THE POWER OF PICTURES: THE ROLE OF PICTUREBOOKS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG LEARNERS

By

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I would like to take this opportunity to thank my mother for her unconditional love and support throughout my education. She is truly my biggest fan. I would also like to thank my capstone committee, Dr. Craig Roland and Dr. Elizabeth Delacruz for encouraging me to “problem find” not “problem solve.” They inspired me to examine the most basic needs of my young students and develop a successful way to promote literacy and stimulate creativity in my classroom.
Abstract

This capstone project examines how picturebooks can support the acquisition of language skills in the very young learner. English language learners are those most at risk if they do not embrace the English language early in their academic career. Using pictures and illustrations can benefit a student’s literacy skills and promote reading and encourage creativity. Throughout this project I researched picturebooks that contained high-quality illustrative narratives that can be used successfully in the art room and Pre-K and Kindergarten classroom. I also investigated numerous websites promoting the use of picturebooks and art to foster literacy skills. I compiled these resources on an online Pinterest board at

www.pinterest.com/arteachertalks/childrens-picturebooks-worth-looking-at
Using a collaborative participatory action research approach, I examined how my collaboration with a classroom teacher facilitated our students’ meaning-making, creativity and visual thinking skills through various activities using picturebooks. The research conducted in this capstone project included documenting young children interacting with picturebooks in both the art room and classroom, facilitated by their Pre-K and Kindergarten teacher. I created an online blog journal, chronicling our picturewalks, discussions and art activities with our Pre-K and Kindergarten students. My blog, C.R.E.A.T.e can be found on my website at www.elaineweeks.weebly.com.

My capstone paper describes my research process, findings, and recommendations. First I discuss the motivation behind this project, an essential need to be able to communicate with my youngest students, the Pre-K and Kindergarten students coming to school for the first time. Then, in my literature review I describe the power behind the picturebooks. As part of this project, I also explored ways to provide young children with opportunities to interact with text and illustrations in picturebooks and the development of children’s emerging literacy skills as they created their own art and verbalized the meaning behind their own illustrations. My recommendations include using picturebooks, like those referenced on my Pinterest board, to entice young children to read and interact with text. I also recommend incorporating the art and illustrations in picturebooks into the classroom and art room curriculums as an effective tool to stimulate and promote children’s creativity. I conclude this capstone paper with final insights on the efficacy of picturebooks in the development of young learners.
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A Picture Is Worth A Thousand Words

Each year in mid-August I welcome a brand new group of Pre-K and kindergarten students into the art room. The majority of these 3, 4 and 5-year olds are coming to school for the first time. Many are fearful of their new surroundings and distressed because they have been separated from their families for the first time. It is difficult for me, as a mother of three children, to watch the tearful emotions of these little people during the first few weeks of school. The real challenge for me as an educator, however, is that many of my youngest students remain silent, choosing instead to just observe, or they do not speak English. Despite any encouragement and support I may convey, the limited understanding they can express verbally frustrates both the students and me. I know from experience that within a few weeks of the beginning of school these little people will acclimate to their new surroundings and love coming to school and art class. But my concern is the linguistic challenges facing many of these young learners may follow them throughout their academic career. What if I could bridge this language barrier in the art room in a child-friendly way in order to make a personal connection with these young learners and help them to embrace their new role as students?

As I contemplated this dilemma, I thought, how could I reach out to these babies, sidestepping the bigger problem of language for the moment, and connect with them on a more experiential level through simple drawings and illustrations? I knew from personal experience that pictures could transcend the language barrier I faced with my youngest students. After all, every artist knows that *a picture is worth a thousand words*. In search of possible answers to my dilemma, I decided to focus my capstone research project on investigating how to use picturebooks as a teaching and learning tool in my classroom. In particular, this study searched for meaningful ways of using the art and illustrations in picturebooks as effective resources to
promote the literacy development of the young learner. In addition, the illustrations served as an effective tool to stimulate and promote children’s creativity.

**Statement of the Problem, Rationale, and Goals of the Study**

Common Core Standards are now in place in Florida for kindergarten age students. The expectations in the English Language Arts Standards identify literacy skills involving *literature, informational text, foundational skills, writing, speaking and listening, and language* ([www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy)). The problem is that emergent readers are struggling to attain the skills needed to meet the rigorous demands set by Common Core Standards. Research and study is necessary in order to improve the early reading skills and dispositions of our youngest learners so that they can become confident readers. However, it is my opinion, they must first make meaning out of visual images that make up their emerging literacy strategies. These 3 through 6 year-old children are coming to school for the first time in order to build a strong foundation in their early learning to become successful life-long learners. I believe the creative process emphasized in the art classroom can serve these young students by giving them a way to express themselves visually. Their art making can support meaning making now and continue to support oral and written language skills as they navigate through their early elementary school years. This strategy of integrating prior knowledge and ideas found in imagery is supported by the content of the Common Core.

For the purpose of this study, I refer to the power of pictures in children’s picturebooks to signify how images enhance the comprehension of meanings intended by texts. Children intuitively understand the meaning of pictures well before they are taught how to read words on paper (Olshansky 2008). Picturebooks provide a natural platform for text and pictures to come together, intricately weaving meaning into both the art/illustration and the written
language (Martens et al., 2012). I believe that my study is needed to explore creative and
dynamic ways to engage emerging readers through picturebooks. I use visual images routinely
in my art room practice to stimulate my students and assist them with strengthening their
comprehension, questioning and meaning making skills. Additionally, the collaborative nature
of this project between myself, the classroom teacher and our students has become inherent in
how I use picturebooks in the art room to inspire my students to create their own artwork to tell
stories.

The goals for my research in this capstone project were to first, gain a deeper
understanding of the role the classroom teacher plays as a facilitator in our students’
comprehension and meaning making through the juxtaposition of the illustrations and text.
Secondly, to develop learning activities that encourage children to create pictures that enhance
their own storytelling. The products of my study include a published resource entitled, A
Picture Is Worth A Thousand Words on an e-book site called Issuu, a Pinterest page of related
books and resources titled Children’s Picturebooks Worth Looking At, a companion website
and personal blog, and this capstone paper that shares my research and findings.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided my exploration of picturebooks and young
learners, using a collaborative action research investigation with a Pre-K and Kindergarten
classroom teacher: What role do picturebooks play in the development of young emerging
readers? How can the art teacher use picturebooks to promote children’s creativity and
meaning making? What are the benefits of using picturebooks in the art room to enhance
visual thinking?
Definition of Terms

**Picturebook.** Wolfenbarger and Sipe (2007) define a picturebook as a book in which the picture is as important as the text. The texts and illustrations are fused together to provide more than either can do alone.

**Picture walk.** A picture walk is a classroom strategy for previewing the pictures in a picturebook to familiarize the child with the story prior to introducing the text. Walking through the picturebook with the teacher prepares the child for reading the story and teaches the use of visual cues as a reading strategy (Milne, 2005).

**Literacy.** Patricia Stock, Professor Emerita, Michigan State University (2012) defines literacy as “the ability to use available symbol systems that are fundamental to learning and teaching—for the purposes of comprehending and composing—for the purposes of making and communicating meaning and knowledge” (Literacy in Learning Exchange, para. 1). While there are many types of literacy, in the context of this project literacy refers to the acquisition of language skills in the emerging reader.

**Visual Thinking.** Philip Yenawine, Visual Thinking Strategy Co-founder defines visual thinking as “…the ability to find meaning in imagery. It involves a set of skills ranging from simple identification (naming what one sees) to complex interpretation on contextual, metaphoric and philosophical levels…” (Visual Thinking Strategies, para 1).

Literature Review

From the time we are born, humans strive to communicate with others using various forms of communication. Early literacy researchers agree that young children talk, read, write and draw to create meaning. They have consistently found that children “purposefully and intentionally make, and weave together, marks on paper, movements in space, and comments
to others to communicate their meaning” (Martens, Martens, Hassay-Doyle, Loomis, Aghalurov, 2012, p. 2). As young children begin to offer narrative accounts explaining their artwork, they provide adults with insight into their awareness that visual forms are related to personal experiences. Therefore, creative experiences in the early childhood years should allow children to explore and manipulate many different materials as they respond freely to the possibilities of visual forms (Thompson, 1990). Storytelling is an essential part of childhood and provides young children with access to literature and culture that they may not otherwise experience. Picturebooks provide a natural platform for text and pictures to come together, intricately weaving meaning into both the art/illustration and the written language (Martens et al., 2012).

This literature review provides an introduction to the power of illustrations in children’s picturebooks. It includes a review of studies that investigate how the illustrations in children’s picturebooks can be an effective tool in the development of the emerging reader. Utilizing picturebooks, educators can entice young children to read as well as develop expressive ways to signify meaning, comprehension and visually give a voice to their own storytelling. The use of picturebooks is not a new idea in art education. Visualizing images play an important role in meaning making and comprehension (Marantz, 1998). I personally enjoy using picturebooks to inspire my own students to consider the power behind the illustrations that they create in order to enhance their own story telling. Learning to listen, observe, and interpret my students’ actions, thoughts, and logic of investigation and construction helps me to understand the processes and choices they make as they acquire knowledge (Thompson, 2005).
History of the Picturebooks

Picturebooks gained acceptance in 1937 when The Caldecott Medal was created to honor the artist who created the images in the most distinguished picturebook of that year. Maria Popova, (n.d.) a writer at the *Atlantic* and an MIT Futures of Entertainment Fellow, is the creator/author of the online newsletter *Brain Pickings*. In her article entitled “A Brief History of Children’s Pictures Books and the Art of Visual Storytelling” Popova explains:

Though pictorial storytelling dates back to the earliest cave wall paintings, the true picturebook harks back to a mere 130 years ago, when artist and illustrator Randolph Caldecott (1846-1886) first began to elevate the image into a storytelling vehicle rather than a mere decoration for text. (n.d., par. 2)

Maurice Sendak, author of *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963), wrote about Caldecott’s legacy:

Caldecott’s work heralds the beginning of the modern. He devised an ingenious juxtaposition of picture and word, a counterpoint that never happened before. Words are left out—but the picture says it. Pictures are left out—but the words say it. In short, it is the invention of the picture book.

(cited in Popova, n.d., p. 2)

Picturebooks did not become popular until the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, when new developments in printing technology evolved and changing attitudes toward childhood emerged. A new class of exceptional artists also propelled the picturebook into modern culture. It was during the first part of the twentieth century that such timeless classics as *Curious George* (1941) and *Babar* (1937)\(^1\) were created. In the 1950’s an

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\(^1\) The colorful images and animated characters found in these popular picturebooks were designed for early readers. They have become classics among children’s picturebook genre.
interesting cultural shift began and the line between artist and author started to blur as a wider appeal in the genre began to grow. Author and illustrators emerged on the scene, writing and illustrating picturebooks using vibrant paint and color in combination with book illustration. This new breed of artist/author/illustrator made an impact on educators and scholars, as well as on children (Popova, n.d.).

With the term “picturebook” now defined, this literature review will explore specific ways in which learning in the pre-k and kindergarten classroom may be facilitated through the use of picturebooks. A significant amount of research examines the importance of picturebooks to learners of all ages, but it would be impractical to discuss the vast depth and breadth of this topic within the pages of this review. For the purpose of this paper I focus on how picturebooks entice young children to read and interact with the text and how picturebooks serve as an effective tool to stimulate and promote children’s creativity (Popova, n.d.).

**A Picture Is Worth A Thousand Words**

Educators are always searching for effective ways to increase the literacy levels of their students. The momentum to engage students in reading activities at the pre-k and kindergarten level is robust, “… more and more, the texts that students are being asked to understand and interpret are not simply words; they are words and pictures” (Wachowiak and Clements cited in Danko-McGee & Slutsky, 2011, p. 174). As Cyndi Giorgis (2012) suggests, “A picturebook is a unique art form, and every aspect of it is meaningful” (p. 4).

For many young children, their first reading experiences often involves the use of picture books (Danko-McGee & Slutsky, 2011). Children’s literature is well suited to the young learner as it encourages reading while allowing the young child to luxuriate in the magic of the picture as the story unfolds. Pictures are a language in their own right, not simply an
addition to verbal language. They speak equally to native speakers of English as well as those learning English as a second language. Beth Olshansky author of *The Power of Pictures: Creating Pathways to Literacy Through Art* (2008), observes, “as a visual language, that runs parallel to our own verbal language, it is possible to teach the very same literary elements through the language of pictures as through the language of words” (p. xii). In order for educators to determine which picturebooks will work best for their young readers, Olshansky encourages teachers to shift their focus from the text to the images in a picturebook. She advises that one should really concentrate on the *pictures*, as opposed to looking at the *writing* for its literary elements. In particular, illustrations that are most informative tell about the setting, who the characters are, what the problem is, what the solution is and what happens at the end of the story (Olshansky, 2008).

Fang (1996) discusses the popular children’s book, *The Polar Express* (1985) as an example of how illustrations can set the mood in a picturebook. Instead of using a bright and cheery palette typically associated with Christmas, Van Allsburg uses dull reds and blues and even pallid yellows along with plenty of black and brown to create a mysterious, gloomy and even somewhat scary mood (Fang, 1996). The color choices in the illustrations help support the eerie mood that is carried throughout the story for the reader.

Illustrations can be effective in teaching about theme or plot, and they may even provide different viewpoints to explore. Intentional or not, illustrations sometimes tell a slightly different or even contradictory story than the text. For example in *Rosie’s Walk* (Hutchin, 1968), the text says that Rosie, the hen, takes a peaceful stroll around the farm and gets back in time for dinner (p. 134). However, the illustrations relate another tale; a menacing fox lurks behind Rosie, ready to make the hen its dinner (Fang, 1996). Here, Fang describes the
interweaving of the language of pictures and the language of words communicating more than either language could ever convey alone.

**Pictures Promote Creativity**

Picturebooks remind us that art is another way to communicate and learn about the world. Galda (1993) explains that as children explore illustrations and develop the ability to read images, they will reach a deeper understanding of literature. Understanding the message of the images, separate from the words has great value. As Paula Eubanks, suggests, “Students need to learn how images communicate social value and be able to identify visual stereotypes.” (p.39). I agree that through both text and imagery, picturebooks express social messages that teachers need to teach and students need to learn (Eubanks, 1999). This will lead to an awareness of how visual images are used in their own creative processes. Research supports the belief that, “picturebooks have the potential to not only secure a set of technical skills, but also to imagine, to think outside the box of conventions and to move into the powerful area where true meaning and aesthetic creation reside” (Soundy & Qiu, 2006, p. 72-73).

Pictures also assist emerging readers to begin understanding certain language nuances, such as metaphor, humor or emotion. In her picturebook *Picture This: How Pictures Work* (2000), Molly Bang explores *emotion* and how the structure of a picture affects emotional response through the telling of the story *Little Red Riding Hood* (Bang, 2000). Children begin to understand the language of art/illustration through the juxtaposition of basic shapes and limited colors used in this classic tale (Martens et al., 2012). The book exemplifies the process children go through as they gain the ability to turn information of all types into pictures in order to help communicate information, thus learning to navigate back and forth from the visual to the verbal. The illustrations and text in a picturebook is that important dialogue
between these two worlds (Olshansky, 2008). Additionally, art/illustrations in picturebooks allow young readers to become aware of the variety of artistic styles and media that artists employ as well as develop a sense of judging artistic quality (Fang, 1996).

**Coming Together In The Classroom**

"What is the use of a book," thought Alice "without pictures or conversation?"

~From Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (Carroll, 1865)

Pre-k and kindergarten students can begin a life-long love of books and enjoyment of reading by interacting with children’s literature as they explore picturebooks. The richly illustrated texts transport young children to diverse places and introduce them to characters that expand their own worlds while captivating their imaginations. The story acquaints children with new ways of experiencing and describing what they see and hear in their world. When young children interact with picturebooks they are experiencing the integral pull between text and image. This could be considered a metaphor for the way in which young emerging readers thoughtfully navigate back and forth, interweaving their comprehension of symbols, text and imagery as they become more aware of how to make meaning of what they are reading. This understanding of the importance of both text and illustration allows children to become active critical thinkers and construct meaning in multiple ways.

Educators should consider the reading of a picturebook an event. Each event evolves as the readers integrate their responses to each element of the book into a complete experience. Educators can encourage today’s emerging readers to use picturebooks as a way to see new forms, images and intersections that are vital spaces for collaborative imagination and inquiry (Wolfengarger & Sipe, 2007). As Cyndi Giorgis (2012) suggests, “A picturebook is a unique art form, and every aspect of it is meaningful” (p. 4). Common Core principles encourage
young students to examine the components of a picturebook, a practice that links directly to individual language art standards (Giorgis, 2012).

As this literature suggests, it is apparent that picturebooks play a significant role in the lives of our youngest students today as we ask them to use pictures to solve problems, think through topics and communicate clearly. During art-making activities, I encourage my own young students to explore picturebooks and interact with the text and the pictures. They love to “discover” and name hidden objects or characters or to predict what is going to happen next as the page is turned. This is what Fang (1996) refers to as “the excitement of a good picturebook…the constant tension between the moments isolated by the pictures and the flow of the words that join these moments” (p. 137). The students truly become empowered to learn as they begin to interact with the story.

I have observed my young art students associate illustrations found in picturebooks with their life experiences and construct new meaning based on their prior knowledge. This is evident in the unique and sometimes wildly creative interpretations the children depict in their original illustrations. Students often combine multiple themes and concepts explored in two or more picturebooks. This shows me that they are using their comprehension skills and exploring a variety of options when they are creating.

When children read picturebooks with limited text, they learn to use their active imagination to interpret and recreate a mental representation of the story (Fang, 1996). I encourage the students to really look at the picture as I ask, “What do you see with your eyes, not what you think you see?” Many of my young students seem to require the art to understand the sophistication of the text, making fostering children’s aesthetic appreciation of art another important creative component of the illustrations in children’s literature. This can be
accomplished in part by exposure to a wide variety of art/illustrations that are coupled with interesting stories in picturebooks. The combination of the two becomes a perfect vehicle for opening a child’s eyes to the beauty and power of art (Fang, 1996).

**Methodology**

The research methodology I used for this capstone project is referred to as collaborative participatory action research (Berg, 2004). The study took place in fall of 2013 during the first trimester of school. Over a five-week period, I collaborated with a Pre-K and kindergarten Montessori classroom teacher in presenting our students with multiple opportunities to interact with picturebooks to inspire their creativity and develop their comprehension and meaning making skills. Prompted and supported by the classroom teacher or myself, a picture walk was conducted as a precursor to these activities. Previewing the illustrations in the picturebook was a way to familiarize the students with the story prior to introducing the text. The picture walk also introduced the students to the illustrative techniques found in the pictures.

As these activities unfolded, I observed and photographed childrens’ interactions, taking notes about the discussion that ensued and the culminating art lesson. The product of my study includes a self-published e-book entitled, *A Picture Is Worth A Thousand Words* on Issuu, a Pinterest page containing links to related books and resources at [www.pinterest.com/arteachertalks/childrens-picturebooks-worth-looking-at](http://www.pinterest.com/arteachertalks/childrens-picturebooks-worth-looking-at), a companion website and personal blog called, *C.R.E.A.T.e* at [http://elaineweeks.weebly.com](http://elaineweeks.weebly.com), and this capstone paper that shares my research and findings.

**Subjects and Research Site**

My study involved Pre-K and kindergarten students at a public Montessori elementary school, located in the southern United States. The students are generally from low socio-
economic and culturally diverse families from the immediate neighborhood. There were 18 students in this class including 4-three year olds, 5-four year olds, and 9-five year olds. There were 9 males and 9 females. I asked 18 students to participate in my research and received permission from all 18 parents (see Appendix A). A new three year old student will typically choose to observe their surroundings and the day-to-day activities in the Pre-K and Kindergarten classroom. At age four, a transition can be expected and they begin to collaboratively within the classroom dynamic. Then at age five, having been part of the class community for the third year, the Kindergartner becomes independent and demonstrates mastery in the classroom environment. This diverse group of students ranges in various abilities including oral, developmental and ELL.

The research took place in my art room and the Pre-K and kindergarten homeroom at the public Montessori elementary school where I am currently employed. The homeroom is one of 14 Pre-K and kindergarten classes; my art room is the only art room in this elementary school. My principal gave her permission to include this Pre-K and kindergarten homeroom for this study.

**Data Collection Procedures And Instrumentation**

I used the following methods to gather my data: I identified research questions, gathered the information to answer the questions, analyzed and interpreted the information, and shared the results with the participating classroom teacher (Berger, 2004). I collected data from students in their homeroom class and the art room. I collected data through informal discussion, written evaluations and observations to determine how to promote the power of picturebooks in the Pre-K and kindergarten classroom and art room, using the illustrations as the catalyst to encourage literacy development. This included journal writing and field notes.
taken by me about each day’s observations, discussion and creative exercises, art making, photographs of student work, and photographs of the students working and participating in activities. As a collaborative participatory action research project I also documented my interactions with the cooperating teacher, and observed and documented through field notes and photographs her interactions with students and the materials they used.

**Data Analysis**

My data analysis of the conversations and artwork by the participants was shaped by my desire to determine the efficacy of incorporating picturebooks into the art curriculum. I used an ethnographic approach as a method of descriptive data analysis for my collaborative action research (Spaulding & Voegtle, 2006). The classroom teacher and I had conversations with students as we conducted a picturewalk. We asked the students open-ended questions about the illustrations in the picturebooks. Once the students responded, I was able to analyze from their answers what they thought the author/illustrator was trying to convey. I was able to evaluate how many students gained a deeper understanding of the story after discussing the illustrations.

I then planned art-making activities based upon the central theme of the picturebook and the illustrator’s techniques and or explored the medium used to convey meaning within the story. I observed the students talk about their artwork to each other and with the teacher and describe the choices used to create the artwork. I watched for recurring ideas, referencing, personal knowledge of themes and processes in their art-making.

I transcribed my journal and field-note entries (Flick, 2006) I then entered this information into a blog created for the purpose of this study. I reviewed my blog entries to determine if participating in the picture walk followed by a creative activity strengthened the
student’s comprehension and meaning making. The classroom teacher and I discussed the students’ production work and creative projects looking for developing comprehension skills. The reliability of this study was checked through the triangulation between the researcher’s field-notes, observations and children’s product work (artwork).

**Limitations**

Limitations of time required an adjustment on my part in order to conduct my research. I originally planned to meet with the students twice a week, for 30-50 minutes in the art room and in their homeroom class. Due to administrative changes made to the school schedule, I met with the students 2-3 times per week for 10 to 20 minutes, in either the classroom or art room. These time frames included student involvement and interaction with the picturebooks, a picture walk, discussion, studio production and cleanup of materials. Other limitations included the this project was conducted with a small group of children (18) during a short time frame (5 weeks), thus the results may not be generalized to other Pre-K and kindergarten classrooms or emerging readers.

**Findings**

The research for this capstone project was driven by 3 questions: *What role do picturebooks play in the development of the young emerging reader? How can the art teacher use picturebooks to promote children’s creativity and meaning making? and What are the benefits of using picturebooks to enhance visual thinking?* The purpose of this study was to explore the benefits of using picturebooks to promote meaning making in young learners, and to discover how picturebooks serve as an effective tool to stimulate and encourage children’s creativity in the art room and the classroom. The student-created art pieces in particular
exemplify the children’s internalization of the art techniques and reading strategies learned over the course of the 5-week study.

The picture walk was the foundation that initially guided me to find the answers to my research questions. However, over the course of the study, other aspects began to emerge as important influences to consider as I gathered my findings. For example, the benefits of collaborating with a Pre-K and kindergarten teacher played an important ongoing role in the dynamic way the classroom teacher, our students, and I connected and worked together during the activities. The collaboration expanded beyond the confines of the classroom and art room to include an art piece created by the young students in a public space at school. This generated conversation about art and the creative process beyond the one Pre-K and kindergarten classroom. I will discuss these findings in more detail in the following sections of the research paper.

**Collaboration**

During my collaboration with the classroom teacher, I learned that drawing goes hand-in-hand in the pre-k and kindergarten writing curriculum. The students are often asked to draw themselves engaged in an activity with their friends or families. Next, they are asked to write sentences that describe their pictures. This research pushed me to explore ways to enhance the students’ drawing and mark making so that they would be encouraged to try to write more descriptive sentences, motivated and supported by their artwork.

Prior to conducting this research, I occasionally used picturebooks as visual resources, but only to the extent that I thought the book had interesting characters or pictures that would promote age appropriate art making geared toward Pre-K and Kindergarten students. After reading the picturebook and discussing the images, I conducted a simple guided drawing
activity with the children that would motivate my young students to create a drawing, easy enough to avoid frustrating my youngest, but challenging enough for the more advanced Pre-K and Kindergarten students. The students were engaged in the art making process and happy to take their pictures home, but I wondered whether they were taking away any strategies to help them make connections to their learning back in the classroom. How could my art program link up with the classroom expectations using picturebooks as a rich visual resource? The answer came shortly after our collaboration began.

Prior to this research project, I used art prints or my own illustrations as visual aids to introduce various concepts behind the creative art lessons I taught. During the research sessions with my co-collaborator, it became clear that the visual format would have to change, forcing me to explore other visual options in lieu of art prints to use in my research. Using picturebooks as our medium to engage our students during the study, we provided rich visual resources in both the art room and the Pre-K and kindergarten classroom, as called for in the English Language Arts expectations of Common Core Standards. The classroom teacher and I selected picturebooks for this study that not only inspired our students’ creativity but that, as she indicated, allowed her to embrace a more visual and creative approach to introducing our young students to oral language, emergent reading skills and higher order thinking.

**What Do You See?**

The question that I ask my students when looking at any artwork is, “What do you see?” When you ask very young children this question, their responses vary greatly; some children see the whole and others see a portion of the whole. Still other children “see” an entire narrative. For example, if we are looking at a lush landscape, one child will see leaves, another child will see trees and another will see a “jungle” where wild animals live. As I observed the
classroom teacher conduct a picture walk, it became evident to me that this exercise of asking the children what they see on each page held the key to successfully using picturebooks as a visual resource. Although the classroom teacher also requires the children to examine the pages of a book during her picture walk, I discovered that the classroom teacher focuses more on the parts of the book, the author, illustrator and the pictures as they relate to the text.

Therefore, I now preface my question and ask the children to tell me what they actually see in the picture, not what they think they see. I am asking for a literal description of what is right in front of them. I conduct a picture walk in the same way (see Figure 1). We discuss the images as individual parts of the whole picture and build on those images to address the illustrator’s choices and the meanings behind them.

![Figure 1. Art teacher conducting a picture walk of Grumpy Cat](image)

This study concentrated on the art and illustrations contained in picturebooks. Therefore, we chose to focus on the illustrative aspects of the picturebooks—the illustrations and line work that were used to enhance the story or characters by showing mood, water elements for example, rain and splashing and movement. In doing so, it became evident to both of us that the students picked up on the illustrative techniques that the illustrator used to
convey meaning beyond the text as the students described the relationship between the illustrations and the story. For example, students quickly learned that a group of small lines near or behind a character indicated “movement” by that character. I have included one of the first examples showing a student’s grasp of this concept (see Figure 2). The students’ artwork strongly indicated that they met the expectations of the Language Arts requirements set out by Common Core by gaining meaning from the illustrations (www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy).

![Figure 2. Original student artwork lines show figure is “running” (3-year old)](image)

**Making A Splash!**

My colleague and I focused the first creative project around two picturebooks that use simple lines and shapes to convey water; *Grumpy Cat* (Techentrup, 2008) and *Our Dog* (Oxenbury, 1994). *Grumpy Cat* is a picturebook about a homeless cat who appears to be
grumpy all the time. *Our Dog* is a picturebook about a dog who requires a bath on more than one occasion. I conducted the picture walk of *Grumpy Cat* first. I asked the children to look at the picture of the cat sitting outside in the rain and explain why he looked grumpy, and they were able to respond, “because the cat was getting wet in the rain,” and “his face looked mad.” I then asked them how they knew it was raining, and they responded, “the illustrator drew lines coming down the page, on top of the cat,” and, “because the cat looked wet.”

After our discussion, I demonstrated on the board how to draw three types of lines; straight, curved and zig-zag, representing the lines used by the illustrator to convey water in both books. Next, I drew a simplified version of ‘grumpy cat’ and we discussed why the cat looked grumpy, and they responded because ‘his face looked grumpy.’ I pushed a little further and asked what on the cat’s face looked grumpy and they replied his ‘mouth and eyes.’ I explained how the illustrator used certain lines to show the cat’s grumpy character by showing them the different direction the lines were drawn in a smiling cat and a frowning cat. I continued to draw adding straight and zigzag lines to simulate the effect of rain and lightning coming down over the cat, referring to the image in the picturebook. I gave the students an opportunity to draw their own version of a grumpy cat in a rainstorm. I observed the students furrowing their eyebrows and frowning to imitate the grumpy expression on the cat’s face. I assessed the students’ success by the lines drawn and their ability to communicate and describe what was going on in their drawings. I thought it was interesting that some of the students stopped their rain lines on top of the cat’s head, not realizing the rain would be falling all around the cat.

Next, I read *Our Dog*. and conducted a brief picture walk. I asked the children how a wet dog dries off and they responded by “shaking all over.” I asked them where the water on
the dog goes as he shakes, and they told me, “it goes all over the place!” As we looked at the illustration of the dog shaking all over the mother and boy, I asked them to pay close attention to the lines and shapes on the page and tell me how did the artist show the water going all over the place. They were able to point out that “straight lines and tiny circles” were drawn on the page and this showed us “the water is flying” and “the water goes all over the boy and the mother.”

The connections the students made to the lines and mark making found in the illustrations in these two books inspired them to incorporate these drawing techniques in a variety of ways during the course of this study. The kindergarteners and several of the 3 and 4 year-olds now include water features such as rain, splashing and puddles in their drawings in a more descriptive way visually, orally and in writing. I have included two examples of student work to illustrate this understanding (see Figures 3 & 4). Other examples can be found on my website at elaineweeks.weebly.com.

![Figure 3. Original student artwork showing Grumpy Cat in the rain (5 year-old)](image-url)
Art in Motion

One of my favorite books to introduce the concept of simple movement to my young students is *Duck! Rabbit!* (Rosenthal and Lichtenheld, 2009). This book pushes children to really “see” by creating optical challenges for the reader to decide whether they are looking at the head of a duck or the head of a rabbit. While the children are engaged in deciding which of these two animals is depicted on each page, it forces them look between the two and decide if they are looking at the ears of a rabbit or the bill of a duck. The illustrator uses simple curved lines to support the visual clues for both the rabbit and duck by strategically placing these lines in the appropriate places to show whether they are seeing the rabbit or the duck moving. During the picture walk discussion, I asked the children if it is a duck, how did the illustrator show us that the duck was flying? They responded, “he used round (curved) lines around the
duck’s beak.” Next, I asked them if it is a rabbit, how did the illustrator show us that the rabbit was hopping? They responded, “the round (curved) lines under his ears.” Next I asked the students how could they show themselves moving in their pictures and they responded that they could draw “round lines under their feet or arms” to show themselves moving.

I discovered that this book, through it’s captivating concept, empowered each of our young artists to use some form of “curved lines” to demonstrate their understanding of motion. I felt that the students needed a little more practice with making curved lines so that they better represented “motion” in their drawings. However, each student seemed to draw with conviction and was confident that the lines he or she drew to indicate “motion” were in the drawings for that specific purpose. This new understanding of motion was evident to me (and the classroom teacher) by looking at their drawings and was supported by discussions I had with the students in the art room.

When they returned to the classroom, with prompting and support from the classroom teacher, the kindergarten students were able to incorporate motion lines into the drawing component of their writing production work. They were then able to discuss and name the activity in which they were engaged in and talk about why they placed the “motion” lines in an appropriate area in their drawing. Many of the 3 year-olds and 4 year-olds also incorporated some type of line work to show motion in their drawings. I have included a photo of a student’s artwork demonstrating the use of curved lines under the feet to show “jumping” and the curved lines around the balloons to show “floating” and “lifting” the figure off the ground (See Figure 5). Additional examples of artwork documenting “motion” in student drawings can be found on my website at elaineweeks.weebly.com.
Assessment Starts With “A”

Even at the kindergarten level, the evaluation and testing of students is rigorous in our district. As students start our Pabic Montessori program at three and four years of age, the youngest ones are given assessments to determine their proficiency levels in all areas of learning. My collaborator shared that she was concerned about the learning deficits that some of the kindergarteners (generally the ELL students) were presenting after the summer hiatus. Specifically, she was looking at the students’ beginning reading levels that included letter and sound recognition. Art and the ABC’s became the motivation for our next creative project, focusing on reading readiness.

The classroom teacher suggested a fun rhyming book that motivates children to recognize their letters. *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* (Martin, Archambault and Ehlert, 2012) was a good visual resource to integrate oral language and art by pairing it with the “magic” of crayon resist and watercolor. The classroom teacher expressed a concern that this might be an ambitious project for the whole group, because several of the students started the study later.
than others, due to the staggered start of the Montessori Pre-K and Kindergarten program. Some of her concerns revolved around whether three and four year olds would be able to sit on a stool and work at an adult-size table? Would the students listen and follow the directions and use the materials in an adequate manner? I remained optimistic and together we embraced an important Montessori philosophy: *process over product!*

Each student was given the opportunity to trace the alphabet with crayons, reinforcing the recognition of the letters and then paint a watercolor wash over each letter. The classroom teacher and I observed the students begin to “read” the letters out loud and we appreciated the students’ enthusiasm when the group began to sing the *ABC* song without prompting on our part. The children’s singing prompted the classroom teacher to play the music that goes along with the book, prompting the children to sing along with the CD. The classroom teacher was surprised when one child, who is typically a quiet observer in the classroom, began to recite the letter sounds from the Montessori sound baskets, an activity that is an integral part of their daily work. I was surprised to see our young students so engaged in the art making process of hand-writing the letters, tracing over the letters with different colored crayons and applying a watercolor wash to create a resist. My newest and youngest students remained engaged even though they had very little prior contact with me, and limited exposure to the art room and the materials. The students listened to my directions, observed the examples of the project and sat on the stools at the large tables working with the watercolor paints and brushes successfully.

This particular project showed both of us that our 3 and 4 year-olds do rise to the technical and creative skill level, with minor modifications, necessary to complete a project geared more toward the kindergarten student. The students participated with enthusiasm in this multi-sensory project, beginning with a picture walk, followed by a creative project, and
unexpectedly incorporating music and singing. The classroom teacher and I felt that this project influenced every one of our students, reaching them at their own level of learning.

![Image](image_url)

*Figure 6. Original student artwork ABC tracing and watercolor resist (5 year-old)*

**The Writing Is On The Wall**

After our *ABC* project, the students went back to the classroom and continued the concept of crayon resist in their daily letter tracing. By using the letter and number insets, the children were creating positive and negative shapes of letters and numbers, in addition to tracing the alphabet. One kindergartener took the concept a step farther and traced the word “name” and then traced her name on the paper (see Figure 6). This was significant because the alphabet template is one piece and she not only selected specific letters to trace, but she also had to line them up on the paper to form the words. This concept was embraced by several
other students in the classroom, and name tracing has been incorporated by the classroom teacher as a natural next step in the progression of tracing and letter recognition.

From this tracing exercise, the *ABC* project grew into a much more adventurous art piece and led the students to explore their capacity to take basic prior language acquisition and transcribe it into art. My collaborator and I decided to try to push the students in a new direction by asking students to create artwork that would be observed by other students and teachers but now I was asking my youngest artists to do just that. Would Pre-K and kindergarteners work freely and collaboratively on a large mural-style project?

This translated into an installation that the children worked on as a class out in public view and displayed on the wall outside of their classroom. First, we introduced our young students to the artist, Jasper Johns, and his paintings *Numbers In Color*, (1959) and *0-9*, (1979). Would they see his work and their alphabet paintings as inspiration to create random letters and numbers in a bigger art piece? Would they feel comfortable enough to do it outside of the classroom? In order to work big and accomplish the goal of this art piece, it would have to take place in the hallway. The wall outside of the classroom was a perfect space and would allow the children to see their work progress. I thought if the students passed by their art piece every day, several times a day, they would have a chance to inspect their work, discuss it with each other and get feedback from other people. I also hoped that they would see something during the development of this creative act that would encourage and develop their visual thinking skills.

They began by drawing the alphabet letters freehand on the 10-feet of brown paper that hung on the wall. During each session, the students worked with a different medium: crayons, chalk pastel, oil pastel and paint. The students drew letters, numbers and their names, building
their marks on top of each other’s by working in a different area of the paper each day (see figure 7).

![Image](image_url)

*Figure 7. Layering of marks and working together (3, 4 and 5 year-olds)*

As teachers and students walked by, they made comments and asked about the work, but the students remained focused on their artwork and I fielded any questions. It was interesting to observe the enthusiastic reaction from the students and teachers as they walked
down the hallway. They asked what the students were doing and some of the teachers attempted to give a name to the type of art that was being created. I heard the term “graffiti” used several times. Two teachers asked when their students were going to have an opportunity to work with me on a similar project. All in all, this project generated a lot of conversation, in the hallway, but also sparked a lot of interest from the other students who asked me about it when they came to art class. This particular project provided our young artists with a unique, creative learning experience where they made art outside the traditional classroom, freely and with experimentation.

While all of the projects in this capstone research study served to support the important role picturebooks play in the development of the young learner, I think the collaborative nature of students working together on the Jasper Johns inspired wall painting exemplifies the true purpose of this study; to use picturebooks in the classroom in order to entice children to read and interact with the text and to allow picturebooks to serve as an effective tool to stimulate and promote children’s creativity. It was very exciting to see how motivated the children were to explore new concepts and work in an unusual environment.

This particular class of three, four and five year olds came together to create artwork that required confidence, trust and imagination. It was inspiring to lead them, with the help and support of their classroom teacher, on this amazing, creative and educational journey. I believe one of the most important benefits of this multi-faceted project was its capacity to reach beyond the classroom, and engage the whole school culture. This project, along with the other projects presented in this research study, are all compelling reasons to consider the power and efficacy of picturebooks in the classroom.
Reflections, Conclusions, and Recommendations

As I reflect upon the collaboration between the classroom teacher, our students, and myself I am reminded of how significant picturebooks can be to the creative learning process of young children. This study proved to me that students enjoyed participating in the picture walks, and that the picturebooks informed them how illustrators use lines and shapes to communicate meaning. This analysis of the picturebook asks the reader to consider “why” the illustrators made the choices they did and “what” the artists were trying to communicate (Eubanks, 1999). Our little people embraced the concept of learning through visual images and successfully carried out each project with minimal support and guidance from their teachers.

Throughout my research I have also found picturebooks to be very useful as a starting point to create and implement various art projects. Examples of high quality picturebooks can be found on my Pinterest page at www.pinterest.com/arteachertalks/childrens-picturebooks-worth-looking-at/. Through the use of picturebooks, educators and parents can begin to incorporate art and illustrations into stimulating and creative reading practice. My daily blog C.R.E.A.T.e., documenting the creative activities accomplished in the art room and classroom, can be found on my website at elaineweeks.weebly.com.

The goals of my research were to promote literacy and creativity through the use of picturebooks as a teaching and learning tool in the Pre-K and kindergarten classroom and art room and to create a blog that documented the collaborative journey that transpired between the classroom teacher, our young students, and myself. I have discovered that picturebooks can promote both oral and visual literacy by enticing the young learner to interact with the images and text within the pages of the book. My research has also taught me that young children, even those who cannot read, can gain meaning from images and apply that new information...
into their day-to-day learning experiences. I now use picture books in conjunction with a picture walk and the students become inspired and their creative practices are enhanced. The picture walk is an invaluable tool in the classroom and art room, helping the students to really see the visual information on the page in order to build comprehension and meaning making skills. This project has empowered both the classroom teacher and myself to include building visual thinking skills in our young students through the use of picturebooks.

Picturebooks are a resource in virtually every classroom because they are valued as a tool for learning to read that involves interpreting both words and pictures. Children can become sophisticated “readers” and connoisseurs of picturebooks even before they know how to read words. I hope this research will encourage other educators and parents to consider the power of picturebooks as an effective tool in the development of their young learners. Learning to “read” a visual story is certainly as important as learning to read the words as the images provide scaffolding that helps the reader become engaged in the story (Eubanks, 1999). By taking the students on a picture walk and introducing them to the images in a picturebook, students are able to gain meaning from the choices the artist/illustrator made, think about what the artist was trying to communicate and interpret how the words and images work together. The world of picturebooks invites interpretation and exploration because the book as an art form is conceived as a total package, a visual-verbal entity (Eubanks, 1999).

**Discussion and Interpretation of Findings**

In the course of this study, I have observed my young art students associate illustrative techniques found in picturebooks with their life experiences and construct new meaning based on their prior knowledge. This is evident in the unique and sometimes wildly creative interpretations the children depict in their original artwork. Students often combine multiple
themes and concepts conveyed or inferred in two or more picturebooks, showing me that they are using comprehension skills by trying out a variety of strategies to make meaning, for example; visualizing, making connections, inferring and questioning.

Reading to children in any capacity is a worthwhile and educational endeavor. By collaborating with the Pre-K classroom teacher, our students benefited from the picture walk in a new way. Our combined strengths of art and literacy provided our students with an invigorated approach to exploring the components of a picturebook. The benefits of conducting a picture walk with the children and showcasing the illustrations in a picturebook became evident in our students’ artwork and classroom production work (See Figures 8 & 9).

Figure 8. The picturebook inspires art and writing
Over the course of the project the children became confident in their drawing abilities, regardless of their naivety or minimal mark making, and were eager to discuss what they had created and written about. The children continue to reference what they learned from the picture walks, discussions and creative sessions conducted. Weeks after the project’s conclusion, the classroom teacher continues to update me, and is happy to report that she observes the students discussing elements in their class production work and qualifying those elements by stating; “Mrs. Weeks taught us that” or identifying the name of the picturebook that inspired their illustrative technique. The students also continue to use lines, shapes and marks to convey *water, motion* and *mood* in their artwork in new and inventive ways, creating thematic compositions based on their own experiences or topics discussed in school. Both the classroom teacher and I have observed the students enjoy re-reading the picturebooks that were
used in this study and seem to “look” at illustrations from other picturebooks with a new perspective.

Through my shared experiences, I discovered that integrating the art and illustrations found in picturebooks into the reading curriculum of a pre-k and kindergarten classroom was a challenge given the time constraints placed on the fine arts schedule this year. It takes considerable time to design a worthwhile curriculum, and building upon a collaborative project requires an understanding of the respective core subjects. I have embraced collaboration in the past and looking back, I see that the classroom teacher “infused” art into their lessons in order to incorporate a hands-on-activity for the students. While this is pleasurable for the children, it is not true integration of art. The collaboration between myself, the classroom teacher and our 18 pre-k and kindergarten students integrated art into the reading program by aligning our instruction to the standards. This collaboration, while not my main focus in this capstone research project, became a driving force and upheld the integrity of the study.

I now clearly see the importance of reaching my youngest students right where they are on that first day of school. Images provide countless opportunities for me to encourage communication and engage my new students. The illustrations found in picturebooks can be used as an effective motivator to encourage our young learners to communicate and interact throughout their learning experiences. By using picturebooks in the classroom, art room and at home, we can build up our students’ comprehension and meaning making by encouraging them to interact with the illustrations found on each page as an early reading strategy. Incorporating creative projects in this process motivates students and promotes literacy while stimulating creativity. I believe that the efficacy of the picturebook as a medium transcends beyond elementary school, through high school and even into higher learning. The graphic novel, for
example, is an excellent resource for teaching older students through text and visual images (Meyerson, 2006). More research is needed to understand the importance of the power of picturebooks on the development of the older learner.

**Significance, Implications, and Recommendations**

The research conducted in this study focused on observing young children in the Pre-K and kindergarten classroom setting interacting with picturebooks as the classroom teacher takes them on a picture walk. Through my investigation, I determined how the illustrations in children’s picturebooks could be an effective tool in the development of meaning making in both the classroom and art room. The goals of the study were to provide young children with opportunities to interact with text and illustrations in children’s picturebooks and to explore effective ways to use these illustrations as rich resources in both the art room and classroom. I hoped to motivate young children to gain meaning from using children’s picturebooks by showing them how to begin to comprehend the nuances between the rich visual imagery and limited text. The results established picturebooks as an important tool in the development of the young learner. The illustrations enticed young children to *read* and interact with the story in a way that allowed picturebooks to serve as an effective tool to stimulate and promote children’s creativity. In doing so, the students began to use illustrations in their own story telling, while strengthening their comprehension and meaning making skills.

**Conclusion**

I have always thought collaborating with other teachers is a powerful way to design and implement lessons that engage, motivate, challenge and inspire children to learn. Research supports that Pre-school teachers have the power to influence early literacy skill development and potentially impact children’s later success in school (Allor & McCathren, 2011). This
collaborative action research project has provided me with the opportunity to expand my art room practices to include literacy strategies. By using picturebooks as a critical tool to help young learners to make meaning from visual images, students can learn early reading strategies. My research supports that young learners interact with picturebooks by visualizing, making personal connections, inferring meaning and significance and by asking and answering questions about the illustrations. Studies show that when teachers increase Pre-school children’s access to books and enhance the quality of how books are read through a rich storytelling narrative, their language and early literacy development increases (Allor & McCathren, 2011).

I am not suggesting that my art program be replaced by the reading program, but based upon my research, I see the need for my students to receive extra support and I feel that I can infuse reading and meaning making with visual thinking skills and stay true to the National Visual Arts Standards. In their book Using Art to Teach Reading Comprehension Strategies, Jennifer Klein and Elizabeth Stuart (2013) help to define art integration as objectives in one art form matched with objectives in another subject area and taught together in a meaningful way, making strong connections. Klein and Stuart confirm my belief that art teachers should be aware of not only the National Visual Arts Standards, but also the Common Core Standards for English and Language Arts, and the National Reading Standards when planning an art curriculum. This project has made me rethink the role I want to have in my school’s culture. By incorporating these standards into my art program, I believe I legitimize visual thinking as it pertains to teaching and learning. As an art educator, I embrace the power of picturebooks as an essential educational resource found in classrooms from Pre-K and kindergarten through higher education. The idea of using these visually rich resources as tools in the development of
young learners is just the beginning of endless possibilities that this genre of storytelling has to offer our students. It is our role as educators to create a learning environment that students find relevant, challenging, and worthy of their attention and effort (Landay & Wootton, 2012). It is the role of the art educator to find the connection between the visual and the goals of the educational standards in order to help students think, learn, create, and reflect. Through this study, I have successfully learned how to implement picturebooks to achieve those goals in my art program and I hope other art educators will consider doing the same. By doing so, we can create rich, memorable learning opportunities for our young learners.
References


Eubanks, P. (1999), Learning to be a connoisseur of books: Understanding picturebooks as an art medium. Art Education, 52(6), 38-44.


Retrieved from: http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/arts_smarts/


http://www.vtshome.org/system/resources/0000/0241/VTS-Montessori_International

## Appendix A

### UFIRB 02 – Social & Behavioral Research

**Protocol Submission Form**

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

<table>
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<th>Title of Protocol:</th>
<th>The Art of Illustration: The Role Picturebooks Play in the Development of the Very Young Learner</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal Investigator:</td>
<td>Elaine M. Weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Degree / Title:</td>
<td>Master of Art In Art Education</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Email:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Degree / Title:</td>
<td>Director of Online MA Program in Art Education 101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mailing Address: (If on campus include PO Box address):</td>
<td>Fine Arts Building C, P.O. Box 115801, Gainesville, FL 32611</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date of Proposed Research:</td>
<td>August 26th, 2013- September 27th, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of Funding (A copy of the grant proposal must be submitted with this protocol if funding is involved):</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scientific Purpose of the Study:</td>
<td>To develop a curriculum and pedagogy promoting visual learning skills in the pre-k and kindergarten art classroom through the exploration of picture books.</td>
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**Describe the Research Methodology in Non-Technical Language:** (Explain what will be done with or to the research participant.)

While teaching pre-k and kindergarten elementary art, I will observe ways in which the students demonstrate comprehension when given picture books as examples of art and literature. I will evaluate what comprehension and meaning making looks like through behavior studies and observation. I will observe peer teaching (through Montessori principles, for example) and individual artmaking to determine if comprehension and meaning making are evident. All participants will participate in the development of several art projects that refer back to selected children's literature. Each participant will work through artmaking, discussions, peer teaching, critiques, and evaluations based on the themes and literary nuances of the picture books. Results may vary. Using comprehension as an intrinsic motivator and art as a vehicle, I hope to see students develop stronger visual literacy skills, critical thinking skills, build oral language, and create a deepened sense of community centered around the creative process. As the only teacher in my district who is teaching this content and approach, my own classroom is best served for this research.

Participatory Action Research methods will be used for this study. I will observe students as they respond to the picture books, engage in discussion about the themes/story line, create artwork and collaborate in peer-to-peer teaching activities. I will keep field notes that document these classroom observations. I will take pictures of the artwork produced during the project. I will have informal conversations about these projects with the students and I will take field notes about these conversations. I will be documenting the products produced in this study in a personal blog. No students will be identified. No recognizable photographs of students will be taken. I will write up my findings in a capstone paper. Some of the photographs of the art projects will appear in this paper. This paper will be deposited in the University of Florida’s digital repository in which masters thesis and dissertations are housed. No students will be pressured or coerced to be participants in this study. All students will have the options to withdraw from the study even after the study is over. No student will be identified. Student participation as subjects in this research will be completely voluntary. No students will be pressured to be volunteers in this project and students will be treated the same as others not participating.

**Describe Potential Benefits:** Increase visual learning skills, oral language development, inspire intrinsic creative ability and encourage emerging literacy through the use of picture books.

**Describe Potential Risks:** (If risk of physical, psychological or economic harm may be involved, describe the steps taken to protect participant.)

None

**Describe How Participant(s) Will Be Recruited:**

Students will be currently enrolled in my class.

| Maximum Number of Participants (to be approached with consent) | 18 students |
| Age Range of Participants: | 3-6 years of age |
| Amount of Compensation/ course credit: | None |

**Describe the Informed Consent Process.** (Attach a Copy of the Informed Consent Document. See [http://irb.ufl.edu/irb02/samples.html](http://irb.ufl.edu/irb02/samples.html) for examples of consent.) Students will be asked to volunteer. Parents will be asked to sign a consent form to allow their child to participate in the study.
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<td>Supervisor’s Signature (if PI is a student):</td>
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<td>Department Chair Signature:</td>
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Appendix B

Informed Consent for Parents and Students

Protocol Title: THE ART of ILLUSTRATION: THE ROLE PICTUREBOOKS PLAY in the DEVELOPMENT of the VERY YOUNG LEARNER

In order to make an informed decision, please read this consent document carefully before you or your child decides to participate in this study.

Purpose of the research study:
The purpose of this study is to examine the promotion of visual learning skills using picture books through art education.

What your child will be asked to do in the study:
All students will be introduced to children’s literature in the form of picture books. They will be asked to participate in group discussions and art making projects. Students will be given the opportunity to work individually or with a partner to create artwork that corresponds to the theme or story line in the picture book using various types of media. Students will be given the opportunity to provide feedback about the books, projects and teaching methodology, thereby helping to improve or develop the curriculum to its fullest potential. This program of study will involve group work, discussions, art making, critiques, strategies to improve visual thinking skills and promote oral language skills. The collection of activities is not any different than what students normally experience in their art class, but could be more personal in nature if the student feels comfortable to share his/her opinion or prior experiences or knowledge. The desired outcome of the revised art curriculum is for all students to develop a better understanding of picture books and how they can help develop visual learning skills, meaning making and personal growth in the areas of visual and verbal fluency.
An example of the type of interaction and or exchange between the student and teacher/researcher is as follows:

Good morning boys and girls. Welcome to the artroom! Today we are going to take a picturebook walk together. As we look at the pictures I am going to ask you some questions about what you see. We are going to talk about how the author/illustrator made the pictures in the book and why it is important for us to understand what these pictures mean as we take a look at the story. Please raise a quiet hand if you have something you would like to share with all of us. I would like you to think about the pictures in the storybook and all of the different things we talked about today.

Next, we are going to work together and draw a picture that represents your favorite part of the story. You may draw and use the crayons, markers and pencils to create your drawing.

Time required:
One-two classes per week for an 4-week period.

Risks and Benefits:
There are no risks expected with this study. I hope to see your child benefit from this program through the development of visual literacy skills and the formation of life-long learning skills.

Compensation:
No student will be compensated for this study.

Confidentiality:
Your child’s identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Participant information will be assigned a code number. The list connecting his/her name to this number
will be kept in a locked file in my office. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the list will be destroyed. Participant names will not be used in any report.

**Voluntary participation:**

Your child’s participation in this study is voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

**Right to withdraw from the study:**

You and your child have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime without consequence. You or your child has the right to withdraw your consent after the study is complete even through the end of the year and after grades are final.

**Whom to contact if you have questions about the study:**

**Supervisor:**

**Dr. XXXX XXXXX**

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Author Biography

The author of this paper is an art educator who has been in the field for nine consecutive years. She returned to school and obtained her degree after successfully raising three children in South Florida. Elaine Weeks has her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Florida Atlantic University (2005) and plans to graduate from The University of Florida with a Masters of Art in Art Education in the fall of 2013. She regularly attends professional development conferences around the U.S. and mentors local 5th grade students who audition each year for the Middle School of the Arts visual arts program in her school district. Mrs. Weeks plans on continuing her teaching career in art education. She lives in Florida and enjoys painting in a variety of mediums, including encaustics, oils, acrylic and mixed media.