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A Qualitative Case Study that Explores the Use of Visual Thinking Journals in an Urban Arts Magnet High School

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Abstract

This qualitative case study research project investigated the question, “What can be learned from a study that explores how an art teacher uses visual thinking journals and how students respond to the use of visual thinking journals in an urban arts high school setting?” The participants of this study were the art educator Mrs. Carlson and the students enrolled in her ninth grade Graphic Design and 12th grade Advanced Drawing and Painting courses. Over an eight week period data was collected and analyzed utilizing constructivist pedagogy to investigate the variety of ways high school art teachers and students use visual thinking journals and the approaches teachers use to facilitate and encourage students’ learning. Data collection methods included interviews, observations, and document analysis. As data analysis occurred the following findings developed: Sketchbook culture, teacher directed assignments and student interests, and the traits of the teacher.

My findings demonstrate what can be learned from studying an art teacher’s use of sketchbooks in an urban arts high school. I discovered that student interests and personality make a tremendous difference in their attitude and effort towards sketchbook assignment and a teacher’s willingness to listen and hear the opinions of her students changes can be made to make the sketchbook process more advantageous to both teacher and students.
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Background Narrative

The purpose for this qualitative research study grew from my first-hand observations of sketchbook assignments in a high school art classroom as a long-term substitute teacher. My personal experience with sketchbooks as both a child and teacher sparked an interest in me to look further into the use and relevance of these reflective tools in the contemporary art classroom.

Sketchbooks have been a part of my personal and educational life for as long as I can remember. Even as a child and student I always had a creative interest in the arts. I wanted to color, draw, and “make special” (Dissanayake, 2003) from a very young age. Dissanayake determined that making art is unique to human experience and separate from non-art actions (2003). Dissanayake believed that making special is a human need that is a biological and universal component to human experience (2003). My sketchbook served as my means of making special and as an outlet of my choosing that provided a blank canvas to generate ideas and improve my artistic skills while experimenting with materials. It was not until high school that using a sketchbook became a requirement for me. While enrolled in an introductory art course I was required to complete weekly sketchbook assignments dictated by my instructor. Imagination was very rarely necessary. The sole purpose was to complete technical drawing exercises to improve drawing ability.

I dreaded these assignments. What was once an enjoyable pastime, using my sketchbook had now become a chore. I found myself rushing through assignments, becoming frustrated, and almost always completing the assignment with minimal effort.
Thankfully my artistic ability allowed me to excel and achieve the necessary outcomes to receive an above average grade. Without an intrinsic and self-motivated interest in the arts, I fear my grades and final course outcome might have suffered.

After high school I had not contemplated the motivation of sketchbooks in the high school art setting. Not until I began a long-term substitute art teacher position did I find how students were once again required to use sketchbooks in introductory art classes. To maintain consistency, I continued to use sketchbooks in the same way as the instructor for whom I was filling in, picking up where she had left off. When the grading quarter ended and it was time for assessment, it was my job to review each student’s sketchbook. To say these sketchbooks were lackluster would be an understatement. The students seemed to be having a similar experience as I in high school with regard to a lack of motivation and interest. I wondered how this outcome could change and what other teachers did that might be more successful. I also would like to discover what I might not be aware of in regards to sketchbook use; what data is out there that could enhance my own use of sketchbooks in the art classroom? Sketchbooks are a tool that budding and professional artists rely on to express themselves, brainstorm, and think critically (Hall, 2007, p. 207).

**Problem Statement**

Therefore my problem came to be the seeming disconnect students have with using sketchbooks in comparison to many artists who find sketchbooks to be of extreme value and importance in the art making process. My research project explores this disconnect by discovering what can be learned from high school art teachers who successfully incorporate visual thinking journals in their classroom.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the variety of ways high school art teachers and students use visual thinking journals and the strategies/approaches teachers use to facilitate and encourage students’ learning and visual literacy by using this tool.

Research Questions

These observations, experiences and thoughts have led me to my research question.

- Central: What can be learned from a study that explores how an art teacher uses visual thinking journals and how students respond to the use of visual thinking journals in an urban arts high school setting?

- What visual thinking journal uses, applications, and strategies do students find most meaningful?

- How do visual thinking journals contribute to students’ reflective and critical thinking skills?

- How are visual thinking journals incorporated into high school art curricula?

- How are student’s visual thinking journals used to address contemporary/visual culture?

- What can I learn about visual thinking journals that will be helpful to my future teaching?

Significance of the Study

Studying the uses and effectiveness of visual thinking journals in an urban arts high school will provide insight on the possible importance and practical uses of visual thinking journals in an art curriculum. Many art teachers use some form of visual thinking journal, and it is my hope that this study will provide valuable information on
how the uses of visual thinking journals impact critical thinking skills and reflective practices in the high school art setting. I hope to find a variety of strategies and techniques teachers find useful.

Definitions

In order to better understand my research problem and its subsequent questions I provide the following definitions to terms that will be discussed in further detail throughout my research.

- **Visual Thinking Journal**

  As stated by Overby (2009), artists need a place where they can record and reflect back on their thoughts, brainstorm, generate ideas, and sketch out various options during the artmaking process. Deaver and McAuliffe (2007) define a visual journal as a blank notebook where artists can combine both visual imagery and written words as a tool to encourage reflection. For the purposes of this study, a visual thinking journal will be combinations of visual imagery and text that can be found in a variety of formats and/or as a tool for planning, reflection, and idea-generation.

- **Constructivism**

  Constructivist teaching is an educational approach that enables students to construct their own learning (Brooks & Brooks, 2001). The teacher’s job is to guide students to a larger, more holistic idea through open-ended questions while encouraging and considering a wide variety of answers (Brooks & Brooks, 2001).

  When discussing constructivism in this study, the definition will be the teacher’s primary focus on connecting information to the child in as many ways possible by
creating learning experiences that are student-centered and place the learner in the active role of discovering knowledge that relates to them (Brooks & Brooks, 2001).

Stout (1993) adds to this definition by stating “if students are to acquire and retain information and ideas, they must seek and discover them for themselves and process them in their own personal manners” (p. 36).

- **Critical Thinking**

  In relation to this study critical thinking can be defined as “the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication as a guide to belief and action” (Scriven & Paul, 1991).

- **Reflective Practice**

  Reflection occurs when students are able to understand and digest their inner thoughts, feelings and actions in order to better understand and transform their learning (Hubbs & Brand, 2005). The term reflective practice throughout this study will be best defined as a higher level of introspective thinking through which we can transform our meaning framework (Kember et al., 2000).

**Limitations of the Study**

The primary limitation of this study will be the small sample size of participants and the limited range and scope in regards to the setting. Because I will be conducting my research during one semester, I will only be able to collect data from a small number of participants. This prevents me from getting a wider variety of results. Also, I will be
focusing my efforts only in the Western New York area, which will further limit the scope of my research. Results may not be applicable to broader populations.

**Conclusion**

After observing sketchbook performance firsthand during a long-term substitute assignment I began to question how these artist tools were being used in the high school art setting. When set with the task of grading sketchbook assignments I discovered an obvious lack of interest on the students’ behalf. This made me want to pursue research that could find a variety of ways high school art teachers use visual thinking journals effectively and how their students respond to them. By researching this topic it is my hope to bring valuable findings that reveal more successful ways to use visual thinking journals for enhancing critical thinking skills and reflective practices for high school students. After providing definitions to terms such as visual thinking journal, constructivism, critical thinking, and reflective practice, I am better able to begin discussing literature from theorists and educators who are discussed in the following chapter.
Chapter II: Review of Literature

Introduction

This review of literature focuses on analyzing and examining work by theorists, educators, and researchers on topics related to visual thinking journals. By investigating how constructivist theory functions within the art classroom I discovered links between constructivist theory and the reflective nature of visual journaling. In order to better understand the impact of visual thinking journals in the art classroom I explored how constructivism directly relates to reflective practice and critical thinking skills. I examined research on the foundations of constructivist theory, education in the constructivist classroom, and the correlation between reflective practice and constructivism.

I found literature that focuses on the uses and applications of visual thinking journals in the classroom, how art teachers incorporate visual thinking journals in curriculum, and also the impact visual thinking journals can have when teaching contemporary issues. I conclude my review of literature with how visual thinking journals have adapted to advances in technology. To begin I provide a historical overview of constructivism.

Foundation for Constructivist Education

Educational theorist John Dewey laid the groundwork for constructivism by advocating a learning experience that creates meaningful (purposeful) learning (Dewey, 1938). Hubbs and Brand (2005) articulate Dewey’s belief that the learning environment needs to actively engage students with content that is highly personal and experimental. According to Hubbs and Brand when students have a personal choice in their learning,
they will naturally be motivated in the process. A.M. Tough (1968) takes Dewey’s ideas a step further, and supports the importance of a student’s learning project to be “independent, self-selected, and self-directed” (Hubbs and Brand, 2005). Following Dewey’s ideas, what would a visual thinking journal need to be?

Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory (1933) also bears relevance to the development of constructivism in promoting student’s learning through the act of self-discovery. Jaramillo (1996) classifies the theoretical framework of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory as fundamental to the constructivist movement and makes valuable connections between Vygotsky’s theory and constructivist education. Vygotsky believed that a person’s social surroundings directly influence how a person learns (Jaramillo, 1996). Vygotsky professed that the people and world in which a person is a part of play an integral role in achieving higher thinking. (Jaramillo, 1996). The views of Dewey and Vygotsky are related to the constructivist assumption that a learner’s knowledge base is constructed by how they interpret their own experiences and beliefs.

Constructivist theory through which a student builds knowledge from their own social surroundings and lived experiences is founded on Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory where students are in charge of determining subject matter in the classroom (Jaramillo, 1996). Jaramillo noted that Vygotsky believed that the student-dictated subject determines curriculum creating a sense of empowerment for the learner (1996). The teacher is placed in the role of “facilitator” who encourages students to learn by doing (Jaramillo, 1996). This learning by doing relates to students deriving meaning from experiences. “Thus, teachers of the Vygotsky mold must foster learning among students that combines internal and external experiences (Jaramillo, 1996). Vygotsky (1933)
maintained that humans are social learners who benefit most when in a setting surrounded by competent peers and instructors who can guide learning. Peer initiated learning can be described as zone of proximal development, which Vygotsky defines as a student’s influence on one another and the adults who educate them (Jaramillo, 1996). Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development says that peers (teachers and students) are comprised of those who are equal, and/or more competent, than each other allowing for students to build on the thinking of others (Jaramillo, 1996). The zone of proximal development classifies the teacher and fellow students as facilitators who hold each other accountable for creating a learning environment that promotes cooperation, communication, exploration, and conceptual development (Jaramillo, 1996). Jaramillo tells us that these Vygotskian concepts of socially constructed knowledge and role of facilitator are a part of what contributed to the development of constructivist education (Jaramillo, 1996). By explaining how Dewey and Vygotsky created a foundation for constructivism, I move on to discuss the relevance of constructivist teaching and how it might be connected to visual thinking journals.

**Constructivist Teaching**

Constructivist teaching is an educational approach that enables students to construct their own learning (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). The teacher’s job as facilitator is to guide students to a larger, more holistic idea through open-ended questions while encouraging and considering a wide variety of answers (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). This concept breaks away from the linear learning process that is common in many schools. Brooks & Brooks (1999) explain that constructivist teaching puts the emphasis on students constructing meaning based on what they know from their own life experience.
and what interests them. They can then relate and compare past and new experiences to each other, ending at a result where knowledge and previous beliefs are continuously being modified and viewed as interconnected (Brooks & Brooks, 1999).

A learning environment that reflects constructivist principles allows students to be in charge of the experience-gathering process and places the teacher in the role of facilitator who determines the needs of the student in relation to the concept being studied (Prater, 2001). With appropriate guidance by the teacher, the learning process reflects the learner’s exposure to new content as they find information that relates to their objectives and goals (Prater, 2001). This construction of knowledge based on a student’s own environment and experiences requires reflective practices that can be utilized in a visual thinking journal.

**Reflective Practice**

Dewey (1933) made a valid distinction between deep (critical) reflection and academic reflection by stipulating that critical reflection requires a learner to analyze all options before reaching a conclusion. Kember et al. (2000) extrapolates on Dewey’s (1933) theory by explaining that critical reflection encourages a learner to inspect their preconceived meanings in an attempt to alter their perceptions; it is this type of thinking that occurs less and is harder to come by. Kember et al. found that it is important to distinguish “between an academic type of learning in which the student might reach an understanding of a concept without reflecting upon its significance in personal or practical situations” (2000, p. 384). This reflection of personal experiences and situations can be applied in a visual thinking journal. After discovering literature on constructivist
teaching and reflective practice I began collecting information on various types of visual thinking journals and their applications.

**Terms for Visual Thinking Journals and their Applications**

A visual thinking journal may be referred to as a portfolio, sketchbook, visual artifact journal, dialogue journal, visual art process diary (VAPD), weblog, or a visual journal. I describe the terms in the following segments to show the various forms and purposed a visual thinking journal can be used as in a high school art room.

**Portfolio.**

A portfolio is a showcase of an artist’s visual work (Welch and Barlex, 2004). The term portfolio, used by Welch and Barlex (2004), functions as a visual thinking journal that can take on many formats. Welch and Barlex (2004) define and explain the term showcase portfolio which is used for enhancing learning, teaching, creativity, and assessment in educational settings (Welch & Barlex, 2004). The showcase portfolio documents the progress a student has achieved towards a particular goal and offers a place for self-reflection on the achievements that have been made. The portfolio sketchbook specifically functions as a research and information gathering tool that can be incredibly personal and allows room for students to gain confidence while also improving on artistic skills (Welch & Barlex, 2004). Portfolios have been utilized throughout art curriculum as a proponent of constructivist thinking, stating that students gain understanding from evaluating their own work (Simpson, 1996). Portfolios are a common format of the visual thinking journal that allows students to reflect and improve upon their previous work. Sketchbook is another term for the visual thinking journal discussed in the following section.
Sketchbook.

Sketchbook is a tool that is often used by artists and by teachers in art classrooms. Delacruz and Bales (2010) define a sketchbook as being a reflective tool that serves as a “journal for personal reflection, artistic aspirations, and as a place for exploring inner worlds, including self-doubts” (2010). Participants in Delacruz and Bales’ (2010) study reported that their sketchbook acted as a journal and provided a space for reflective writing. Delacruz and Bales (2010) further explained the importance of the human and social need to make special and record aspects of events and issues that are of important and meaningful to students, especially during an era where standardized testing is of primary focus (2004).

Sketchbooks can also be exceptional tools in constructivist education for student-initiated discoveries as stated by Welch and Barlex (2004). Welch and Barlex suggested that students begin using sketchbooks early in their art experience in order to develop their artistic voice and gain confidence as they collect information and pursue creative solutions to various art problems (2004).

Jane Parker (2005) suggests implementing sketchbooks into an art curriculum to further develop a student’s level of creativity. She bases her use of sketchbooks on Graham Wallas’ (1926) four stages of the creative process (preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification), specifically stages one and two: preparation and incubation. Illumination and verification are the last stages of creativity where the individual has discovered, accepted, and finalized the solution to their art problem (Parker, 2005). During stages one and two are when the sketchbook acts as the role of supporter for the student during the creative process (Parker, 2005).
During the preparation stage the teacher acts as facilitator by providing a beginning structure for idea development that is purposefully broad. Requirements that art staff may choose to implement can range from suggestions on sketchbook layout, “proposed routes for investigation, potential methods of developing ideas and the appropriate use of artists to inform and extend ideas and personal responses” (Parker, 2005, p. 194). Using a sketchbook during the preparation stage guides the student on to the next stage of incubation.

The second stage, incubation, is often the most difficult yet productive stage in the creative process (Parker, 2005). During this stage students take the information and guidance provided from the art staff, and begin to collect and organize information, ideas, and materials that the student finds most relevant (Parker, 2005). The sense of ownership, freedom, portability, and feeling of privacy that a sketchbook affords during the incubation stage, creates security for a student to ensure that “truly creative outcomes can be achieved” (Parker, 2005). The sketchbook’s purpose is to offer an outlet for brainstorming during highly influential moments in the art making process.

Jane Parker (2005) also discusses the benefits of using a sketchbook in order to highlight individual pupil’s learning styles. Parker states, “the role sketchbooks play in supporting the creative process is significant and flexible” (2005). Parker found that students’ sketchbooks reflected drastically different approaches to achieving a shared final goal (2004). She explained how one particular student’s sketchbook exposes the process from ideas to solutions that can readily be seen by an outside observer (Parker, 2005). Each sketchbook was unique to the individual pupil, however all shared a connective thread due to the effective guidance and suggestions of educational staff.
By being able to use their sketchbook in a way that suited their learning style, students felt empowered during a vital and often difficult time in the creation process. In the following images Parker shows reproductions of two student’s sketchbook assignments on Japanese tea ceremonies.

*Figure 1.* Japanese tea ceremony student 1.
Figures 1 and 2 show an obvious difference in student personalities. These figures show how each individual tackles an art problem differently yet can still arrive at a viable solution when given the same instructions (Parker, 2005). The art staff provided general directions allowing for each sketchbook result to be unique and personal to the student (Parker, 2005).

Despite working within different disciplines, each has followed a similar route and met the same assessment objectives: the outcome of each journey, however, reveals very different approaches to working. Significantly, each has the freedom to pursue ideas in a personally relevant and creative manner. (Parker, 2005) Parker (2005) explains how sketchbooks are adaptable to students needs and allow freedom and security for the student to reach a final solution. A visual artifact journal shares similarities with sketchbooks as discussed next.
Visual artifact journal.

Sanders-Bustle (2008) devised a new term for sketchbooks called a “visual artifact journal”; these visual artifacts are everyday items in a student’s life that are of meaning to them, and include “both material culture and naturally found objects” (2008). Sanders-Bustle (2008) explained that art educators define sketchbooks as “a space for ideas to take shape, imaginations to wander, and drawing skills to be practiced.” In order to address the contemporary world in a post-modern paradigm, Sanders-Bustle revises the use of sketchbooks to move away from formalist principles as the sole focus in the art classroom. She keeps the term visual artifact (an image, or photo of an object) broad in order to allow students to have as few restrictions as possible when making their artifact journal. Each week students collect a visual artifact and attach it to their 11” x 14” sketchbook (Sanders-Bustle, 2008). After thoroughly examining the chosen artifact, the student is then instructed to write a reflection giving a detailed description of the artifact and why they chose it. The students are encouraged to include art terms covered during class when completing written responses as a way to improve their art vocabulary (2008).

The success of the visual artifact journal depends partly on the fact that students can choose items that encourage inquiry and create self-motivated interest allowing students to make their own connections to both art and other subject matter (Sanders-Bustle, 2008). Sanders-Bustle finds that “by self-selecting and writing about objects of importance, learners make personal connections between art and their lives” (2008).

Visual journal.

Deaver and McAuliffe (2009) use the term visual journal and define it as “a notebook with unlined pages in which individuals record their experiences using both
imagery and written text.” These visual journals encourage reflection and follow constructivist guidelines for student-centered learning that incorporates the student as a whole person (senses, emotions, thoughts) and therefore deepens the learning experience (Deaver & McAuliffe, 2009). In a study by Deaver & McAuliffe (2009) a majority of students used their visual journals at home. Students followed a similar routine of creating images and then following up with written responses to images using a wide variety of art media of their choosing (Deaver & McAuliffe, 2009). Participants who completed a visual journal all reported the acquisition of insightful feedback by combining both written responses and visual imagery and then later reflecting on entries (2009). Deaver and McAuliffe (2009) believe that “art may make tangible and concrete that which cannot be said in words, but, for the participants in this study, responding to imagery with words seems to have served an integrative purpose. The combination is the essence of visual journaling.” By utilizing both visual images and text, a visual thinking journal can become even more useful when combined with expressive writing, as further explained by Stout (1993) with regards to a dialogue journal.

**Dialogue journal.**

Expressive writing and critical thinking are of primary concern in a dialogue journal, a term elaborated on by Stout (1993). This dialogue journal reflects constructivist beliefs in that expressive writing shifts the emphasis and responsibility on to the learner (Stout, 1993). The idea generation that comes out of expressive writing cultivates new and creative thought (Stout, 1993). Stout explains that expressive writing is using an inner thought voice that allows relaxed use of grammar, sentence structure, and spelling. The format of a dialogue journal is similar to a visual journal and combines expressive
writing with art creation, allowing for “students to make both verbal and visual sketches (Stout, 1993). The overall structure of the journal is separated in half vertically allowing for both factual notes/observations and responses/opinions to begin reflective writing (Stout, 1993). The reflection half is a space where critical thinking can occur as the student begins to ask questions and make their own self-initiated connections (Stout, 1993). To help students who may not be familiar with this active way of learning, the teacher must act as facilitator and provide examples of their own or other artists dialogue journals (1993). By connecting visual and verbal thinking, students are able to construct their own personal knowledge on art. Another type of visual thinking journal is the Visual Arts Process Diary.

**Visual Arts Process Diary.**

The Visual Art Process Diary (VAPD) is a diary that functions as a reflective artist’s journal (Grushka, 2008). As stated by the New South Wales Board of Studies, Visual Arts Stage 6 syllabus, this reflective journal can include:

- Drawings, paintings, sketches, annotated diagrams, notes and ideas, critical comment and reflections, photographs and collections of objects. It can take the form of a sketchbook, folder, container for three-dimensional works, CD-ROM, DVD, files on a memory stick or a combination of these. (2009, p. 29)

A student uses their VAPD primarily during the art making process as a forum to work out their ideas and intentions, which may involve “investigations of subject matter, interests, issues, processes, expressive forms and conceptual challenges” (NSW Board of Studies, 2009).
The VAPD has an important place in a contemporary learning environment that is purposefully broad and flexible in order to provide the most relevance to students (Grushka, 2008). This VAPD is useful for students during the art creation process and also while tackling contemporary issues they may encounter. Grushka explains that in the 21st century, it is important to allow students the opportunity to take ownership of their learning by providing a space for idea generating and reflecting during the creative process (2008, p. 300). Another space for a visual thinking journal could be a Weblog.

Weblog.

The integration of technology is especially lacking in regard to reflection on art making (Overby, 2009). Overby explained how blogs serve as a visual record of student art work and a platform for conversation and reflection (2009). Overby (2009) proposed integrating weblogs, which can serve as personal reflective journals. Overby (2009) divided weblogs into three categories: the tutor blog, learner blog, and class blog in which the later pertains most directly to reflective practice. Overby (2009) noted that often the class blog serves as an electronic portfolio, but is most helpful in its ability to encourage students to reflect and gain insight on their artwork. Just as with sketchbooks and group critiques, blogs offer a forum that is based on student-centered dialogue (2009, p. 19). Overby uses her experience incorporating a blog in an advanced placement photography classes by showing excerpts from a class blog, which show examples of student-initiated discussions sparked by uploads of student’s work. These conversations provided valuable feedback.

Overby’s (2009) observations showed that blogs are particularly more effective than class critiques because they allow quiet, introverted students an equal voice in
critiques, they organize comments chronologically allowing for past information to be reflected on, and the teacher becomes facilitator with equal voice/opinion as the students. In addition, high school students are not only interested in analyzing their art work, but also gaining feedback and perspective from their peers (Overby, 2009). “Students literally see the conversation and have a chance to contribute to a past exchange when they realize a connection” (2009); the teacher begins the questioning but the students carry on the discussion. Weblogs also provide the same benefits of a visual thinking journal in terms of allowing a space to look back and visualize the progression of ideas and concepts, contributing real world information into the art making discussion, and resulting in richer and advanced conceptual art work due to the incorporation of critical thinking (Overby, 2009). However, blog postings on a Weblog should be treated as an extension of the classroom critique, and not considered journal entries (Overby, 2009). Overby emphasizes that it is necessary to take time during class reading and analyzing blog postings in order to connect information back to classroom curriculum (2009). 3D Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) take extend reflective practice through technology even further.

3-D virtual living environments.

Lu (2008) defines 3-D Virtual Living Environments (VLE’s) and explains the benefits of this virtual community as providing information, visualization, autonomy, interaction, and interactivity. Information visualization occurs in 3D VLE’s by allowing a student to log in to a site under an avatar, which is a visual representation of who they are. This visualized self-image creates a connection to the site and gives the student a sense of presence within their learning environment (Lu, 2008). This sense of presence
achieves a primary learning goal of creating student engagement with their learning. Lu’s (2009) choice for her 3D VLE setting was that of a café where students would find art discussions to be as pleasant and comfortable as talking with friends in a café (p. 50). The web design was arranged to resemble a café where participants could meet to discuss art exhibitions and artist’s works (Lu, 2008).

Lu’s (2008) 3D VLE allowed students to actively engage in art conversations with peers in a setting which already felt comfortable and familiar to their daily lives. Art conversations revolved around “artist talk sessions” where participants had the opportunity to ask visiting artists questions on their work (Lu, 2008, p. 50). Lu (2008) noticed that conversations among students and artists showed enthusiasm and aesthetic comments that were less likely to occur in a traditional classroom setting. Lu (2009) also observed that the “environment enabled participants to easily become active learners, engaged and maintaining a sense of ownership of their art conversation. Lu (2008) believes that the computer-mediated learning environment is founded in constructivist theory; the idea of collaborating, interacting, and reflecting to acquire knowledge is a fundamentally constructivist belief. 3D VLE’s

Transform students into active participants (learners) in so far as they are thereby encouraged to initiate navigation and interaction. They discover meaningful information within the virtual learning environment and become engaged in the process of knowledge construction while sharing and discussing ideas with other participants. (Lu, 2008, p. 50)

As students communicate, interact, and converse with site members they are participating in a learning activity that allows them to construct their own knowledge.
How Teachers Employ Issues in Visual Thinking Journals

Elsdon-Clifton (2005) uses visual journaling with her high school art students as a forum for students to construct meaning about their artwork and explore their own subjectivity. She defines subjectivity as a way for the student to discover their meaning of self, society, and the world around them (2005). When students tackle issues about their own subjectivity they develop the skills to become self-knowing members of society with a confidence necessary to question that society and culture they are a part of (Elsdon-Clifton, 2005).

Elsdon-Clifton (2005) describes the high school experience as wading through “messy, murky waters of transformation” (2005) in which art students can use their visual journal as an accessory in charting their course through those difficult times of adolescence. The purpose for implementing a visual journal is to have an outlet that enables the student to create art that reflects their feelings/subjectivity and to explore ways to alter and improve upon themselves, their world, and their art work (2005). The visual journal was Elsdon-Clifton’s way of observing and documenting how her students constructed meaning in their art work.

The author’s findings showed that the high school in her study dealt with issues that were relevant to today’s youth such as: body image, sexuality, family problems, peer relationships, confidence, and self esteem. The primary goal of developing the visual journal was to create art that negotiates a student’s course through adolescence by exploring and shaping their subjectivity (2005). By taking part in visual journaling a student constructs and changes their knowledge about themselves and society.
In order to best understand ourselves, our community and society, we must use information that pertains to our own reality (Grushka, 2006). This requires students to learn how to actively communicate and reflect on an everyday basis (Grushka, 2006). Grushka (2008) believes visual thinking journals enable students to construct their own views on highly sensitive subjects such as the nature of existence, being, and one’s relationship to the body and material existence, making a conscious shift towards a framing that “situates students as critical observers and social commentators” (p. 298).

Students living in a highly digitized society are often concerned with ideas of expressing themselves and how they fit into such a media driven world (Grushka, 2008). Art making and visual journaling can have a direct impact on a student’s ability to understand their identities and even create new ones (Grushka, 2008). By including the use of visual thinking journals a student may better understand the contemporary issues they are exposed to.

**Conclusion**

In reviewing previous literature I found theorists Dewey, Vygotsky, Jaramillo, and Banks and Banks who discuss reflective practice and constructivist theory, which is the framework for incorporating reflective practice into visual thinking journals. In order to begin my research it was critical that I understand the different types and applications of visual thinking journals. I discovered a wide variety of terms and uses that educators refer to when working with visual thinking journals. Some teachers employ contemporary issues in visual thinking journals as a useful technique in the art classroom. By investing the applications of visual thinking journals, how they are incorporated into an art classroom, and their use in relation to contemporary issues, I hope to have created a solid
foundation to begin the research process. Now turn to the design of study for this research process.
Chapter III: Methodology

This qualitative case study was conducted in order to explore how art teachers use visual thinking journals and how students respond to the use of visual thinking journals in a high school setting. This chapter will discuss the reasoning behind conducting a qualitative research study, the focus on case study research, the setting and role of the researcher, data collection and analysis strategies, and considerations of ethics and confidentiality.

Assumptions and Rationale for Qualitative Design

Qualitative research is best suited to explorative research that emphasizes the necessity of being in the field and gaining participants viewpoints (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Qualitative research can be classified as interpretive research that is based on reality being a social construct; researchers do not discover knowledge but construct it (Merriam, 2009). This constructivist philosophy focuses the researcher’s task on “understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam, 2009). When there is a lack of theory, researchers must collect data that attempts to build knowledge through observations learned in the field (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research is often used in the education field because it provides the reader with vivid and highly descriptive prose in order to fill any gaps that are present in inductive qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). The inductive nature of qualitative research (Merriam, 2009) and philosophical roots in constructivism relate heavily to my constructivist framework.
Types of Qualitative Research

Six of the most commonly used approaches in qualitative research are phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, narrative analysis, critical, and case study qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). I have chosen to conduct my research using a case study approach in a high school classroom located within Western New York.

Case studies are intrinsically bounded to particular incidents that a researcher can study exclusively to gain unique and complete understanding on a phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). Merriam goes further to specifically state “by concentrating on a single phenomenon or entity (the case), the researcher aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon” (2009). Since the phenomenon of how one teacher uses a visual thinking journal with students a case study is the most appropriate fit for my research.

Site of Study

Determining a research site depends on permission for entry, high probability for a rich variety of data, and a location where quality and credibility are sufficiently guaranteed (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The following research site was chosen because it best represented the interest of my study, providing myself with an information-rich case. I conducted my research at Thomas Jefferson Arts High School in the classroom of an art educator whom I will call Katherine Carlson. The school’s location resides in the city of Lafayette, a mid-sized city in Western New York.

Participants

The participants for my research were the students enrolled in Thomas Jefferson Arts High School and Mrs. Carlson who uses visual thinking journals in her art courses.
This school is an arts magnet school that requires students to apply and audition for enrollment. Students can major in dance, media communications, music, theater, and visual arts. The student participants in this study were visual arts majors.

In order to find the most compelling data it was necessary to study a classroom that has substantial visual thinking journal usage. Because visual journaling most often takes place in the high school setting, it was most beneficial for me to study this age group. Art courses studied at this site included an upper level drawing and painting course (grade 12) and a Graphic Design course (ninth grade) that actively incorporated visual thinking journals in the curriculum. Participants, teacher and students, all received consent forms (see Appendix B) and approved of their involvement in this study.

**Role of Researcher**

The observer/observed relationship can range from full participant to solely being an observer (Merriam, 2009). In this study I followed the role of observer as participant wherein the primary role of researcher is observing and information gathering with participation being secondary (Merriam, 2009). Observer as participant allows the researcher access to a wide range of participants and information in addition to allowing for minimal interaction with subjects (Merriam, 2009).

Through my role as observer-participant I visited the research site each Tuesday for two months in order to observe how visual thinking journals are used in the high school art classroom. I conducted interviews with the teacher and selected students, documented how students use and respond to visual thinking journals, and collected teacher documents that helped me better understand how visual thinking journals are
implemented in the high school art setting. Lastly, I analyzed and interpreted the data collected to report my findings.

Data Collection Methods

When discussing data collection and analysis it is imperative that the researcher use methods that are appropriate for the topic, setting, and participants, while also limiting intrusion to the maximum extent (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). All information was recorded and collected in a binder divided by sections titled: school, participants, data collection methods, and items photographed from visual thinking journals. I also allowed space for pertinent course materials obtained from teacher participants.

My data analysis began in October 2011 and concluded in December 2011. Data collection methods included interviews, observations, and documents to triangulate data. Triangulation is described by Marshall and Rossman (2006) as data being collected from “multiple sources to include interviews, observations, and document analysis” (p. 199). These data collection methods and are described below.

Interviews.

Interviewing allows the researcher to observe what cannot be observed: a subject’s feelings, behavior, how they interpret their world, along with their perspectives and intentions (Merriam, 2009). When attempting to record or understand past behavior, the technique of interviewing is helpful (Merriam, 2009). In certain circumstances interviewing may be the only way to collect data.

Three types of interviewing styles are structured, semi-structured, and informal (Merriam, 2009). The semi-structured interview includes a mix of question types, can be flexible in delivery and order, and is guided by issues and topics to be explored.
Informal interviews use explorative questions that are open ended and much like a conversation, which allows for formation of future interview questions (Merriam, 2009). In this study a mixture of semi-structured and informal interview questions were used (see Appendices C and D).

**Observation.**

The terms fieldwork and field study can be used interchangeably to define the combination of informal interviews and observation that also include studying documents and artifacts (Merriam, 2009). As with interviewing, observing is a skill that can be learned and requires much practice and training (Merriam, 2009). Observing provides the researcher a method to triangulate emerging findings by using observation in addition to interviewing and reviewing documents (Merriam, 2009). Observation also gives the researcher contexts for behavior and is helpful when participants do not feel comfortable discussing topics in an interview (Merriam, 2009).

Throughout my research I observed participants at varying stages of visual thinking journal production and recorded these observations, or field notes, in a journal. Merriam (2009) defines field notes as “written accounts of observation” (p. 128). I provided thorough field note records before, during and after observations that allowed for easier data analysis to ensure accurate recollection of information (Merriam, 2009).

**Documents.**

Merriam defines a document as written, visual, digital, and physical materials that pertain to a researcher’s study (2009). Artifacts (symbolic and non-symbolic) are also considered documents. These documents can exist prior to the study or can be produced by the researcher or participants during the study (Merriam, 2009). Four categories of
documents are: public records, personal documents, popular culture documents, and visual documents (Merriam, 2009). Documents can be especially valuable for numerous reasons. They are often free or non-expensive, can provide descriptive information, and can verify or discover emerging findings (Merriam, 2009). The primary benefit is the lack of observer influence. Document collecting is unobtrusive and considered non-reactive, or immune, to the researcher’s agenda because it exists independently from the investigation (Merriam, 2009).

Personal and visual documents were collected during this study. “Personal documents are a reliable source of data concerning a person’s attitudes, beliefs, and view of the world” (Merriam, 2009, p. 153). Diaries, letters, scrapbooks, etc. are examples of personal documents, which can be a relevant and reliable source when a subject’s attitude, beliefs, and views are of importance for data collection. I acquired copies of students’ visual thinking journals after obtaining permission from the course instructor and student involved (see consent form in Appendix B). I collected and photographed images from visual thinking journals and selected examples can be found in chapter four.

**Validity and Ethical Issues**

Validity and trustworthiness was addressed within this research in the following manner. The methods of data collection have been chosen thoughtfully in order to provide transactional validity, or the most accurate reflection of reality in the field (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Triangulation of data sources (interviews, observation, and document analysis) also contributed to a more accurate and objective representation of results (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).
I recorded observations in field notes journal as well as information discovered during informal interviews conducted with participants. Examples of information collected from student visual thinking journals may be found in Appendices E-J.

Rich, thick description (Merriam, 2009) during data collected allowed for readers’ understanding and judgments about transferability to made. Signatures of participants and participant guardians on informed consent forms assured participants privacy, anonymity, and right to participate. All names were changed for the protection of participant privacy. Approval was received from SUNY College at Buffalo State Internal Review Board to conduct this study.

Data Analysis

When analyzing data the investigator collects and analyzes the data simultaneously (Merriam, 2009). By analyzing and collecting data simultaneously, I will be able to make speculations, connections, and discover emerging findings to direct myself to more valuable data opportunities (Merriam, 2009). Coding (Merriam, 2009), or providing indentifying notations to data, can make organizing and managing resources easier while allowing effective analysis of data. During the analysis process I focused on creating and discovering themes, categories, or patterns that address the research questions. When constructing categories during data analysis my goal will be to discover themes that represent repeating patterns that may appear throughout my data. Merriam (2009), states that “when categories and their properties are reduced and refined and then linked together, the analysis is moving toward the development of a model or theory to explain the data’s meaning” (p. 192).
Conclusion

This proposal suggested a qualitative case study using a selected high school that met my criteria of actively using visual thinking journals in art curriculum. Data from the study gathered used a variety of data collection methods and included interviews, observation, and document analysis. Data was collected from the art teacher and her students who have signed consent and permission forms approved by the IRB at Buffalo State College. The collection and analysis of data occurred simultaneously with results being discussed in the following chapter. In the following chapter I summarize my findings for the research study.
Chapter IV: Results and Findings

Primary research findings discovered from a triangulation of data that included observation, participant interviews, and document collection. Through my research I attempted to answer my central question of what can be learned from a study that explores how art teachers use visual thinking journals and how students respond to the use of visual thinking journals in an urban arts high school setting.

Observation included visiting the research site each Tuesday on a weekly basis for approximately two months and transcribing findings in a field journal. I conducted semi-structured and informal interviews with Mrs. Carlson and student participants in order to document participant involvement, viewpoints, and perception towards sketchbook use and assignments. Sketchbook entries from student participants are included in order to provide documentation and triangulation of data.

This chapter will discuss and elaborate on the research setting, teacher participant, courses observed, student interviews, sketchbook documents, and findings culminated from data collection and analysis with excerpts from teacher interviews interspersed throughout chapter four.

Research Setting

Thomas Jefferson Arts High School resides in the mid-sized urban community of Lafayette, NY. Thomas Jefferson focuses on providing a college-preparatory experience in the arts and academics to a racially diverse student population. With approximately 850 students enrolled at Thomas Jefferson, the racial/ethnic origin of students are as follows: 68% Black or African American, 19% White, 10% Hispanic or Latino, 1% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 1% Asian or Native Hawaiian/other Pacific
Islander. Only a few blocks from downtown businesses and storefronts, Thomas Jefferson’s campus is neatly maintained and boasting a recently renovated building.

While walking the grounds of Thomas Jefferson Arts High School boisterous, energetic personalities intermingle cohesively. Hugs, high fives, handshakes, and laughter emanate from the students of all grades. The demographic is racially eclectic and books, skateboards, and hoodies can be found in the hands of students with backwards caps and music headphones fixed into teenager ears. Hallways are brightly lit with shiny white walls.

Students are typically dressed in clothing that serves comfort, fashion, or a mix of both. The majority of girls are adorned in the most recent fashion, and can be seen wearing dark skinny jeans, flashy jewelry, and black basics with added decorative accents such as bows, buttons, clips, and pins. Athletic clothing, graphic T’s, denim, and converse sneakers seem to be the typical male uniform. The students at Thomas Jefferson can be characterized as the quintessential teenager: one who’s concerned with appearance and the newest trends in apparel.

Exiting a crowded high school hallway and entering Mrs. Carlson’s classroom, one sees clean white walls and muted grey cabinets that serve as a blank canvas on which a wealth of art ephemera is displayed. Students walk into a room that immediately conveys a space that is dedicated to the creation of art. The spacious room allows ample working space for the small class sizes of 12-14 students. Easels can be found strategically located around the room with displays of classroom rules, art reproductions, and the ever present art teaching staple, the color wheel.
Each item serves a purpose and may be referenced at any time during instruction. A special space has been reserved to provide a display of finished student artwork from the most current project. On the perimeter of the classroom reside drying racks filled to the brim, along with shelves and counters decorated with a multitude of books, supplies, containers and bins. If a student is looking for something, whatever it may be, there is a good chance Mrs. Carlson has just the thing somewhere in her treasures. These treasures have undoubtedly been acquired through a long, and prosperous art teaching career.

Mrs. Carlson has spent a significant amount of her teaching career at Thomas Jefferson Arts High School. Typically found dressed in a basic black blouse and slacks, or wrapped comfortably in an earth-toned and patterned shawl, Carlson exudes a calm and nurturing aura. Her voice is soft and she has a quietly confident quality to her teaching; the type of voice that draws one closer. She shows great restraint and tolerance for teenage behavior and attitudes. Seldom would one find Mrs. Carlson making a scene by raising her voice in order to address a student’s undesired behavior.

What I noticed first and repeatedly about Mrs. Carlson’s teaching personality was her frequent and genuine moments of positive reinforcement and praise for a job well done. Carlson can be heard making the following statements on any given day:

“I’m glad to see all of your sketchbooks out in front of you!”

“I love looking at your drawings, it’s such a treat, it’s my favorite time of the day.”

“When your drawings are this good, they need to be shared.”

“I am very proud of you, I’m proud of all of you.”
“It’s getting difficult to even criticize because you all are developing such a keen eye.”

“Those of you who did your assignments, thank you; I will analyze these very carefully and give them a grade.”

Through words of soft-spoken praise and a priority on sketchbook production, Carlson constructs a learning environment where students partake in an open dialogue for sketchbook discussion. Students feel appreciated for and secure in expressing their thoughts and showcasing their sketchbook accomplishments. Through interviewing and observation, the following section will discuss Carlson’s teaching patterns, and her passion and philosophy on employing sketchbooks in the high school art setting.

**Carlson and Sketchbooks**

During an interview when asked why Carlson includes sketchbooks in her curriculum she replies quite expressively with,

Isn’t it a given? That we as art teachers need to prepare our students to collect ideas. I just think every art teacher needs to have a sketchbook. Every good art teacher should. You know there’s just not enough time in class to cover everything. I don’t want them to feel that being creative is just for the art room. They need to constantly collect those ideas. I think over the years my ideas about a sketchbook have changed just through reading literature and becoming more aware of what they can be. I think the journaling came later, probably when I started teaching Graphic Design. I realized that there was a really strong parallel between Graphic Design and using the day as information to be creative with.

(Teacher Interview, November 26, 2011)
It is Carlson’s opinion that using a sketchbook is a necessity for all learning artists, and that it is the art teacher’s job to promote and model sketchbook use in the curriculum. The sketchbook functions as an extension of class time, allowing students to extend their creativity beyond the classroom.

Carlson uses her art budget to provide the students with sketchbooks. The sketchbook is a 5”x7” book bounded by rings and is filled with blank white sheets. The sturdy, cardboard cover is non-descript and can be personalized to fit the teacher and/or student’s intentions. Allowing the student’s to personalize the sketchbook cover can creates a sense of ownership for the student. The small size makes portability easy and can be stowed neatly in a purse or backpack. Carlson’s idea of using the sketchbook as a convenient location for idea collection also mirrors that of Parker (2005) as discussed in Chapter Three.

![Student sketchbook cover](image)

*Figure 3. Student sketchbook cover.*
Inside the sketchbook cover one may find a small, golden sticker. This small gold circle is not excessively decorative, tacky, or childish.

![Image of a golden sticker](image)

*Figure 4. Student sketchbook gold sticker.*

It is a metallic gold that gives off a subtle and tasteful sheen. Carlson was inspired by the stickers on college football helmets and stated that, “the students love having a little bling.” Carlson awards gold stickers to assignments that have been done exceptionally well, or “knocks your socks off,” and hopes to see many covers “covered in gold” by the end of the course. She mentions those who received stickers when handing back sketchbooks to the class. The gold star seems to serve as both incentive and acknowledgement and reinforces the importance of quality sketchbook work.

Each Tuesday students arrive to class and place their finished sketchbook assignments in front of them on their desk. Carlson informs student’s that “Tuesdays are your chance to show up, to show us your skills. Tuesdays are the day to impress.” This theme of showing off their skills creates a friendly sense of competition amongst the students and motivates students to produce a quality of work that they can be proud of. Carlson utilizes an expected Tuesday routine of sketchbook collection and activity. After collecting sketchbooks from students she proceeds into a class critique by displaying the students assignments on her SmartBoard. Due to Carlson’s access to a piece of equipment
called the AVerVision 300, she can capture a sketchbook image clearly and transpose it onto a white board or SmartBoard device.

The AVerVision 300 is a document camera that captures an image clearly and transposes it onto a white board or SmartBoard device. Carlson considers this her “ace in the hole.” During an interview Carlson was asked how using the AVerVision 300 has affected sketchbook use and she replied,

Oh I think it’s been huge, huge for me. I love it. I think it’s so important I would go out and buy my own, if for some reason I had to share it and I didn’t have it. I just think the quality of the sketchbooks I’ve seen has improved because of it. I think that when it’s up on the SmartBoard because you can see it, they’re less afraid to say ‘Hey, this eye is a little bigger than it should be. It’s a little out of proportion.’ (Teacher Interview, November 26, 2011)

During a Tuesday critique many students can be heard saying “That looks good!” or “Good job!” One student, after seeing an impressive entry from a classmate, thought to say, “I think it deserves a golden sticker! I wish I got a golden sticker!” Students may not always comment out loud, but are frequently whispering to their classmates about tips and ideas to change for next time. During an interview one student stated, “Seeing everyone else’s and comparing my work to theirs basically helps me to see what I did wrong, where I can improve, and what techniques I can use to make my work even better.” All six students who contributed to my research during formal interviews expressed their fondness for viewing their classmate’s work on the SmartBoard. The following comments were recorded during their interviews.

Ms. Machina: Do you like seeing everyone’s work?
Danielle: Yes I do, I really do. I love it cause I get ideas and I see. I can relate it to my artwork too.

Ms. Machina: Does viewing your artwork on the SmartBoard change how you work in it?
Danielle: it kind of does because if I see a classmate’s artwork and they’re really good, and she puts mine up it can be embarrassing if I didn’t take my time to do that entry.

Ms. Machina: Do the SmartBoard critiques influence you in anyway?
Carl: Yes because I get to see my work for myself, and what other people are thinking about it.

Ms. Machina: Does it change how you work in your sketchbook?
Carl: A little bit because now I can choose to change anything I don’t really need, or add anything. You know, just make it better as best as I can.

Ms. Machina: How does the SmartBoard critiques influence you?
George: Well first off, I don’t want to be embarrassed to show something that’s really bad, so I try to at least show something of a moderate level of work.

Ms. Machina: What about seeing everyone else’s?
George: Seeing everyone else’s and comparing mine to theirs basically helps me to see what I did wrong, where I can improve, and what techniques I can use to make my work even better.

By utilizing an expected schedule, the technological tool of the AVerVision 300, and the designated class critique, Carlson is demonstrating that using the sketchbook is an integral part of learning in her classrooms. She has set up an environment where students know what to expect and can come prepared to perform.
Through observations and interviews I found both Graphic Design and Advanced Drawing and Painting Carlson typically follows a similar routine for collecting and critiquing sketchbooks. However, the content and grading vary greatly between the two courses. Now I turn to a description of my observations of the Graphic Design class and Advanced Drawing and Painting.

**The Graphic Design Class**

Graphic Design is a 90-minute course that meets daily for a 20-week period consisting of 14 freshmen. During observation the curriculum revolved predominantly around a calendar project where students create a visual journal using symbols and images to tell the story of one month. Ninth grade students produce daily entries in their sketchbook for each day of that month. The day’s entry included a list of what happened with a corresponding design that visually represents that day. Each daily entry was required as a homework assignment that Mrs. Carlson would check at the beginning of the class. When asked how she manages sketchbook use in regards to grading Carlson said:

In graphic design class it’s always been based on the calendar assignment. I have a plus/minus system. If I can tell that they go home and they’ve created their brainstorming list, that they’ve started to play with shapes and lines to put together a unified design, they’ll get credit for that homework. So for them in a marking period if I’ve checked homework 12 times and they’ve only done it 8 times, their grade is based on that, eight out of 12. (Teacher Interview, November 26, 2011)
Carlson uses each Tuesday in Graphic Design to conduct an in-class assignment for the sketchbook. One activity observed revolved around a poem “The Great Figure,” by William Carlos William, which students pasted in their sketchbook. Carlson had a student read it out loud, and asked them to “visualize” and create a design in the sketchbook that illustrates this poem. The class had about 15 minutes to work on their design. Carlson encouraged students to keep working on their sketch if it was not ready to be displayed using the AVerVision 300 for the class to see. When students finished sketching Carlson informed them that the artist Charles Demuth also created an artwork inspired by this poem. She then displayed Demuth’s artwork titled The Figure 5 in Gold, which begins the class discussion on how Demuth created an abstract piece using the elements and principles of design to visually represent the poem.

Students then cut and paste information about the poem and the artist into their sketchbooks in order to “remember this day and how Demuth packed so much information into his painting…try and do this with your calendar assignment.”
The student’s next sketchbook assignment was to document their day. Carlson instructs the class to “list everything -food, thoughts, outfits, people, and happenings- and then draw a design that represents that list. You might want to carry your sketchbook around with you today.” This sketchbook activity is Carlson’s way of modeling how to produce a quality sketchbook assignment with the results she desires. With her ninth grade students Carlson takes each Tuesday to model her expectations for their sketchbook assignments. She uses this time to get her students acquainted to the kinds of processes and thinking strategies by modeling it step by step for them. In Advanced Drawing and Painting the content and desires vary greatly.

**The Advanced Drawing and Painting Class**

Advanced Drawing and Painting is also 90-minute course daily 20-week course that consists of 10 senior-year art majors with a curriculum that targets improving and
demonstrating realistic drawing and painting skills. Sketchbook assignments are teacher-directed and closed ended in order to most efficiently improve student artistic ability.

Mrs. Carlson focused the assignments predominately on skills-based drawings done using a reference image or object. When asked how she determines grading of sketchbooks for Advanced Drawing and Painting Carlson responded with,

I’m looking for quality and an investment of time. So I’ll give them a grade based zero-ten. And I don’t use a rubric; it’s just not practical. Especially after I spend the time critiquing it in front of class. You know I really analyze them. My post-it notes, I put in lots of comments. I don’t use a rubric because there are so many different things I look for. I’m basically looking for growth and improvement. I think each drawing should build upon the last and I’m so thrilled if I see them really applying the suggestion that I’ve made. This group is really good at that. They listen, they look, they try to see it, and in their next one they’ll try to improve it. (Teacher Interview, November 26, 2011)

Figure 6. Teacher comment in sketchbook on post-it.
The Advanced Drawing and Painting students also have class critique on Tuesdays like the Graphic Design class, but activities and sketchbook assignments follow a different agenda for the drawing and painting students.

Sketchbook assignments for Drawing and Painting consisted of contour line drawings of the following: hands, keys, a still life that includes three objects that represent the student, drawing of three kitchen objects arranged in a still life, and multiple entries of drawing a model’s image from a magazine. The last assignment examined was the first rendering entry, done using a photo provided from Carlson.

Carlson almost always provides the students with an image to work from and paste into their sketchbook. One such image was that of Picasso’s Igor Stravinsky. Students were instructed to paste the Picasso drawing upside down in their sketchbook. Then they were to draw Stravinsky upside down, using an index card as they moved further down the image. The index card allows students to focus on drawing one area at a time and encourages the student to study the image in front of them.

*Figure 7.* Igor Stravinsky upside down.
During my observation I was able to witness a class critique of their Stravinsky assignment. Students entered the classroom and began their Tuesday routine of pulling out sketchbooks and preparing for a sketchbook critique and/or activity that lasted from approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Mrs. Carlson decided to warm-up the students by providing a large jug of animal crackers for the their enjoyment, explaining to them, “A little snack always makes a critique a little less painless.” As the teacher collected the Stravinsky assignment, this senior group finished their conversations and got comfortable in their seats with a generous handful of crackers. Carlson began the critique by stating, “Let’s have an intelligent discussion about this drawing.”

It’s always an exciting moment when that first entry gets displayed on the big screen. Students can be heard asking, “Who’s is that? Is that yours? Ohhh, that one is good.” Each student had the opportunity to have their artwork displayed and discussed among their classmates and also Mrs. Carlson. These moments allowed the students to give their thoughts and opinions to one another. As the critique wrapped up and the final entry was viewed, Carlson prepared the students for their next assignment.

Next week’s assignment was to draw a face from a magazine using the same upside down technique as with Picasso’s Stravinsky. The students then had the next 10 to 15 minutes to browse through Carlson’s magazine collection to find an image of their choice. Allowing students to prepare for the next assignment while in class is an effective way to ensure a student’s chances of completing their work on time and eliminating the possibility of the student not finding an image with which to work. On one particular Tuesday very few students arrived with their sketchbook assignment finished. During our interview Carlson hypothesized that this could have been due to the fact that she had not
provided the students with time to cut and paste the image into their sketchbooks. Student’s living in an urban environment may not have access to computers, printers, or magazines and may need time in class to use the teacher’s resources.

When Carlson asked the class, “What’s going on here?” in regards to the low amount of sketchbooks turned in, a student responded with “We don’t like the assignments. We don’t like drawing people.” Carlson responded by explaining that she has seen great improvements in their drawing skills after each assignment. That their line quality was getting better and better and their ability to draw the human form proportionately was also advancing. This incident led me to ask Carlson why the drawing class sketchbook predominately focuses on exercises that are skills building. Carlson responded,

Because they needed it. We started with gesture and proportion and having them loosen up with their line, and create a human figure that’s in proportion? They were struggling with that. They were really, really, having a hard time. I just feel like they need to exercise those skills before they come to class and really do quality work. Plus I’m modeling my class to model an existing drawing and painting class, so a lot of what he does influences me. Maybe the reason I’m doing exercises in the sketchbook might be because I’m trying to design a class that’s compatible, that touches upon what he does.

Plus, I think the exercises on their skills, they should be doing that at home. Do that at home so you can come and learn about art and make art. Practice at home, but come to school and lets put together an artwork. (Teacher Interview, November 26, 2011)
Carlson’s response in the interview to focus on skills activity shows an element of giving up something in order to get something. In order to achieve artistic ability Carlson has set up close-ended assignments that leave little room for student interest or choice. This creates a conflict among the teacher in regards to high quality of student sketchbook production. The teacher wants drawings of a high ability, but the students may not embrace these assignments when not given the opportunity for individuality and personal choice.

Carlson’s intentions for sketchbooks and the student’s response to the use of sketchbooks in class demanded the need for formal interviews of students from both Graphic Design and Advanced Drawing and Painting.

**Interviews**

Three students each from Graphic Design and Advanced Drawing and Painting were picked for formal interviews. Specific participants were chosen in order to provide a well-rounded mix of results and feedback. The first interview to be discussed was with a ninth grade Graphic Arts student named Carl. Carl typically comes to school wearing a bright graphic T, jeans, and a pair of Nikes. His round, full cheeks exude youthfulness, but his eyes delude a child who may have had to grow up quickly. Behind Carl’s curled lashes is a young artist who pulls creativity from his strife. His artistic passion lights his face with a smile when we begin to discuss his sketchbook.

Carl begins by explaining the assignment for his sketchbook cover. The students cut out letters of various fonts from magazines that made up the letters of their name. As we flip through the pages our focus is directed to the many daily entries for the calendar project.
The first calendar entry was on October 1st and detailed Carl’s day. In the figure on the left are various designs/symbols that represented that day to Carl. The figure on the right is a specific design that Carl described as where he “got mad at somebody over here.” I asked him to tell me a little more about it.

*Figure 8. Carl #1 and #2 first calendar entry.*

Carl: I wanted to show a lot of anger, what I wish would happen.

Ms. Machina: Which one is you?

Carl: Probably the eyes, looking down.

Ms. Machina: And what’s this person there?
Carl: This is the person I was mad at right there. Because I had a little sympathy I gave her a shield, but it only covered the bottom. And that’s a monster coming out of the sea about to get her.

Ms. Machina: Is this someone from school or family?

Carl: School.

It is clear in this first calendar assignment Carl is attempting to create images that represent that day’s activities, including an interaction with a friend from school. Carl did not create one unified design to represent his day until weeks later. An entry from later in Carl’s sketchbook shows a more unified design. However, the content remains similar.

*Figure 9. Carl #3 later calendar entry.*
Ms. Machina: What are you showing here in this design?

Carl: This (the human figure) is me being out of it. Like all my brains are everywhere. (Points to spikes atop figure’s head) This is my friend Raymond; he has spiky hair. This is for my friend Monica who wears a panda backpack (points to dark shadow on figure’s back). And this is my friend Serena because she has a scar on her nose right now (points to slash on figure’s nose).

Carl has chosen to draw a human form that represents himself and has added elements of his friends to his form. When asked what aspects from his daily life he chooses to portray the most, Carl responded, “My friends. I include them a lot because they’re always in my life.” Friendships were a recurring theme in Carl’s sketchbook. Delacruz and Bales (2010) explain the important need of humans to record events and issues that they deem meaningful, just as Carl has. He also informed me that anime and cartoons also serve as inspiration, which is a similarity he shares with the following interview participant, Monica.

Monica arrives each day in an attention-grabbing outfit and an attitude that conveys, “Oh this old thing” as if every day is an opportunity to dress like a star. Her natural curls are often worn clipped to the side with a decorative bow, keeping the tight coils out of her face. Brightly colored tights and legwarmers are the background for pins, jewelry, headbands and other bits of flair. She describes herself by saying “I like a lot of bright colors, accessories. I like a lot of anime. I like to draw my own characters in my sketchbook and I enjoy fashion a lot… I really like pandas and I really like Asia and Asian things.” Her statement-making style is represented throughout her four sketchbooks which all serve different purposes. One sketchbook is filled with cartoons
and figures that she creates, another sketchbook is for art class assignments, she has one sketchbook used for fun, and “I lose sketchbooks a lot so I’ll get more, this explains the bigger one. They serve different purposes.”

Ms. Machina: Pick your favorite entry, from the personal sketchbooks or your Graphic Design sketchbook.

Figure 10. Monica self-portrait.

Monica: (chooses an entry from her personal sketchbook) This is a zombie cartoon character of me and it actually represents me a lot. I have a panda hat, and I really enjoy pandas. And my brown curly hair. And I really enjoy cupcakes and I love wearing dresses and bows; there’s bows on her socks. Green is one of my favorite colors and she’s a zombie so I made her a green zombie.
The self-portrait created by Monica is an excellent example of her likes, interests, and personality represented in her own image. Another self-portrait is discussed below.

![Monica Self-Portrait #2](image)

*Figure 11. Monica Self-Portrait #2.*

Monica: That one’s me (Figure 11). I was just practicing on Anime and drawing myself.

Ms. Machina: What about you is represented in this?

Monica: Cupcakes. I like to wear tutus a lot. I like a lot of accessories. I love pandas, I have glasses, bows, a lot of things. Everything about it.

Monica’s work in her sketchbook shows her fascination with her Japanese culture and fashion, anime, zombies, etc. Throughout her calendar assignments, Monica works in a
similar fashion to her self-portraits. Her artistic style, the visual world she is a part of, and her individuality is of primary concern in her entries.

I asked Monica which sketchbook entry represented her daily life the most. She chose the quiz assignment that was pasted into the sketchbook. The quiz was required by Mrs. Carlson and was to be the student’s best attempt at listing their day and creating a unified graphic design to go along with it. Figure 14 is the list she generated and Figure 15 is the design she created to represent that list. This unified design accurately depicts Monica’s artistic style and life interests.

![Figure 12. Monica quiz list.](image)
Ms. Machina: What aspects of life do you include the most in your entries?
Monica: A lot of sadness and a lot of rage. The envy, which I incorporate a lot into my work.
Ms. Machina: Which entry do you think incorporates it the most?
Monica: This quiz. I was really mad and sad, and it’s all up here; like furious (points to word in list). Sad and confused. And a lot of emotions. Basically that’s what I’m trying to do, is just show emotions.
Ms. Machina: Emotions about school, friends, family?
Monica: Friends and family. Not really school.
Ms. Machina: Which assignments allow you to put in your own style?
Monica: All of them. Mostly the calendar project. I mean it’s my everyday life so it’s kinda hard not to put myself into it.

Monica’s list for the quiz entry shows words such as fulfilled, cheated, furious misunderstood, along with phrases describing conversations and feeling towards her
peers. It is obvious that Monica is attempting to express her emotions about friends and family in her design. Elsdon-Clifton (2005) notes that visual journals are an important tool for today’s youth to work out issues that are relevant to them such as family problems, peer relationships, confidence, and self-esteem. Monica’s sketchbook serves as a place to express her artistic endeavors and discuss issues that relate to herself as a teen artist and the world around her. Carl, Monica and the next student participant from Graphic Design all stated that they could express their personality in the sketchbook assignments, especially in regards to the calendar project.

Natalie also agreed with Monica when asked what assignments she was best able to add her personality to: “The calendar because it’s all about our day and what’s going on in our life.” One look at Natalie’s calendar entries and it’s easy to see this is a girl with a dry sense of humor, and a devotion to video games. Nina speaks with a deadpan voice and a neutral expression as she explains her sketchbook and answers my questions.

When asked which assignment was easiest for her, Natalie picks a calendar entry.

Figure 14. Natalie calendar entry.
The bullet was created because “I played Call of Duty: Black Ops (video game) so that was the bullet.” Many of her entries include the bullet because she often plays video games involving war-themed, gun-related adventures. Natalie found her easiest entries revolved around video games, but her highest quality work had to do with practicing drawing skills.

For her best quality assignment Natalie chose an entry done during class. The task was to practice drawing animals that would be included in her artwork for the story of “Peter and the Wolf.”

Figure 15. Natalie, “Peter and the Wolf.”

Natalie believes that using a sketchbook is good for “practice. You sketch in there and get ideas down and practice on better drawings and stuff.” This can be seen in the following image.
During some down time in class Mrs. Carlson provided Natalie with a handout depicting a drawing of a hand. She gave this to Natalie because she was finished with her assignments and could use this time to practice drawing in her sketchbook.

The interviews with Carl, Monica, and Natalie show the sketchbook being used as an outlet for student expression and personality. The Graphic Design calendar project allows students to visually represent the important people in their life, build and develop their artistic style, incorporate their interests of the visual world around them, and tackle issues that teens face today. The sketchbook is also a place for practicing drawing skills as seen lastly with Natalie. Artistic skill building is the primary focus of Carlson’s Advanced Drawing and Painting class.

In Advanced Drawing and Painting, George shares similar opinions with Natalie about using a sketchbook for drawing improvement. Usually quietly working and chatting with friends, George is a Thomas Jefferson Arts High School senior who speaks eloquently and with confidence. In the interview George walked me through the three assignments involving magazine images of faces.

Figure 17. Natalie. Hands.
Figure 17. George #1 first model contour.

George: I was actually better but still the proportions were off by a lot in the face. The eyes are too wide and the teeth were too defined. She wrote it down on a post-it and it was a reminder on what I was supposed to work on to get better. She also told me during our critique (class critique with the SmartBoard).
George: I did better but the only thing was it didn’t work out with the pen. I couldn’t erase. I messed up on the proportions and couldn’t erase.
George: Now this one was my best drawing. Because first off, I used pencil, and the second thing I took my time with this. And the third, I actually implemented the techniques that Mrs. Carlson taught us, like using the paper and moving it down. And that’s what I did.

George chose Figure 19 as his best work because it showed the improvement of his drawing skills as he continued on with the assignments. It is clear in Figure 19 that George’s drawing skills have improved since his first attempt in Figure 17. Andrea also credits practice to why certain entries were more successful.

A tall, thin blonde, Andrea thinks of herself as an artistic soul who has plans to continue utilizing her creative skills at a local college next year. I asked Andrea what her best assignment was and she picked her second contour drawing from a magazine.
“This one (Figure 20) is my best work because I think it really showed my improvement from the last contour drawing.” Andrea added that, “It didn’t take me too long. I think it’s because I had that practice before.” During the interview with Mrs. Carlson, she also echoed that she’s observed much growth in the student’s sketchbooks: “I’ve seen lots of growth in those little tiny sketchbooks, I’d like to make them bigger next year.” During Andrea’s interview she also mentioned that she’d like a bigger sketchbook and to “maybe pick something that we like to do. Because that’s something I feel like maybe we would try harder. If it’s something that we enjoy drawing.” This idea brought forth from Andrea on having personal freedom with sketchbook assignments relates directly to Brooks and Brooks’ belief of students constructing meaning based on what they know in their own life experience and what interests them. Having personal
freedom in regards to sketchbook assignments was also expressed in the following interview with Danielle.

A warm-hearted Latina who comes from a home that speaks predominately Spanish, Danielle is a sweet girl who enjoys talking about art. She reported that she often spends her study halls discussing her drawings with other art majors because she relishes the feedback she receives from them. Her favorite part of her sketchbook is the cover.

![Figure 21. Danielle sketchbook front cover.](image)
Figure 2. Danielle sketchbook back cover.

Ms. Machina: Tell me about the cover (Appendix J Figure 1 and 2).

Danielle: I like color, and the “fairy” kind of look; Colorful. I decided to put words that describe me, main words that I outlined. I like to do a lot of lettering and colors.

Ms. Machina: What’s your favorite part of your sketchbook?

Danielle: The cover. I actually took my time and I wanted to do it. It was something I chose to do not something I had to do.

Ms. Machina: In the assignments is there ever anything that you get to pull from yourself and what you do?

Danielle: In the assignments? No.

Ms. Machina: Would you like the opportunity to be more individual and personalize your assignments?

Danielle: Yea, I actually think it would be cool if she just, like one day said to chose something that we wanted, anything.
George and Andrea had similar thoughts about including their personality and daily life into their assignments in Advanced Drawing and Painting. When asked if George had ever been able to include his life and happenings into his sketchbook, he said, “I actually never had that experience to tell you the truth. But I would like to though. I would like to see how it turns out.” Andrea believed that Mrs. Carlson doesn’t leave too much room for personality in their sketchbook because the assignments have very specific guidelines.

**Personal Entries**

In our interview I asked Mrs. Carlson how much decision-making power she usually gives the students in Advanced Drawing and Painting when it comes to the sketchbooks. The following is an excerpt from that interview.

I haven’t been giving the drawing and painting kids much. I feel like it’s because with the method I’m using now, I can help them and point out things to improve their technique. Whereas if they bring me very expressive imaginative works, for me they’re more difficult to critique. Because I can’t say ‘Well look here…’ There isn’t something for me to reference. And who am I to say that their own work ‘needs more contrast,’ it’s theirs. I don’t know, I just feel like I can give better constructive criticism if I have a reference to look at and I eliminate the unknown factor.

I sound so much like my colleague when I say that because usually I’m the one that’s really big on having a voice and being expressive. But I so want them to get the basics down too. Maybe their final project should be something that’s their own. But by the time you get through our program in our school with five different art teachers, hopefully there’s a good balance. That by the time you’re a
senior you’ve explored not only your own voice, but also a lot of the skill and
technique. (Teacher interview, November 26, 2011)

After hearing Mrs. Carlson’s opinion I realized that this is a situation where one
needs to give up something in order to get something. Mrs. Carlson wants to see the
student’s artistic ability improve throughout their sketchbooks so she assigns
straightforward, teacher directed exercises. It may be easier to critique constructively, but
it leaves the students feeling bored and perhaps unfulfilled. During the student interviews
with the Advanced Drawing and Painting students it was clearly expressed that they
would enjoy being able to have some decision making power when using their
sketchbooks.

Mrs. Carlson and I then discussed the idea of personal entries in the sketchbook.
I’d love to see them do their own thing in their sketchbooks. I would love that!
They don’t. I’d give them extra credit if they brought in something. I’ve never
said ‘ok let’s just save this for school assignments.’ I would love for them to bring
me their work. They’re free to do their own thing. But I think they really kind of
like being told what to do at this stage.

Another thing, in school if you give them too much freedom it’s hard to design a
rubric and assess their work. But I would love to see them. Maybe I should
emphasize that next time when I check their sketchbooks. Or I could do it every
other week.

And then I find that some times too, like the one day I gave them an assignment
but I didn’t give them time to paste in into their sketchbooks during class, I got
such bad turnout that week. And I wonder if I gave them so much freedom would
they take the time to go and find a reference. Sometimes they need it right there. But I’m going to try it! A lot of me thinks they’re just not there yet. They still have so much more to learn. (Teacher interview, November 26, 2011)

In her last statement, it is clear that Mrs. Carlson believes in being open to the student’s suggestions and opinions and is willing to be flexible. This openness to conversing with her students on topics of the classroom subject matter relates to the constructivist philosophy of teachers and students learning from each other. With open communication Mrs. Carlson can hear her students requests and answer them in an effective way.

Summary

Through observation, interviews, and examining student sketchbooks, I found Mrs. Carlson to strongly utilize sketchbooks in both courses because she believes it is the best way to prepare students to be idea collectors while also improving their artistic ability. Her use of technology with the AVerVision 300 has resulted in better critiques and sketchbook results as seen by herself and the students.

Different approaches to using sketchbooks occurred between the two courses of Graphic Design and Advanced Drawing and Painting, resulting in a mixture of student opinions. Within the Graphic Design class, personality and student interest were of primary concern. The opposite seemed to be observed in Advanced Drawing and Painting, where drawing exercises and skills were the primary focus of assignments.

In the next chapter, descriptions of emergent themes pulled from data analysis and my recommendations for future research will be discussed and explained.
Chapter V: Conclusions and Recommendations

By reviewing and analyzing the data during a qualitative case study of Mrs. Carlson’s art courses at Thomas Jefferson Arts High School, a number of themes emerged. Themes that will be discussed are sketchbook culture, teacher directed assignments and student interests, and traits of teacher.

Sketchbook Culture

Mrs. Carlson’s teaching philosophy and teaching style play a large role in how the sketchbook is used in her classroom. Because Carlson believes that a sketchbook is an integral tool for the young art student, she utilizes a number of motivational techniques for students. With many words of praise and encouragement, Carlson consistently attempts to build student pride in their sketchbook. She utilizes a reward system that consists of a gold sticker, which acknowledges a job well done.

The new inclusion of the digital camera device (the AVerVision 300) is another way Mrs. Carlson increases student interest and quality production. Students have a genuine interaction with each other through class critiques, which also encourages them to create better and higher quality artwork. This new technological tool enhanced Carlson’s teaching approaches and contributed to improved sketchbook quality.

Carlson stimulates seriousness in attitude towards sketchbooks from her students by consistently following through with a sketchbook routine each Tuesday. Students come in to class knowingly prepared to examine and critique their assignments. Carlson also reinforces the importance of quality sketchbooks by modeling the desired behavior outcomes she expects from her students. Students know what to expect and it becomes more than just a graded homework assignment because Carlson has created a culture in
her classroom where sketchbooks are second nature; she has high expectations and motivates the students.

During our interview Carlson mentioned, “I think the exercises on their skills, they should be doing that at home. ‘Do that at home so you can come and learn about art and make art. Practice at home, but come to school and let’s put together an artwork.’”

This idea of using a sketchbook at home to be prepared for class is due to the time constraints art teachers face in a half-year art course. Carlson feels pressed for time and finds including everything into a 20-week course can be an easier task if the students use their sketchbooks as a preparatory tool that supplements classroom learning.

**Teacher Directed Assignments and Student Interests**

The sketchbook for Graphic Design focused on the daily life of the ninth grade student. The assignments consisted of student-centered entries based on the life, emotions, family, friends, and visual interests of the young artist. Assignments were student centered and nearly all entries were completely based on the life, emotions, family, and friends of the young artist. When interviewing Carl, Monica, and Natalie they all discussed how they incorporated their friends and feelings into their daily entries. They also all believed that their sketchbook assignments gave plenty of room for their artistic styles and interests. While speaking with these students, their passion for their work was evident. Carl and Monica both picked their best assignments as the ones that were most personal and represented their style. In Monica’s entries she had the freedom to include what interested her in the visual world around her and her artistic style. She incorporated Japanese culture and a love for fashion into her designs developed her artistic voice.
The Advanced Drawing and Painting students found less room for personal, artistic license. Mrs. Carlson’s teacher-directed assignments focused on building drawing skills due to the need to improve the realistic drawing ability of the students. When analyzing the student’s sketchbook entries from chapter four there is a marked improvement in drawing ability. During interviews students expressed an improvement in skills by stating that their best work was done after the creation of previous entries. However, during observation and throughout interviews, it was clear that the 12th grade advanced level art students would appreciate more opportunities to include their daily life and interests into their sketchbook. Danielle’s favorite assignment was her cover, “I actually took my time and I wanted to do it. It was something I chose to do not something I had to do.” This led me to believe that if students have the opportunity to choose what is included in the sketchbook assignments, they may spend more time creating quality work because it relates to themselves and what they like.

**Traits of Teacher**

While interviewing Mrs. Carlson and observing her classroom I was able to become acquainted with Mrs. Carlson’s teaching traits. Carlson demonstrated an openness towards student feedback during observation and during our private interviews. She made it known that the idea of personal entries is something she has considered and she expressed that it is something she would love to see, but also realized that she had not blatantly expressed this idea to her students. She made it clear that this topic would be discussed with her students and that their final art project may allow for more freedom and personalization. This ability to create an open dialogue with students may dramatically effect sketchbook production.
**Recommendations for Future Research**

A more in depth study could examine how other teaching styles, student interests, and skills building influence sketchbook production. Further research might seek to discover how a teacher can develop a good balance of student interest and artistic skills building in sketchbook use. I would like to know if student interest results in better drawing skills. A study merging student interests and ideas with techniques and skills building could extend this study.

**Conclusion**

Through conducting this study I was able to gain a greater understanding of how visual thinking journals are implemented in an urban arts high school. The study examined how one art teacher utilizes sketchbooks in a ninth grade Graphic Design course and a 12th grade Advanced Drawing and Painting course. Overall I was able to discover a sketchbook culture that could only emerge through the active modeling and reinforcement from the instructor. I discovered that student interests and personality make a tremendous difference in their attitude and effort towards sketchbook assignment and a teacher’s willingness to listen and hear the opinions of her students changes can be made to make the sketchbook process more advantageous to both teacher and students.
References


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Appendix A

Dear Student/Parent or Guardian:

I am writing this letter to ask your permission for your son or daughter to be a part of a special art study. As part of my Masters project in Art Education at Buffalo State College, your students will be taking part in a research study.

The goal of my research is to investigate the question, “how do art teachers use visuals and how do students respond to the use of a visual journal in the high school classroom?” This visual journal is already implemented in your child’s regular art classroom curriculum and they will not be subjected to any additional work or responsibilities because of their involvement. Your son or daughter will have the opportunity contribute their experience and knowledge to help me better answer questions regarding visual journal use.

Fictitious names will be used throughout this study to protect your child’s privacy. Everything created for this research project will be completely educational and confidential. I appreciate your time and willingness to help me in my professional development. Thank you very much for helping me make this project possible.

Please sign your name below, to give permission for the following:

- I give permission for my son or daughter to be interviewed about their experience in art class.
- I give permission for my son or daughter to have their artwork photographed

Please print, sign and date the line below.

Student Name (Print) ______________________________________
Student Name (Sign) ______________________________________
Parent/ Guardian Name (Print) _______________________________
Parent/ Guardian Name (Sign) _______________________________
Date __________________

Sincerely,

Shannon E. Machina
Art Educator

*If you are unable to reach a member of the research team and have general questions, or you have concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact Gina Game, IRB Administrator, SUNY Research Foundation/Buffalo State at (716) 878-6700 or gameg@rf.buffalostate.edu
Appendix B

Interview Questions
Teacher Participant

1. Why do include sketchbooks in your curriculum?

2. Now, I noticed in the drawing class you do predominately focus on exercises that are skills building. Is there a reason why?

3. Do you ever include more personal assignments in drawing later on in the semester?

4. So how do you manage the sketchbooks? How do you manage the grading and what you’re going to give them?

5. So how do you manage the sketchbooks? How do you manage the grading and what you’re going to give them?

6. What do you think are the sketchbook assignments that the students like the most, or enjoy the most?

7. I wanted to talk about the seating arrangement in class. It seems like you take a lot of thought into who sits next to each other.

8. You’ve said a lot about it already but just for one final time, how does using the SmartBoard and AVerVision 300 device enhance sketchbook performance?

9. How much decision-making power do you usually give the students when it comes to the sketchbooks?

10. Is there anything else you would like to talk about?
Appendix C

Interview Questions
Student Participants

1. Tell me about your sketchbook.

2. What assignment do you think you did best on? Can you show me? Why is this one better?

3. What assignments do you think you disliked the most or did the least well on?

4. How do you come up with ideas for your sketchbook?

5. Are you ever able to pull ideas from your own life and put it into the sketchbook?

6. How do the SmartBoard critiques influence you?

7. What do you think about seeing your classmate’s work on the SmartBoard?

8. Do you use a journal for private use?

9. What would you change about your sketchbook?

10. What would you change about the process?

11. Is there anything more you would like to tell me about your sketchbook?
    Anything I have missed?