate the effectiveness of our instruction or student growth in these areas? Often the art teacher is asked to engage students in community awareness programs such as *Stop the Violence* and *Say no to Drugs* that are usually accompanied with poster contests that present important messages. Even if the poster is produced and the information is delivered there is no way to determine if the information is having a real time effect on the students.

Behavior assessments are used in special education by recording observed behaviors, but those students are not in the mainstream classrooms and the supervision is much more intense. Many at-risk students are in regular classrooms that contain 25 or more children; thus many at-risk students go unidentified and cannot be singled out. Those are the students that will likely fail and drop out if their needs are not addressed.

Based on the results of this capstone, I suggest art lessons for at-risk students should include emotional and pro-social objectives. For example, lessons that examine issues of tolerance and self-esteem should lead to positive results with student participating in this project. Focusing on positive solutions and positive behavior changes by featuring student-relevant topics and well formulated over-arching ideas that encourage students to examine their own behaviors and responses to important issues can become a key part of a school art curriculum.

Furthermore, I believe that narrowing curricular focus from global to local, making art personal and relevant to the students' neighborhood might bring about a bigger impact on at-risk students. Perhaps we cannot assess changes in behaviors, but if the message is repeated and investigated through several art lessons the connections may be established that engage at-risk students and encourages them to participate more wholesome lifestyles.

The evidence is strong that there is a growing need for addressing at-risk populations. Up until now, community centers and after school programs have been actively and aggressively supplying art opportunities outside of the school day. But at-risk issues are far reaching and have an effect on in-school culture as well. Failing and dropping out of school is only a small part of an at-risk student's downward spiral to disaster. Creating art lessons in the classroom using positive behavioral goals give at-risk students the chance to learn and practice appropriate positive behaviors and the opportunity to reflect on their own choices. Remediation is good for struggling students in reading and math, but at-risk stressors go beyond poor grades. Using expressive arts to explore at-risk behavioral goals can re-engage at-risk students into the learning environment and potentially increases protective factors such as self esteem, self-discipline and positive coping skills. We need to find aggressive approaches to these problems. Retooling art

education to impact at-risk issues is a strong step toward reclaiming the at-risk student's interests and commitment to education.

Can art education affect the behaviors of at-risk students, I believe it can but only if we develop partnerships between the community, schools, and the juvenile justice system. Waiting for community programs to carry the whole burden of serving at-risk students seems incomplete as well as doomed. Bringing the proven success of after-school art programs into the school art curriculum would expand the opportunity to make a positive impact on a child and turn around the damaging atmosphere of failure and violence that is bearing down on our schools and our children.

My study indicates that thoughtfully planned art activities that also attend to the learning of pro-social behaviors developed for students identified as at-risk produce positive results for these students. Further studies are needed to create more concrete methods that assess behavioral learning in these student populations. Many subjects (music, theater, science, ESE and dance) use behavioral assessment to augment their authentic assessments in their content areas. Perhaps a compilation of their methods would inform an assessment strategy for at risk behavioral learning. Most of all, I want to say that a curriculum of caring, peace-making, anti-bullying and character building is waiting to find its place in the art curriculum both within alternative learning sites and within regular schools, and regardless of the site for art education, we should make our art lessons mindful of the needs and realities of at-risk students.

## **APPENDIX I: FIELD NOTES**

### **March 7, 2012**

I started collecting materials for the lessons in the last few days. I bought small digital cameras (\$10.) for all the students to use if they wanted to participate. My reasoning is; if these children had cell phones they could use those to make pictures but if they didn't have picture phones that they would have to sit out and I didn't want anyone who wanted to do art to feel impoverished.

When I offered the interest inventories for their selection they circled lots of things, and some I thought they would be bored with since they do some if it every day (i.e. drawing). This will give me a nice list of activities that I know they want to do, which will make lesson planning much easier. I discussed this with the Mental Health Specialist, and we may continue with additional art lessons after we complete these four projects.

The art supplies were in my office and since all the students come to see me and hence, found the bag of cameras. I couldn't believe how excited they were to use a camera. I let them up-pack the camera and put in the batteries, write their name on it and instructed them to take 26 pictures of something they thought was beautiful. They completed the assignment and brought me the filled cameras and without hesitation left them with me until the following day, when we could up load the images and move to the next step.

I brought my personal laptop to the computer lab and bought a new high tech printer/fax/scanner that can print from a cloud, a phone or a tablet so we would be sure they could get some good images quickly. Although we are using the printer for this lesson we will be using the copier for the next. This project is about "What is Beauty" and "toleration of other people's ideas". Tolerance is a very weak subject for these at risk kids and this lesson should point out that we are all different and it's ok to have your own ideas and its ok for someone to think differently than you.

I'm excited to see what images they found. The beauty of this simple camera is if we didn't get a good picture, we can go outside and take a whole new set and try again immediately.

I had two ninth graders who did not want to participate because they didn't think they were good enough to make something (they have never had art in school). But when all the students started making pictures they jumped right in too.

### **March 12, 2012**

Monday

The students took the weekend to finish taking pictures. Some asked to take the camera home for the weekend and take pictures of things there. I told them no naughty pictures, no skin or body parts, but only things they felt were beautiful. I think the novelty of having a camera to take home was the excitement for them.

Even after they had the weekend some still did not get the assignment finished so we waited one more day to do the project.

### **March 13, 2012**

Tuesday

I set up the laptop and loaded the software for the cameras and attached the printer. The system was self-contained and there was no access or need for access to the internet. We decided to do this lesson in the computer lab. The art materials were opened and scattered over the work table so the student could pick whatever they wanted to embellish their pictures and matt them.

My oldest student an 11 grader was anxious to learn photo manipulation and was the first to get his pictures and down load his work. He then worked as the helper and downloaded all the other cameras as well. His picture was a picture of himself shooting basketball, the thing he found to be most beautiful.

He experimented with some of the effects and printed off the image he liked and mounted it in a matt. He had changed colors in the photo and it became surreal, and he didn't want to add anything more just his BIG signature.

The other seven children picked out their favorite photo image from their set of 26 images and printed as I looked on. I wanted then to learn to use the computer and the camera and experience digital photography. They were very respectful to each other and to the equipment, taking turns, taking their time and really thinking and "choosing" their special image.

I was surprised by the maturity of some of the images. One child photographed a cemetery, another one a tree tire swing, one photographed colorful cactuses another one captured a jet stream in the sky and some wonderful cloud images. Several asked to save all of their images onto a flash drive so they could continue to make pictures at a later date. Once the images were matted they were invited to add interests with pen, markers, jewels, flashy stickers, sparkle paper and glitter. The matt became the object to be embellished by the students, very little was changes on the actual image. We finished the pictures and as a group hung them up to view and discuss. The students were very kind in their comments to each other and really discussed the pictures with insight. Later in the day there were many visitors and the students took them over to discuss the photo grouping, pointing out the interesting points of every ones work. The students really worked well together, I didn't have to re-direct or referee. We agreed to leave the photos up for a few day then they can take them home.

The At-Risk Goal for this Photograph Something Beautiful project was for the students to get along, to share space, materials and ideas, learn to speak kindly and appreciate that everyone has a different vision and it's ok to have your own ideas.

The Art Goal was to expose the student to a brief encounter with digital photography and the aesthetics of, what is beautiful.

**March 14, 2014**

Wednesday

Today we made full size body Portraits of Wonderful Me.

I pre-cut brown packaging paper into 7 foot long pieces. The students laid on their paper on the floor and I outlined their body with a black crayon. The students poised in different positions so

they could portray themselves as basketball players and runners. One girl wanted to be a crime scene body drawing (she wants a career with the police force). Some students just watched until almost everyone was done before they joined in. I think they were afraid they would look silly, but after they watched and no one was criticizing anyone's work, they finally drew their portrait. Many of these students have never had art in school, since they have always attended alternative schools, but they have learned to draw cartoons and the faces on the Portraits of Wonderful Me, were cartoon faces. The students finished and hung their pictures on the wall, but the late joiners had trouble finishing their project, because they were "last" and no one wants to be last, so they needed a lot of encouragement to finally finish.

The comments the students wrote on their pictures were modest, and they had a hard time thinking of superlative to call themselves. I expected some super man, and kings and queens and highly decorated images, but they were very controlled with their work and sports were the theme of most of the portraits.

Several of the students jumped in and helped the others finish their portraits on the floor and one girl re-drew her image free-hand on the back, so she could show her skills as an artist. She continued working on her picture the following day. Everyone wanted to hang their work in the most visible space. I suggested the hallway but the well-lit dining hall was the final students' choice.

The At-Risk goals for the Wonderful Me Portrait were self esteem building, cooperation (these were big pieces and working along-side each other could be difficult) sharing personal feelings in a safe environment, sharing materials, taking a project to completion and having pride in ones product.

Art Goals: Understanding what a portrait is and that it can be any size. Developing drawing skills on a large scale, planning placement of facial features, developing attention to details and experiencing the materials.

### **March 23, 2012**

#### Project personal books

Our mental health counselor asked if I would make book with the students so they can create a personal book that includes family pictures and close personal entries.

I started the class with just two students so they could help with the rest of the groups when they arrived. The construction of the books was fairly easy, but it was a project that took time and little expertise. I pre-cut cardboard, into 5x8 inch rectangles. The cardboard was actually mailing boxes from the post office. They have a good weight, are clean and easy to handle.

I placed the cardboard (backs) and a variety of decorative papers (scrap booking pad) on a table. On another table I set up a glue station and on the third table I placed needles, beads, thread, scissors, bamboo sticks, rubber stamps and stamp pad.

I brought my own handmade books as samples and several art books about art-book making. I noticed the girls looked over the books and picked out things they wanted to make, but the boys went right for the materials and started asking for help. The girls took their books farther than the

guys by adding beads and gluing on external embellishments. The guys tried to rush but this was a project that could not be hurried. There was a lot of drilling into the backs and drilling into the paper that we did using sharp pointed scissors. When the books were done they were delighted with their products. Some students allowed me to take photos but several tucked their books away like the private items I had hoped they would be.

If found the boys to be distractible and when they asked for help they would be so busy talking that I would have to repeat the directions and demonstrate several times individually. They had a hard time following the process of measuring paper and gluing it onto the front and back covers. Even with other students working next to them they wanted individual help, they couldn't follow along watching others. Every one shared materials and space and admired each other's work. No one was unsuccessful. The process took two hours to complete and get everyone finished. Some of the girls asked to make more books and make them bigger. I told them we could on another day but today we could learn the basics and try something more advanced on another day.

These books will be used in art projects in the following weeks including photos, collages writings and paintings.

At-Risk Goals: Cooperating and sharing space and material, positive response to others work, accepting positive responses to their own work, following direction, anticipating the next step in planning and execution of a project and taking the project to completion.

Art Goals: Using materials and tools appropriately to achieve intended results, develop competence and dexterity in use and practice of materials, develop skills in craftsmanship.

## APPENDIX 2: ASSENT AND CONSENT FORMS

Dear Student,

Hi, my name is Sue Walker, and I am an art teacher at XXXX and a graduate student at the University of Florida. I am doing a study of how art making has a positive impact on students who come to XXXXX. I'd like to make some art projects with you and ask you some questions about these art projects. We'll do these art projects in the study hall at XXXX during the after school hours. It will take about one hour each day for five days. There is no risk to you for participating in this study. All information will be confidential, and all student identities will be anonymous (no student, school, or city locations will be identified). You will not be paid for your participation in my study. You can stop being a participant in this research project at anytime and take home anything you make. Would you like to participate in this project?

Please sign your name below if you would like to make some art with me and be a part of my study.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Parent Permission letter:**

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am an art teacher at XXXXX, and a graduate student in the Department of Art Education at the University of Florida. I am conducting research on Art for the At Risk Student, under the supervision of Dr. Craig Roland at the University of Florida. The purpose of this study is to explore programs and possibilities that address Arts for the at-risk student that may be applied to art education in alternative school settings. I hope to answer the question: How can art be used as effective learning interventions for “at-risk” students? These results of my study may not affect your child today, but may benefit future students. With your permission, I would like to ask your child to volunteer for this research.

This study will take place at XXXXXX, during after school hours, for one hour a day for a total of five days. I will ask the students to fill out a short questionnaire about his/her interests in a variety of art project. Five of the students will then be asked to make art during this after-school art time, and talk with me about their art making experience while they are engaged in these art making activities. I will ask them what their art is about, and why. I will also ask them about their general ideas about art as well. I will take notes both during and after each art session. My notes will contain my observations about what the students thought about these art-making activities, about the art they made during their time with me on this project, and about art in general. I will also photograph the art work produced in these art activities, and will include my observations about the art work itself.

You and your child have the right to withdraw consent for your child’s participation at anytime without consequence. The students may keep their artwork. There is no known risk or immediate

benefits to the participants. The confidentiality of your child's information as a participant will be protected to the extent provided by law. No names, school, or community locations will be used in my study. No photographs of the students will be taken. No compensation is offered for participation. Group results will be available in May 2012 upon request.

If you have any question about this research protocol, please contact me at xxx-xxx-xxxx or my faculty supervisor, Craig Roland. Craig Roland's office phone number is xxx-xxx-xxxx. Questions or concerns about your child's rights as research participant may also be directed to the IRB (Institutional Research Board) office, University of Florida, PO Box 112250, Gainesville, Fl. 32611. Their phone number is 352-392-0433.

Please sign below giving your consent and return the signed form to me. Thank you for your consideration.

Sue Walker Stinnett

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I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily give my consent for my child (insert name of the child here) \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in Sue Walker Stinnett's study of art for the at risk student. I have received my own copy of this letter.

Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Today's date \_\_\_\_\_

**Principal's Request Letter:**

Dear Principal,

I am a Student at the University of Florida. I am completing an art research project about Art for the At Risk student. I would like to ask your students to fill out a questionnaire that offers them choices of art projects and techniques that they might like to learn.

It is a blind study so I do not need contact with the students. I will need permission from you and the students that they understand and are willing to participate. I am attaching the questionnaire and the permission forms for you to review. If this is acceptable to you, for me to continue, please reply to this e-mail and I can use this correspondence for the IRB process.

Thank you so much for all you do.

C Sue Walker  
Student University of Florida

Due to Florida's broad public records law, most written communications to or from government employees regarding public education are public records. Therefore, this e-mail communication may be subject to public disclosure.

**APPENDIX 3: UNIVERSITY IRB FORMS**

FILED: JAN. 12, 2012

# UFIRB 02 – Social & Behavioral Research

## Protocol Submission Form

*This form must be typed. Send this form and the supporting documents to IRB02, PO Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611. Should you have questions about completing this form, call 352-392-0433.*

<b>Title of Protocol:</b>	<b>Arts for At Risk Youth: a study and recommendations for art education for “At Risk” students.</b>		
<b>Principal Investigator:</b>			
	<b>Cynthia Sue Walker Stinnett</b>	<b>UFID #:xxxx</b>	
<b>Degree / Title:</b>	<b>Master Art Education, Candidate</b>	<b>Mailing Address:</b> (If on campus include PO Box address):  <b>Cape Canaveral Fl. 32920</b>	<b>Email:</b>
<b>Department:</b>	<b>College of Fine Art +Art Education</b>		<b>Telephone</b>
<b>Co-Investigator(s):</b>			
		<b>UFID#:</b>	<b>Email:</b>
<b>Supervisor (If PI is student):</b>			
	<b>Dr. C. Roland</b>	<b>UFID#: xxxx</b>	
<b>Degree / Title:</b>		<b>Mailing Address:</b> (If on campus include PO Box address):	<b>Email :</b>
<b>Department:</b>	<b>College of Fine Art +Art Education</b>		<b>Telephone #:xxx-xxx-xxxx</b>

Date of Proposed Research:	Jan. 2012 to May 2012
Source of Funding (A copy of the grant proposal must be submitted with this protocol if funding is involved):	None
<p><b>Scientific Purpose of the Study:</b> is to collect data and synthesize information into a series of art lessons that can help “at Risk” students acquire coping skills, rationalize risky behaviors and develop strategies that may help them have a more successful school experience.</p>	
<p><b>Describe the Research Methodology in Non-Technical Language:</b> The classroom teachers will ask the students to fill out an “Interest Inventory” of art activities that I have created. The “Interest Inventory” is a list of various art activities that are usually offered to public school student in the regular art curriculum. Those students who do not wish to participate do not have to participate, the “Interest Inventory” should only take a few minutes to complete since it is a checklist. The teachers will collect the questionnaires from the students and I will collect them from the office. <u><i>I do not want to have contact with those students.</i></u> I want this to be a blind study that will not add personal information that may influence my findings.</p> <p>The five volunteer art students will be self selected and relayed to me through the school guidance office. The art classes for the five art students will be held for one hour a week for five weeks. When they have finished each lesson they will discuss their experience and their art work. The art work will be recorded in a photograph and the students will take their art work home</p>	
<p><b>Describe Potential Benefits:</b> There are no direct benefits to the participants in the ‘Interest Inventory’. The five volunteer art students will receive art lessons that may enhance their school experience and take their art works home.</p>	

**Describe Potential Risks:** There are minimal student risks. The students will be checking off a list of art activities and using traditional school materials in a classroom setting.

**Describe How Participant(s) Will Be Recruited:** I have selected three small schools for “at Risk” students and discussed this research with their principals. I am choosing a blind study format and do not want to know any of the personal information about the students or have contact with all but the five volunteer art students. The commonality of the students is the “At Risk”. Age, race, grade or sex are not factors to be considered. The classroom teacher will deliver the questionnaire to any student that may want to participate. The five volunteer art students will be self selected and referred to me by the guidance office.

<b>Maximum Number of Participants (to be approached with consent)</b>	150	<b>Age Range of Participants:</b>	10-23 years old	<b>Amount of Compensation/ course credit:</b>	none
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**Describe the Informed Consent Process. (Attach a Copy of the Informed Consent Document.)** I have created an informed consent form to be sent to the parents of each child through their classroom. The children will be assigned a number starting at the number one (1) to one hundred and fifty (150) to insure privacy and track results.

**(SIGNATURE SECTION)**

<b>Principal Investigator(s) Signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b>
<b>Co-Investigator(s) Signature(s):</b>		<b>Date:</b>
<b>Supervisor’s Signature (if PI is a student):</b>		<b>Date:</b>
<b>Department Chair Signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b>

## APPENDIX 4: ART INTEREST INVENTORY

Dear Student,

Thank you for participating in my research by choosing as many art activities as you like that appear in this list. Please circle any activities on the list below that seem interesting to you. If you are only interested in a few then just pick them! If there is something that you don't see on the list below, that you want to make or learn about, then write it in at the bottom of the list.

I will be the only one who sees your answers and your privacy is very important to my school and me.

Sue Walker

### ART Interest Inventory

Drawing	Pop-up books	Mosaics
Painting	Book making	3-D drawing
Sewing	Wire sculpture	Book illustration
Pottery	Stain glass	Origami
Clay Sculpture	Cartooning	Altered books
Pastels	Wood work	Art journals
Watercolors	Print making	Tie-dye
Finger paint	Wax painting	Macramé
Murals	Weaving	Bead making
Collage	Mobiles	Jewelry making
Photography	Sand painting	Paper Mache'
Computer art	Paper making	Diorama
Graphic art	Architecture	Assemblage
Calligraphy	Portraits	Bookmaking
Models	Pen and ink	Pop-up books

Other: (please list any other art activities that seem interesting to you)

**Interest Inventory results:**

Drawing 20	Pop-up books 2	Mosaics 4
Painting 9	Book making 1	3-D drawing 15
Sewing 8	Weaving 8	Book illustration 4
Pottery 11	Stain glass 8	Origami 10
Clay sculpture 13	Cartooning 13	Altered books 2
Pastels 6	Wood work 12	Art journals 5
Watercolors 8	Print making 5	Tie-dye 12
Finger paint 8	Wax painting 7	Macramé 2
Murals 4	Bead making 5	Assemblages 4
Collage 5	Mobiles 5	Jewelry making 11
Photography 14	Sand painting 8	Paper Mache' 4
Computer art 15	Paper making 3	Dioramas 3
Graphic art 8	Architecture 4	Wire sculpture 7
Calligraphy 5	Portraits 3	Bookmaking 3
Models 8	Pen and Ink 13	Pop-up books 4

Write in: Graffiti, Candle-making, Card-making, and Song writing.

## **APPENDIX 5: LIST OF AT RISK ISSUES**

Anti-drugs	Anti-drinking
Anti-violence	Anti-crime
Community service	Group participation
Conflict resolution	Crime free community
Stand against drugs	Anti-bullying
Positive relationships	Trust
Teamwork	Friendship
Civic awareness	Self identity
Citizenship	Self identity
Positive coping skills	Responsibility
Bonding	Empathy
Forgiveness	Leadership
Self- confidence	Self discipline
Cultural awareness	Self esteem

## **APPENDIX 6: AT-RISK ART LESSON FRAMEWORK**

### **Lesson plan**

Behavioral Goal (at-risk issue):

Art Activity (Interest Inventory):

Art Goal (State Art Standards):

Project title:

Considerations:

- Time:
- Student Skills Level:
- Materials:
- Location:
- Students age:

Directions:

Display:

Assessment:

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## **BIOGRAPHY**

Cynthia Sue Walker Stinnett is a graduate student at the University of Florida. She began her art education as an Art Major in Washington Dc. at the Corcoran School of Art. While attending school there she worked as a window trimmer for several major and private retailers in the metro area. In 1998 she moved to Georgia and attended Armstrong Atlantic State University in Savannah and acquired the professional training and coursework needed for Art Education Certification. While attending Armstrong, she worked in the gallery of the Telfair Museum and taught art and pottery in the community. She began her art teaching career in 2000, in the inner city schools of Savannah, Georgia. In 2004 she moved to Florida and enhanced her Art Certification with several other Florida Certifications: Social Science 6-12, Elementary Ed. K-6, Exceptional Ed. K-12 and Gifted Endorsement K-12. While attending the University of Florida she has continued to work with the abandoned, neglected and abused children of Florida as an Education Coordinator for foster children. She currently is an active member of the Stone Fire Gallery and Studios a community gallery for all the arts. Her heart has stayed with the struggling and delightfully creative children that filled her first classroom and still populate her life.