

EVERY CHILD DESERVES AN ART EDUCATION

By

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A CAPSTONE PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS  
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To the public school art teachers and students who inspire me every day

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Summary of Capstone Project Presented to the College of Fine Arts  
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Master of Art Education

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Major: Art Education

The reasons for art education's inclusion in the public school curriculum have varied throughout the years and art educators have always had to advocate for their subject in one fashion or another. In the recent past, mandates such as *No Child Left Behind* and *Race To The Top* have put an emphasis on high stakes standardized testing and led to a narrowing of the school curriculum. These mandates coupled with dwindling school budgets have forced many school districts to make tough choices, cutting subjects which are looked upon as "specials" or "extras" such art education. As a result, it is imperative that art educators continue to advocate for themselves, their students, and the field of art education.

Recent reports such as *Reinvesting in Arts Education: Winning America's Future* highlights statistics-based research that art education's presence in schools does indeed have a positive impact on our nation's students. In a time where mandates and school budgets have lead to the reduction or elimination of art education programs in our public schools, how can we best advocate for our field? Why haven't statistics-based reports been enough to convince policymakers and the public at large? This

study examines the power of the narrative in both teacher and student experiences and understandings in art education advocacy. Students and educators were asked the same set of questions on camera. Though their recorded answers somewhat varied, there were some universal themes and ideas that emerged. Weaving together these stories by common theme and idea lead me to develop two videos containing cohesive messages of many voices advocating for art education. *Every Child Deserves an Art Education* focuses on how experiences in art classes offer a creative outlet and freedom of expression for students, which differs from other subjects in the curriculum; whereas *Art Education Builds 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* highlights reasons that art education helps students to think creatively while building critical thinking skills to enable them to prepare for the future as adults in the workforce. Both of these videos are featured on a website I created called [Art4Kids.weebly.com](http://Art4Kids.weebly.com), which offers students, parents, and educators advocacy tips, as well as resources and information highlighting the many reasons art education is important for educating the whole child.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

With the implementation of mandates such as *No Child Left Behind* and *Race To The Top*, United States public school policy has had detrimental effects on art education. Unfortunately, STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and math) are seen as essential and of paramount importance in school curriculums. The implementation of these mandates along with dwindling school budgets, have lead to the reduction and or elimination of many art education programs across the country. Because of this, it is important for art educators, parents and students become advocates for art education programs in their schools.

21<sup>st</sup> Century art education advocates have many resources and tools at their disposal. Evidence of art education's importance can be found in the stories of art teachers, who work directly with students on daily basis. Additionally, students' experiences are equally compelling. Studies and statistics only tell part of the story. Personal stories from both teachers and children of the impact art education has on students is indeed evidence of the benefits of art education. These narratives have the power to inform the public by relaying positive and meaningful experiences that students have with Art and in art classes. Advocacy for the field art education is a necessary component to the health and vitality of the field. By utilizing new methods such as technology and social media outlets, art education advocates can reach a wider audience and hopefully have a greater impact.

Following this idea of the power of the narrative and its potential for advocacy, I interviewed several area art educators and my own students using a series of general questions about art and art classes, in order to find evidence and common themes that

demonstrate art education's impact on students' lives. Using the *Made to Stick* model for success in messaging, I edited the footage of these educator and student interviews into two different videos, each with their own overarching message on the importance of art education in public schools and posted both of them on YouTube. I then created an art education advocacy website in order to showcase the two videos and included a poll for the general public to vote on the video they thought made the best case for art education in public schools. Finally, I took advantage of the wide range of social media outlets such as Facebook®, Twitter®, Scoop.it®, LinkedIn®, Art Education 2.0, and Tumblr® in order to disseminate my two videos.

### **Statement of the Problem**

School districts across the country often find themselves making tough choices. Mandates such as *No Child Left Behind* and *Race To The Top* have lead to the current emphasis on standardized testing and the narrowing of the curriculum. Studies such as the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities *Reinvesting in Arts Education: Winning America's Future* have shown that art education is beneficial in educating and engaging students, yet time after time arts education is left behind. How can art education advocates, teachers, arts professionals, and arts public policymakers turn around this trend?

### **Significance of the Project**

Art educators' and students' voices are especially crucial at this time within the public discourse regarding education reform. As many of these reforms result in emphasizing the STEM curriculum subjects such as science, technology, engineering and math, art education is looked upon as an extra instead of an essential component of a well-

rounded education. It is indeed ironic that arts education is included as a core subject within the *No Child Left Behind Act* along side the traditional core subjects of math, reading, and science (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Unfortunately, this strong reliance on the time-consuming practice of standardized testing to measure results, only serves to further marginalize art education. I hope that my research plays a part in valuing experienced art teachers, as well as supporting the recent quantitative research studies on the need for art education in public schools.

### **Limitations of the Study**

As this capstone project will be based solely on interviews, all of the evidence produced in support of art education will be based on the stories, personal experiences, views, and the opinions of those working in the art education field. The results will not be based on quantitative research findings. Due to the nature of interviews, the questions posed are semi-structured and follow a natural progression during the conversations I had with participants. Additionally, the subjects of my videos all reside in the Central Ohio area. I chose art teachers in the Jonathan Alder School District and students of my own in my after school art program as a matter of convenience. Therefore, the small sample of subjects is limited by geographic area.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

In this literature review, I discuss five main themes and influences on art education. In the first section, I highlight the history of art education and how art educators have always had to advocate for themselves and the field. In the second section, I discuss recent school reform efforts, the federal funding programs *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top Acts* and how they have both affected the position of art education in the public schools in this country as well as efforts led by corporate education reformers. In the third section, I will bring forth voices from the field of art education to illuminate a scholarly viewpoint on the value of art education. In the fourth section, I concentrate on current legislative events in the state of Ohio, which directly affect art teachers and their students. In the last section, I discuss effective messaging and why it is imperative in regards to art education advocacy, especially in today's message-saturated world.

#### **A Brief History of Art Education Advocacy**

There have been a variety of justifications for the inclusion of art education in the America's public school curriculum throughout history. In the mid 18<sup>th</sup> Century, art education was looked upon as something desirable for the upper class Americans to learn, as they strove to emulate European aristocracy (Stankiewicz, 2001). As the nation moved forward into the industrial age in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, art education's purpose evolved into more capitalistic purposes. The Massachusetts Drawing Act of 1870 was the first legislation of its kind to mandate the inclusion of visual art instruction in the public school curriculum (Bolin, 2006). The Drawing Act was written and signed by individuals in the manufacturing and textile industries who had a vested interest in

increasing the population of skilled draftsmen. Originally, regular classroom teachers instead of art specialists taught drawing instruction, which consisted of copying shapes, lines, and curves. In 1880, art instruction became more decorative and ornamental in nature and became the basis later for the teaching design elements and principles. ~~And~~ Later in 1890, nature drawing became a way to justify the inclusion of art in schools as a way to teach urban children about plant life and growth (Stankiewicz, 2001).

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, child development advocates argued that schools should evolve to meet the needs of children and art could be used as a way to enhance creativity, self expression and individuality in children. The modern art world also reflected this direction towards spontaneity and freedom of expression during this time (Stankiewicz, 2001). Art education reflected the changing times in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Gone were Walter Smith's rigid design books to be copied. Instead, progressive art educators like Ruth Faison Shaw, Florence Cane and Natalie Robinson Cole felt that each child had an artist within that deserved to be recognized in art classes. During this period, art education was more concerned with the growth and well being of the child rather than developing skills for the marketplace. Instead, many felt art brought beauty and enjoyment to life. Art education also became a way to teach manners, morals, and good taste through instruction in art history and art appreciation. In many schools, holiday art was used as a way to decorate the halls and rooms, which unfortunately led to the marginalization of art education in schools (Stankiewicz, 2001).

At the turn of the 20th Century, David Snedden, Massachusetts Commissioner of Education, felt that art education hadn't really made much of a difference for the state (Stankiewicz, 2001). Criticism of art education's importance in a well-rounded

education is not a new issue. This may be due to many educators and policymakers not understanding what art education has to offer students. Several panels were established during the 1970s in order to study and make recommendations for the implementation of art education in schools (Chapman, 1982). According to noted art educator Laura Chapman (1982), many policymakers and school administrators don't understand what art education has to offer students.

According to noted art educator Laura Chapman (1982), many policymakers and school administrators don't understand what art education has to offer students. During the 1970s, the *Arts Education and Americans Panel* recommended increased involvement of artists and arts councils in the nation's public schools. Community arts centers were also mentioned in the panel's recommendations as a viable resource for art education (Chapman, 1982, pp. 124-125). Chapman describes this "de-schooling" of art education as driven by people and policymakers who had little to no arts education experience or expertise (Chapman, 1982, pp. 125-126). Likewise, the National Endowment for the Arts' *Artists in the Schools* program, which placed local artists and artisans in area public schools, devalued trained and certified art educators (Chapman, 1982, p. 121). Not surprisingly, art educators were critical of this program, but the National Endowment for the Arts' lobbyists as well as their controversial publicity package kept the *Artists in the Schools* program intact, as it still exists in public schools to this day (Chapman, 1982 pp. 120-121).

### **Current Education Reform**

*The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)* has been detrimental to art education programs in schools in poor socioeconomic areas in the 2000s (Chapman, 2005). Ironically, the arts are considered core subjects under *NCLB* (U.S. Department of

Education, 2002). Since that time, many school districts and states have opted out of NCLB's requirements. Regardless of NCLB, the emphasis on standardized testing persists because of the Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's mandate, *Race to the Top* (2011). Chapman's article is important to art education advocates who wish to understand the challenges facing the field in public schools. In it, she outlines the different aspects of *NCLB* and questions its methods to supposedly improve public schools (Chapman, 2005). Chapman uses the analogies of the factories and assembly lines to illuminate how education has become an institution rife with rote memorization through standardized testing.

Prior to *NCLB*, there was a landmark report called *A Nation at Risk (ANAR)* released in 1983 during the Reagan Administration. *ANAR* encouraged creation of state and national standards in many subjects. Unfortunately, the movement stalled out as history standards became mired in a political stalemate (Ravitch, 2010). The United States had seen SAT scores drop throughout the prior decade. *ANAR* was seen as a *call to action* to restore and repair failing schools and it urged the strengthening of high school graduation requirements. The difference between *ANAR* and *NCLB* was that *NCLB* "sidestepped the need for standards" by solely relying on test scores to measure achievement (Ravitch, 2010).

Ravitch referred to *NCLB* "all carrots and no sticks" and was "bereft of any educational ideas." It became a bi-partisan effort lauded by both Democrats and Republicans that was only concerned with test results in math and reading. This resulted in a narrowing of the curriculum which continues to this day, as the push to drive test scores ever higher the arts and humanities often fall by the wayside.

Recent educational reforms have focused on strengthening and expanding the *STEM* (*Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics*) subjects, as a way to increase the United States' standings in those subjects as policymakers point to countries like China surpassing the U.S. in science and innovation. Ironically, in a recent article David Sirota stated that *STEM* crisis in our nation is a fallacy and myth perpetuated by mainstream media and politicians. In reality, corporations would rather outsource these jobs to low paying countries like China than hire *STEM* graduates here in the United States (Sirota, 2012).

In our statistics obsessed country, politicians jump at the chance to point to standardized test results as a way to show how tough they are on student and teacher accountability (Kohn, 2000). Test results have become the way that schools are measured for success. In the years following NCLB, politicians and policymakers convinced themselves and attempted to convince the public that socioeconomics no longer played a role in whether schools succeeded or not. Ravitch and Kozol agree that Arne Duncan's competitive grants program, the *Race to the Top Fund* (RTTT) only serves to strengthen the stranglehold that standardized tests have on public schools, as it directly ties teacher effectiveness to test scores. RTTT was a competition between states, which has been revamped as a competition between school districts to secure federal funds. In order to receive these funds, school districts must agree to meet a set of rigorous mandates (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Regarding the emphasis on standardized testing and the narrowing of the curriculum, Naison (2012) succinctly states the effect it has had on public schools:

No public school has ever willingly tried doing something like this, and for good reason. It means that all that goes on in school is preparation for tests. There is no spontaneity, no creativity, no possibility of responding to new opportunities for learning from current events globally, nationally, or locally. It also means play and pleasure are erased from the school experience, since students will be under constant pressure from their teachers, who know that their own jobs depend on student performance (Naison, 2012, para. 7).

Corporate education reformers like Michelle Rhee seem to have little regard for the arts and the opportunities they provide for creative outlets:

People say, 'Well, you know, test scores don't take into account creativity and the love of learning,'" she says with a drippy, grating voice, lowering her eyelids halfway. Then she snaps back to herself. "I'm like, 'You know what? I don't give a crap.' Don't get me wrong. Creativity is good and whatever. But if the children don't know how to read, I don't care how creative you are. You're not doing your job. (Ripley, Rhee, 2008, para. 18).

The mainstream media and corporate reformers such as Michelle Rhee and Bill Gates have recently portrayed public schools as being in a crisis situation; in order to push their agenda that includes more standardized testing and larger class sizes which sadly leads to the reduction or elimination of arts programs. A grassroots movement driven by organizations such as *Parents Across America*, *Occupy Education*, *OPT Out*, and *SOS March* include parents, teachers and public school activists such as Diane Ravitch, Lois Weiner, Mark Naison, and Jonathan Kozol are pushing back against the effort to blame teachers and public schools as well as expose the corporate reform

agenda. Although these activists are not art education advocates per se, they do recognize the value of arts education and post regularly in online newspapers, journals, magazines, blogs and forums. They have also organized marches in cities across the country in order to protest the current direction of education reform, including emphasis on high-stakes standardized testing and the narrowing of the curriculum.

### **The Value of Art Education**

For many children, their experience in the arts classes are thought of as their “salvation” in school (Eisner, 1991, p. 11). Eisner argues that the arts are not “simply objects that afford pleasure, but forms that develop thinking skills and enlarge understanding” (Eisner page, 1991, p. 16) Eisner cautions against making the assumption that the arts can boost academic achievement in other subjects because in doing so, art education may become even more vulnerable as education reformers look for the next best way to improve academic achievement. Ironically, many policymakers view the arts as a way to increase academic performance in other subjects, which some view as disingenuous to art education (Hoffman Davis, 2008). Additionally, art educators often try to sell the importance of art education by explaining that it teaches creativity, even though art education does not hold a domain over creativity (Gude, 2010). Eisner feels that in order to properly show the value of arts education, advocates should expound upon the “contributions that only the arts make possible” (Eisner, 1998, p. 13). This is especially true of visual art, as children learn to work through a medium and problem solve. The thought processes that are unique to visual arts cannot be underestimated. Students have the opportunity to utilize metaphor and symbols visually in art (Eisner, 2004). In the art-making process, there are multiple solutions to problems and no one right answer. Sadly, other core subjects in a post NCLB school environment

have trained children to think that mistakes are to be avoided. Students often feel paralyzed in art classes, as they are afraid to take any risks that might result in an incorrect answer (Gude, 2010). The contribution the arts make in educating the whole child cannot be measured in SAT scores, but instead affects students on a deeply personal level, as they begin to realize the benefits of the hands-on exploration of multiple possibilities (Eisner, 2001).

Searching for and defining meaning through visual images is an important skill that can be learned in art education. Children in the digital age are bombarded with images through cyberspace as well as multiple offerings on television and they need to be able to decode these images and understand their underlying meanings. Art classes also offer students opportunities for collaborations, whether through group projects or by talking through tasks and problem solving (Gude, 2010). Art-making opportunities give children the opportunity for play, which is extremely important for human development. Human beings were designed to learn through play and experimentation (Donaldson, 1993). The benefits of play extend well beyond the early school years, according to Christakis & Christakis (2010):

Through play, children learn to take turns, delay gratification, negotiate conflicts, solve problems, share goals, acquire flexibility, and live with disappointment. By allowing children to imagine walking in another person's shoes, imaginative play also seeds the development of empathy, a key ingredient for intellectual and social-emotional success.

The real "readiness" skills that make for an academically successful kindergartener or college student has as much to do with emotional intelligence as

they do with academic preparation. Kindergartners need to know not just sight words and lower-case letters, but how to search for meaning. The same is true of 18-year-olds. (Christakis & Christakis, para. 15)

The President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities' report *Re-investing in Arts Education: Winning America's Future* (2011) was inspired by President Barack Obama's 2008 Arts Policy Campaign platform and illuminates how important the arts and humanities are to a well-rounded education. The study mentions budget constraints and narrowing of the curriculum due to high stakes testing. This is especially true for low income and minority students (Dwyer, 2011). Conversely, the arts in education are shown to improve attendance and engage students (Dwyer, 2011). Art education also has been shown to tap into the undiscovered talents of students and helps children find a voice through the arts. Additionally, art education builds confidence in children academically who may be struggling in other subject areas (Frambes, 2011).

### **Recent Legislative Events in The State of Ohio**

Upon taking office in January 2011, Ohio Governor John Kasich, began to downsize and privatize many aspects of government. Kasich's administration slashed the state's education budget by 11.5% in 2012 and another 4.9% in 2013 (Bischoff & Magan, 2011).

All of this has had detrimental effects on local school districts as they attempt to make up the difference with local taxpayer money via levies. Many school districts like Westerville, Ohio have had trouble passing levies, due to a down economy and as a result, as many as 200 teachers faced possible termination (Nesbitt, 2012). As the focus on standardized tests and STEM subjects continues, school administrations have had to

make tough choices including cutting the arts in order to meet tough budget constraints. Westerville fought to keep the arts in their schools with an “emergency levy” on the March 6, 2012 ballot, which passed by a very small margin. Instead of eliminating the arts in the district completely, they were instead reduced considerably. Situations like Westerville’s are becoming all too common as Ohio’s art teachers are often looked at as expendable. Because of these recent events, it is imperative that art educators continue to advocate for themselves as well as art education in our public schools.

### **Making Advocacy Messages “Stick”**

Effective messaging is essential for advocacy efforts, especially in our media saturated 21<sup>st</sup> Century world. The Internet and airwaves are awash with information from public service announcements, to advertisements, as well as do-it -yourself advocacy efforts of all kinds. How is it possible to have one’s message effectively heard? Effectively communicating one’s ideas is imperative. A message that repeats statistic after statistic would not only bore the audience, but the message would be lost. The core elements of “sticky” ideas are: Simplicity, Unexpectedness, Concreteness, Credibility, Emotions, and Stories (Heath & Heath, 2007). *Made to Stick* outlines strategies and examples for utilizing these elements. Some brilliant messages can and do get lost as a result of mistakes such as “burying the lead” or focusing on data, statistics and numbers instead of the emotional element that involves people and their stories. It’s important for experts in their field to be aware of the “curse of knowledge” (Heath & Heather, 2007). The audience will likely not have the same background information as experts do so it is important to keep the message simple, and compact. The concept “If you say 10 things you say nothing” is important to bear in mind, and

keeping to just a few key points will make the message more likely to be remembered. Telling stories provides the viewers with an emotional connection and as a result, makes data and statistics more meaningful. The Presidents Committee on the

## **Summary**

Advocacy work in art education requires the reading many literary resources, from blogs on the Internet, to books, to scholarly papers in research journals. The history of art education and the varied reasons for art education's inclusion in public schools, tells us that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Art educators have always had to advocate for their profession in one fashion or another. Education reform directly impacts public schools, and art education. Chapman discusses how lawmakers, policymakers, and tax-payers do not always recognize the impact art education has on children, nor do they fully understand how it educates the whole child. Eisner and Gude illuminate the many ways that art education benefits students, including problems solving skills, offering a creative outlet, and freedom to explore and take risks. Christakis and Christakis explain that opportunities for play and exploration are an important part of human development. The President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities' report *Re-investing in Arts Education: Winning America's Future* describes the many ways that art education benefits students, including student engagement and discovering hidden talents in children. This recent report seems at odds with the many legislative events, which have unfortunately lead to cuts and reduction in the arts in Ohio schools. Art education advocacy is as imperative as it always has been, and requires effective, concise, and clear messaging while utilizing

21<sup>st</sup> Century networking opportunities in cyberspace, in order to be heard and noticed by the general public.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Research Design

For this capstone project I produced two art advocacy videos that celebrate art education. Using my literature review and my own observations these videos addressed issues of concern to me about the current state of art education in the United States and Ohio in particular, such as eroding support for public school art education, and the emphasis on standardized testing in public school curriculums. Although there is a serious and somewhat dire nature to both of these issues, I decided my videos would be more effective and better received by focusing on positive messaging aspects of art education, rather than concentrating on a message that involves “saving” the arts.

Each video contains an overarching message that ties together the art educator and student interviews, along with my own narrative. I also created an art education advocacy website which showcases both videos on the homepage and also offers parents and other interested parties information and tips on how to advocate for art education in their own public schools. In addition to publishing website, I disseminated these videos and on social networking sites such as Facebook®, Twitter®, YouTube®, LinkedIn®, Art Education 2.0, and Tumblr® thereby meeting the goal of widespread advocacy.

I selected a group of K-12 art educators from my local area, in the hopes of capturing their thoughts and feelings about the current state of art education and what teachers, parents, and students felt art education had to offer in the public school curriculum. I also interviewed my own students, hoping to capture their enthusiasm, hopes and aspirations as well as their feelings about art class. Using the power of the narrative as evidence, testimonials from teachers and students were woven together to

show the impact that art education has on children and the importance it has in their lives.

## **Preproduction**

In preparation for the creation of my video, I began viewing short films and videos that I found online in order to become knowledgeable about with how online videos are created, edited and formatted. In viewing these videos, I paid close attention to the content, verbiage, music, sounds, text, and imagery. With my goal of creating a short art education advocacy video in mind, I took note of what these short film creators chose to include in their videos. Videos that exceeded three minutes felt too long, especially where advocacy and messaging were concerned. The Web is awash in informational, educational, and advocacy videos. The message has to be clear and concise in order to make an impact.

My original concept for an art advocacy video based on the power of the narrative, informed my review of supporting literature as well as my research method. Becoming familiar with the subjects of public education policy, art advocacy, and effective messaging, was imperative in order to formulate my storyboard and list of interviewees. I created a storyboard for my video, including frames with my interviewees answering and talking about questions I planned to ask. The storyboard was used more or less as a guide, for the order of questions to be asked. I also included other visuals, such as art classrooms, art materials, children making art and student artwork.

I had hoped to have the opportunity to video interview Dr. Laura Chapman and Diane Ravitch, as each of their writings informed my knowledge on art education and education reform as it relates to my project of art education advocacy. Neither of them

was available to be interviewed, but they both offered me valuable advice regarding my project. ....

## **Population**

I chose to interview two elementary art teachers, one middle/junior high school art teacher, and one high school art teacher from the Jonathan Alder School District in Plain City, Ohio. I used signupgenius.com in order to schedule student interviews. As a result, eighteen former students from my own fourth grade after school art program agreed to be interviewed. I got the idea to host a children's chalk drawing event for my former students in order to obtain bright and colorful footage of children making art to add visual interest in my video after chatting with Diane Ravitch via email. She said to me, "The best advocacy that I have seen for the arts is the kids performing. When you see the joy on their faces, you become an advocate for them and the arts."

## **Film Production**

I obtained permission from the principal of Plain City Elementary to use the art classroom to film my interviews. I invested in a good solid tripod, wired lapel microphone and Canon Vixia® HF R20 high definition camcorder to film my interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using a purposeful sampling of individuals in Central Ohio. Subjects were given the following list of questions beforehand, but I allowed for the conversation to take a natural route in the hope that new illuminations and insights would come forth.

## **List of Sample Questions for Art Educators**

- Why is art education still relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?
- Why does art education deserve a place in the public school curriculum?

- What do you think of claims that art education enhances learning in other subjects?
- What do you think of claims that art education teaches creativity and critical thinking skills?
- What do you think is important for children to learn in art class?

### **List of Sample Questions for Students**

- Why do you like art class?
- What is your favorite subject in school?
- What is your favorite part of art class?
- What do you learn in art class?
- Why do you think that art is important?
- Why do you think art class is important to have in your school?
- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- What would the world be like without art?

The questions for both the art educators and the students are open-ended and general. Keeping in mind the advice from Heath and Heath (2007) in their book “Made to Stick,” I knew it was important for all viewers, whether they had a background in art or not, to understand what was being said in the video. This tactic is especially important regarding the art educators. If my questions were too specific to art education theory and scholarly knowledge, the answers may have ended up filled with technical terms and jargon that would have been lost on the audience. Instead, the questions were general and allowed for the natural flow and progression of ideas in the art educators’ answers.

As one would imagine, it was a bit more challenging to encourage the students to elaborate beyond one or two word answers for these questions than it was to get the art educators talking. Sometimes I would have to ask follow-up questions of the students such as “Can you tell me why you like art class?” or “Why do you think art is important?” If they were really struggling with these questions, I would employ another strategy just to get them thinking about art and their experiences in art class. I asked them to describe a favorite project they worked on or ask them to name their favorite artist, art movement, or technique. These questions did not result in much usable footage for the purpose of these videos, but they did open the lines of communication between the students and myself. Part of the strategy for successful interviews, involves putting the interviewee at ease. Some children may feel somewhat nervous in front of the camera. I reminded them that this interview was supposed to be fun and none of their answers to my questions would be wrong answers, as all of their opinions, experiences and stories are valid and have importance. Conversely, the art educators had no trouble elaborating on their experiences with students and stating their opinions on the current state of art education. The conversation often strayed beyond the starting point of the questions, but this often resulted in wonderful stories and illuminations, which were very valuable to this video project.

### **Post Production**

As I filmed each sequence of my video, I kept a film log in order to organize the film footage I was capturing. This film log contained the date, time of day, and sequence of questions as they occurred in the file footage. I had vast amounts of video footage that had to be stored on a Macintosh®-compatible 1TB external hard drive that had to

be viewed, cataloged, and disseminated. I began to view the footage of the interviews over and over, making notes about similarities and differences in the answers of the art teachers and students. It became apparent that there were two themes emerging from the footage. The first theme, that I noticed, was 'the joy of art for art's own sake.' There was genuine delight coming forth from students speaking about their artmaking experiences. The teachers talked about the creative and enjoyable outlet art class offered the students. The second theme, had to do with art education's ability to increase critical-thinking skills, develop divergent thinking and encourage students to consider multiple possibilities. Both of these themes are valid art education advocacy messages.

I edited my film footage using iMovie® software, creating titles, transitions, cutaways and other video effects. I also added upbeat background music to tie the video together and add a feeling of energy and vibrancy. My video also included cutaways of still shots of children making art taken with my Canon PowerShot® digital still camera, as well as video footage of children making art. In the second video *Art Education Builds 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills*, I included an image of Orville and Wilbur Wright's aircraft blueprint as a cutaway while art educator Jason Polston discussed how the Wright brothers were "artistic thinkers." I also included a screen shot of an online article regarding the cuts in the Westerville, Ohio school district from the Columbus Dispatch. Throughout both videos, I interspersed quotes to tie together and drive home the concepts being discussed by the participants, as well as the title page and end page, of which the latter includes my art education advocacy website. Both of videos resulted are a compilation of text, sound and images interwoven with voices of K-12 art teachers

and students, each with differing yet cohesive messages regarding art education advocacy.

As part of this project is concerned with current news, legislation and initiatives, I began curating articles from the Internet on the Scoop.it® website. I post articles based on the relevance to the field of art education and advocacy in American schools. I hope this becomes a valuable news resource for art educators, parents, and students alike, and plan to add to the page in the months and years to come.

Finally, I created a website titled *Art4Kids* at [art4kids.weebly.com](http://art4kids.weebly.com) using Weebly®'s self web-publishing software in order to showcase, promote and distribute these videos. The website also includes pertinent information regarding the value of art education in public schools, a link to current news via my Art Education Advocacy Scoop.it® webpage and links to other public school and art education advocates. I am using this website to connect other art education advocates, teachers, parents, and students, to bring about awareness to the state of art education in our public schools while also providing viewers with a starting point to create change in their own school districts.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results

Once my two videos, *Every Child Deserves an Art Education* and *Art Education Builds 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* were completed, I posted them on YouTube®, as well as the social media sites Facebook®, Scoop.it®, Tumblr®, Pinterest®, LinkedIn®, Art Education 2.0 and Twitter®. I also embedded both of the videos on my Art4Kids website (art4kids.weebly.com) and included a poll at the bottom of the page that asked viewers to vote for the video they think makes the best case for art education in public schools. This non-scientific poll netted interesting results (Figure 1). As of this writing, there are 60 total votes. *Art Education Builds 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* has a considerable lead over *Every Child Deserves an Art Education* with 76.67% of the vote.

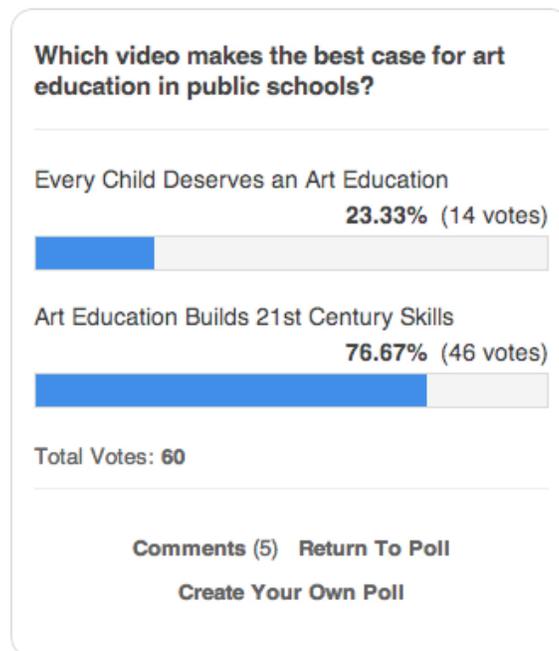


Figure 1. Poll results on art4kids.weebly.com

This result is not entirely surprising, considering the messages regarding education reform disseminated by mainstream media outlets. Buzzwords such as

“critical thinking skills,” “creativity,” “out of the box thinking,” and “21<sup>st</sup> Century skills” are read and heard often. As a result, parents believe that these skills are necessary for their children’s success in the future workforce.

The footage of the art educator and student interviews contained stories and experiences regarding the themes of both videos. It is important to note, that the educators spoke of the importance of art making, expression and creativity with just as much enthusiasm as they did 21<sup>st</sup> Century critical thinking skills for future student success throughout the school curriculum and beyond the classroom walls. As the videographer, it was my job to sift through the answers to my questions and find the common ideas and messages provided by both the art educators and students I interviewed.

The power of the *narrative* lies within both the raw interview footage and in the hands of the person relaying the message. This video advocacy project is very similar to narrative methodology, in that the author or in my case video editor, weaves their own overarching message throughout the subjects’ interview footage. Keeping with the *Made to Stick* model, I knew I had to keep the message for each video simple. Bombarding the viewer with too many facts and statistics would lead to the message getting lost. “Burying the lead” was also to be avoided, as it was important for each video’s central message to be at the forefront from beginning to end. Each video opens with a title page along with a child’s voice reading it aloud, setting up the premise for the viewer. *Every Child Deserves an Art Education* begins with Middle School and Junior High Art Educator Joe Peck (Figure 2) stating, “In my opinion, the world is always going to want art. The world is always going to need artists.”



Figure 2. Art Educator, Joe Peck in *Every Child Deserves an Art Education*

The rest of the video follows this idea, with other art educators and students echoing the following: *Art is important. Artists are important, and children need art in order to express themselves, utilize their imaginations, explore multiple possibilities, take risks, and embrace mistakes along the way.* At 1:34 in the video, student Linnea states that “Art is about colors and imagination and whatever you want to make about it because really you can’t make a mistake in art...so that’s what really cool about it because you can make it your own.” Meanwhile, a cutaway presents the viewer with children drawing with vivid pastels on pavement, connecting a visual element to solidify the idea of creativity done live on camera (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Cutaway to children drawing with pastels

The children seem to be enjoying themselves in this clip, while Linnea wistfully speaks about art as something she enjoys. This is exactly what Diane Ravitch said was important to include in arts advocacy videos.

The second video, *Art Education Builds 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* opens up with a series of students stating what they would like to be when they grow up (Figure 4). This sets the theme for this video. These children have dreams and future aspirations.



Figure 4. Ally stating she would like to be a lawyer when she grows up

Again, following the *Made to Stick* formula, this approach is sort of a “teaser” and an attempt to encourage the viewer to figure out the connection and look forward to what comes next in the video (Heath & Heath, 2008). How can art education help them achieve their goals? Elementary Art Educator Jason Polston, is featured first and speaks about why collaboration is necessary in high school and beyond. Working together is an essential 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skill, and apparently more important than memorizing state capitals. Polston is featured quite often in this video, as many of his answers directly tie together art and 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills such as cooperation and critical thinking (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Art Educator Jason Polston talking about artistic thinking

One of his most compelling arguments for creativity and critical thinking skills in regards to art education comes through in this statement: “Orville and Wilbur Wright might not have been great artists, but they were artistic thinkers.” I included a blueprint of the Wright brother’s aircraft designs as a cutaway during this statement, further solidifying the message that these skills are indeed essential to success. This analogy is important as it ties together this important concept. Most of the children featured in the beginning of video state that they plan to be something other than an artist when they grow up. The underlying message here, is that art is important to all of these children. The skills learned in art class help to build problem-solving and critical thinking skills, as well as encourage children to collaborate with each other and explore new possibilities.

Although there are differences between the messages in *Every Child Deserves an Art Education* and *Art Education Builds 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills*, the videos do share a few common ideas. Both videos mention the negative impact of standardized testing and *teaching to the test*. Both of the videos feature art educators and students stating that creativity is important to them, and that the creative outlet offered in art class is an essential part of the school curriculum. These statements are important in supporting each video's overarching theme. In conclusion, the experiences in art class nurture the artistic and creative potential within each student while also building their 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills. Art education offers something for all students, whether they go on to become artists, teachers or even veterinarians.

## CHAPTER FIVE Reflection

### **The Power of the Narrative**

A few months ago, I had the opportunity to sit in on a class of Dr. Kevin Tavin's at The Ohio State University. On that particular day, Tavin had Dr. Arthur Efland as a guest speaker. Dr. Efland remarked on how creativity seems to come and go in art education, as a reason to teach art. In the 1960s, he said that creativity as one of the purposes of art education became popular as a mode of expression and freedom. He went on to say that creativity is back again, but this time for more "capitalistic purposes." *Newsweek's* popular 2010 article *The Creativity Crisis*, describes a decline in creativity skills in American students while also stating that Fortune 500 Companies desire creative thinking skills: "A recent IBM poll of 1,500 CEOs identified creativity as the No. 1 "leadership competency" of the future" (Bronson & Merryman, 2010). In today's world, creativity is a popular buzzword because it is a skill needed to compete successfully in the workforce. This may explain why my second video is polling more popularly than the first in my non-scientific poll on my website. Parents want their children to be successful and teachers want their students go to on to have successful productive lives. This dynamic along with education form and media spin feeds into the clamor for so called 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills.

Art may provide children with the skills they need to compete in the future, but for many students, it may also be their salvation, as it was for Elliot Eisner. In his landmark book *The Arts and the Creation of the Mind*, Eisner explains in the acknowledgements: "My interest in the visual arts began in elementary school. In fact the visual arts were a source of salvation for me at both the elementary and secondary school levels; I might

not have got through without them.”(Eisner, 2004, p. ix) For those children who struggle in other core subjects, they need a place where they can excel and succeed, just as Eisner did. As Elementary Art Educator Janel Luker stated in *Every Child Deserves an Art Education*, “Every student deserves to succeed in something.” We need to provide opportunities for all children to develop their skills and talents, whether it be in math class or art class. Providing children with equal opportunities to exceed is what it means to live in a democratic society. These equal opportunities should exist in all public schools, not just wealthy ones.

As a graduate student in this Master of Arts in Art Education program, I’ve spent a lot of time recently reading about the connections between creativity and critical thinking skills online and in scholarly research papers. What I found in my interview sessions with art teachers, is that they may not necessarily spend the same amount of time researching scholarly journals, but they do indeed see the same evidence first hand in their students. These revelations came forth during the interview process.

Is it possible for one or two videos to cut through our media-saturated Internet and make a difference? I’m not naive enough to believe that my two videos could change the world, but I do believe they have the potential to make a difference in promoting the importance of art education in public schools. Videos can and do go viral on the Internet all the time.

I believe that J. Ulbricht (2011) makes a valid point in stating that art educators need to change the “master narrative.” Relying solely on student work displayed in school exhibitions as a way to show the value of the school’s art education program, isn’t enough. Art educators have a wonderful untapped advocacy resource in their own

enthusiastic students. Ulbricht recommends art educators write about classroom observations and experiences in a journal. Then, develop “creative narratives” to frame their message via newspapers, magazines and social media outlet in order for it to have an impact on policymakers and tax payers. This method reaches beyond the typical parents who likely already support the art programs in their schools. In a climate of reform and diminishing school budgets, changing the *master narrative* is indeed imperative and we must think beyond the school walls. The Internet provides a gateway to network with many people at once through social media outlets. Good advocates take advantage of this potential audience.

### **Questions for Further Study**

There will always be people who do not understand art education’s importance or impact on students. As an art education advocate, it is important to keep in mind the potential to bring awareness to those who may not have considered the many benefits of art education.

Is promoting *art for art’s sake* enough in today’s climate of tightening school budgets and emphasis on other core subjects? As an artist, I want to believe that it is, but this project has taught me that may not be enough. Should we as artists, teachers, and researchers abandon the idea that art and art education are important in their own rights, regardless of art’s so-called ability to teach creativity and critical thinking skills? I believe both of these reasons are important. In reality, only a small number of students will go on to become artists. However, all students deserve to experience what art education has to offer.

CHAPTER SIX  
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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Hilary Frambes lives in the Columbus, Ohio area and is pursuing her Masters of Art Education through the University of Florida's online program. She obtained her Bachelors of Fine Arts degree from the Columbus College of Art & Design, Columbus Ohio in 1992, with an emphasis in Illustration. Upon graduating from CCAD, Frambes secured employment in a graphic design firm. She then moved into corporate information technology auditing recruiting, where she worked with numerous Fortune 500 Companies including but not limited to, ABC/Disney, Motorola, American Express, and Microsoft. While working in corporate recruiting, Frambes continued to make artwork while exhibiting and participating in many local arts events through the Dublin Area Art League. (Ohio)

Frambes began an [after school art program for fourth graders](#) in her children's elementary school. In February of 2011, she was chosen as the 2011 Ohio Delegate for [Parenting Magazine's Mom Congress](#). She and fifty other delegates from around the country, gathered in Washington, DC for a 3 day education conference, featuring Michelle Rhee, The Gates Foundation, Reading is Fundamental, Jamie Oliver's *Food Revolution*, Michelle Obama's *Let's Move Campaign*, America for the Arts, and also a question and answer session with Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. Frambes continues to work with Parenting's Mom Congress on numerous education advocacy issues.

A portfolio including course work in Frambes' master of art education program at the University of Florida is available at the following website: <http://frambesart.weebly.com/>