

KEEPING STUDENTS ENGAGED IN THE COMMUNITY VIA AN ARTISTIC
ORGANIZATION

By

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A CAPSTONE PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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I would like to thank everyone in my life that has supported and encouraged me to never give up on what I put my mind to; it has helped me get to where I am today. With their support, I've proven those wrong that thought I would never succeed in life by overcoming the struggles of my learning disability, and showing growth over the years. I would like to thank everyone who has supported me in this next step of my future, including my professors and committee members at the University of Florida's Masters of Arts Education program. Thank you for teaching me the different techniques and providing me with formative information that will enable me to be a successful art teacher. Thank you for all the help, support and time you have given me while in this program. It will never be forgotten as I continue to grow as an educator in the field I love so much.

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ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS
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Abstract

My capstone project created a guidebook consisting of instructions and best practices for establishing an Art Club within a school or organization. This guidebook was developed through a literature review of current and past art club organizations, as well as a action based research of a pilot Art Club, including self-reflections from participants and community members on the strengths, weaknesses and areas of improvement. The guidebook includes methods for identifying and collaborating with members of the community, the roles of the group facilitator or educator, the responsibilities and expectations of the high school students and additional recommendations gathered during several community based projects, such as murals, collaborations with local artists, and so much more. Due to the lack of current research and resources available to educators for developing Art Clubs, the availability of a guidebook would be very beneficial. The creation of successful clubs enriches adolescent students' art education skills, experiences, and community cohesiveness.

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This research project follows the dynamic interaction of a school-based afterschool arts program that reaches out to a community and creates a collaborative art project. During the process, a guidebook was created which others who wish to implement such a program can use. It is important that students become aware of the world surrounding them, and this was accomplished through the exploration of individual and cultural backgrounds, involvement in their surrounding community, and engagement in student-initiated community art projects.

Students were responsible for developing and creating community projects and working together to ensure success. The Art Club students are motivated by the arts and one of the goals of this project was to instill this energy into the community as well. A second goal of this project was to simulate the students' desire to seek community involvement and gain insight into their talents and abilities in a sharing relationship. The educator or advisor in the group assures that all students stay on task, ask the right questions, meet deadlines, keep their projects moving toward completion and that the community engagement is successful for my students and the community.

My group of students created our school Art Club together and sought a community project. They found their first project with the owner of a restaurant, who is a supporter of the community. The owner requested that students paint a mural. In addition, the students began to explore other venues in downtown Mt. Dora, where they met an artist in her gallery shop. They began a dialogue about having a show, and the gallery owner offered to judge and sponsor a student art show. The show featured her shop's exhibits, our work and experience in preparing pieces to exhibit and will also bring attention and benefit her son's school for the awareness of autism. These are just a few examples of students helping the community with the arts.

Statement of the Problem

I would like to be able to observe and record the overall leadership of my students as they work together in the community with different projects over the course of this semester. I want to document how the level of each student's engagement changes with each project that is facilitated by the group. I also want to consider and analyze how the community works with the students. As a result several questions emerge for my research. Does the student involvement in the community have an impact on the community members in the project? Finally, does the involvement of the community positively impact the students' energy and appreciation of both the community and the artistic endeavors?

Purpose or Goals of the Study

I researched and reflected upon the dynamics of combining a school-based art club to work on a common project with a community-based art group, and as a result created a guidebook for the web (<http://artclubguidebook.weebly.com>) to provide best practices on locating, developing and implementing a community art project.

Research Questions

During my six years of experience teaching art with middle and high school students, I have noticed the personal and social benefits of engaging students in after-school programs and participating in community activities. Even with a supportive administration and assistance, it is a challenging task for a teacher to develop without specific plans or guidelines. There is also a lack of guidance for ensuring that such an organization will enhance the leadership skills, positive social interactions, and community cohesiveness. The following questions will direct the search for best practices and guidelines in creating this Art Club.

1. How did the students engage with the community?

2. How did leadership and teamwork play a role in an art club?
3. How might the students' roles in the art club change during the year?
4. How does a school-based art organization promote a connection between the students and their place within the community through projects?
5. What is the benefit in having an art club on a school campus?
6. How does it impact the overall student body's perception and acceptance of art?

These questions are designed to allow for a broad exploration of the benefits of this group while also seeking insight into specific outcomes that have been identified from previous research in art education.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

The rationale and significance of my research is that students had the opportunity to participate in a leadership role that proved to be valuable experiences for the future. Students wanted to continue in the arts and work with the community by being a helper in an art class, working on a project for the community, showing work in shows and entering into art contests. The guidebook will be significant in that it will assist other organizations in establishing successful art clubs.

Students worked with adult leaders and peers to establish relationships that are important in building leadership skills, collaborating with others, learning problem solving, analytical thinking, friendships, social support, self-esteem, self-expression, mentoring to children and adolescent development. This is an important characteristic of a club.

Assumptions of the Study

It is my assumption that other educators want to have their students actively engaged in the community. I also assume that an Art club would be a vehicle to accomplish this task, and the experience would be beneficial to both the student and the community. It is also my assumption that teachers would like to have a successful art club on their campus. Based on research (Buys & Miller, 2009; Caterall, 2009; Heath, 2001; Weissner, 2005), I'm assuming that art club students will learn leadership, and other life skills while in a community based art club. I am also assuming that the students will want to take ownership in their projects and want to do more things within the community (Heath, 2001; McCarthy, 2003).

Definition of Terms

21st Century Skills: These skills include critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, innovation, and adaptability. They are skills key to tackling the intellectual and professional challenges students will face in high-tech environments. They also include the social skills and capacities demanded in an increasingly plural society and global world, including capacities for empathy and tolerance and skills necessary for collaboration in and among diverse groups (Jerald, 2009).

Academic Service Learning: An educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of the course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility (Virginia Commonwealth University, 2013).

Community Based Arts Education (CBAE): CBAE is an approach to creating art where the artists and the community collaborate to create art that builds awareness, celebrates community strengths and promotes change in the social constructs of the community (Takechi, 2011). Art program: Program that uses community based art methods that allows the students to explore themes that are directly associated within their own community without the interference of curriculum standards and day-to-day classroom interruptions (Manternach, 2012).

Literature Review

Student involvement in art reaches far beyond personal expression and interest. The creative arts have proven to be especially helpful by fostering positive relationships, academic motivation, responsibility and a climate of respect. There is evidence that the creative arts promote social, cognitive and self-management capacities (Americans for the Arts 2004). As a result this literature review explored the affect of art clubs and student community association, motivation, 21st century skills and leadership. In this section, I explore some of the literature in support of my research.

Community Based Arts is an approach to where the artist and the community collaborate to create art that builds awareness celebrates community strengths and promotes change in the social constructs of the community. The purpose of Community Based Art is to create dialogue among members of the community. It is through this dialogue that the object or event becomes a catalyst of discussion. Community Based Art is any art created with the purpose of engaging a particular community into a larger dialogue with the purpose of generating positive change (Takechi, 2011).

Building an after-school art program that uses Community Based Art methods allows the students to explore themes that are directly associated within their own community, without the

interference of curriculum standards and day-to-day classroom interruptions (Manternach, 2012). Unlike traditional schools-based approaches, community arts initiatives naturally foster social capital by emphasizing the value of collaboration, the respecting and valuing of diversity, extending networks and prioritizing the sharing of cognitive, emotional, social and physical resources (Buys & Miller, 2009).

Art classes are many times a safe microcosm of the real world where these lessons can be learned in a nurturing environment and under the guidance of a nurturing trained art educator. These educators encourage students to be the very best that they can be and to do their very best. Numerous studies across all primary and secondary grade levels have shown that there are common threads of engagement, attention, motivation and persistence, developed through art education, and these skills are imperative for independent success in college (DeMoss & Morris, 2002; Rostan, 2010). Sustained attention and engagement in learning, or in completing tasks, are vital skills for success in college 21st century skills.

There are numerous benefits to the arts, including affording opportunities for students to bridge beyond obstacles by creating an environment where persistence assists in motivating mastery in skills achievement (Manternach, 2012). Much of the thinking that drives creativity in the arts comes from asking the question “if I do this ... then what will result?” Students in the arts are encouraged to contemplate the impact of thinking about possibilities not only during the process of learning, but also during the process of doing the arts. In the course of studying the arts, students must constantly analyze information, techniques, processes and their work so they can make appropriate inferences or draw appropriate conclusions (Manternach, 2012). Learning the arts develops student engagement, meaningful involvement and persistence in one’s own learning.

Research findings have shown that student motivation and school engagement was increased in students who participate in art programs, compared to other groups. Further studies also showed that in middle school students motivational factors increased due to learning how to persist through challenging tasks and mastering skills in addition, those who continued into high school with arts programs had a stronger motivation for higher achievement (DeMoss & Morris, 2002; Rostan, 2010). Studies find that art education develops student's critical thinking skills such as comparison, hypothesizing and critiquing, which are essential to a student's ability to apply knowledge and visualize solutions. Beginning at the elementary level, research suggests that arts education develops awareness and exploration of multiple viewpoints (Noice & Noice, 2006).

Art programs give students the opportunity to address social change and provide personal growth, by giving them the opportunity and vehicle to envision and express various possibilities they may see in themselves and their community (Krensky, 2001). Furthermore, research also connects arts learning with increased self-understanding and confidence, and finds that both the visual and performing arts provide an environment and medium through which students can explore, create and express their identity (Winner, et al., 2006). It is the nature of the arts to be shared. This is an important aspect of the students' experience in art education, since much of the work they do is taken outside the school walls and offered to the community. The circular nature of the art process provides the students with the opportunity to learn from reactions and perceptions, thus grow from the realization of their efforts, which plays a significant role in their awareness and validation of their achievements (Krensky, 2001).

Art teachers prompt students to go beyond their personal best and, in so doing, show students and that their perceptions of themselves is important to how they feel about themselves

and function in the world (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2013). Research findings have shown that students who participate in art programs typically rank higher in academic achievement and have better self-esteem and social skills. This could be attributed to the fact that reflection and active engagement in their thoughts, feelings and actions are translated through the use of art thus making the experiences more meaningful while connections are made with their knowledge (Deasy, 2002; McCarthy, 2003). Student reflection of their experiences and knowledge often gives them the impetus to bring about change in both their personal and professional lives.

Art studies often provide students experiences and opportunities where they can discover their various abilities, receive accolades for exercising those abilities and realize, that as singular individuals, they have unique and individual worth, value and ability. Quality art instruction promotes “students' self-esteem and provides situations where students can actually prove and demonstrate their value and unique capabilities” (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2013, p.5).

Studies of extracurricular activities for secondary education students have shown that the sense of community helps to support their individual artistic and social development. It gives them a way to engage positively with their community, while fostering positive and healthy relationships. While support from the community and the peers in the group help to make connections that will be beneficial later on in life in their work environments (Heath & Roach, 1999; Manternach, 2012; Stevenson, 2011).

Arts participation, “particularly in out-of-school settings, develops in older students a sense of personal responsibility toward their communities, known as civic engagement” (Caterall, 2009, p.1). Beginning in middle school and continuing through adult learning, research

shows a positive relationship between arts study and civic engagement expressed through a greater understanding of local and global issues, growth in ability to generate creative solutions to social problems, political participation, increased participation in community service and ability to affect the community social life through artwork. According to Caterall (2009), longitudinal research demonstrates connections between arts learning and subsequent community involvement and volunteerism in adult life. Community cultural development initiatives, which emphasize interaction, collaboration and creativity via arts-based projects, facilitate individual and community wellbeing.

In community cultural development programs, “members work with artists to creatively express their life experiences and the culture of their community, with these collaborations on a wide range of artistic and creative endeavors frequently generating significant social and economic benefits” (Buys & Miller, 2009, p. 2). Within the field of visual arts, these benefits may take the form of murals and larger collaborative projects that require multiple individual to work as a team to combine their cultural backgrounds and individual talents into one project and an optimal outcome (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2013). Studies that have looked at the outcomes of out-of-school arts programming have shown that group projects develop greater understanding of one’s own and others cultural backgrounds while also developing mutual respect for everyone’s individuality (Heath & Roach, 1999).

McCarthy (2003) defined academic service learning, or community engagement, as “linking academic instruction with community service, guided by reflection. As students reflect on their experiences and knowledge, this often gives them the impetus to bring about change in both their personal and professional lives, as well as within the community agency in which they are working” (cited in Russell-Bowie, 2009, p.2). Collaborative arts education experiences, both

performing and visual, create an environment in which diverse perspectives can be visible and valued, and facilitate cross-cultural dialogue and learning when participants in the arts program are from diverse backgrounds (Stevenson, 2011).

Problem solving, conflict resolution and productivity in the work force are critical skills that many youth art programs address, typically just by the nature of the program itself (Hoeffferth & Jankuniene, 2001). Valuable leadership experiences are provided through clubs, and many students get this exposure when they participate (Heath, 2001). Students who study the arts in their school years are more likely to be engaged with the arts as consumers, performers or creators in later life. Rabkin & Hedberg (2010) found that students who participated in at least two forms of art education were three times more likely to pursue future art activities than those without specific art education.

According to Wiessner (2005), art also helps prepare students for the teamwork, collaboration, organizing and critical thinking which most student in art or in other fields are going to need to succeed into days working world. Heath (2001) highlights the critical thinking, identity exploration, collaboration, organization and pursuit of excellence that transpires when youth participate in artistic groups; “Community arts organizations often help older youths to elaborate their knowledge and skill by bringing younger participants into the group” (Heath & Roach, 1999, p. 2). The racial and socioeconomic barriers that are breached by the work of such organizations are likely to benefit both youth and communities.

Methodology

Action based research is defined as a reflective process that allows for inquiry and discussion as components of the research. It is often a collaborative activity among colleagues searching for solutions to everyday, real problems experienced in schools, or looking for ways to

improve instruction and increase student achievement. According to Ferrance (2000), “rather than dealing with the theoretical, action research allows practitioners to address those concerns that are closest to them, ones over which they can exhibit some influence and make change” (p. 72). My research methodology required me to do observe my students during the projects over the year and analyze the interviews and reflections I get back from them. This will help direct my guidebook and with answering my initial questions; will this guidebook help others schools or organizations build a successful community based art program and will the student continue to be engaged in their community and be successful in life with the resources and skills they would be learning in the art club. I will accomplish this by conducting surveys with the students and community partners. I will also review other art club models, previous research based on arts in the community and journals of the students. “The research we do at the local level - collaboratively - is what makes formal, outside research work. Outside research cannot be installed like a car part - it has to be fitted, adjusted, and refined for the school contexts we work in” (Schmoker, 1999, p. 70).

The Art Club Community

I worked with my art clubs, involving 16 - 18 year old students in the Mount Dora, Florida area. These are students who have joined and formed a group on their own and asked if we could have an art club. Depending upon the overall scope of the chosen projects, groups consist of five to ten members. Most of my students were born in other parts of the United States and have moved to the small-town atmosphere. The group celebrates diversity and includes Hispanic, African American and Caucasian students. The majority are males who needed an outlet to express themselves within artistic experiences. These students’ search began with finding a place they could experience art of many styles and learn how they could share their art

with the community. Some started with what they considered as art and then realized that graffiti art was more than just *tagging*. We are working with other artists in the community and showing them who we are as a whole and putting all our different styles into a piece of art for everyone to understand and enjoy. This study will be in compliance with IRB regulations, and participation will be on a voluntary basis.

My Research Site

This project will take place at a high school in a small community in Florida. The students will be engaged in on-ground activities with younger students in the area and working with the community, such as other artists, exhibits, contests, and other ways of sharing that will be the students' choice as a group. The student base of Mount Dora High School is approximately 1200, 35% minority enrollment, 65% white, 16% black, 16% Hispanic, 3% mixed. It is located in a small rural community that has a large art base which includes multiple galleries, an art center, an art league, and a large antique area. The community is built around its artistic center, and it is often visited for day trips by people all around the state of Florida. The quaint atmosphere makes it a desirable place to spend time outside exploring all of the various venues.

Data Collection Procedures

Mount Dora High School Art Club, consisting of nine students of various ethnicities and sexes, with varied levels of art experience, meets on a weekly basis. All projects are developed and implemented by the students, who take on numerous leadership roles, and facilitated by the instructor. Students were observed on campus and in the community, and feedback was obtained from all parties involved. Participants will take part in journaling exercises and surveys during

their participation in the art club. Community members will also complete surveys to provide their input on the process and experience.

- Direct Observation and Field Notes: Observations and field notes on the student's participation will be taken in order to keep records of relevant information to be used in data analysis.
- Surveys – All subjects will complete surveys in order to provide insightful information regarding their experiences. In addition the students will have the opportunity to express their thoughts about their participation and how they think it affected the community.
- Interviews - After answering surveys, all subjects will be invited to answer an informal interview about their experiences throughout this entire process.
- Photography - Images will be taken (with permission from each student and parent) of each student who participates in the projects. Images will show the interaction of the students working as a team, and working with the community.

The majority of this research will consist of qualitative data, so it is imperative that all parties involved feel comfortable in responding honestly to the questions asked.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data collected will be systematically analyzed to derive findings, and then organized by themes. Once the data has been disaggregated into themes it will be reviewed, translated and formatted into information to be used in the guidebook. The clever man will tell you what he knows; he may even try to explain it to you. The wise man encourages you to discover it for yourself, even though he knows it inside out (Mcniff, 2000).

Limitations

There were several factors that may be seen as limitations of the study. Firstly, the findings of this study are not generalizable in the traditional sense. To further verify the findings, it would be beneficial to duplicate the study in another school with similar demographics and community make up.

Secondly, participants volunteered for the study and this may have affected the results. However, the duplication of this type of program would be voluntary in nature as well, so the findings would be pertinent.

Thirdly, the lack of time to complete an in depth study. Action research is conducted during practice, so close monitoring within the practice itself demands space and time. It is therefore difficult to maintain rigor in data gathering and critique.

Findings

The goal of this research is to examine the dynamics of combining a school-based art club with a community-based art group, and create a guidebook providing best practices for other teachers and schools to replicate the program. Participants were questioned on challenges, successes and overall experience with the opportunity to elaborate. I observed that students were enjoying the projects that we did with the community members and with working with each other. Students learned critical thinking by carefully planning out each project. I observed significant improvement in the artistic talents of the students, and I saw the community and the students enjoying their collaboration and search for meaning in their work together. Students successfully solved problems together, answering questions, dealing with frustrations or attempting a new skill. As the group mentor, I discovered that identifying future goals, having discussion about the organizational process, exploring the meaning of the piece, and reflecting on the projects helped

everyone involved feel like a part of the entire project, and I enjoyed watching them take ownership of the pieces and make it their own.

For the purposes of the guidebook, I maintained notes on questions to ask community partners, ways to improve student interaction and project success, and identified strengths and weaknesses in the attempted plan. With this particular group of students, I looked for changes in leadership and teamwork, differences in artistic and social skills, and how the students used their critical thinking to solve problems and keep the group on the right track. I observed student cohesiveness and confidence increase as the group progressed.

Overall, the students stated that they greatly enjoyed the art club. One student stated, “art club has helped me to encourage my expression in the arts and with learning more about graffiti as an art and not just tagging. [The researcher] looked at the artwork we enjoy and brought in an artist for us to learn more about what we enjoy and to then paint our own mural with a statement for the school and everyone to see” (personal communication, student, March 1, 2013). Another student said, “I enjoy how I got to get more drawing experience and communication skills while working with the partners in each project. I wish I could be in an art class, but art club helps with not being able to have that time for expression. I have learned drawing techniques with gridding, drawing, and blending with paint, and I can express my pieces in writing my artist statement as well for college” (personal communication, student, March 1, 2013).

The positive feedback and outcomes seen in the community were extremely positive as well. One community member stated that “overall I was pleased with the students and their work in the community. I would like to work with them again and do other projects, and I am looking forward to working with the art club in future on other projects and shows” (personal communication, community member, March 20, 2013). The community “enjoyed the

professionalism of the students and advisor and how the meetings and projects got done in a timely manner” (personal communication, community member, March 20, 2013). One student stated that “working with the community gave me the opportunity to show off my talents and maybe get a job working in their galleries, do other projects in the future, and I got to meet great people during the projects” (personal communication, student, March 10, 2013).

Social Interaction

The common thread among student survey responses was the desire for after-school socialization and how the art club was a vehicle to accomplish this need. One student stated, “I love doing art and with each project I got to do, I improved my skills. I used to be quiet and my only other friend was my twin brother but now I can share things I have in common with a different group of students I normally would not see or even talk too” (personal communication, student, March, 10, 2013). One noticeable passage in the author’s field notes stated, “I found that students that normally didn’t interact outside of the art club worked very well together in the time we spent and then continued to spend the time outside of the classroom as well. Students shared an interest in styles and ideas that they didn’t think they would have, until they were put into the same situation to work together— e.g., mural project— and they continue to work well together” (March 6, 2013). Students came together with their common interest and focus on the art, but they developed into a cohesive group that collaborated on challenging tasks and created wonderful pieces of art in their community. In addition, I observed that the entire student body, faculty, and administrative staff increased their interest in the arts, coming by to see the projects completed by members of the Art Club. Teachers began submitting requests for additional murals and other projects to be done on campus. These discussions led to more connections to be created between teachers, students, and community leaders; I received feedback relating to

improved student relationships in their academic classes, increased valuing of education, and involvement from community members to help students build both artistic and overall life skills. While the student body did not directly respond to questions pertaining to the art club, I noticed an increased student attendance at community events where Art Club projects were presented.

Leadership

Leadership roles surfaced as a notable characteristic among participants, which in turn built confidence among participants. Students collaborated with each other and community members to develop and implement projects. Initial projects began as individual processes but relied increasingly more on teamwork as they progressed. One participating community artist stated, “I enjoyed the way the students brainstormed and really formed the ideas of their projects. They really took the time to map out how they wanted to organize their piece. And by holding art classes for younger kids in the community, it will open the eyes of younger students and let them know that there is more than just sports and music” (personal communication, community member, March 10, 2013). Another field note observation stated, “As the project progressed, students began to realize where they fit into individual leadership roles, and the group began to function as one. Each student brought ideas and techniques they were learning from the artist to the mural and helped each other learn” (March 1, 2013). The trust and collaboration among the group enabled individuals to either fulfill the necessary leadership roles or to remain an active participant, and the students would decide which role to take on depending on their own strengths and weaknesses as well as the characteristics of the specific project. One student stated, “with most projects, and I don’t know if it was because they always told me my artwork was great, or what, but they always asked for my opinion on everything we did. I was happy that the group felt that I could kind of be a leader, but I did make sure I didn’t act like a

boss, and I think that I gained a lot of respect that way with my group and I will miss them next year” (personal communication, student, March 15, 2013).

Sense of Community

Art Club participants collectively noted that a sense of community and pride developed among the group, as each project was completed. According to community members, “working with the art club has been a rewarding experience. The club was so supportive of the idea of joining the Spring Art Show and every deadline was met” (personal communication, community member, March 3, 2013). A direct observation from the author stated, “I feel that the community and student responses was wonderful and they continue to flourish as I built the program. The communication, the responsibility from both parties, the finished product, and the work ethic my students showed was amazing and I’m so proud of each and everyone of them for how they proved to the community that they could go above and beyond what the community had set as a standard” (March 20, 2013). Another community member reported that “it was the best prepared and best quality work of any school group she has ever worked with. We were impressed with the quality of the artwork and how professionally it was presented. We received many positive comments from League members and from attendees during the show. We definitely want to continue this relationship with Mount Dora High School” (personal communication, community member, March 25, 2013). Community members noted an increased presence of students, peers, and family members as the projects were completed. I received multiple positive comments in response to the students feeling supported and encouraged by the community members and the overall response of the projects that they created.

Discussion

Based on my findings, it is evident that Art Clubs and community projects benefit both the participating students and surrounding community. Common threads of social interaction, leadership, and sense of pride permeated throughout the surveys and were evident in the projects as well. Individual artistic abilities brought a multitude of levels to the group and each participant was able to infuse their expertise into the program, while learning from others with different strengths. The atmosphere of collaboration was present in meetings, work sessions, and during civic events where works of art were presented.

Participant feedback noted that the group's purpose and each project's direction became clearer as collaboration and individual ownership increased. Students further noted that those who initially joined the club simply to fill time after school changed their intentions once the projects started. Their sense of ownership and pride that came from successful projects completed in their community was noted both by the participants and the community members that partnered with the art club.

Significance, Implications, and Recommendations

The focus of building community relationships is an important key to remember when developing the plans for the work being created. I observed students working closely together as a group and with the community partners. Students initially bonded as a group when the projects began, but as meetings progressed they opened up to community members and bonded with them. It is essential that you have the support of the community and the motivation of the students to keep the program growing. Strengthening internal and external relationships help create effective leaders within the group, making it easier for them to interact with community members they might otherwise have no connection to. My students and community members

demonstrated this as they collaborated to assign roles to members of the group. Each student had the opportunity to demonstrate their strengths in the group as well as work with others in areas they were deficient in artistically. The small town atmosphere of Mount Dora fosters a system of rapid communication, so it is imperative that programs begin with as specific and achievable a plan as possible to reduce confusion and negative influences on project success. Luckily, I witnessed only positive supports offered by the community through their event attendance and informative feedback. Students were complimented on their artistic work as well as their positive behavior while working on the project and at events. Students taking the lead in the projects helped facilitate the transition from school to community environments, and they rose to the challenge by taking on additional responsibilities. For example, students in the art club who are more inclined towards leadership roles were the first to take the lead and organize the group. They reached out to the community members to initiate the conversation and get the group running. It quickly became evident that all the students were able to see this partnership as a way for them to gain a voice in the community and use the projects as an avenue for self-expression. They were truly able to express themselves in their group murals and individual works of art.

Forward Thinking

I have gained a lot of knowledge and insight in regards to establishing a formal school organization which collaborates with the community. I have also truly seen the benefits to all parties involved, and I am even more assured that there is a need to duplicate this type of program in schools. The benefits, by far, outweigh the challenges and constraints that may arise. It is my hope that the webpage that I have constructed will provide guidance, forms, images, feedback, and much more to those who wish to implement a program of their own. I feel that this continues to be a work in progress, and I will continue to update and revise information as more

projects are completed. I have made some great connections with the community, artists, students, staff and parents. I feel that the Mount Dora Art Club will continue to grow and strengthen its leadership within the school and community, leaving an artistic legacy in the school and community.

The limitation of time left the group with a few unfinished projects, so I don't feel that all of the research questions were able to be completely answered. I do feel that with the work accomplished by my students and the community was very highly received, and a lot of valuable feedback was obtained. In addition, I was able to foster great connections to keep the program moving forward. I have future projects lined up and will keep updating the webpage as the program grows over this year and beyond. The students benefited from the partnership by increasing their leadership roles and growth in their artistic ability. It gave many of them goals to strive for and I look forward to seeing them grow and continue their work in the art club.

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Author Biography

Caryn Goldstein graduated from Florida Atlantic University in 2001 with a degree in Bachelors of Fine Arts focusing on photography and graphic design. During her studies at FAU, Caryn worked as a sports photographer for the university and substituted full-time in the Boca Raton public schools. Caryn's first full-time teaching job was in 2007 where she worked for a charter school in Palm Bay teaching Middle School art and coordinating multiple extra-curricular activities. Caryn continued to grow as an educator and moved to the Tampa Bay area to work at a Charter High School. While there she was able to build a graphic design program and grow the yearbook program. Realizing the need to grow as an educator, Caryn began her Masters in Art Education at the University of Florida in 2010. Caryn has since moved to Central Florida where she currently works for the Lake County School System as a High School Art teacher of all levels including Advance Placement. Caryn's other interests include exploring the outdoors, working in her personal darkroom and building her portfolio while enjoying time with family and friends.