

A STUDY OF THE INTEGRATION OF ZINE-MAKING WITHIN A MIDDLE SCHOOL
VISUAL ARTS CURRICULUM

By

BRITTANY BRINSON

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 MASTER OF ARTS

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Chair: Craig Roland
Committee Member: Jodi Kushins
Major: Art Education

Abstract

The goal of my Capstone Project was to enhance the visual art learning experience of my 8th grade students through the study and production of handmade mini magazines, often referred to as *zines*, in my middle school art curriculum. I found that, although the zine-making project was challenging to implement, the students enjoyed the opportunity to create something alongside their peers that could potentially benefit others. I also found the students to be especially receptive to the collaged combination of imagery and text most associated with the *zine* format. My Capstone paper describes my research process, findings, and recommendations. First, I discuss the development of the *zine* curriculum and the improvement of the classroom environment in order to create a space more conducive to open dialogue and collaboration. Then, I describe the implementation of the *zine* project as 8th grade students are given the task to create a “Middle School Survival Guide” for future 6th grade students. Finally, I share insights on the

zine project. Recommendations include goal-focused conversations with individual students as well as student groups, and opportunities to gain input from other students removed from the project. I conclude this Capstone paper with final insights about the inclusion of zine-making within the visual art classroom as a form of reflective artmaking. The end product of my research will be the printed copies of the zines available in the school library and a digital copy available at http://smsart.weebly.com/uploads/1/4/1/7/14170330/ms_survival_guide.pdf or through smsart.weebly.com.

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I wait, with much anticipation as the bell rings for 8th grade transition. I have been working for weeks on preparing my papier-mâché animal mask unit. I couldn't wait to share with my students that we would be doing papier-mâché so early in the school year. After a thirty-minute PowerPoint presentation highlighting animals and symbolism in art from the Lascaux cave paintings and illustrations of Anubis to William Wegman's Weimaraners and parade floats, I was overcome with excitement when one of my students raised his hand. What could he be about to ask? I began to answer possible questions in my head as I called on the student. "Yes, Jose? You have a question?" You can only imagine the look on my face when Jose responded, "Why are we doing this again?"

The above scenario is a play-by-play of what I experienced my first year as an art teacher. It was not too long ago that I was sitting in my own middle school art classroom, yet, my excitement and enthusiasm for the content as the art teacher was unmatched by that of my students. The ever-changing face of education proves to challenge my educational and instructional practices. Art education is not relieved of such a challenge.

Statement of the Problem

Only entering my second year of art teaching, the compulsion to connect my students to the curriculum is constant. I currently teach art at a Title I middle school that rests on the outer perimeter of a major urban city in the Southeastern United States. My school consists of a predominately Black and Hispanic student body, where it seems to me that visual art education does not take high priority within the community. I noticed earlier on as their art teacher, my students just did not appear to be connected to the art curriculum; they did not identify with it. For this reason, I dedicated my Capstone Research Project to making my curriculum more engaging to my students through the implementation of a zine artmaking project.

Purpose of the Study

Zines, or homemade miniature magazines, have been extremely successful in language arts classrooms, offering students an alternative way of reading and writing (Bott, 2002; Buchanan, 2012; Jacobi, 2007). The purpose of my action research project was to utilize zines as an alternative form of reflective artmaking in my art curriculum, creating a more relevant connection for my students (Klein, 2010).

Research Questions

The motivation for my research was centered on the potential of a zine-making project that could instill understanding and ownership in a middle school visual arts course. The questions that informed and guided my research were: (a) what curricular strategies and components are best suited for the design and implementation of a zine project in my middle school classroom, (b) what subject matter, content, and methods of zine-making are most desirable and doable in this context, (c) what happens in the classroom when I implement a zine project, and (d) how does the integration of a zine-based art project enhance the educational experience of my middle school students?

Rationale and Significance of the Study

As stated previously, from the start of my teaching career, I noticed an observable disconnect between my students and my curriculum. My lesson plans, although offering a limited assortment in outcomes, were very rigid in instruction. I was offering my students a choice here and there, but did not grant them full reign on their creations; thus, limiting the pride and ownership they took in their work. It is safe to assume that students who personally connect with their artmaking tend to produce more meaningful works of art. When students can connect themselves to the curriculum, they have an opportunity to engage in their educational experience in more meaningful ways. This is what I remember of my connection to visual art when I was

my students' age. It was something I was able to be passionate about art and found it enjoyable because I was able to meaningfully connect with the curriculum in. Zines offer students limitless possibilities to create in meaningful ways.

Assumptions

I based my research on the assumption that some middle school aged students seem to be overly preoccupied with their personal lives and peer relationships. In other words, pre-adolescent students are very aware of themselves and things that directly impact their lives. Based on this assumption, it was my belief that the students would respond positively to a zine-making project as they typically respond to topics most identifiable to their age group. My research also operated on the assumption that students respond better to art if engaged in a way that encouraged them to solve their own problems; in this case, how to survive middle school. Middle school-aged children are exploring their identities and boundaries at a very crucial time of their development. They not only want to distance themselves from the role of being mere children, but want to experience some of the rights and powers associated with adulthood. It is when a student is met with opposition to these wants that the child becomes discontent. Zines are often used to illustrate such discontent (Buchanan, 2012) which can offer students a way they can connect themselves and their identities to the artmaking process. Therefore, I assumed the students would enjoy being able to use zines to share their personal or collective voice as they illustrated the ups and downs of the middle school years.

Definition of Terms

Title I. Part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the foundation of the federal commitment to closing the achievement gap between low-income and other students. (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

8A. Students who are enrolled in my 8th grade visual arts class that attend art first. My 8A class meets every day from 9:20am to 10:05am.

8B. Students who are enrolled in my 8th grade visual arts class that attend art second. My 8B class meets every day from 3:10pm to 4:00pm.

ESOL. An acronym for English to Speakers of Other Languages which is a program designed to help students whose native language is not English (Catoggio, n.d.).

Zine. A small circulation self-published work of original or appropriated texts and images (Brent & Biel, 2008).

Zinesters. Creators of zines (Congdon & Blandy, 2003).

Study Limitations

Although zines offer limitless opportunities for freedom of expression, the use of zines in my classroom was restricted by certain parameters. The idea of the zine is that the author is given ultimate freedom of expression while using the familiar format of imagery and text to entice potential viewers (Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2004). However, within the public school setting as my research site, I could only offer freedom to the students within the limitations imposed by school norms and rules. Throughout the project, I made reference to the “school appropriateness” of the images and text the students selected. The limitations within public education might have hindered the creative possibilities of some of the groups. For some students, it was challenging to adjust the language of their zine topic for the anticipated 6th grade audience so they omitted information that they would have otherwise included.

Participation in the zine project was also limited to students who were randomly placed in my third quarter 8th grade classes. Although participation in the research was voluntary, all students had to cooperate in their groups as part of my visual arts curriculum. Students selected

for the research project were not necessarily for or against zine-making prior to enrollment in my course. The project was a graded assignment as opposed to a workshop done before or after school, so students were expected to participate on some level.

The study was also limited in time span due to unforeseeable inclement weather. The anticipated five week project was condensed to three weeks due to snow day interruptions. The gaps in instruction not only made it difficult for students to complete their zines before the end of the nine week course, but numerous students failed to return their parental consent forms (see Appendix B), making their individual contributions impossible to document.

Literature Review

Most art education programs encourage and support student reflection (Andrews, 2005). Art is itself a process and educators can gain a lot through student reflections. Most commonly documented as an artist statement, within an informal class discussion, or written in a spiral notebook or sketchbook called an “art journal” or “art notebook,” reflection aids students in making their artwork meaningful (Andrews, 2005; Cummings, 2010). Gray and Malins (1993) and May (1993) also support utilizing student reflections as invaluable information throughout the action research process. In my research, I was able to explore the enhancement of my curriculum through the integration of zines as a form of reflective artmaking.

Zines as Artmaking

Zines are short, self-published magazines usually handmade by one person or a collaborative group of people which illustrate personal, political, themed, or social issues, concerns, or celebrations through a combination of text and imagery (Bott, 2002; Buchanan, 2012; Congdon & Blandy, 2003; Jacobi, 2007; Klein, 2010). With roots in the United States as far back as the colonial Revolutionary War and pamphlets, the zines as they are known today are

derived from science fiction fanzines of the 1920s and 1930s (Buchanan, 2012; Congdon & Blandy, 2003). Today, the concept of zines is widely used in language arts and literature classes as well as in the visual arts. Zines offer a venue for free expression that fosters a positive learning environment where all perspectives may be valued (Courtland & Paddington, 2008; Jacobi, 2007).

As students explore different themes or ideas that are relevant to them, they navigate the zine creation process like problem-solvers, attempting to identify problems, suggest solutions, or illustrate discontent (Klein, 2010). Many teachers have adopted and advocate zine creation in their classrooms through the zine-based projects to allow students an alternate way of developing literacy skills (Bott, 2002; Buchanan, 2012, Jacobi, 2007). Klein (2010) even embraced the use of zines in pre-service art education courses as reflective journals illustrating the issues and anxieties of teaching art. Guzzetti and Gamboa (2004) have also documented the utilization of zines created by a group of adolescent girls adamant on producing literature that confronts gender roles and stereotypes. In this case, the zines serve as a form of activism and leadership as students are given the opportunity to find their voice (Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2004; Jacobi, 2007)—voice long lost to peer-pressure and the desire to please others (Gilligan, 2005).

Young students enjoy the form and freedom of zines. “Zines are particularly attractive to adolescent writers—mostly girls—who feel disenfranchised by peer pressures and societal expectations to conform to physical, emotional, and linguistic social norms” (Jacobi, 2007, p. 44). Students are also attracted to the visual appeal of zines, their portability, manipulability, and accessibility (Buchanan, 2012). In zine-making, students are engaged in the process of researching, reviewing, and producing mini magazines that can serve as a window into their lives and what they find most important (Buchanan, 2012). Art courses offer opportunities throughout

a child's education where originality, creativity, and free self-expression are encouraged and valued. These aspects may be further enhanced in zine-making. As students challenge or embrace age-specific themes through zines, identity formation takes place (Bott, 2002). Utilizing the alternate literacy format of zines and establishing a foundation of visual literacy through art, students can create astonishing compositions that marry text and imagery in meaningful ways. Congdon and Blandy (2003) observe the increasing impact of visual culture and how students utilize images to form new meanings through zines. Zines lay the groundwork for new meanings to be explored and communicated.

Although zines are nothing new to modern society, gaining popularity since the 1970s and 1980s (Buchanan, 2012; Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2004), the use of zines in the art classroom remains relatively new territory. A concealed gem, zines can be the gateway to bolstering student self-confidence within the art classroom as they evaluate and reconsider their own priorities, goals, and assumptions. Working independently and as groups, students are offered an opportunity to voice issues or concerns that the students find important and relevant. For my research project, I have decided to make the creation of a "Middle School Survival Guide" the overarching theme of the zine-making project. Student-led and student-driven artmaking has shown to be empowering, especially for students exploring the concept of self-identity and community involvement (Andrews, 2005). Coupling this desire for identity development with the endless possibilities of zine creation makes this component of a child's art education invaluable. "[Z]ines encourage students to link images and text towards the expression of ideas in a free-form and intuitive manner" (Congdon & Blandy, 2003, p. 45). Using zines in the context of a reflective art piece, the 8th grade students will be able to find the curriculum personally relevant while developing an artwork that has the potential to help others.

Methodology

The goal of my action research project was to enhance my middle school art curriculum through the use of zines. May (1993) defines action research as “the study and enhancement of one’s own practice” (p. 114). Through the zine project I facilitated with 61 middle school students, I attempted to provide a positive learning environment for students to explore and investigate societal issues specific to their lives. The students were able to identify and select topics that had the greatest impact on the school community, and work together in illustrating ideas, concerns, and solutions in a collaborative zine project that will later be distributed to future sixth grade students of the school. An atmosphere of open dialogue was emphasized and encouraged as students worked collaboratively to solve the problems directly impacting their lives and the lives of others. Students worked simultaneously on teams of four as zine writers, illustrators, and editors. Periodically, students were asked to respond independently in the form of entries on interrelated unit themes and topics in a handmade book referred to as their “Art Note Book.” Pulling inspiration from the Courtland and Paddington (2008) e-zine action research project, digital tools and resources were explored to extend the accessibility of the zine project outside of my classroom.

My project began with a “Middle School Experience Survey” that required students to rank a list of issues and topics found to be relevant to their age group (i.e. drug abuse, teen pregnancy, good grades, physical appearance, death, etc.). Utilizing the United States Centers for Disease and Control 2013 Middle School Youth Risk Behavior Survey, I developed an anonymous online survey for my 8th graders to complete at the beginning of the project. I created a list of topics, issues, and concerns for the project that aligned with the concept of enduring ideas (Stewart & Walker, 2005). I also used my prior experience with my students to generate

topics that, as an educator, appeared to be important to my students. The survey asked students to respond to questions about bullying, relationships, peer pressure, identity, stress, family problems, physical appearance, drugs, academic pressure, depression, suicide, and fighting.

After answering specific questions about the twelve topics, students were asked to rank all twelve words with 1 being most important to them as middle school students and 12 being least important to them as middle school students. The top eight highly ranked words were then used as the zine topics for the development of the “Middle School Survival Guide.” For my 8A class, the top eight words chosen were identity, bullying, peer pressure, relationships, stress, family problems, fighting, and physical appearance. My 8B class identified identity, bullying, peer pressure, academic pressure, stress, family problems, fighting, and physical appearance as their highly ranked topics. The fact that 7 out of 8 topics were identical between the two classes suggests an appropriate assumption of beliefs and values of my 8th grade students.

Based on student response, I created a plan of action that incorporated both traditional and contemporary art making techniques while connecting to the overarching theme of zine production. Students were able to read and analyze an assortment of zines I was able to find online (See Appendix A). It was critical that students became well-versed in the zine format to ensure clear expectations of the project. I introduced students to various collaging, photography, and digital art techniques most associated with zine creation. Ultimately, I had planned to publish the zines as a series where each topic would function as an independent zine. However, due to time constraints, the topics were altered into page spreads that would compile a single publication distributed throughout the school in print and digital formats.

Subject Selection

The main subjects of the study are 61 students enrolled in my visual art 8th grade class. I teach at a predominately Black and Hispanic Title I school where 86% of students receive free or reduced lunch (need reference). My study group consisted of 61 students from two separate classes where 26 students are female, 35 are male, 7 are identified as English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students, 2 are Special Education, 51% Hispanic, 30% Black, 10% Asian, 8% White (Non-Hispanic), and 1% multi-racial.

Research Site and Description

The site of the research was my middle school art classroom. Student schedules are computer generated based on enrollment requirements, credits needed to graduate, and maximum class size. Students enrolled in art attend the course daily for 50 minutes a day for a nine week period. Within the public school setting, my classroom was subject to planned interruptions in the school day due to assemblies, testing, fire drills, and the like as well unforeseen interruptions like late buses, inclement weather, and false alarms.

Data Collection Procedures and Instrumentation

Action research was my main research methodology where I approached written and verbal student responses through thematic analysis, adjusting my curriculum when necessary to align with my research questions and goals. The student survey (see Appendix A) was the first piece of collected data that set the stage for the zine project. Art Note Book entries would later be used to gauge student understanding of the curriculum while supporting the use of zines are reflective artmaking.

Over the course of the project, data was collected in the form of student responses and student work. I also collected data in form of field notes from informal classroom discussions and student interactions, observations of student collaboration, teacher resources and handouts,

and the completed zine project. Students were asked to respond to an interim prompt in an individual Art Note Book each student created in class. The prompt was “What is one thing you know now that you wish you had known as a 6th grade student?” The students were informed that their response did not have to relate to their specific topic. I used member checking during class and group discussions by restating student responses for clarity to ensure that my observations were congruent with participant responses and discussions (Doyle, 2007). Students were also encouraged to record any thoughts, feelings, images, and text that are stimulated through the zine-making process. Some students would later use their thoughts in their zine illustrations in the form of poems or creative writing. Individual student responses were recorded in an excel document for reference and analysis.

Data Analysis

According to the Middle School Student Experience Survey, 93% of my 8A class ranked “identity” and “stress” to be within their top eight. The other six words with highest percentages of rankings were bullying, peer pressure, relationships, family issues, conflict, and physical appearance. My 8B class of 28 respondents (See Figure 1) also ranked “identity” as a top priority. The other words highly ranked were physical appearance, stress, peer pressure, bullying, family issues, conflict, and academic pressure in no specific order. It was noted that both classes identified the 7 out of 8 of the same topics to be highly important.

I was able to gather the Art Note Book responses in my hand-written teacher research journal. I used the thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) approach to analyze the data through “recurring themes and patterns of intentions and behaviors” (Subramaniam, 2010, p. 943). Commonalities were noted and recorded. I used an excel spreadsheet to document individual student responses to note patterns, as well as identify any areas of the project that require re-

teaching or adjustments. As an outsider of the youth culture, analyzing the Art Note Book entries both confirmed and contested my assumptions of the zine curriculum. I used member checking with independent students as well as during class discussions for clarity.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Identity	53.57% 15	3.57% 1	7.14% 2	0.00% 0	21.43% 6	7.14% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	3.57% 1	3.57% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	28
Stress	3.57% 1	28.57% 8	0.00% 0	10.71% 3	7.14% 2	14.29% 4	10.71% 3	7.14% 2	3.57% 1	7.14% 2	3.57% 1	3.57% 1	28
Bullying	7.14% 2	3.57% 1	21.43% 6	7.14% 2	0.00% 0	7.14% 2	10.71% 3	3.57% 1	10.71% 3	3.57% 1	14.29% 4	10.71% 3	28
Depression	3.57% 1	10.71% 3	10.71% 3	14.29% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	14.29% 4	7.14% 2	10.71% 3	3.57% 1	17.86% 5	7.14% 2	28
Family problems	3.57% 1	3.57% 1	14.29% 4	21.43% 6	17.86% 5	7.14% 2	7.14% 2	7.14% 2	0.00% 0	10.71% 3	3.57% 1	3.57% 1	28
Fighting	0.00% 0	10.71% 3	14.29% 4	10.71% 3	10.71% 3	21.43% 6	3.57% 1	0.00% 0	17.86% 5	7.14% 2	3.57% 1	0.00% 0	28
Peer pressure	7.14% 2	7.14% 2	0.00% 0	3.57% 1	10.71% 3	21.43% 6	25.00% 7	7.14% 2	7.14% 2	7.14% 2	0.00% 0	3.57% 1	28
Physical appearance	3.57% 1	7.14% 2	3.57% 1	7.14% 2	7.14% 2	3.57% 1	10.71% 3	35.71% 10	7.14% 2	3.57% 1	7.14% 2	3.57% 1	28
Drugs	3.57% 1	7.14% 2	3.57% 1	3.57% 1	0.00% 0	14.29% 4	3.57% 1	3.57% 1	17.86% 5	7.14% 2	10.71% 3	25.00% 7	28
Academic Pressure	3.57% 1	0.00% 0	7.14% 2	14.29% 4	21.43% 6	0.00% 0	7.14% 2	10.71% 3	3.57% 1	25.00% 7	3.57% 1	3.57% 1	28
Suicide/Self-injury	7.14% 2	3.57% 1	3.57% 1	3.57% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	3.57% 1	7.14% 2	10.71% 3	17.86% 5	25.00% 7	17.86% 5	28
Relationships	3.57% 1	14.29% 4	14.29% 4	3.57% 1	3.57% 1	3.57% 1	3.57% 1	10.71% 3	7.14% 2	3.57% 1	10.71% 3	21.43% 6	28

Figure 1. Middle School Student Experience Survey Analysis for 8B Respondents

Limitations

As mentioned earlier, a major limitation in regard to data analysis was the severe time constraint created by school closing due to inclement weather. At the end of the course, students were asked to answer three questions about the project: what did you enjoy about the project? What was most challenging? And what would you do differently? For the last question an overwhelming amount of students responded that they wish they had more time on the project or that they had worked harder or faster. I wanted to ensure my students were able to finish the project, so some of the pre-planned discussions and activities had to be cut short or omitted to maximize production time. Students confirmed that they would have appreciated additional time

on their projects, but getting more than one student per group to come before or after school was difficult.

The zine format consisted of each group developing a two page spread consisting of two 8 ½” x 11” sheets of paper. The final pages were copied front and back revealing a new topic once the pages were turned. This format possessed certain boundaries as students could only use two pages that would always be seen together for the contents of their topic as opposed to each group creating their own mini zines. The emphasis on the use of the digital and photographic images and handwritten elements contributed to the overall look of the zines. My research only considers the student responses to this particular zine format. Given a different format, it is expected the students would respond differently to the artmaking. Thus, the students would create something that looked much different.

Findings

The goal of my Capstone Project was to implement a zine-based art project with my 8th grade classes, and document student engagement and interaction. What exactly happens in the classroom when I implement a zine project in an attempt to enhance the educational experience of my middle school students through a relevant and doable curriculum? Although challenging, the students enjoyed the opportunity to create something alongside their peers that could potentially benefit others. I also found the students to be especially receptive to the collaged combination of imagery and text most associated with the zine style.

Four Heads are Better than One

By placing students in groups of four, students were able to communicate and share their perspectives and individual research findings about the selected topic. Of the eight words chosen per class, each student selected their top five and wrote the words on ½ an index card. I made a conscious effort to place the students within their top three choices to ensure personal interest

and engagement throughout the course of the project. It also revealed the different ways different students assigned meaning to the same word. The “Identity” group, for example, had two very different ideas of what was considered *identity*. The group was able to combine their thoughts into one cohesive illustration, using a poem to motivate 6th graders as they navigate through their newfound identities as middle schoolers. Group roles and responsibilities were also discussed in detail at the onset of the project to ensure every member was prepared to play a contributing role in their group. It was important for the roles to rotate so students felt the workload was shared amongst all students. It also allowed every student to take ownership in what the group was creating. Students took on the role of negotiator as they attempted to make everyone’s ideas and views valid for the good of the group. On the exit survey, several students commented that they enjoyed being able to create something with their peers. Many students also commented that they found enjoyment in the project due to the fact that their work had the potential to help others. The zines offered the students a voice as well as insight to their own perspective, which helped them build the connection between themselves and their artmaking.

Zinesters in the Making

Another critical finding was the receptiveness to the zine format of combined imagery and text. The students enjoyed collaging and appropriating images from magazines and the Internet to make their zine page spreads. To familiarize the students with collage, I presented them with a postcard activity with advertisements from magazines. Each student received an advertisement page from a magazine and was given the task of creating new meaning using only the images and text on either side of their advertisement. Only very few students were familiar with collaging. Others expressed frustration in determining which text or images to choose as if there was one correct way to utilize the images available. I showed them images of Romare

Bearden's work and examples of zine collages that utilized overlapping images and appropriated typography. Appropriation of text and imagery is a critical component of zine-making, so the postcard activity assisted students in thinking in these terms. Students also became well-versed in utilizing technology to copy, cut, crop, and paste digital images. This was especially challenging for my students who lacked basic computer skills. Much time was spent familiarizing students with the technological tools, which took away from time they could have used on the creation of their zines.

Findings Summary

All in all, the zine project proved to be quite successful. Students most desired collaborating with their peers to create something that could, in essence, tell their story to others. By reflecting on their own experience as middle school students to inform their artmaking, students were able to make a relevant connection to their artwork. Students also found the collaging technique most associated with zine-making to be enjoyable and doable. On the exit survey, students commented that they found the collaging to be challenging because they couldn't always find the right pictures, enjoyable because they liked appropriating the high gloss pictures from magazines, and, given another chance, they would have selected different pictures, included more pictures, or arranged their illustrations differently. Condensing their project from an eight-page mini magazine to a two-page spread required students to include only the most useful images and text about their topic. Even so, the students were still drawn to the project and the seemingly limitless possibilities to create freely within the context of the classroom. A couple students would later share with me their own mini zines they created once they were no longer in my class (See Figures 2 and 3).



Figure 2. Student work: Relationships

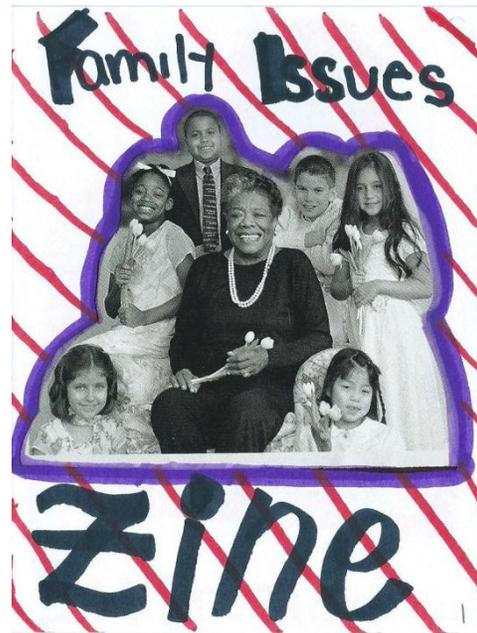


Figure 3. Student work: Family Issues

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of my research was to connect my students to an engaging and relevant art curriculum through the use of zines. Zines are creative gateways to self-expression; “cheaply made printed forms of expression on any subject” (Todd & Watson, 2006, p. 12). Students are naturally drawn to zines and, with endless possibilities, zines are easily adapted to suite any classroom’s need. Through action research and a thematic approach to the data, I was able to explore the dialogue and happenings of my classroom with the implementation of the zine project. I found students to enjoy the collaboration. The students were highly receptive to the combination of imagery and text. I will continue this paper with a more detailed discussion and interpretation of the findings, as well as provide the significance and implications of the study along with recommendations.

Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

Despite the interruptions due to inclement weather during the process of my Capstone Project, my students found zine-making to be an interesting and relevant way to produce art. Meaningful artmaking was made possible through the use of zines. Collaboration amongst students and the pressure to create something that would be left for 6th graders, as if leaving a legacy for the school to remember them by, pushed students beyond their limits. The limitless possibilities challenged students to create some extraordinary for others to see. Groups that particularly excelled during this project are groups where all four members were placed in their 1st topic choice. However, I feel the other students were still motivated because of the overarching theme that something they create could and would help others. Students also enjoyed using multi-media for their illustrations; I even had a group that made additional effort to put their hand in their creation by having every member create an original drawing or write statements by hand.

Significance, Implications, and Recommendations

As a 21st century art educator, it concerns me to see that my students felt disconnected with a subject that I enjoyed so much at their age. It concerns me even more to see that my art curriculum, a curriculum that I consider to be fresh and new, was not quite holding their interest the way I had hoped. Zines are easy to make, easily accessible, and naturally appealing to young viewers. Zines are also adaptable, proving they can be just as beneficial in the art classroom as they have been in other content areas. As an artist and educator, I value documentation and personal reflection of my work. Zines can offer students the same possibilities.

The implications of this study suggest that any art teacher can connect his or her students to art in meaningful ways by assigning a zine project. The classroom environment must be

shaped to encourage and support open dialogue. It is critical to foster this exchange with your students so they will feel invested in the classroom and with a zine-based project.

I recommend gauging the maturity level and personal interests of your students before introducing them to zines. Also, familiarize the students with the techniques you will be using in the projects leading up to the zine-making. My students have limited proficiency in Microsoft Word, so I planned a project to familiarize them with the tools so they would feel more comfortable manipulating their zine spreads on the computer. Also explore the visual imagery most available to students in the form of magazines, advertisements, flyers, and websites as a gateway to instruction. The mini postcard was great practice for students who never created a collage before. Perhaps having the students appropriate each other's magazine images or require the students to photograph and then re-work the compositions will help students in understanding how the meaning of their work can change.

What's Next?

As I previously mentioned, my project was drastically cut short due to the amount of school closings due to inclement weather. Due to this, I had to reduce the amount of time spent on the assignments that prefaced the zine-making. Again, I wanted my students to become familiar with utilizing the tools on the computer to assist in the creation of their zine. I was limited in the amount of magazine illustrations available to my students, so having the cropping and altering capabilities with digital imagery allowed students to appropriate images from the Internet they might have not otherwise had access to.

In the future, I plan on having students work simultaneously on a collaborative zine project while working on an individual zine. The group zine, similar to the "Middle School Survival Guide," would address an issue or problem in which the students would like to share

insight or provide solutions. The individual zine would be documentation of the zine-making process including terminology, artists' inspirations, and student thoughts about zines. Artist exemplars include Romare Bearden, Guerrilla Girls, Barbara Kruger, and Jenny Holzer.

Although I am fond of the two-page spread, I am also considering allowing students to select the format of their own zines. This will require students to create and explore the different formats to see which ones are best suitable for their concept or design.

Conclusion

From researching their zine topics to creating their zine spreads, I observed a noticeable increase in the level of engagement of my 8th grade students. Developing the "Middle School Survival Guide" (http://smsart.weebly.com/uploads/1/4/1/7/14170330/ms_survival_guide.pdf) extended students a voice and ownership of the artmaking process. This project is easily adaptable to the other grade levels or themes. I plan on using mini zines in my other classes to replace the Art Note Book. Like an Altered Book or Art Journal, the zine can be a personal account of the visual art experience, making viable connections between the student and artmaking in a context that students enjoy. Requiring the use of text with the images also encourage students to utilize meaningful imagery; imagery in which they identify or connect.

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Appendix A

A1. Sample of Online Survey Questions retrievable at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/S66FGV9>.

1. The following questions are about identity. Identity may include your gender, race, religion, physical appearance, ability, beliefs, culture, etc.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
How often have you considered your identity on a daily basis?	<input type="radio"/>				
How often would you say your identity is important to you as a middle school student?	<input type="radio"/>				

2. The following questions are about academics and education.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
How often do you consider academics to be important?	<input type="radio"/>				
How often is your academic progress brought up at home by someone other	<input type="radio"/>				

Note. The questions from the student survey are an adaptation of the CDC Middle School Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2013) accessed at http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/yrbs/pdf/questionnaire/2013_ms_questionnaire.pdf.

A2. List of Zine Resources

Zine	Author	Date	URL
<i>30 Zine Ideas</i>	Gracie Sparkles	February 2013	https://www.etsy.com/listing/111672475/30-zine-ideas-how-to-make-a-zine-zine
<i>How to Make A Zine</i>	Brittany Brinson	January 2014	NA
<i>In-Between</i>	Aijung Kim	October 2011	https://www.etsy.com/listing/101105928/zine-in-between-travel-zine-perzine?ref=shop_home_active_8
<i>Letter to my Younger Self #2</i>	Erin Leslie	N.D.	https://www.etsy.com/listing/180290992/letter-to-my-younger-self-zine-issue-2?ref=shop_home_active_3
<i>We Carry Each Other</i>	Aijung Kim	November /December 2007	http://bit.ly/wecarryeachother
<i>Zine on Zines</i>	Christina Loise	October 2012	https://www.etsy.com/transaction/178407954?ref=fb2_tnx_image

Appendix B

B1. Sample of IRB Letter

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am a graduate student in the Art Education program at the University of Florida, conducting a curriculum project under the supervision of Dr. Craig Roland and Dr. Jodi Kushins. The purpose of this study is to observe and analyze the responses and interactions of 8th grade students during a student-centered, zine art project. The results of the study may show a link between zine artmaking and student engagement. These results may not directly help your child today, but may benefit future students. With your permission, I would like to ask your child to be a participant in this project.

Your child has been selected to participate based on enrollment in my 8th grade class. Your child, along with 23-29 other students will work collaboratively on a zine project starting in February as part of the 8th grade Visual Arts curriculum. The project will take approximately 4 weeks. Students will be given the task of constructing a series of images that will be compiled into a zine- a short, handmade magazine

B2. Sample of IRB Parental Consent Form

Parental Consent Form for Participation in Research

I give consent for my child _____ to participate in the research titled, "A Study of the Integration of Zine Making within a Middle School Visual Arts Curriculum" which is being conducted by Brittany Brinson as part of the Masters of Art Education program, University of Florida. I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary; I or my child can withdraw consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can be identified as my child's, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

1. The reason for the research is to investigate zine artmaking within the 8th grade curriculum.
2. The benefits that my child may expect from the research are: increased engagement as well as knowledge and understanding of specific artmaking processes.
3. The procedures are as follows: The research project will take place over a period of four weeks. During that time, the researcher will be collecting data using a variety of instruments and techniques (questionnaire (Q), survey (S), observation (O), document analysis (DA)). I understand that the researcher might be asking my child to participate using a combination of these data collection instruments and techniques.
4. No discomforts or stresses are foreseen.
5. No risks are foreseen. My child's participation is completely voluntary. I understand that my child will be given alternative, equivalent exercises if I or my child does not consent to participation. This choice

Author Biography

Brittany Brinson is a visual arts educator currently teaching at a Title I school near a major urban city in Georgia. She received a Bachelor's of Fine Arts in Art Education from the University of Georgia in 2011 and is currently enrolled in the University of Florida's Masters of Art in Education program. As the youngest of four children, Brittany made a conscious effort to set herself apart from her siblings. Brittany claimed art as her own. The process of creating an idea in one's mind and having the ability to grant that idea life on a sheet of paper was inspiring, drawing Brittany towards a career in Art Education.

Brittany encourages her students to "try" and to "take risks" with their artmaking. Art is in the process, and Brittany emphasizes the importance of the process to her students as their skills emerge and develop every day. Although Brittany has been faced with numerous challenges, she finds her position to be just as rewarding.

When she is not working on graduate school assignments or preparing for her own students, Brittany enjoys painting and using mixed media to explore new modes of expression. She hopes to continue to develop herself and her curriculum to benefit her current and future students. Her research interests include using visual arts as a form of self-expression, incorporating cultural awareness in artmaking, and the development of professional learning communities for art educators.