PROMOTING LITERACY IN THE ART CLASSROOM

By

CARRIE GRUNNET

A PROJECT IN LIEU OF THESIS PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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Chair: Dr. Craig Roland
Committee Member: Dr. Michelle Tillander
Major: Art Education

Abstract

The aim of my Project in Lieu of Thesis was to explore how the language arts can be taught effectively through the visual arts with the goal of developing and implementing a visual poetry art lesson at P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School in Gainesville. Through the implementation of art lesson combining image and text using iPad technology, I was able to promote literacy skills in a fifth grade art classroom. In this supporting paper, I will describe my project in more detail. First I designed my lesson referencing the Next Generation Standards and Common Core Literacy Standards. Next, I arranged to teach my lesson to three groups of fifth graders over the course of three weeks at a local elementary school in Gainesville, FL. Finally, I share my insights in this paper regarding my visual poetry art lesson with recommendations.
about the inclusion of the language arts in the art classroom as a way of promoting literacy. The end product of my research will be the artworks made by the students, which will be shown in a Spring Student Art Exhibition at P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School and on a blog at http://carriegrunnet.tumblr.com.
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Introduction

One afternoon while I volunteering in the children’s art area at a Downtown Festival and Art Show in Gainesville, Florida, I positioned myself at the bookmaking table with the hopes of helping a few children create storybooks. I had a young boy come to my table with his mother. He sat down and we began to make his book. He paused at the cover. He wanted to spell the word “the” but couldn’t remember how. He became frustrated but his mother broke down the word into sounds. After he thought it over, he proudly announced that he knew how to spell the word, and wrote each letter in a different color. He said how much fun he was having and that he demanded that he stay till he finished writing and illustrating his book.

On that day, I was lucky enough to witness how the arts can be an inspiration for learning. Not only did the boy learn to spell a new word, he used his newly acquired skills to tell a story. Art is what engaged this boy to learn a new word. The boy was so excited to make his book that he struggled though learning a new word so he could continue creating his story. As I watched him create his book, I wondered what other types of connections could I create to join the visual arts and the language arts? Could art be the primary vehicle of an integrated curriculum that takes concepts learned in Language Arts class and reinforce it in an art classroom?

Seeing firsthand how art inspires learning coupled with the experiences I have in the education course I took over one summer about teaching reading, inspired me to research how the language arts can be taught through the visual arts.

Statement of the Problem

Adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st century will read and write more than any other time in human history. They will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs, run
their households, act as citizens, and conduct their personal lives (Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999). Literacy is very important to our students’ lives. It is the key to their happiness and success. “Almost seven thousand students drop out of high schools in the United States every day. Many of these students do so because they lack the necessary literacy skills to be successful in high school. Without strong literacy skills, students are less likely to experience academic success and more likely to drop out of high school before graduating” (Carlson, 2013, p.1).

There is a need to improve literacy nationwide as well as locally. In Florida, 20 percent of adults 16 and older lack basic literacy skills (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013).

Discovering these alarming statistics, I wanted to devote my Project in Lieu of Thesis to studying how to promote literacy in the art room. Students should have the most opportunities they can to learn and practice their language arts abilities, and the art room is an ideal place to promote literacy.

**Goal of the Study**

For my thesis project, I created an art lesson that integrated the use of text and image with the goal of promoting literacy in the art classroom. I referenced the Common Core Literacy Standards and Next Generation Sunshine State Visual Arts Standards when designing my lesson. I implemented my lesson at an elementary school in Gainesville, Florida. The overall aim of this action research project was to investigate ways in which art teachers could promote literacy in their classrooms with the hopes of improving the writing and artistic abilities of students.

During this study, I documented and reflected on the integration of language arts and visual arts as a process in the art classroom. The students’ artworks are available on a Tumblr blog at http://carriegrunnet.tumblr.com and will be shown in a spring art exhibit at their school.
Research Questions

The motivation of my research was focused on developing a text and image-based lesson that could promote literacy in the elementary art room. The questions that informed my research were: (a) How can I promote literacy in the art classroom? (b) In what ways do students exhibit language art skills that are taught through the visual arts? (c) What types of software programs are available that teach or promote the language arts through the visual arts?

Rationale and Significance

After interning in the art classroom at Glen Springs Elementary School in Gainesville, Florida, I realized although the art teacher did have children’s literature on art and other subjects in the classroom and regularly introduced new vocabulary words that there might be more powerful ways to integrate reading and writing into the classroom. As I met with my advisors and classroom teacher at P.K.Yonge I realized that I could promote literacy not only with the books in the art room but also with the technology available within it.

Assumptions and Limitations

As I began my research, I had an idealistic idea that arts integration can be the quick fix to the literacy problems we are facing in schools. I thought that just by integrating the language arts into the art classroom, I could improve reading and writing abilities of my students in a very short time. Although my goal is noble and is worth pursuing, I realize it will take more than three days of combined art and language arts instruction to drastically improve the reading and writing abilities of students.

I taught my lesson to a select group of 5th graders at a privileged school that had access to the newest iPad technology available. Not every school is going to have access to technology but
the same concepts from my lesson can be applied with more traditional media (e.g., collage, paint, markers).

As art teachers, we struggle with not having enough time to teach what we want. The timespan of my project was limited to three classroom sessions in which I was limited to forty-minute classes. I had to work within this timeframe to complete my project, which at times felt a little rushed. I felt that my project could have used an extra day so that my students could spend more time reviewing and modifying their work.

Another limitation to my project is that my cooperating teacher and I did not have any communication with the reading teacher at the school. Buren (1986) believes that art teachers and reading teachers should pair up to teach the language arts. For example, “An art teacher and an elementary teacher in the same building could plan a unit together on a particular topic such as “Insects” (Buren, 1986, p.86). By working together, all teachers could benefit from seeing their specialized subjects from another perspective.

Another limitation is that my research will not prove or disprove using my own statistics the practically or statistical value (in terms of higher test scores) of teaching the language arts through the visual arts. Thus, I recognize that my conclusions are speculative in addressing the effectiveness of my lesson on teaching the language arts through the visual arts.

**Definition of Terms**

**Literacy**

The International Reading Association defined *literacy* as “Until quite recently, literacy was generally defined, in a very limited way, as the ability to write one’s own name. A much more ambitious definition of literacy today includes the capacity to accomplish a wide range of
reading, writing, speaking, and other language tasks associated with every day life”  
(International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English, 1996).

**Multi-modal Literacy**

The National Council of Teachers of English defines *multi-modal literacy* as “Integration of multiple modes of communication and expression can enhance or transform the meaning of the work beyond illustration or decoration” (National Council of Teachers of English, n.d.).

**Language Arts**

The International Reading Association defines *language arts* as “reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and visually representing” (International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English, 1996).

**Literature Review**

**Teaching the Language Arts through Visual Arts**

The purpose of my literature review is to investigate ways the language arts can be taught effectively through the visual arts. Combining the language arts and the visual arts is practiced in the 21st century art classroom. Haden (2013) believes that one way to connect the arts to 21st century skills is by integrating art with reading, writing, and arithmetic to “increase creativity throughout the entire school day” (para.3). Through this approach, students are exposed to the skills the arts provide and through this process students make meaningful connections to reading and writing. My research investigated multiple approaches of incorporating the language arts and the visual arts in the classroom (Yenawine, 2013; Cowen, 1983; Criscuolo, 1985) and how the combination improves learning of both art and reading.

When researching my sources, I searched key terms such as *language arts, literacy, and arts integration*. I choose the term *arts integrated* because I am interested in the combination of
the language arts and visual arts in a classroom. I searched for schools and communities that were already using this approach to teach the language arts using the visual arts. I also researched the similarities between art and reading and what are the benefits when you combine them.

There are many programs that have been created to promote teaching the language arts in the art classroom with the purpose of increasing students reading abilities. The Guggenheim Museum’s *Learning through Art* program encourages teachers to design art projects that support student learning across the curriculum (Guggenheim Museum, n.d.). Also in Chicago, Chicago Public Schools and Chicago Art Partnerships in Education (or CAPE) partnered in a three-year study focusing on the contribution of arts integration to text literacy development in grades 1, 2, and 3 (CAPE, n.d.).

**Similarities Between the Language Arts and the Visual Arts**

There are many similarities between the language arts and the visual arts. “Communication and self expression are two goals common to both art and reading” (Buren, 1986, p. 56). When a child writes a story, he or she is writing it from his or her point of view. They make decisions on what characters to include and how the story will end. They may even choose to illustrate the story in which they are communicating their ideas.

Writers and artists have similar ways of working. Walsh-Piper (2002) said, “writers use words the way an artist uses paint. The words chosen by their length, meaning, sound, and the way they are combined, create a tone or expressive quality for the written work” (p.16). Jackson Pollack may use paint to express his ideas on canvas, as Hemingway would use words to communicate a story.
Promoting Literacy in the Art Classroom

Cowens (1983) believes that comprehension skills are needed for reading and art. “As we learning to understand and appreciate art, we are at the same time working on processes that are also necessary to full comprehend printed matter” (Cowens, 1983, p. 55). When a child reads the words on the page or sees the elements in a painting he or she comprehends and interprets the information in terms of his or her own personal feelings and knowledge.

The visual arts and the language arts can promote self-reflection and evaluation. “A child who reads takes in information and evaluates it in terms of his or her own experience. Reading is a learning, evaluative process as in working on an art project” (Buren 1986, p.56). Students evaluate both their own writing and artwork. This process is very important in the meaning making process. “And they are also asked to judge their own work and the work of others, a process we refer to as evaluate. Both of these dispositions involve the construction of meaning” (Hetland, 2007, p. 20). Being able to evaluate is essential for any kind of creative endeavor.

Benefits of Combining the Language Arts and Visual Arts

Throughout my research, many authors have mentioned the benefits of combining the language arts and the visual arts. Combining the two subjects is beneficial for the students because language instruction is enriched and deepened when combined with art experiences. “It seems likely that children who experience art along with reading instruction will develop better vocabularies, learn sequencing of events, and even learn to think with more originality and creativity” (Buren, 1986, p.56). These benefits will pay off in the long run when students are building upon their prior knowledge.

Some teachers start the school year off with the arts to emphasize reading skills. “To prepare the young students to be observant, distinguish sounds, look for details, expand vocabulary and comprehension, recognize colors and shapes and enrich critical thinking skills,
they begin the school year with the arts” (Buren, 1986, p.56). The visual arts can be an effective way to teach the language arts and to promote enthusiasm in the classroom.

Not only does art produce excitement about reading and writing, it is also proven to raise test scores in schools and increase student vocabulary. Richards (2003) found that a school in Kentucky used the arts to enhance learning in reading and writing. “At the end of the 1998-1999 academic school year, the results show that approximately 90% of the kindergarteners who were involved with the arts literacy strategy read on or above grade level” (p.19). Studies suggest that that this program produced positive results in the area of improved reading scores.

The arts can improve literacy skills. The Learning Through Art program at the Guggenheim studied the academic performance of students who completed their program. The museum program stated that “While it is unknown exactly how learning about art helps literacy skills, she said, “the hypothesis is that the use of both talking about art and using inquiry to help students tease apart the meaning of paintings helps them learn how to tease apart the meanings of texts, too. They apply those skills to reading” (Guggenheim Museum, 2013). They also concluded ” The study found that students in the program performed better in six categories of literacy and critical thinking skills — including thorough description, hypothesizing and reasoning — than did students who were not in the program”(Guggenheim Museum, 2013).

Started in the seventies, the program has been so successful that it has spread to at least ten other states across the country (Ganley, 2003).

**Integrated Art Curriculum**

An integrated approach to education is a major theme that I see in my research findings when researching the topic of combining art and reading. John Dewey advocated for an
integrated curriculum in the late 1800s. He believed an active curriculum should be integrated rather than being divided into subject matter segments (Brewer, 2007, p.43).

The Transforming Education through the Arts Challenge Project (TETAC) strove to enhance the quality and status of art education and how art can compliment and enhance school reform. “Because the TETAC project was conceived to link the arts to other areas of the school curriculum and “demonstrate the value of the arts as part of the core curriculum,” a consideration of integrated curriculum became essential” (Stewart, M. G., & Walker, S., 2005, p.105). The proponents of the TETAC project was interested in how an integrated art curriculum could potentially benefit art learning and how the learning of art could enhance other subjects.

Tanner (1984) believes that art teachers should incorporate reading skills into their classrooms but they don’t have to be experts on the subject. “Art teachers need not become reading teachers, but they can teach their students how to process print related to what they’re doing in art class as an art major would” (p.17).

An integrated approach in the classroom promotes enthusiasm for learning in the classroom. Crisuolo (1985) believes that reading isn’t a subject but a skill that can be integrated with other subjects in many ways. “Combining art and reading doubles student’s pleasure“ (p.5).

An integrated curriculum might be a good choice when teachers are asked to approach teaching reading in different ways. McDonald and Fisher (2006) think that classroom teachers should be challenged to think of new ways to teach reading, writing, and oral language skills. “Simply put, we know our students need a variety of ways to explore the deeper meaning of the words they hear, read, and are asked to write” (p.38). They suggest that the visual arts may encourage students who are verbally challenged to express their words through the arts. Similar
to McDonald and Fisher, Buren (1986) believes an art integrated curriculum can help students who have difficulty with reading by adding creativity and originality into the learning mix.

**Ways to teach reading through the visual arts**

Art lessons can include important vocabulary words. Looking at and talking about paintings can expand student’s vocabularies. As students describe their reactions they expand their vocabularies and increase fluency in verbal expression. “Learning and using new descriptive words while discussing and writing about art works can enlarge vocabularies as well as give students more pleasure when viewing works of art” (Cowen 1983 p. 59). Teaching children versatile words such as “composition” will reinforce their knowledge when they hear this word used in different ways in other classes.

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) is a simple and time effective way to increase class participation as well as deepen the thinking, language ability, writing skills, and visual literacy of students (Yenawine, 2013). Visual Thinking Strategies are used in a teacher-facilitated discussion in which students discuss an image or work of art. By participating in the discussion, students look carefully at works of art, talk about what they observe, back up their ideas with evidence, listen to and consider the views of others, and discuss a variety of interpretations. Yenawine (2013) states

> Helping students become aware of their thinking, as it appears hand-in-hand written expression, and providing tools for rethinking, adding, editing as a integral activity, not an exercise, directly assists the meeting of the Common Core Skills for college and work readiness.” (p.163)

VTS allow teachers to meet Common Core Standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, n.d.) and promote literacy in the classroom.
Illustrations can promote art and reading appreciation. Children’s books about artists or that have strong illustrations are a wonderful way to introduce art to children. “Calling students’ attention to the various types of illustrations in books can help them to better appreciate both art and literature” (Cowen, 1983, p.58). I often read books about art to my students and the students are captivated by the illustrations.

Children’s illustrations could also help struggling readers who might get stuck on a word. Calkins’s (2001) strategy she does is has the student look at the image on the page for clues to the word. For example when one student could not read the word dime, she said, “Think about the story. What might you be giving to that man? Sometimes the pictures can make sense of the word” (p. 169). Images can be used as powerful tools to help students decipher words.

Reading can also be taught in many other ways. Criscuolo suggested having students draw costumes sketches of their favorite book character, create a face of someone famous out of found materials and write about them, have students match shapes to words, and many more fun artistic activities to include in the classroom. “Teachers who have used these activities report good success with them because they result in enthusiasm for both reading and art” (Criscuolo, 1985, p. 5).

**Multi-modal Literacy**

Technology is changing the way literacy is taught and viewed in the classroom. Students will need to learn more than the written word to be literate in today’s world. “With multi-modal literacy becoming more important as many states push for 21 century learning standards, we are always looking for ways to help students break their concepts of literacy away from the printed page” (Graham, Benson, 2010, p.93). According to Clary (2013),
“Students need access to the literacy knowledge and skills necessary to infer and make meaning from reading complex texts and to enable them to make informed choices as writers or authors of meaning in many of these modes. This is an age where the traditional emphasis on print is expanding to include forms of communication and expression that embrace multimodality.” (para.4)

Teachers should call attention to different modes of literacies, (e.g., visual, spatial, gestural, audio, and linguistic) when designing applications for students. By students becoming aware of multi-modals forms of communication, it might not only increase their sensitivities and also strengthen their abilities to produce multi-modal texts.

**Methodology**

My research project is separated into six different phases. My research sought to answer three questions: “How can I promote literacy in the art classroom?” “In what ways do students exhibit language art skills that are taught through the visual arts?” and “What types of software programs are available that teach or promote the language arts through the visual arts?” In the first phase, I referenced the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards in Visual Arts and Common Core Literacy Standards when designing the lesson plan I taught in this project. (See lesson plan in Appendix A) As I expressed my interest in applying my lesson in the field, my Committee Chair, Dr. Craig Roland suggested I contact the elementary art teacher at P.K. Yonge, Ms. Kathy Robertson. As I met with her regarding lesson ideas, she suggested that I use the iPads available in her classroom to teach my lesson. Being able to use the iPads intrigued me. This was a tool that I could use to not only teach writing but also teach photography. My background as a photographer weighed in on my decision to use the iPad. As I met with my chair, Dr. Roland, he informed me of an application called *Visual Poet* that allows you to add
text and images together. He suggested the Cinquain poem to use as the format. I choose the Cinquain (5 line poem) due to its simplicity and descriptive qualities. With the recommendation of Dr. Michelle Tillander, I taught this lesson to two fifth graders prior to starting my first day of class at P. K. Yonge. This was extremely beneficial in seeing how the students responded to the lesson.

Ms. Roberston allowed me to teach my lesson at P.K.Yonge, and gave me three classes of fifth graders, which involved at total of 66 students, 30 males, 36 females. Each class time consisted of a 40-minute block. I taught for three consecutive weeks with each class meeting once a week. The third phase of the project was conducting action and observational research while the students were engaged in the lesson. The fourth phase was adding the students’ artworks to Tumblr blog at http://carriegrunnet.tumblr.com to display their work (See Figure 1). The students’ artwork will be also be printed and displayed in their school. The fifth phase was distributing a survey to students about their experiences in the classroom. (See Appendix B) The final phase involved writing this supporting paper.

(Figure 1). Screen Shot of Blog
Data Collection Procedures and Instrumentation

In my study, I conducted action and observational research. According to May (1993), action research is the study and enhancement of one’s own practice. The research conducted by the teacher is reflective and is framed by the teachers’ own questions of interest. It is not aimed at solving specific problems or meant to specifically improve the situation. The research I conducted was motivated by my research questions.

While I was an intern at another elementary school in Gainesville, I commented in my blog weekly regarding my experiences in the art classroom, which included how the art teacher promoted literacy in her classroom. For example, she would often read books to the students about artists. The students would become engaged by the color illustrations and would listen intensely to the stories. She would employ Visual Thinking Strategies when showing artwork, which really helped the students build their vocabularies. In planning my project, I had conversations with the art teacher at P.K. Yonge and Glen Springs Elementary in Gainesville about incorporating the language and visual arts in a lesson. I photographed the project to document the students’ progress. I had daily conversations with my cooperating teacher at P.K. Yonge about the progress of the lesson. I asked for suggestions and feedback and modified my lesson based on our conversations.

I collected my students writing samples, their visual poems they created, their written comments reflecting on their peer’s projects and survey responses (See Appendix B). This evidence provided me with a timeline of their progress.

Data Analysis Procedures

I received 48 of the 66 poems that my students created. The others did not get to me due to students not typing my email address correctly or else not hitting the “share” button. Students
submitted their visual poems via the P.K. Yonge School’s Google Drive and I received them through my email. When assessing the students’ artworks using the rubric I created in my lesson plan (see Appendix A) 34 projects scored at excellent, 9 good, 3 average, and 2 needed more improvement (See figure 2). 88% of students received good or excellent on the results of their artworks. The categories with the lowest scores were the word usage, and grammar and spelling. Some students only had 4 lines of text with the majority of these missing the synonym. I believe this was the most difficult part of the assignment for the students.

Project Implementation

My project was conducted over three class periods with each class meeting once a week. On the first day, I introduced the lesson by showing visual poem examples, and showing students...
how the Cinquain (5 line poem) is similar to the Haiku poem they had previously written in their English Class. I then asked the students to pick one subject that they could see in or near the art room. Students were excited that they could write about any subject they wanted to as long it was in the room or nearby. We picked one object in the class to write about as a class, and wrote a sample Cinquain poem. We went over each category of the poem, (e.g., noun, adjectives, verbs, synonym) and filled in each line with descriptive words. I then instructed students to write a Cinquain poem about their chosen subjects. I asked them to be descriptive as possible in their vocabulary words they chose to describe their subjects. For example, one student had difficulty coming up with words for her lizard. I suggested thinking about the object as a real lizard. I asked “What do real lizards do in the wild?” This helped her to come up with some good action words (See Figure 3). It was challenging for students to come up with descriptive words for their object, but I think the words ended up driving what and how students photographed their objects.

One the second day, I explained how to use the camera and use the visual poet application on the iPads. I showed the students how to focus the camera and how to crop the image. We discussed different points of view and how the images we take will be descriptive of the words we use. We discussed text placement. Although they were limited to five lines of text they could place those lines anywhere in the images. I pointed out how they could use the negative space in their photos to place their line of text.

On the third and final day, I showed students how to share their poems with me on the school’s Google Drive since they couldn’t access their emails. This took up a good portion of the class. At the end of class, we conducted a walk around critique where students wrote comments about one another’s poems on a sheet of paper in front of their visual poems. The students’ enjoyed seeing their peers’ work, and wrote very expressive comments.
Findings

The goal of my Project in Lieu of Thesis was to create and implement a text and image based art lesson with 5th graders with the goal of promoting literacy in the art classroom. Although some students did not consider this a “normal art lesson” as indicated in their surveys, they enjoyed the opportunities to combine text and pictures. Many indicated it was a nice change because they got to use technology to create art. Analyzing the outcomes of the project led to five major findings.
Students Need to Improve their Vocabularies and Spelling.

As I observed student’s writing abilities, I noticed that some of them had difficulties writing a sentence and spelling words. For example, as I explained the Cinquain format, I informed students that they needed four words in the sentence. I had students who added more than 4 words and some did not write a sentence at all. Many also struggled with coming up with a synonym. Some could not think of one and left out the last line of their poems.

There was a wide range of student abilities in writing with some finishing early while others needing the entire class time. I saw a need for students to practice their writing abilities so they would become better writers and more competent spellers.

The Visual Arts Generate Enthusiasm For The Language Arts.

The visual arts play in an important part in generating enthusiasm for the language arts. My cooperating teacher informed me that we had one student who did not like to write but after I presented the project she became excited about writing when finding out she could write about her favorite thing. She brought in a set of deer antlers early in the next morning to the class and could not wait to get started. Her family is very interested in hunting and she told us hunting stories about her dad. The visual arts prompted her to become excited for the language arts.

Not Enough Time

With the limited amount of time available in the elementary classroom, I was not able to discuss the photography part of my lesson as much as the writing part. During my photography instruction I explained that the photographs should be descriptive of the words the students wrote and should be composed thoughtfully. We discussed different
points of view, I showed them how to crop, select their best pictures, and text placement. This was as much as I could teach the students in the time that I had. After viewing the students’ final poems, I noticed that some of the photographs they took were underexposed. If given an extra day to teach the photography portion of the lesson, I would have discussed lighting, since it is not possible to change the exposure on the iPads.

**Technology is Tricky but Worthwhile**

Students were excited about using technology to create works of art. Since the students had access to iPads, I created a lesson in which we could utilize the technology we had available. Previously iPads were only used in the students’ regular classes at this school. They did not have access to them in art class.

Using technology in the classroom doesn’t always go to plan. We experienced technical difficulties with the picture rotating in the application. A clever student fixed this problem by discovering how to hold the camera with the lens-facing top left.

The *visual poet* application had to be loaded to all the students’ iPads by the school’s IT department before they arrived the first day to class. There were a few iPads in each class that did not have the application available when we started so I needed to consult with the IT department to have it fixed before the next class section. Also the students did not have access to email in the classroom so I needed to have students take screen shots of their poems on the iPad screens and then upload those images to the school’s Google Drive to share access with me. These were extra steps that took valuable instruction time away.

The *Visual Poet* application had limited features. *Visual Poet* limits the font size to big/small and the text is always black on white. The photographs are always in a square
format and limited to only three photographs. The students worked well within these limitations but they indicated they wanted more photo and text options.

Collaboration is Key

It was an advantage for me to collaborate with the art teacher at the elementary school to create my lesson. She helped me with getting the students access to the iPads and structuring my lesson into three days. She was also a reading teaching for ten years before becoming an art teacher. This experience was valuable when asking for suggestions for my lesson. She had the unique perspective of a reading and art teacher combined.

The only limitations I experienced with this collaboration was that I was limited to three days in the classroom and not having complete authority of my lesson. I wanted the students to show their poems on the big screen on the last day, but another teacher was using our class projector. I had the students show their artworks on their iPads instead, and had students walk around and critique them.

Findings Summary

Overall, the text and image lesson I developed for this project was successful. The students enjoyed combining text and images together. They were excited about writing about a favorite thing and using technology to create a work of art. As indicated in their exit surveys, the students learned a few new words, such as “Cinquain” and “Visual” and many thought their writing abilities improved a moderate or little amount during this project. (See table in Appendix C).

Implications of the Study

The implications of my study suggest that art teachers could promote literacy in their classrooms by teaching lessons that combine image and text in meaningful ways. My project
could be of interest to art teachers who are looking for innovative ways to teach reading.

Richards (2003) believe that “being literate in the arts affords students a greater advantage in learning to read” (p.21). I hope that by sharing my project on my Tumblr site, it will inspire art teachers to incorporate the language arts into their lessons with the result of improving the reading and artistic abilities of their students. Every teacher should have the opportunity to provide meaningful art experiences for students. The arts shouldn’t be only seen as a reward or a rainy day activity.

**Conclusion**

When I began my research I started with the question of “How can you teach the language arts through the visual arts without losing the integrity of art instruction?” After reflecting on my lesson, I realized that I was promoting literacy more than teaching the language arts. Due to the limited amount of time that I had, I could not go into in-depth in teaching the language arts (poem format), and some students commented in their surveys that they would have liked more detailed instruction in that regard. After the lesson was completed, I changed my research question to “How can I promote literacy in the art classroom?”

I believe I promoted literacy in the art classroom when implementing my lesson. Requiring the use of text with images in my project, engaged students in writing and being descriptive of what they saw. They were excited to write the poems using their iPads. I believe that using the visual arts to promote the language arts is effective in engaging students and meeting Common Core Literacy standards. This integrated approach to learning is a worthy pursuit in the elementary art classroom. As an art educator, I plan on
promoting literacy in my classroom. I intend on continuing to research how to integrate reading and writing in my art room, and learn from experienced teachers around me.

Several additional questions arose after completing my project including: (a) What role should art teachers play in teaching literacy? (b) How much background in reading and writing should an art teacher have to teach the language arts?” and (c) “How do art teachers balance language arts and visual arts instruction without giving one more “attention” than the other?” I will search for answers to these questions as I pursue my goals in art education.
Promoting Literacy in the Art Classroom

References


International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English. (1996). Standards for the english language arts. Newark, DE.


Appendix A

Lesson Plan: Visual Poetry (Poems that have Pictures)

GRADE LEVEL OF STUDENTS: 5th grade

Characteristics of the Learners:
Fifth graders work hard on projects and tasks that require them to draw on the skills and strategies they have been learning in elementary school. Fifth graders are asked to read a lot in a variety of subject areas. As in reading, they should be encouraged to explore writing for personal expression, putting their often intense feelings onto paper through poetry, stories, and song writing.

Rationale:
This lesson was designed to allow students the opportunity to combine text and image together to create an artwork.

Historical/Cultural:
Cinquain Poetry was invented by an American poet Adelaide Crapsey who was inspired by Japanese haiku. It has a strict structure that is meant to communicate a mood or feeling.

Common Core English Language Arts Standards:
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2d Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

New Generation Sunshine Standards:
Explore and use media, technology, and other art resources to express ideas visually. (VA.4.S.1.2)

Objectives:
Students will: (1) create an original visual poem; (2) use descriptive words to tell a story about one theme; (3) make connections between words and pictures; and (4) take pictures to illustrate words (picture as a metaphor).

Introduction:
Step 1: Show students an a teacher made example of the poem and explain personal story behind the poem. Explain to the students the format of Cinquain Poetry. Complete a Cinquain poem as a group by choosing a subject in the room. Pass out handout (See attachment B) to students.

(5 line poetry)
Line 1: one word (subject or noun)
Line 2: two words (Adjectives) that describe line 1
Line 3: three words (action verbs) that relate to line 1
Line 4: four words
Promoting Literacy in the Art Classroom

(feelings or a complete sentence) that relates to line 1
Line 5: one word
(synonym of line 1 or a word that sums it up)

Procedures:

Step 2: Students will write a Cinquain (5 line poem) about a one topic that they can see in the room. (about themselves, best friend, favorite thing, etc.)

Step 3: Student will take photographs on the iPad that illustrate the words in their poem. We will use the APP *Visual Poet* on the iPad (Free app that will have to be downloaded from the Apple Store) Located at https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/visual-poet/id375207524?mt=8.

Step 4: Students will add words and pictures. When completed, the poems will have to be e-mailed to someone to print out, or they can be uploaded to the Tumblr blog.

Distribution and Clean Up:
5 minutes before class ends have students save their poems and upload them to the Tumblr blog.

Closure:
Once the poems are completed we will view the poems on the blog. The following questions below are suggested discussion questions.

1. How does it feel to have your photographs in an online blog and have an audience respond to them?
2. After reading these stories, is there something else that you wish you would have added to your story?
3. How can reading someone else’s story or writing make you a better writer?

Assessment:
Use the rubric in Attachment A to evaluate the poems.

Resources:
Cinquain Poetry
http://teams.lacoe.edu/documentation/classrooms/amy/algebra/5-6/activities/poetry/cinquain.html

Student Samples:
See http://carriegrunnet.tumblr.com
Attachment A:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of Pictures: Do the pictures describe the words?</th>
<th>Excellent 4</th>
<th>Good 3</th>
<th>Average 2</th>
<th>Needs Improvement 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The pictures are highly descriptive of the words.</td>
<td>The words and pictures describe one another.</td>
<td>Some thought was put into connecting the pictures with the words.</td>
<td>There was no connection between the words and pictures.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Usage: Are the correct nouns, adjectives, synonyms in the correct categories?</th>
<th>Excellent 4</th>
<th>Good 3</th>
<th>Average 2</th>
<th>Needs Improvement 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All 5 lines are filled in with the correct words.</td>
<td>All five lines are filled in but some words were incorrect.</td>
<td>4 lines of text with mostly correct word usage.</td>
<td>3 line or less of text and mostly incorrect of all words.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creativity: (Use of Metaphor) Are the pictures always literal?</th>
<th>Excellent 4</th>
<th>Good 3</th>
<th>Average 2</th>
<th>Needs Improvement 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All the pictures are different and fill the frame differently.</td>
<td>2 of the pictures are different in filling the frame.</td>
<td>All pictures fill the frame in the same way.</td>
<td>Missing pictures.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammar and Spelling: Are the words spelled correctly?</th>
<th>Excellent 4</th>
<th>Good 3</th>
<th>Average 2</th>
<th>Needs Improvement 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All the words are correctly spelled.</td>
<td>1 misspelling</td>
<td>2 or more misspelling</td>
<td>3 or more misspelling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attachment B:
Cinquain Poem Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject (Noun) 1 Word</th>
<th>Adjectives 2 Describing Words</th>
<th>Verbs 3 Action Words</th>
<th>Write a 4 word sentence.</th>
<th>Synonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

**Art and Reading Survey**

The goal of my study was to create an art lesson that combined the language arts and visual arts with the intention of promoting literacy in the art classroom. I’m interested in your feedback. Your participation is voluntary and your data is anonymous and confidential.

1. How much did you enjoy writing the Cinquain (5 line) Poem? Place a X in the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A great Deal</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>A moderate amount</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. How much did you enjoy taking pictures for the poem?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A great Deal</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>A moderate amount</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3. How much did you enjoy taking your I PAD to art class?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A great Deal</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>A moderate amount</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. Did you enjoy using words and pictures together?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A great Deal</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>A moderate amount</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

5. Did you learn to spell a new word?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If so, what was it?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Do you think your writing abilities improved during this project?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A great Deal</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>A moderate amount</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

|                     | Not sure     |     |                    |          |            |
1. How much did you enjoy writing the Cinquain (5 line) Poem?
2. How much did you enjoy taking pictures for the poem?
3. How much did you enjoy taking your IPAD to art class?
4. How much did you enjoy using words and pictures together?
5. Do you think your writing abilities improved during this project?
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Biographical Sketch

Carrie Grunnet is an artist and educator. She was born in 1981, and grew up in Hollidaysburg, PA. She earned her B.F.A from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2003 with a concentration in photography. She worked as a freelance photographer and in banking before returning to college to pursue a master’s degree. After completion of her M.A. program in Art Education at the University of Florida, she plans working as an art educator and encouraging others to enjoy their lives through art.