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Cultivating a Democratic community in the Elementary Art Classroom

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Art Education at Virginia Commonwealth University

By

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## Personal Statement

In my elementary schooling years, I had a greatly limited arts experience. For me, at my elementary school, art class was offered once or twice a month and was taught by parent volunteers, not even by practicing artists or certified art teachers. This was very devastating for me as a child who loved creating art. Nevertheless, I kept pursuing my artistic dreams and never stopped creating art. I basically became a self-taught artist until I was able to switch to a better school and take a variety of different art classes. Looking back, I wish I had a richer variety of art styles every day during my elementary school years. There is nothing wrong with self-taught art but when you are a young child it can be more beneficial to learn art in a classroom community setting.

Therefore, I am a strong believer in making sure all children have access to and are given a high quality arts and education experience. Art is so important at the elementary level because it has the power to nurture and harness children's individual artistic skills and sparks a passion in them to pursue a career in the creative arts. Also, the elementary art room becomes a safe space where children can come as they are and express themselves freely. Through art and artmaking, elementary students can learn how to notice more deeply, think critically and reflectively, make connections and problem solve.

For me, the abstract concept of cultivating a socially just classroom community inside the elementary art room is important because its purpose is not to produce or copy the same thoughts, ideas, understandings, and artworks of others. Instead its purpose is to empower students to take ownership, make mistakes, and create art that is different from others but unique to them and their story. Through conducting this research and writing this paper, I sought examples to help me better understand the pedagogical practices of other elementary art teachers

as well as to better understand my own pedagogical practice. As I transition into a full-time in-service art teacher, this research will provide me with possible strategies I might want to implement in my future classroom to cultivate a more socially just, democratic community.



# CULTIVATING A DEMOCRATIC COMMUNITY IN THE ELEMENTARY ART CLASSROOM

By Kelly Marie Fergus, MAE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Art Education at Virginia Commonwealth University

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2019

Major Director: Dr. Pamela Lawton, Associate Professor, Department of Art Education

Cultivating a more socially just, democratic classroom community is a best pedagogical practices qualitative case study. This study is designed to explore how three Virginia elementary art teachers define and create a democratic classroom community, inside their art rooms, through the implementation of various instructional strategies within the physical, social-cultural, and pedagogical spaces of their classrooms. Such instructional strategies may include a shift in power dynamics, student-centered art, choice-based art, and a big idea/real-world issue-orientated curriculum (ex: visual culture, social justice, democratic pedagogies). Each of the three selected participants were interviewed and asked to describe their classroom practices as well as provide examples of ways they perform any or all of the various instructional strategies mentioned. The data in this research study was collected through a digital survey, interviews, raw field notes, audio recordings, and visual journal entries. The responses to the interview questions were then coded and analyzed to compare and contrast understandings of the participants' pedagogical practices. This study concludes that the perceptions of these progressive instructional strategies varied among each participant, however, they ultimately all fall on the spectrum of a democratic classroom community.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The concept of a democratic art education classroom community has been explored in depth at the secondary level (Darts, 2006; Milbrandt, 2002; Woywod, 2015). However, more research needs to be done at the elementary level, such as: encouraging artistic behaviors, curricular choice, self-disciplinary/self-directed learning, social justice issues, and the visual culture outside of school in correlation with classroom management and curriculum. This study hypothesizes if elementary art teachers adopt these concepts into their pedagogical practices, then they can create the potential for democratic and socially just classroom communities to form. The purpose of this research is to study elementary art educators' best pedagogical practices for developing socially just curriculum and classrooms, where young students can learn and grow into empathetic, respectful, civic-minded, and socially responsible citizens.

Schools and classrooms in the United States consist of a variety of individuals of different genders, classes, ethnicities, abilities, ages, religions, and beliefs. With such diversity, it is crucial for the classroom community to be a non-hierarchical (shared power) and socially just space that “provides opportunities for students to explore the ways that the dominant society normalizes feeling for different groups” (George, 2011, p.268). In re-conceptualizing the aim of elementary art education through a more democratic lens, it can be important to first consider the United States' current polarization and the role of politics in a democracy. Given the current ideological divisions in our country, it can be critical to start learning to make sense of our highly complex, visual, and democratic society as early as elementary school because children are still growing and constructing their physical, artistic, cultural, social, and political self-identity.

The intersection between the political and media landscape in the United States is changing and can be considered one of the most contributing factors to the current polarization in

our country. It cannot be denied that technology and media keep advancing. In fact, forty-two percent of Americans said that technology has been the biggest improvement to life in America over the past fifty years (Strauss, 2017). While technology has been and is a big improvement in the U.S., a digital news report in 2017 revealed that American media has become exceedingly polarized. “While 51% of left-leaning Americans trust the news, only 20% of conservatives say the same. Right leaning Americans are far more likely to say they avoid the news because ‘I can’t rely on news to be true’” (Edkins, 2017, para. 3). This report also questions how many Americans still get their news from television but reveals that Americans still believe T.V. is an important media news source along with online and social media news sources. The rise of online and social media integrated with television media can be the cause of many Americans feeling overwhelmed as well as skeptical. In this digital age, Americans are being flooded more and more with all sorts of news, from a variety of media outlets, causing misperceptions of what is justifiable facts versus opinions. Most Americans today are more likely to associate themselves with more like-minded individuals and media outlets. For instance, “conservatives favor Fox News and liberals gravitate towards online sources like BuzzFeed, CNN, or the New York Times” (Edkins, 2017, para 5). Some Americans might discount any media sources that disagree with their views, even if the news agrees with the individual’s party.

In the U.S. today, one of the main reasons Americans are divided is that their political identity is becoming more shortsighted regarding policy and issues, especially centered on the government’s role, race, immigration laws, and education (Doherty, 2017). It is not fair to blame the media for our country’s current polarization but it cannot be denied that it is a major contributing factor. Other results from surveys, conducted by the Pew Research Center in June and July 2017, conclude that there is now “an average 36-percent-point gap” between

Democratic, Republican, and Independent leaners (Doherty, 2017, para. 4). This is significantly wider than past years. This gap is now much larger because it goes beyond simple differences in individual or group political opinions to a more significant increase in political and social conflict caused by the growth of diversity (racial, ethnic, religious, political, gender) and the rise of new technology and digital media. The intersection of politics and the media has led to a partite United States where Americans, their identities and viewpoints, are divided and isolated from each other and from the greater common good. Democratic values may have the power to unite Americans from different cultures, perspectives, ideologies, and identities, creating a shared national identity--- “e pluribus unum, out of many one” (e pluribus unum, n.d.).

Starting with public education, the school and the classroom to be more precise, America can once again be united to its democratic roots and values. “A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” (Dewey, 1916, p.87). In schools and classrooms, democracy has the potential to be an educational tool that teachers and students can use to foster a community built upon open, joint communication, life-long learning, experience, respect, empathy, cultural awareness, and civic-mindedness. In order to accomplish a quality, democratic education, education must be “based upon experience” and have both a societal and individual purpose. (Dewey, 1938, p. 89). Within a democratic educational lens, the elementary art classroom community can focus on, through artmaking, nurturing a young child’s individual identity as well as their relation to society. This can be accomplished through active learning or learning through the whole body, the whole heart, the whole mind, and the whole person. The goal of democratic education is “not knowledge or information, but self-realization” (Dewey, 1956, p.9).

Children should have a place where they can learn, explore, understand, and most of all experience the world from different angles. In fact, “students...need a space in which to become articulate about their involvement in visual culture” (Duncum, 2002, p.17). Democratic schools and classroom communities have the potential to be that place providing children with opportunities for a quality educational experience and allowing them to learn and grow into empathetic and socially responsible citizens. “At a time when democracy is being challenged by even our own policymakers, the protection of art and art education in social institutions is increasingly important” (Freedman, 2000, p.315). Educators can help protect the role of arts in our contemporary democracy by creating an open and just classroom community that fosters imagination, creativity, social action, and dialogue. The arts have the power to help students face and make sense of growing problems caused by injustices in today’s complex world.

Cultivating a democratic community inside the elementary art classroom is important because it has the power to be a space both of equal opportunity and freedom, especially artistic freedom. “It is artistic freedom—that is the freedom to create and have access to those mind-expanding ideas and objects—that perhaps best illustrates democratic thought” (Freedman, 2000, p. 315). Through shared power and pedagogy, art education, at the elementary level, can provide that open, brave, fair, and just space where students learn through and from experiences how to be more civic-minded, culturally responsive, and socially responsible citizens. Students are more than just learners, they are active, living, and engaging participants who are ready to embark on new experiences that can help them grow into empathetic, creative, and socially responsible leaders of the school community, the neighboring community, our country’s community, and furthermore, the global community.

In order to understand how to cultivate a more socially just, democratic classroom community, I begin with a review of literature to help spark a discussion regarding the definition of a democratic classroom community as well as why socially just classroom spaces in which the teacher and learner build a reciprocal, non-hierarchical relationship better prepares students for the world outside of school. Both teacher and students' roles in developing socially just classroom communities are discussed in terms of power dynamics, classroom environment, pedagogical approaches and curriculum development. The explicit components of art education addressed are democracy and education, shared power, classroom community, choice-based art education, visual culture art education, and social justice and issues-based art education. These influences include visual culture, lived experiences, personal narratives, and identity. The following questions guide this qualitative multi-case study research: What do the power dynamics/power structures of a democratic elementary art room look like? What pedagogical practices do elementary art teachers employ in developing socially just classroom communities? In what ways do elementary art teachers inspire and encourage students to be more civic-minded, socially responsible, culturally aware, empathetic, and respectful in their classroom and how is it reflected in the curriculum? The following questions will help guide this literature review: What is a democratic classroom community? What does a non-hierarchical, socially just classroom community look like in terms of power structures, the physical space, the social-cultural space, and the pedagogical space?

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Democratic Classroom Community Defined

In schools in the United States, a classroom can be defined as a space where groups of students are taught. Dewey (1916) states, “a democracy is more than a form of government” (p.87). Perhaps then a classroom is more than just a classroom, it is a community. According to Lawton (2014), “community may be defined as a body of people working together for the benefit of the group as a whole” (p.422). The art classroom should be no different in that it should cultivate a community through the art of democracy. The United States was founded on democratic principles and the concept of a democratic community. Dewey (1916) states that a democracy is “primarily a model of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” (p.87). Schools are a microcosm of the larger society and as such should reflect the democratic values of broader society. When students are in the art classroom, their education should include more than learning about and making art.

Contemporary models of progressive education have shifted from a teacher-directed to a learner-centered model whereby students construct their own knowledge through social interactions with peers and their teacher (Vygotsky, 1978). Similar to a democratic community, the art classroom has the potential to be a space where a group of people can work together to learn about, with, and through art to engage in meaning making as well as create new, lived experiences. A democratic art classroom community may foster a caring communal space where students feel encouraged to be brave in expressing their own personal and community identity in a creative manner and feel supported by their teachers and their peers. The democratic art classroom community is intended to be a non-hierarchical space in which both the teacher and the students share power and responsibility throughout the learning process. The heart of a

classroom community and the educational process is the caring interactions occurring between the teacher and the students (Gay, 2010). A democratic community in the elementary art classroom is about reflection, collaboration, and encouraging a student's passion for the arts. Creating a shared power classroom community model may encourage students to visualize the whole story of their identity (past, present, and future), their relationship to other classmates, and their relationship to the outside community to help them grow into socially just, responsible citizens (Pellish, 2012). Through caring democratic practices, the elementary art teacher can model for students the importance of showing empathy, respect, and compassion to everyone within and outside of the classroom.

### **Power Dynamics**

The power dynamics of the elementary art classroom may undergo a significant change when the classroom community is being created through a democratic, socially just lens. The shift away from a traditional one-sided, discipline-centered classroom to a more student-centered, democratic classroom causes a significant shift in the power dynamics of teacher-student relationships (Andrews, 2010). Both the teacher and students are considered reciprocal learners to each other and share in the power to create a classroom community where they all feel comfortable and courageous to learn from and share their own experiences with one another. It is a "co-operative enterprise, not a dictation" (Dewey, 1938, p. 72). The power structures of a democratic art classroom community may not be viewed as a hierarchy but rather a partnership between the teacher and the students. In shifting the power dynamics toward a more socially just elementary art classroom community, it may be important to rethink the roles the teacher and students play in the art room. Foucault (1980) states teacher-student relationships embody the "capillary form" of power: power that "reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their



bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes, and everyday lives” (p. 39). Elementary art teachers can empower students and de-marginalize their bodies and minds by allowing them opportunities to be the experts and decision-makers of some art units (Ivashkevich, 2012). Empowerment becomes a crucial component in determining the distribution or re-distribution of power in a more socially just elementary art classroom community.

**The teacher’s role.** In a non-hierarchical elementary art classroom community built upon empathy and respect, where reciprocal learning is the goal, the art teacher can take on many different roles to help them become a more culturally responsive teacher. In a democratic elementary art classroom community, the art teacher should no longer be perceived as the “sole commander or judge,” the person who gives out instructions and assessments (Andrews, 2010, p. 44). It may be more beneficial for the students if the art teacher is perceived as simply another human being rather than the sole authority figure of the classroom community. Ginott (1972) states, a teacher “is a [human] even when she [or he] is a teacher” (p. 119). In a non-hierarchical classroom community, the art teacher’s role shifts toward partner, mentor, guide, demonstrator, role model, facilitator, and coach (Andrews, 2010; Douglas & Jaquith, 2009; Zander, 2007). The teacher can be considered a role model for appropriate democratic classroom behavior as well as a coach who motivates and encourages a child’s personal, social, and artistic development. Flexibility becomes key for the art teacher as he/she takes on all these roles. It is important for the elementary art teacher to find a balance between all of their roles as well as between direct teaching and indirect teaching. It is this balance allowing students more freedom to become independent learners and responsible human beings.

In cultivating a shared, non-hierarchical power dynamic of a democratic art classroom community the teacher may implement more student-centered, choice-based, and culturally responsive instructional strategies. In a democratic, student-centered art classroom, the art teacher's instructional roles may be seen as actively listening to students' ideas or project concepts, offering suggestions and expertise, directing appropriate [or additional] resources to them, and helping them cultivate their problem-solving skills (Andrews, 2010). This type of student-centered instructional strategy may also involve choice-based teaching whereby the art teacher creates an environment where students have choices with the topics, materials, and art projects they want to pursue. Choice-based teaching involves the teacher in all his/her roles balancing "direct and indirect instruction, whole-group demonstrations and discussions, small groups with students who choose a particular exploration, and one-to-one interactions" (Douglas & Jaquith, 2009, p. 10-11). Direct instruction may be seen as introducing students to the curriculum content then doing a quick demonstration while indirect instruction might be viewed as the teacher facilitating small group discussions.

By becoming culturally responsive and centering the art instruction around student-choice, art teachers can work towards changing the power dynamics of their classroom communities (Buffington, 2014). "Rather than focusing merely on what students will do on a certain day or within a time frame, culturally responsive teachers plan student learning in a long-term manner with different aspects building upon one another, leading to students' academic success" (Buffington, 2014, p.10). In the shared power dynamics of a democratic art classroom community, it might be seen that the art teacher takes on so many roles because they truly care about their students and are fully invested in the long process of helping their students reach their full artistic potential as well as helping them develop into socially responsible and empathetic

leaders of our world. According to Gay (2010), “teachers who genuinely care for their students generate higher levels of all kinds of success than those who don’t” (p.49). In the creation of caring interpersonal teacher-student relationships, elementary art teachers set consistent, high expectations to help students achieve their individual, educational, and artistic goals. “Caring interpersonal relationships are characterized by patience, persistence, facilitation, validation, and empowerment” (Gay, 2010, p. 49). Although, when it comes to their classroom instruction, educators might have many different ways of expressing these caring relationships. Elementary art teachers can begin nurturing their newfound democratic relationship or partnership with their students by sharing their own narrative or lived experiences. Sharing one’s own narrative can be seen as a great teaching strategy for starting a relationship with students as well as establishing an open line of communication for a classroom community where students may feel brave to share their narrative and lived experiences.

**The student’s role.** Within the shared power structure of a democratic art classroom community, the student’s role can extend beyond just being a traditional student. Nevanen, Juvonen, and Ruismaki (2014) state, “a characteristic of a traditional learning environment is the idea of the learner as the receiver of information” (p. 10). However, in terms of a non-traditional, student-centered, and democratic classroom, the students can be viewed as “producers of information and knowledge” (Nevanen et.al, 2014, p. 10). A democratic, student-centered art classroom community has the potential to be a “quality art education” environment where previously reluctant learners transition into engaged learners, taking on the role of helping shape their own curriculum (Gude, 2009, p. 10). It might be seen as beneficial to the students’ artistic and human development if their roles equally share power with the teacher. In the center of their

own learning, students have multiple roles and responsibilities whereby they might be seen as learners, artists, and teachers/facilitators who help their peers (Andrews, 2010).

When students have more power and responsibility in the art classroom community, it can help students to create their very best work and gain a deeper appreciation for art and the art process as well as gain a new or deeper cultural awareness for the world around them. When provided more responsibility and power in art class, “students [take] ownership of their learning [and discover] how to learn for themselves, not just to please a teacher or pass a test” (Andrews, 2010, p.45). Students should have power and choice over their own artistic destiny. “The student is the artist and will have control over their subject matter, materials, and approach” (Douglas & Jaquith, 2009, p.9). When students are given the power and control of directing their own learning, it can be expected that they are “practicing skills of self-regulation and independence as responsible and self-propelled artists” (Jaquith & Hathaway, 2012, p.10). A non-hierarchical, student-centered classroom environment has the potential to be more beneficial to the students, the teacher, and the whole class community. “When students self-direct, they build understandings through inquiry and problem-solving” (Douglas & Jacquith, 2009, p.11). Through power and choice, students can learn to be authors and problem-solvers of their own artistic search.

Elementary art students may begin sharing power and responsibility in their learning when elementary art teachers rethink modernist views of children (Ivashkevich, 2012). Children should be seen as both “artists” and “producers and consumers of visual culture” (Wilson, 2007, p.6) rather than as “innocent or naive” (Ivahkevich, 2012, p.41). Art teachers can change the power dynamics in the elementary art room by respecting and recognizing children as “equal participants, thinkers, and communicators” so that they may take “full ownership of the

associated topics, media, materials, process organization, and technical and aesthetic choices” (Ivashkevich, 2012, p.42). Art teachers can establish a democratic, student-centered classroom community through care and by viewing students as cultural experts and showing that their experiences, expertise, identities, and ideas are valued and routinely included in the curriculum in ways that are much more difficult in a traditional, teacher-centered classroom (Buffington, 2010). “Art that is created from the meaningful context of young artists’ lives enhances relevancy and authenticity” (Douglas & Jaquith, 2009, p.10). Through a more caring and empathetic approach, teachers can make it known to students that their thoughts, opinions, and ideas are valued by taking on the role of a “facilitator” rather than an “information-giver” (Stout, 1999, p. 23-24). Students might begin to take on more roles, responsibilities, and power in the art classroom community when they feel that they are in an environment where they are respected and cared for. This empathetic, holistic approach to art education may be viewed as one of the first steps in cultivating a caring connection and co-learning relationship between the teacher and the students.

In a democratic elementary art classroom community, it might be important for both the teacher and students to acknowledge and understand that sharing power is an ongoing, difficult task. Greene (1995) asserts “the classroom situation most provocative of thoughtfulness and critical consciousness is the one in which teachers and learners find themselves conducting a collaborative search” (p.23). Teachers and students have the potential to create this type of collaborative, shared power classroom community through mutual expressions of empathy and respect.

## **The Three Classroom Spaces for more Democratic Learning**

A democratic elementary art classroom community has the potential to be a space where students can create profound and meaningful works of art, learn to take responsibility for their art and actions, and develop a deeper cultural awareness for who they are in relation to the society and world that surrounds them. According to Nevanen, Juvonen, and Ruismaki (2014), the physical space, the social space, and the pedagogical space are three different areas that make up the learning environment of a classroom community. With regards to a more socially just, non-hierarchical elementary art classroom community, it is important that the art teacher re-conceptualize the physical space, the social-cultural space, and the pedagogical space of the classroom. To create an art classroom conducive to democratic learning, it can be important for the art teacher to foster the physical, social-cultural, and pedagogical aspects of the classroom with a societal and individual purpose (Dewey, 1938). Art education, at the elementary level, may play an important role in democracy by creating a classroom community where children can actively “participate in public dialogue and democratic decision-making” (Blandy & Congdon, 1987, p. 48). Democracy may continue in society as long as art educators help prepare young students to understand “it is their democratic responsibility to be life-long makers of meaning through active participation” in individual or group investigations of various art forms/styles from contemporary society (Gude, 2009, p. 10). Elementary art teachers may create classroom spaces for more democratic learning into developing a community where young students can learn, grow, and become engaging, socially responsible citizens.

**The physical space.** According to the first principle that underlies the position statement of the Early Childhood Art Educators (ECAE) Issues Group of the National Arts Education Association (NAEA), “a child needs an organized, materials-rich environment that invites

discovery, interaction, sensory and kinesthetic exploration, wonder, inquiry, and, imagination” (McClure, Tarr, Thompson, & Eckhoff, 2017, p. 156). Using this principle as a lens, elementary art teachers might be able to better consider the physical arrangement of the space and materials as it relates to the aesthetic quality of the whole classroom community. The physical environment of an elementary art classroom should be intentionally created with care as a space where students can explore the aesthetic qualities of the world and develop discipline skills of how to use materials (McClure et al., 2017).

It might be important to recognize that the physical space of a non-hierarchical, democratic elementary art room should be reflective of the teacher, the students, and the surrounding community. “Classroom environments must reflect the culture of both who inhabit the space and the surrounding culture” (McClure et al., 2017, p. 157). When discussing the physical space, “one of the artists described the situation: ‘...when you start working with a group in a room, the room becomes your own space, which is used in whatever way that is possible...’” (p.14). Nevanen et al. (2014) discussed some practicing artists, who were a part of the project that criticized the physical spaces being too small making it hard for the kindergarteners to engage in visual and performing art activities such as dance or painting. Other artists also criticized physical space for being too big making it easier for the kindergarteners to engage in disruptive behavior, making classroom management difficult (Nevanen et al., 2014). With regard to classroom space and behavior management, it is important to take advantage of all the physical and immediate surroundings within a school, especially in an elementary setting. How the physical space of an elementary art classroom is structured correlates to how successfully the students navigate and maximize the class time, given that art instruction on average lasts 30-45 minutes per week. “The [choice-based] classroom space is organized around

studio centers complete with materials, tools, and resources necessary for each medium” (Douglas & Jaquith, 2009, p. 5). With regard to the physical space of student-centered, choice-driven learning classrooms, the art teacher has the responsibility of observing how students interact with the studio centers to make necessary adjustments to improve how centers function, or perhaps find a different space within the school setting for the art activity (Douglas & Jaquith, 2009).

Woywod (2015) notes that the physical space of the art classroom consists of three different layers of material culture: fixed, fluid, and transient. Fixed material culture refers to the parts of the classroom that cannot be immediately changed like furniture or storage arrangements. Fluid material culture consists of things in the classroom that the art teacher can impact or change and transient material culture are the momentary things in the classroom that can be changed to fit specific lessons. Some art educators described “items of fluid material culture as means through which they create an art space that is informative and unique from the rest of the school, develop spaces that students can manage, tame, and reclaim space, and collect to support instruction” (Woywod, 2015, p. 24). The selection and organization of art materials, tools, and other resources is crucial for an authentic artistic process to occur in a choice-based classroom community. For example, a fluid material culture may be seen as designating a “special work area” where students can manage their own work, manipulating bulletin boards for class critiques and displaying work, having designated “portfolio slots” for in process work, or “small classroom collections” of objects for drawing, art books for reference, and memories from field trips with students (Woywod, 2015, p. 24). When it comes to the arrangement of the physical space of a socially just art classroom, elementary art teachers should try to have the fixed, fluid, and transient material culture consist of different things to talk to the students about



or different things the teacher or students could refer to at any time during their artmaking process (Woywod, 2015). When the physical elementary art space is built on relational aesthetics it can be “dynamic, dialogical, and open, rather than fixed” (Woywod, 2015, p. 27). In contrast to Woywod, it can be okay to have some “fixed” materials in the art classroom culture because some “fixed” materials have the potential to help establish a level of comfort and familiarity for the students. As teachers, we should want our students to feel comfortable with the physical space of the classroom.

As art instruction time is so brief, the organization and arrangement of the materials is crucial because it allows “young artists to access what they need and return excess for others’ use” (Douglas & Jaquith, 2009, p. 13). Elementary art students should be able to participate, contribute, and interact with the material culture within the physical space of the art room. The materials the elementary art teacher selects, organizes, and arranges are essential to the cultivation of classroom community because they help create the atmosphere that makes young artists excited about art class and owning their own studio work. It is crucial the organization and arrangement of the physical space of a non-hierarchical, student-centered, and choice-driven elementary art classroom community be made easily accessible for every child’s personal, academic, and artistic needs.

The physical space of a democratic elementary art classroom community might be more beneficial to a young artist’s growth and learning if the art teacher placed emphasis on the fluidity of the space. In a democratic classroom community, the art teacher recognizes the physical space as a fluid collection, constantly growing and changing, so that the students can be provided resources and insights that help them feel comfortable to take control, reclaim, and manage their unique studio space (Nevanen et al., 2014). The physical space of an art classroom

can promote democratic learning by consciously changing the material culture so it is representative of both the students' artistic process and real-world issues within our contemporary times.

**The social-cultural space.** To develop a more critical social and cultural awareness and some mutual understandings of conflicting real-world interests and issues, can be viewed as two important goals of a democratic classroom community. In order to achieve those goals, it might be important for the classroom space to be built through a method of “communal deliberation” (Stout, 1999, p. 23). This method can be established by fostering care and empathy into the classroom spaces and curriculum. Care and empathy should be at the center of the classrooms' social-cultural space: “caring not only for the self, but for others and the community, for animals and the physical environment, and caring to know and to make sense of the world” (Stout, 1999, p. 23). Students should learn how to make sense of the world through art by being offered opportunities to actively listen to various famous/contemporary artists' experiences and by listening and respecting the experiences, ideas, and opinions their peers have to share.

By fostering care and empathy, elementary art teachers can help create the social-cultural aspect of a democratic classroom community. Blatt-Gross (2017) indicates a community needs to be redefined around Nell Nodding's' (2005) concept of a curriculum of care. By fostering care and empathy, elementary art teachers can help create the social-cultural aspect of a democratic classroom community. An art curriculum of care can be defined as a sense of community or place in the art classroom where everyone feels brave to open up and share their lived experiences. Blatt-Gross (2017) states that within a curriculum of care in the classroom, we all have mutual responsibilities in helping maintain a healthy and happy world around us. The social-cultural space of an elementary art classroom should be a brave space where students are

encouraged to be courageous and take risks as human beings and as artists. “The arts have the capacity to draw on students’ thoughts and feelings, turning them toward the imaginative exploration of a wide world of human experience” (Stout, 1999, p. 23). The social-cultural art space has the potential to be centered on community building through the arts, identity development, and developing a critical awareness of the visual culture that surrounds us. For example, allowing the students to have encounters with the arts, visual and performance (i.e. paintings, music, dance, poems), encourages them to enter new conversations and have ongoing dialogues about concerns or curiosity they have about the world they live in. Students can start to care about and empathize with others when they have the chance to engage with the arts.

Arao and Clemens (2013) believe “facilitators of social justice education have a responsibility to foster a learning environment that supports participants in the challenging work of authentic engagement with regard to the issues of identity, oppression, power, and privilege” (p. 138-139). The elementary art classroom community should be a brave space where students can take risks in exploring their own cultural identity as well as develop a better understanding and respect for the other cultures that make up the classroom community and the outside world. In a non-hierarchical elementary art classroom community, students should be encouraged to express their true selves and never feel like they have to suppress their views, ideas, or narratives. Arao and Clemens (2013) suggest facilitators open a conversation with participants and work together to define the brave space and the ground rules for that space. In a non-hierarchical elementary art classroom community, the teacher can use their role as facilitator to start up an open, non-judgmental discussion with the students on what they think should be the ground rules for the brave art room community.

The use of narratives and contemporary art can be two ways the elementary art teacher constructs a social-cultural space within the classroom community. Narratives or stories in the art room can allow students to gain many new perspectives about the artmaking process instead of only the technical skills of artmaking (Zander, 2007). Through narratives, art teachers have the power “to change the nature of classroom talk” (Zander, 2007, p. 200). When children create art, it has the potential to help them visually form their own identity as well as compose a narrative. “When students share their stories visually, reflective of the diverse ways in which they live and connect with personal and cultural experiences, they are able to value their past while making connections to the present and future” (Pellish, 2012, p. 19). The elementary art classroom community should be a place for children to reconstruct past identities, form their present identity, and envision their future identity (Pellish, 2012). In a non-hierarchical, choice-based classroom community, students have the power, control, and ownership of the art they create. They control what they want to tell and how they want to tell it through art making. “When students are given the opportunity to share personal and cultural stories, we are allowing them to build a sense of who they are and who they want to become in this world” (Pellish, 2012, p. 23). By giving young elementary art students choices, the art teacher is mentoring and shaping them into becoming active, engaged, and independent leaders and artists. Narratives can help construct a social-cultural space as well as foster a brave space within the elementary art classroom community. Sharing narratives teaches students that the meaningful connections they make in the classroom reflect the meaningful connections they can make outside the classroom.

For a non-hierarchical, elementary art classroom community to be successful, the art teacher must take advantage of the classroom surroundings, the school environment, and the community outside the classroom. The art teacher could implement this by inviting a local

contemporary artist from the community into the classroom or by introducing the students to contemporary artists that involve a big idea or theme that is relevant to the students' lives. Elementary art teachers should "choose meaningful, issue-based works of contemporary art that fit the particular community" (Yokley, 2002, p. 200). Introducing elementary art students to contemporary artists is an essential way of helping them envision and develop an understanding of some of the biggest issues that practicing artists are dealing with in our current visual culture. Offering students the chance to learn about various artists who have relatable experiences has the potential to cause the students' artwork to be more expressive and rooted in their own personal values, beliefs, and experiences. "When artists invest their own work with the spark of their own insights, what they know and feel of life, the art object becomes a vehicle for communicating significant human experience" (Stout, 1999, p. 33). Also, students learn through the ideas within contemporary artworks (Thulson, 2013). Elementary art students can learn to construct meanings and tell stories through studying contemporary artists and artworks. A brave elementary art classroom community is a space where students are encouraged to unpack the big ideas or issues of the contemporary times we currently live in.

**The pedagogical space.** Based on the purpose of this research study, there are three key pedagogical approaches towards revitalizing the elementary art curriculum that help cultivate a non-hierarchical, democratic elementary art classroom community. One of these approaches is a democratic pedagogy. Gude (2009) suggests "as educators we create citizens of a democratic society" (p. 7). Elementary art educators should foster a democratic pedagogy for students to learn, through the making and studying of art, how to become respectful and empathetic citizens (Gude, 2009). Through art making and a democratic pedagogy, elementary students can tell their own stories of lived experiences as well as develop a newfound respect and understanding for

how they perceive others. “Through artworks, students absorb the perceptions of others—situated in other times and places, embodied in other races, genders, ages, classes, and abilities” (Gude, 2009, p. 9-10). Gude (2009) emphasizes the importance of teaching students the discipline skills they need to create art because they can use those skills to understand and make sense of these contemporary times, especially with the rise of new media and technologies in this visual culture. Elementary art educators can prepare their students, through studying contemporary art, “to engage, to shape, (and sometimes to preserve) aspects of our ever-changing world” (p. 10). A democratic pedagogical space in an elementary art classroom community has the potential to be a space providing students with fair and equal opportunities for shaping/re-shaping their voice, constructing stories through experimentation with different art forms, and encouraging participation in whole-class democratic dialogue (Gude, 2009).

Similar to the democratic pedagogy approach, a visual culture pedagogy can also revitalize the elementary art curriculum. Modernist views of children as innocent, immature, and in need of rescuing by adults need to be challenged when cultivating a non-hierarchical elementary art classroom community through a visual culture pedagogy lens (Ivashkevich, 2012). For elementary art teachers today, it is important to start “seeing children realistically rather than through eyes blinded by our own adult needs” by considering “that our ideas of children are constructed from historical processes and contemporary social pressures and [we need] to see children as possessing fragmented identities” (Duncum, 2002, p. 104). When elementary art students have a personal connection to the visual images taught in art class, the artistic process becomes more pleasurable, more fun, and more meaningful for them.

As indicated by Duncum (2002), the primary goals of visual culture art education, “critical understanding and empowerment, are best developed through an emphasis on image-

making where students have some freedom to explore the meaning for themselves” (p. 6). Bringing popular culture, related to the students’ lives, into the classroom opens up space for students to engage in play, dialogue, and develop their own cultural understanding. Students may have a more enjoyable experience within the art classroom community when their cultural preferences are acknowledged (Duncum, 2008). A visual culture pedagogy is crucial to cultivating a non-hierarchical, elementary art classroom community because it teaches students that they have the power to notice deeply, think more critically, and look past the “fluff” of the popular visual images that surround us.

Thirdly, alongside the democratic and visual culture pedagogical approach, comes a social justice or activist art pedagogy for a more democratic classroom community. In a democratic classroom community where art, identity, and culture are linked, culturally responsive teaching might play a crucial role in “how teachers interact with students and ultimately how students themselves come to understand cultural diversity, social inclusion, and antiracist behaviors” (Lee, 2012, p. 48). Gay (2010) defines culturally responsive teaching “as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles, of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them” (p. 31). For this teaching practice to exist in a caring, democratic learning community, it is important elementary art teachers recognize and value the racial and cultural differences of each student that enters their classroom. A social justice pedagogical approach is important to a democratic classroom community because it allows for students to engage in big ideas such as race and racism. Through artmaking, students can make personal, emotional, and meaningful connections to important social justice issues as well as engage in a critical unlearning about their own cultural bias or identity (Lee, 2012). Implementing a social justice pedagogy or an activist art

pedagogy can be considered important as teachers make the move toward a democratic education model. Teaching for social justice can take on the educational purpose of “a participatory democracy” or “education that fosters youth’s ability to work collectively toward a better society” (Westheimer & Kahne, 1998, p. 2). Using the arts to teach about social justice issues engages students in critical thinking, allows them to share their stories and make connections with other stories they encounter, and helps them to personalize their learning (Beyerbach, 2017).

Under a social justice pedagogy, elementary art teachers can help students make meaning in the art classroom by incorporating visual literacy, specifically media literacy, into the curriculum. Living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the information age, it might be important to teach students how to be conversant in the information that our visual world (i.e. the media) presents to us. Elementary art teachers can make activist art come alive for their students by “bringing in images from contemporary art, graphic novels, YouTube videos, music [and] lyrics from contemporary performers” (Beyerbach, 2017, p. 6). By sharing these contemporary media resources, teachers can facilitate group discussions around social issues presented in these sources. Through artmaking, students might engage with these media resources by “researching their meanings,” then developing an understanding [of how] they impact their own lived experiences,” as well as be able to “deconstruct their meaning.” (Beyerbach, 2017, p. 6). A social justice or activist art pedagogy might be a great approach to develop various arts-integrated lessons, like, technology-integrated lessons, language arts (found poems), history (world cultures), science, etc. A democratic classroom community in the elementary art room has the power to allow students the chance to explore and understand the various aspects of our complex visual world. Implementing a democratic, a visual cultural, and social justice pedagogy has the



potential to be three best pedagogical practices for cultivating a more socially just classroom community inside the elementary art room.

### **Scholars' critiques**

While there are many upsides to creating a more socially just classroom community, it is important to discuss some of the critiques or concerns scholars have pointed out about some of the key components that help make a more socially just, democratic community in the art room. First, Mckenna (2013) raised a concern about the student-centered approach in that by focusing on the student, educators might fail to examine the role these “academic aspects” (ex: school administration, the discipline, and the knowledge) have on a student’s success or failure (p.3). According to Mckenna (2013), teachers employing a more student-centered pedagogy should examine their practices using a critical lens with an understanding of the “socially constructed nature of our [academic] disciplines” (p.4). In other words, in a democratic classroom community, if power/knowledge is too centered on the learner then success or failure will be innately in the student’s individual characteristics with no consideration to the notion that the student is part of larger group.

Other scholars like Michelle Kamhi have also raised concerns and critiques about visual culture studies in art education. Teaching for social justice in the art classroom may involve creating a space where students can explore and try to make sense of the complex images in our visual culture. However, Kamhi (2004) argued that art teachers have too quickly embraced the concept of visual culture in art education causing them to lose sight of the true qualities of visual works of art. “Postmodernist genres such as pop art, installation art, and video art have nothing essential in common with the traditional visual arts and should, therefore, not be classified or studied with them as art” (Kamhi, 2004, p. 26). Under visual culture art education, commercial

artworks (i.e. advertisements) or photography are two examples in our culture that should be studied as visual works of art generally by having students decode or deconstruct the images and their meanings. However, it has been argued that studying these components of visual culture “wrongly assume[s] that all individuals within a given group share the same set of values and concerns and that these distinguish them from other groups” (Kamhi, 2004, p. 26). Concerns have also been pointed out that if students are focused too much on decoding images in order to try and understand or deconstruct wrongful meanings or assumptions, then they might miss out on the broader human values that those images might convey (Kamhi, 2004). Scholars, like Kamhi, believe that visual culture studies in art education might deprive students from making deep emotional, personal connections unlike studying traditional forms of *fine art* such as paintings and sculpture.

Lastly, art teachers are presented with a challenge in trying to employ social justice pedagogy. “In our zeal to convince our students about the need for social change, we may silence their voices” (Garber, 2004, p. 13). In that sense, it is important that the art teacher does not let their personal passion for social justice art diminish their own students’ voices. A social justice pedagogy should be about respecting and valuing the various identities in the art classroom community.

### **Summary**

Through shared power dynamics and pedagogies of democracy, visual culture, and social justice, elementary art teachers have the potential to cultivate a more socially just, democratic classroom community in their art room. The careful cultivation of the physical, social-cultural, and pedagogical spaces of an elementary art classroom can be essential to the development of a more socially just, democratic art classroom community. Therefore, it can be important for the

teacher and students to work together in creating the foundations of these three democratic learning spaces built on joint communication and power, safety, bravery, empathy, and respect. In a democratic art community, students may express themselves freely, develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and investigate both social justice issues and shared lived experiences through artmaking and the study of contemporary artists. Students may have a more quality art experience if they feel comfortable and can make connections to the physical arrangement of materials in the room. By fostering care and empathy throughout the classroom and curriculum, elementary art teachers can help build a more socially just, inclusive community for their students.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The exploratory nature of my research questions, an analysis of best pedagogical practices for cultivating a more socially just classroom community in the elementary art room, calls for a qualitative research approach. This qualitative case study employed ethnographic methods in order to collect and analyze data. Ethnography is an important research methodology because it seeks to understand a situation or culture through a social-cultural analysis with the researcher immersed in the field or unit of study (Miragilia & Smilan, 2014). A case study methodology is important because it seeks to examine a theory, through intensive descriptions and analysis, in order to gain a thorough understanding of a single unit or bounded system (Miragilia & Smilan, 2014). In this type of study, the researcher is an “interviewer” engaging in the “bounded” elementary art education pedagogical “system/culture” (Miragilia & Smilan, 2014, p. 35). The researcher wants to discover and understand some best pedagogical practices elementary art teachers are using and compare, contrast, and analyze them in order to determine the best practices for providing students with a quality arts education experience. For the purpose of this research, a quality art education experience is defined as allowing all elementary students to have access to an arts education and making sure that each student feels brave and safe to freely engage in critical thinking, reflection, and creative art expression.

#### **A Social Justice Art Lens**

A critical social justice art lens helps emphasize an important goal of this research: to recognize and understand the need to establish fair and just relationships between the individual students, the art teacher, and the art classroom community as much as the need for fair and just relationships between the individual and society. Utilizing a social justice art lens helps frame

the research within the art education field, specifically, around its shift towards a more progressive, democratic education model.

In this research context, social justice art education is not, as it is often assumed, “based on controversial or overtly political issues” but rather is about how “the process of making art offers participants [students] a way to construct knowledge, critically analyze an idea, and take action in the world” (Dewhurst, 2010, p. 2). Using Dewhurst’s three facets of social justice art education, “connections, questions, and translating,” as a critical lens, the researcher will compare, contrast, and analyze participants’ responses to interview questions about their best practices for creating a more socially just classroom community inside their art room (Dewhurst, 2010, p. 3).

**Connections.** In analyzing the data, connections might first be discovered in terms of making “foundational connections” or “starting where they are,” a critical first step in creating socially just art (Dewhurst, 2014, p. 39). In a socially just art classroom community, the artmaking and educational process starts from where the students are, from their situation. A “situated learning” approach like this means the art content they are learning is “relevant to or rooted in their social and physical environment or school context” (Pitri, 2004, p. 7). For educators, making connections means understanding the shift in power dynamics and understanding the process of making connections when it comes to curriculum planning. In collecting data, the “connections” facet will help analyze in the participants’ responses to the interview questions about power dynamics and pedagogy or curriculum planning as well as the physical space of the art classroom.

**Questions.** To question practices/behaviors in their world (in and out of school) that address issues around social justice, elementary art teachers can use critical questions as a tool

for framing lessons and encouraging and empowering students to find answers or solutions. “A question is a call to participate in the pursuit of knowledge--a way of instigating learning with the possibility of transforming how people make sense of the world around them” (Dewhurst, 2014, p. 69). Critical questions play an important role in student-directed projects, a main component of a socially just art classroom community. In collecting the data, the “questions” facet will help analyze the participants’ responses to the interview questions about issue-based/big idea instruction and encouraging students to explore relevant ideas.

**Translations.** In a socially just art classroom community, translations refer to the concepts of collaboration, communication, and decision-making/choice. “Translating an idea into a work of art demands that artists engage in questions of possibility--to imagine and invent new ways of thinking about or being in the world, to play them out in their own heads or in conversation with others, and to return to their artistic tools to make necessary changes” (Dewhurst, 2014, p. 81). Translating their artwork requires the students, as artists, to choose their materials/tools they believe will most effectively communicate their idea or ideas of their artwork (Dewhurst, 2014). In the process of translating their artwork, it might help students “meet the audience where it is” by making connections to “cultural references, popular imagery, or social symbols” (Dewhurst, 2014, p. 80). In collecting data, the “translations” facet will help analyze the participants’ response to the interview questions about student choice/decision-making and the art process/product.

### **Design of Study**

The questions used for this study were based on the researcher’s own hypothesis about the best ways elementary art teachers can cultivate a more socially just classroom community, through the use of shared power dynamics and student-centered, choice-based, big idea

orientated, visual culture orientated, and/or social justice orientated practices, in order to provide elementary students with a high quality arts and education experience. During the interview sessions of this study, ten open-ended questions were asked to the three participants about how they build the physical, social-cultural, and pedagogical spaces in their art classrooms to be more socially just and/or democratic. The ten open-ended questions explored how these elementary art teachers define a democratic art classroom community as well as describe their best instructional strategies and how they use them in their art curriculum or in their individual lessons.

**Participants/location of research.** This research is comprised of a case study of three different elementary art educators currently teaching art at three different elementary schools in the city of Richmond, Virginia. The context of the participants in this research study is based on years of teaching experience, geographical location, and a diverse student population. The researcher selected elementary art teachers who had three or more years of teaching. Elementary art teachers with three or more years of teaching are great participants for this research study because their years of experience give them prior pedagogical knowledge and awareness of the more progressive and democratic shift in art education. The researcher also believed that this study might provide the participants the opportunity to critically reflect on whether their pedagogical practices were democratic enough. All three elementary art teachers were chosen to participate in this study because they all were familiar, to a certain degree, with the more progressive democratic approach to art education, especially at the elementary level.

Geographical location was considered in participant selection in order to accommodate the researcher's need to interview participants face-to-face and observe the physical space of each art classroom. Therefore, the elementary art teachers participating in this research all teach at schools in the city of Richmond, VA. Lastly, the selection of Richmond elementary art

teachers as participants in this study correlates to the fact that the Richmond population is so diverse. “The population of Richmond, VA is 48.4% Black, 39.8% White, and 6.33% Hispanic. 9.4% of the people in Richmond, VA speak a non-English language, and 95.7% are U.S. citizens (Data USA, para 2).” However, it is important to question the demographics of those who pursue a teaching degree Virginia. According to the Teacher Educational Attainment 2017-2018 chart, Richmond Public Schools (RPS) attains 53% of teachers with a master’s degree and 42% of teachers with a bachelor’s degree (Appendix C Figure 1). With these demographics in mind, it is important to consider the race and ethnicity of the teachers who were hired by RPS for the 2017-2018 school year. How many non-white individuals earn a master’s or bachelor’s teaching degree and get hired by RPS? With most of the teachers in RPS being White, it was not a surprise that all of the participants in this study are White. In fact, it might be even more important, because the participants are White, that they strive to create a socially just, democratic space for the mostly minority students that they teach (Appendix C Figure 2).

If every student in the art classroom were the same, there would be no need to conduct this comparative case study. However, because of the diverse student population in Richmond schools, this research seeks to discover how current elementary art teachers navigate fair and socially just relationships with their diverse student population by fostering a more democratic classroom community through the promotion of empathy and respect.

**Data collection methods.** The ethnographic methods employed to collect data in this research study were an email invitation, raw field notes and audio recordings of interviews, sample lesson plans, digital photographs, and visual journal entries. In order to recruit participants, the researcher received referrals of elementary art teachers who fit this research’s criteria from academic professors. Then an initial email was sent to those several Richmond



elementary art teachers inviting them to participate in an interview session for this research study (Appendix A). After confirming dates and times that worked for each participant, the researcher met with each participant in their art classroom to conduct the interview. The researcher took raw field notes (Appendix C) as well as audio recordings (Appendix D), to be transcribed later, throughout each interview session. The raw field notes were for the researcher to write down initial reactions to participants' answers to interview questions as well as write down observations of the physical classroom setting. The interview process contained 10 open-ended questions about how power/choice, the art process/product, the physical classroom space, the social-cultural aspects of a classroom, and the pedagogical/curriculum strategies are shown in their classrooms. These open-ended questions allowed participants to engage in critical thinking and reflection about their own teaching practices and whether or not they envision their art room as a more socially just, democratic classroom community.

Digital photographs were taken of the physical classroom environment to compare later alongside the participants' responses to the interview questions regarding the physical aspects of their classrooms (Appendix F). Lastly, the researcher did three visual journal entries to help visualize the analogies that participants compared their classroom communities to (Appendix G).

**Data analysis and coding the responses.** This process of analysis relies heavily on a method of interpreting data using open coding. "Open coding is commonly used by qualitative researchers, who look for patterns in the data and relate bits of information into categories, which may suggest topics for further investigation" (Davenport & O'Connor, 2014, p. 62). As these interview questions explore a heavily holistic, abstract, and subjective concept, cultivating a more socially just classroom community inside the elementary art room, similarly the coding of the responses makes use of the subjective analysis process. The descriptions of the pedagogical

practices found in each participant's responses to interview questions were coded to find related or unrelated patterns in classroom community, power, and curriculum content across three elementary art programs in Richmond, VA. The data was analyzed through a critical social justice art lens and coded using Dewhurst's (2014) three facets, connections, questions, and translations, of social justice art education.

The transcriptions of the audio recordings (AR) were coded and analyzed to find patterns, similarities, or differences between the participants' answers to the interview questions. The researcher was also able to obtain two sample lesson plans from Mrs. Bell and Mrs. Holt to be coded and analyzed to find connections in participants' responses to questions regarding curriculum and connections between their lesson plans and existing literature. The interview field notes (IN) were collected through the researcher's direct listening skills and analyzed to discover initial patterns in the participants' responses and observations of the physical setting. While taking those initial field notes during each interview, the researcher discovered and wrote down a common pattern amongst all the interview questions. The digital photographs (PR) were taken to document the physical classroom environment. The photographs (PR) were then coded and analyzed to find patterns and connections to existing literature and between participants' responses. From the field notes (IN) and digital photographs (PR), the researcher was able to visualize how each of the participants envisioned their classroom community. This led to the research creating a visual journal entry (VN) to represent the overall idea or pattern of each participant's classroom community.

## Data Collection and Analysis

Collection Methods	Data Collection Type	Unit of Analysis	Abbreviation Code	Participants
Primary Data Collection Methods	Observational Notes	Viewing all 3 participants in their classrooms during interview session	ON	Mrs. Patty, Mrs. Bell, Mrs. Holt
	Interview Field Notes	Direct listening/direct note-taking to ideas, opinions, and the other responses from interview questions	IN	Mrs. Patty, Mrs. Bell, Mrs. Holt
	Visual Journal Notes	Visual representations of field notes/interview responses of each participant	VN	Mrs. Patty, Mrs. Bell, Mrs. Holt
	Photographic Records	Digital photographs of the physical space of participants' classrooms	PR	Mrs. Patty, Mrs. Bell, Mrs. Holt
	Audio Records	Recordings/Transcriptions of interview questions & answers	AR	Mrs. Patty, Mrs. Bell, Mrs. Holt
	Lesson Plans	Sample lessons from two participants	LP	Mrs. Holt, Mrs. Bell

**Note:** All research participants will be identified by code names

Participant 1 = Mrs. Patty

Participant 2 = Mrs. Bell

Participant 3 = Mrs. Holt

## **Significance of Study**

With this study, the researcher hopes to open the gateway, spark deeper conversations, and push or shift the boundaries of elementary art education towards a more progressive, democratic model. The researcher also hopes this study will be an accessible resource for all elementary art teachers, especially those who are socially just, democratic practitioners. The research believes this study to be significant to the growing popularity of more socially just teaching practices within the field of art education.

## **Limitations of Research Methods**

Initial participant recruitment took place through a digital Google form survey sent out to elementary art teachers who are members of Central Virginia Art Education Association (VAEA). With the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the researcher did send this survey out through the fall 2018 to try and recruit possible research participants. However, there were no responses to the survey. The researcher adapted her plan by asking art education professors for referrals of possible participants who fit the study's criteria and contacted the suggested participants directly via email. If the researcher did use VAEA membership list to recruit participants it would still limit the data by excluding elementary art teachers who employ socially just teaching practices but are not VAEA members. Also, the fact that all three participants teach in the same school system can limit the data because it only allots for a comparative case study of an elementary art teachers in a specific school system and in a specific geographical area.

The interview field notes, transcriptions of audio recordings of interviews, digital photographs, sample lesson plans, and visual journal entries are also all limited data collection methods because they all only provide this research study with the teachers' perspective and the

researcher's perspective. The digital photographs present as a limitation in this research's methods because it provides the readers of this paper with a second-hand perspective of the physical environment of these art classrooms. The data collection of this research was also limited in that only two of the three participants provided copies of sample lessons. The third participant no longer writes lesson plans so her responses to the interview questions is the only primary data evidence to her degree of socially just teaching practices. The visual journal entries are limited because they only provide the researcher's account of how she visualizes the participants' responses and the participants' classroom communities.

## Chapter 4: Results and Responses

### Interview questions one and two

Questions one and two ask participants to describe what the power dynamics look like in their classroom in terms of roles/responsibilities and how much choice/decision-making students have. Q1. *What is the power dynamic/power structure like in your classroom (i.e. is it a shared power dynamic?)? What role/roles do you, as the teacher, play in that classroom structure? What role/roles do your students play in the classroom structure?* Out of the three participants, Mrs. Patty, Mrs. Bell, Mrs. Holt, all three described that the teacher had most of the power but emphasized that the students were also, to a certain degree, given choice and roles or responsibilities. Mrs. Patty described that she gives tasks to the students who are working hard and participating fully. On the other hand, Mrs. Bell would give tasks to the students who appear to be behaving disruptively in order to give those students the chance to move around and re-center themselves. Out of the three participants, Mrs. Holt is the only one who uses very little teacher instruction in the sense that students are given nearly full choice in the artmaking process. The participant's responses to question one can be linked to Dewhurst's (2014) *connections* facet of social justice art education. All three participants start making connections with their students by creating a foundational classroom structure where students know that the teacher remains the head of the classroom. Mrs. Patty and Mrs. Bell both make connections and share power with their students by giving them more responsibility/power in classroom art tasks, such as passing out materials. Mrs. Bell connects with her students, for example, if one of her students is being disruptive and feels like they do not have any control, she will reach out to that student to find out what is wrong and give that student back some control by giving them power or control of a specific task. Mrs. Holt connects with her students by starting each class sitting

together on the carpet and allowing students opportunities to share or ask any questions that are on their minds. Mrs. Holt also connects with her students by empowering them to take ownership of their choices in the artmaking process, for example, allowing them the freedom to choose the materials to create art with.

*Q2. How much power and decision-making do your students have when it comes to the curriculum? How much choice or power do your students get in their artmaking process and how do you, as the teacher, distribute that power/choice? How is that power seen across different grade levels and ages?* Mrs. Patty describes that she designs lessons around topics students are interested in but acknowledges that not every child will like the lesson. During carpet time, Mrs. Patty listens to her students share their thoughts, ideas, and interests and then she uses those to help her generate topics/big ideas for her lessons. Mrs. Patty's classroom is built on a point system and when students get to 35 points then they are given a choice-based art day where they have the power over what art they want to make and learn about. Mrs. Bell and Mrs. Holt both described that power/choice with the lower grades is more controlled and structured. Mrs. Bell describes that with the upper grades, she designs the lessons so students have choices in how they want to convey their art, what materials/tools they want to use, and how it should be displayed. Mrs. Holt implements center-based instruction by starting each class with a brief teacher-directed introduction and then allowing the students to choose what materials/tools they want to create with which determines what station they get to work at. Power/choice in the elementary art classroom gradually increase more from Mrs. Patty's classroom to Mrs. Bell's classroom to Mrs. Holt's classroom. The collaborative communication and decision-making throughout the art process and product in these three teachers' art classrooms refers to Dewhurst's (2014) translations facet of social justice art education. Mrs.

Holt allows her students to translate their artworks by giving them the power to choose what materials to use to best communicate their artwork. In Mrs. Holt's art room, students translate their artworks when they are free to play out and experiment their personal ideas at each of the various stations during class. In Mrs. Bell's upper grades, translations in artwork can be seen when students collaboratively communicate their ideas with one another of how they want to present their artworks as well as convey the important meanings behind them. Translations of artwork in Mrs. Patty's room can be seen mostly through the students' choice-art day. That is because Mrs. Patty, through a sticky note system, collaboratively works with the students to collect their ideas about what they want to make on their choice-art day. Each of these three teachers, to a certain degree, give their students opportunities to actively participate in the art room's decision-making process whether it be having choice of materials or collaboratively communicating ideas about what art to make and/or how to present the artworks.

### **Interview questions three and four**

Questions three and four ask participants to describe what the art process, art product, as well as the physical space look like in their classrooms. Q3. *Can you describe what the art process and art product look like in your classroom community?* Mrs. Patty, Mrs. Bell, and Mrs. Holt all described how the art process and product should differ from student to student. The fact that each of three participants all agree and discuss how the art process/product all look different in their students can be linked to Dewhurst's (2014) translations facet. In socially just art classroom community, similar to these participants' classrooms, students' translations of their artworks will all look different because each student is different and will each communicate their own personal ideas in their art, using their choice of materials, in their unique way. Mrs. Patty describes using the art process as a way to teach students basic life skills and emphasizes art as



being so individualized. Mrs. Bell emphasizes process more than product by not providing a project sample so students can't try and copy the teacher's product. The art process should be about teaching children that there is no right or wrong answer. Mrs. Holt describes her classroom as a space where the art process and product for each student all looks different, thereby she does not design her lessons around specific artists/artworks. Translating their artworks calls students to make real-life connections and continue to question and think of new ways of being a part of a community. It is because all students learn and think differently that their translations of the art process/product will also look different from one another.

*Q4. How did you approach setting up the physical space of your art room (describe how you chose to arrange the materials of your room)? How do the power structures of your classroom affect your arrangement of the physical space of your art room? Do you believe the arrangement of the physical space of your classroom directly relates to your students' behavior and/or learning styles?* Dewhurst's (2014) connections facet can be linked to the physical space of these three teacher's art classrooms. Elementary art teachers can establish foundational connections with their students through how they arrange the physical space of the art room. Both Mrs. Patty and Mrs. Bell described how the physical arrangement affects their "traffic routes" meaning that they both emphasize the need for them as a teacher to be constantly walking around the room helping students. For example, Mrs. Bell describes her traffic route pattern as "clover-leaf" walk (Appendix G). The fact that Mrs. Patty and Mrs. Bell both described how they visualize and map their daily classroom walking patterns infers they both care deeply about making sure they can reach and connect with each student every day during their art class. In approaching the physical setting of her classroom, Mrs. Patty's material culture consists of "a library, low lighting, music, a cabinet of curiosity, visual posters that constantly

change and aren't too stimulating" (Mrs. Patty, personal communication, 2019). Mrs. Bell designed the physical space of her classroom so demonstrations are done using a projector and students know where the basic materials are. She describes implementing a seating chart but only in certain classes and depending upon the students' behaviors. Lastly, Mrs. Holt's physical space stresses the importance of play, experimentation, choice, movement, and mindfulness. Mrs. Holt describes starting each class with a mindfulness practice and then sending the students off to whatever station they choose to make the art they want to make. Each table contains a variety of different materials students can choose to work with and there are no chairs so students are up and moving while they make art. The various physical materials that make up the elementary art classroom allow young students to make connections between the materials, the art content, and their own personal ideas and lives. It can be inferred that Mrs. Patty's, Mrs. Bell's, and Mrs. Holt's physical art classroom spaces were all created with the intent to provide students with a structured, yet openly fair foundations for the classroom community. Establishing these foundations can help students make connections and feel comfortable in the physical classroom environment and all its materials.

*Photographic Records of Physical Spaces.* The photographic records (Appendix F) of Mrs. Patty's art classroom show the physical make-up of her art classroom space. Figure one depicts the classroom location of the cabinet, which contains all the drawers of art materials. Mrs. Patty described how she puts all the basic, extra art materials in the lower drawers so students can get up and get the material they need or do not have. Figure two is a depiction of all the visual images hung on the classroom wall, which includes a poster of well-known artist Bob Ross, a "BEEhave in the BEEhive" poster of the classroom rules, and a world map poster. The panoramic picture in figure three depicts the student workspace, the class library space, and the

carpet space where students come together in the beginning of every class. These photographs are evidence that supports existing literature by Woywod (2015) around the concept of the physical material culture of an art room having designated “special work areas” as well as areas of “small classroom collections” of materials and resources (Woywod, 2015, p. 24). Photographs of Mrs. Patty’s art room show cabinets of a collection of the basic art materials/resources (figure one) and a zoomed out picture that shows: student work tables, a carpet for teacher-directed instruction, and a class library (collection of art books) where students can explore when they finish their art (figure three).

The photographic records (Appendix F) of Mrs. Bell’s show the physical make-up of her art classroom. Figure four depicts the front of classroom where the teacher directs instruction at the beginning of each class. It also depicts Mrs. Bell’s full desk in the corner which supports her response of how she hardly ever sits there and uses it as a space for kids who need a break or time to be by themselves (i.e. a safe space for a student). Figure five depicts how Mrs. Bell organizes the art materials along the back wall so students are aware of them and can access them if they need to. Figure five also shows the tables arranged in middle of classroom in the shape of a square, which correlates to Mrs. Bell’s description of her “clover leaf walk” in order to make sure she connects with each student one-on-one. Figure six depicts visual posters for inspiration and reminders of basic skills or knowledge students should be aware of as well as many globes that represent the teacher’s interest in fostering art instruction based on global and cultural understandings. These photographs of Mrs. Bell’s art room are evidence that supports existing literature by Douglas and Jaquith (2009) around the concept of the importance of having a strong organization and arrangement of the physical materials and resources in the art room on students’ participation. From the photographs, it can be inferred the physical space of elementary

art classrooms vary in size and design and Mrs. Bell's art room happens to be smaller than Mrs. Patty's or Mrs. Holt's art rooms. Even with a small, square classroom, Mrs. Bell has a rich and colorful material culture of globes and posters of important art knowledge, classroom rules, and daily goals. The photographs show that Mrs. Bell understands that young artists, in an elementary setting, need access to various materials and resources to effectively communicate their ideas in their art, especially when class is only forty-five minutes long (Douglas and Jaquith, 2009).

The photographic records (Appendix F) of Mrs. Holt's classroom show the physical make-up of the space. Figure seven presents a panoramic view of Mrs. Holt's choice-based art room. Figure eight depicts a close-up photograph of the tables with no chairs, which represents the different stations/centers students can go to during the artmaking process of class. Removing the chairs so students are creating art while standing emphasizes movement in this teacher's choice-based art and material based lessons practice. These photographs are evidence that supports existing literature by Douglas and Jaquith (2009) around the concept of how to organize a choice-based art classroom through studio centers or stations. Each station has different materials and mediums for students to explore, experiment, and create with. Figure nine depicts the project materials for the lesson placed out on one table then later distributed evenly to each center/station. Figure ten shows the carpet in center of the classroom where Mrs. Holt begins each class by introducing the project to the students and taking questions. Choice-based teaching often consists of a balance between both direct, teacher-directed instruction and indirect, student-directed instruction (Douglas and Jaquith, 2009). Mrs. Holt also describes how carpet time is used to engage students in some mindfulness exercises.

The photographic records documenting each of the participants' physical classroom

spaces all are evidence of what young children need; an “organized, materials-rich environment” (McClure et al., 2017, p. 156). These photographs provide this research with evidence that Mrs. Patty, Mrs. Bell, and Mrs. Holt, as elementary art teachers, care about how their students interact with the art classroom as well as how the physical classroom can impact the design of the art curriculum/lessons.

### **Interview questions five and six**

Questions five and six asked participants to describe their own curriculum strategies and their thoughts regarding more issue-based art curriculum as well as strategies for encouraging student exploration of identity and lived experiences. Q5. *As an elementary art teacher, what are your thoughts on implementing an art curriculum in your classroom that is more big idea/issue-based orientated (i.e. social justice issues, bring in personal interests of students from the outside visual/pop culture, choices)? How does this type of curriculum allow children the opportunity to learn and grow artistically and personally into more civic-minded and socially responsible citizens? How can this curriculum help children to become more socially and culturally aware?* Mrs. Patty describes the importance of teaching what is not only relevant and relatable to the students’ interest but that the curriculum is also something that the teacher is interested in. Even though Mrs. Patty implements more teacher-directed lessons, her lessons can still be linked, to a certain degree, to Dewhurst’s questions facet of social justice art education. This is because Mrs. Patty described how she always allows time for students to ask questions after the demonstration. Mrs. Patty also believes in teaching children how to care and be empathetic to the fact that others might look differently, learn differently, and feel differently. Mrs. Bell is new to figuring out the curriculum based on big ideas/issues so she describes planning her curriculum by reflecting on past lessons and re-imagining them with a twist or a big

idea emphasis. For example, Mrs. Bell reimagined a previous *Faith Ringgold Tar Beach* lesson around the big ideas of fantasy and superheroes (Appendix E). A big idea lesson like this one can be linked to Dewhurst's (2014) questions facet of social justice art education because it empowers and encourages students to explore and find answers to the essential questions the lesson presents. By framing the essential questions around the big ideas of superheroes, fantasy, and flying, Mrs. Bell made the art process fun, relatable, and more engaging for her students. Big idea lessons pose questions and questions empower students to actively participate in the critical thinking, questioning, and reflecting learning art process. Mrs. Holt's choice-based art lesson can also be linked to Dewhurst's (2014) questions facet because, through a material-based and stations lesson, Mrs. Holt encourages her students to explore and experiment with various materials and techniques to create works of art (Appendix E). She also encourages her students to question what materials create what art and what materials artists use to create art. Mrs. Holt also describes her art curriculum as being focused on teaching students to be decent human beings because she feels that some social justice issues might be too heavy for students to handle. However, like Mrs. Bell, Mrs. Holt believes in introducing children to a variety of artists and not just the "white male artists" (Mrs. Holt, personal communication, 2019). In so, both of the lessons Mrs. Bell and Mrs. Holt shared in this study are great examples of socially just teaching methods to implement in a more democratic elementary art classroom community. Big idea(s) or choice-based art lessons are two useful methods to implement in the elementary art room because they allow students many opportunities to pose questions and find answers to questions.

*Q6. What are your strategies for encouraging your students to explore their own personal, social, and/or cultural identity, narrative, and lived experiences through art and*

*artmaking? How do you teach such a young audience about real-world issues and social justice?*

Mrs. Patty describes implementing culturally sensitive projects that involve students exploring storytelling and making connections to how the past, present, and future relate to each other.

Mrs. Bell describes how she takes on the role of an “artistic social worker” in teaching students about real-world issues, especially when it comes to the older students (Mrs. Bell, personal communication, 2019).

Mrs. Bell describes how older students tend to need more one-on-one guidance in trying to articulate their messages, as they are more critical of themselves and their art.

Mrs. Bell is making “connections” with her students by meeting her students where they are and helping via one-on-one or individual instruction (Dewhurst, 2014, p. 39).

Mrs. Holt describes how social justice issues are tricky to discuss with elementary students so instead she focuses on a teaching compassion and mindfulness. Despite not being about social justice

teachings, Mrs. Holt’s mindfulness teaching practices can still be linked to Dewhurst’s (2014)

connections facet of social justice art education in terms of fostering a shared power dynamic.

By fostering a classroom community built on teaching empathy, respect, and compassion, Mrs. Holt

helps frames the “foundational connections” for a shared power dynamic. The first step toward

building a reciprocal, non-hierarchical teacher-student relationship in a democratic art classroom

community is through showing compassion and respect to one another.

### **Interview questions seven and eight**

Questions seven and eight ask participants to describe how they encourage students to be

brave and safe, think more deeply, and make connections so they can develop a better social and

cultural understanding. Q7. *How do you think the artmaking process can help children develop a*

*better social and cultural understanding of the individuals in their classroom community, their*

*school community, and the outside community? How do you teach and help your students to*

*notice deeply and think more critically about visual images and art that exist in the outside community?* Mrs. Patty, Mrs. Bell, and Mrs. Holt all describe how fortunate they are in teaching in schools that are rich in diversity and cultures. Mrs. Patty describes the importance of fostering an open dialogue without being critical. Mrs. Patty's non-critical, open dialogue can be linked to Dewhurst's (2014) questions facet because it is a useful strategy for encouraging students to think more critically and deeply about the art content and the art process. A non-critical, open dialogue allows students to feel comfortable and brave to ask any questions without being judgmental or worrying about the right or wrong answer. Mrs. Bell describes Dewhurst's (2014) translations facet when she describes the artmaking process as a way to help students see, through an artistic lens, how ideas and thoughts relate to each other and learn how to better articulate and communicate their story or message. In Mrs. Bell's art classroom, students translate their artworks by discovering how their ideas or thoughts relate to fellow students, relate to other artists, and relate to the art content. Through translations, students learn how to effectively communicate their ideas or messages. Mrs. Holt describes Dewhurst's (2014) connections facet when she discusses how she brings in visiting artists, who are parents, grandparents, uncles, or community members to collaborate in the artmaking process at the classroom stations. She believes it helps build the practice of being a member in a community. By bringing local community members into her art room, Mrs. Holt is creating a "situated learning" environment that is rooted in ideas that are relatable to the students because they are coming from their own local community (Pitri, 2004, p. 7). Students are more likely to make strong connections in the art classroom community when they are introduced to people or artists, ideas, and content that is relatable and relevant to them.

Q8. *What are your thoughts on fostering brave spaces rather than safe spaces? Do you*



*believe that for a successful democratic classroom community, there should be clear definition of a fine line between what is a brave space and what is a safe space? How do you, as the elementary art teacher, encourage bravery but also at the same time make sure every student feels safe in this kind of classroom community?* The participants' response to this question can be linked to Dewhurst's (2014) connections facet because the way these elementary art teachers create a safe classroom space while encouraging bravery is all about how to make connections with the students. When it comes to safety in her classroom, Mrs. Patty describes a sense of "group mentality" or the idea that we are all connected and should look out for each other. Mrs. Patty also discusses how the ability to make strong connections with one another involves being a good listener and good observer. For example, Mrs. Patty described how she is always observing and listening to make sure no one gets physically or emotionally hurt in her art room. Like Mrs. Patty and Mrs. Holt, Mrs. Bell describes the importance a creating a safe space especially with many of her students coming from unsafe homes. Mrs. Bell describes creating a safe space as making sure you know your students, and what their stories and situations are. By actively listening to her students' stories, Mrs. Bell is able to make connections and get to know each one of her students, who they are and where they come from. Mrs. Holt strongly believes in safety first, especially, a space for safe mental health and understanding our minds/brains. By emphasizing safety as a top priority in their art rooms, Mrs. Patty, Mrs. Bell, and Mrs. Holt, are helping their students feel comfortable to make connections with their bodies, minds, art, and fellow classmates.

### **Interview questions nine and ten**

Questions nine and ten asked participants how much they value creating a democratic classroom community and asked them how they would define the purpose of a socially just,

democratic classroom community in the elementary art room. Q9: *How important do you feel it is to cultivate a sense of community inside the elementary art room? Please Explain. How much do you value (i.e. place on) democracy inside the elementary art room?* Mrs. Patty describes the way she values democracy in the classroom is by pointing out good behaviors or good leaders and by switching roles with the students in which the teacher remains silent and the students get to voice and share their ideas. Mrs. Bell places a high value on democracy and the idea that the art room has to be fair and equal to every child but also consider the various characteristics and traits each child brings into the room. Mrs. Holt describes that democracy and choice is a work in progress and is about a balancing act between teacher-directed and student-drive.

Q10: *In your opinion, what should be the purpose of a socially just, democratic classroom community in the elementary art room? In what ways, do you see yourself as a culturally inclusive elementary art educator who strives to create a more democratic classroom community?* Mrs. Patty does not refer to her classroom community through the terms democratic or socially just but she does believe in creating a classroom community where everyone has a role to play, everyone works together, and everyone learns “flexibility, patience, and principles we must live by in order to get along” (Mrs. Patty, personal communication, 2019). In a more democratic classroom community, Mrs. Patty and Mrs. Bell both describe how many of their students may come from unsafe homes so they emphasize the importance of providing a consistent, safe space for their students. Similar, to Mrs. Patty and Mrs. Bell, Mrs. Holt also teaches at a school rich in diversity and culture. Mrs. Holt believes that a democratic classroom community should teach children “what society can and should function like” and emphasizes the importance of introducing children to artists representative of the various cultures that the students come from (Mrs. Holt, personal communication, 2019).

Although, not all the participants say that they practice social justice and/or democratic teachings, the analysis of this research's data presents strong evidence that these elementary art teachers value a sense democracy inside their classroom community. All three of these art teachers believe in creating a classroom community around the facets of making connections, asking and answering questions, and translating artworks to effectively communicate personal ideas or messages (Dewhurst, 2014).

## Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

### Review of Proposed Study

To review, this research study was a best pedagogical practices case study of three elementary art teachers in Richmond, VA. The purpose of this study is to examine the various instructional strategies Virginia elementary art teachers are currently implementing, within the physical, the social-cultural, and the pedagogical spaces, to create a more socially just, democratic classroom community. Such instructional strategies include a shared power dynamic, student-centered learning, choice-based art, and big idea orientated pedagogies (ex: visual culture, social justice, and democratic pedagogies). The data collected was coded and analyzed through a critical social justice art lens using Dewhurst's (2014) connections, questions, and translations facets of social justice art education. Based on the findings of this study, it can be inferred that these current elementary art teachers, to a certain degree, are creating democratic classroom communities through the implementation of some, if not all, of the various instructional strategies existing literature has discussed.

### Findings Summary

The responses to question one regarding the power structures of the participants' classrooms showed a comparatively even span amongst the data collected in that all three participants described the role of the teacher as head of the classroom but established a fairly open and simple power structure. In simplest terms, sharing, caring, and working hard, best describes how each of the three participants viewed their classroom power dynamics. This finding was no surprise as it supports existing literature in that each of the participants describe how important it is to cultivate a classroom that is built on community, collaboration (working together), sharing power (i.e. switching roles), and being culturally responsive and respectful to

one another (Buffington, 2014; Dewey, 1916; Gay, 2010; Lawton, 2014). However, the power dynamics in each participants' classroom is one of teacher as authority figure, supporting existing literature within art education field whereby power in the classroom can never fully be eliminated, especially in a school setting. For these participants, sharing power with their students is a continuous work in progress (Foucault, 1980).

Looking at the data from questions two, three, five, and six, it can be inferred that all three participants have some concept of how *shared power*, *student-choice* or *student-centered art process*, *big idea/culturally relevant issue-based curriculum*, and/or *exploring lived experiences*, can help create a more socially just, democratic classroom community inside the elementary art room. Although one out of three participants described switching roles and sharing power with the students as well as implementing “culturally sensitive projects,” her pedagogical classroom practices remain more *teacher-directed* instruction and students are given more choice/freedom in the artmaking process and curriculum content when/if they earn a certain number of points. The other two participants strongly fostered student choice daily, to a certain degree, in their classroom art projects when it came to choosing materials, tools, media, and content. However, the data collected from these questions does infer all three participants have grasped the concept that art process and product should differ from student to student in a more democratic classroom community.

There was an interesting finding in the responses to questions four, seven, and eight about the physical and social-cultural spaces as well as creating brave-safe spaces, the three participants did not have prior knowledge of the idea of brave spaces but really liked the concept. The responses to question eight infer that all three participants, when it comes to their classroom practices and students, value safety first, both physically and mentally or emotionally. It can also

be inferred when it comes to the art classroom community, it is important to have consistency when it comes to a safe space for all students. The responses to question four share the same concept of movement when it comes to the arrangement of the physical space of each participant's classroom. Two of the participants described how the arrangement of their physical space caused them to create their own teacher "traffic route" of how they continuously move around the room in order to reach and help each student. The other participant described how the physical space of her *choice-based/material-based* art classroom relies heavily on movement, specifically focusing on play and experimentation. This participant describes how each table represents a different station/center with different materials to create art and there are no chairs so students are up moving throughout the whole artmaking process. Based on the responses, it can be inferred all three participants grasp the importance of having both a fixed and fluid material culture when it comes to creating a safe classroom community (Woywod, 2015). All three participants describe how they have consistent visual posters, as constant reminders of basic skills and knowledge students should know. At the same time, it can be inferred that all three participants also take in consideration the fluidity of the physical material culture of their classrooms in that visuals should change frequently.

The data collected on responses to questions nine and ten showed a wide spread in the participants' answers to what they believed to be the purpose of a socially just, democratic classroom community inside the elementary art room. The first participant describes creating a democratic art classroom community as a place where everyone has a role and everyone works together. It is a place that teaches flexibility, patience, and basic principles people need to live by. The second participant describes creating a democratic art classroom community as a place where every student has a voice and is built on consistency and high expectations. The third

participant also describes creating a democratic art classroom community as a place provides students with exposure to diverse artists from the outside community rather than “white male artists” (PI 3, personal communication, 2019). Based on these responses, it can be inferred all three participants value the importance of cultivating a sense of democracy and community inside their art classrooms. They all have good intentions and some successful impact on creating a democratic classroom that respects students’ voices and ideas as well as allowing them many opportunities take ownership of their art process and product.

### **Limitations of Study and Further Research**

This thesis study, although well-intended to broadly examine and analyze best pedagogical practices of elementary art teachers, primarily only provided limited insights into how some current elementary art teachers cultivate a more socially, just democratic community inside their classrooms. By expanding the number of participants and selecting participants from different schools in different districts, this study might open up to richer and more detailed comparisons. This study might also improve through the expansion of methods. For example, after conducting and transcribing the interviews, the researcher might follow up with observations and video recordings of participants teaching one of their more socially just lessons and observing how students respond to the lesson and the teacher. Adding observations to this study’s research methods allows the researcher to examine and analyze what a shared power/choice dynamic actually looks like from both the teacher and students’ perspective.

Despite being limited by only the teachers’ perspectives and the researcher’s perspective, this thesis study provided a well-executed introduction to the development of a spectrum of socially just teaching practices. Each of the participants in this study fall at different places of the spectrum; one up high by giving a lot of power/choice to the students, one in the middle who

values both teacher-directed and student directed learning, and one who leans more on teacher-directed learning by allowing more student-choice. A richer and more comprehensive study might lead to a further and deeper analysis of how teachers at different schools who fall at different ends of the spectrum compare to one another as well as offer suggestions for ways teachers at the lower end of spectrum can create more socially just and democratic spaces.

Many participants in this research study expressed a desire to learn more about how to create a more socially just, democratic classroom community through *student-choice* and fostering *brave spaces*. An examination and re-examination of the data points out how these three elementary art participants all describe difficulties and a fear of teaching the lower elementary grades, such as kindergarten, about real-world or social justice issues. In knowing this, a follow-up research study might dive deeper with more specific resources on how elementary art teachers can implement a *big idea/real-world/social justice issues curriculum* with lower elementary grades, like kindergarten. Also, as there are a number of resources on this topic, a follow-up study might be an action research study where current practicing elementary art teachers are testing this type of curriculum with their younger grades. In addition, the scope of this research study only looked at three participants within one central region, within one school district, but a follow-up research study might include getting different perspectives from a variety of teachers, working in a variety of different school districts, who can share their resources on how they create their classroom community. A broader and more detailed study could provide a spectrum from poor to best practices from which a professional development program for elementary art teachers could be formulated to assist in moving toward a shared power and a more socially just classroom.



The expansion of this thesis research study can also lead to professional development programs to assist elementary art educators in expanding their teaching practices to be more democratic. Possible professional development programs for socially just elementary art educators might include organizing new school-wide/district-wide/county-wide socially just teaching practices workshops. These workshops could meet once a month, in person or via a webinar, where teachers share some of their best lessons and maybe get feedback on lessons that did not go well or could be improved. As socially just teaching practices are becoming more critical and are a continuous work in progress within the art education field. These workshops can be beneficial for elementary art teachers to collaborate with one another on their best instructional strategies that work in their classroom community.

By furthering this thesis study, elementary art educators can be exposed to various ways to create more socially just, democratic classroom communities inside their elementary art rooms. As elementary art teachers keep developing their socially just teaching practices, they can keep providing their students with the quality art education experience that they so richly deserve.

## **Conclusion**

This research started by unpacking, then re-imagining, the key components, the physical, social-cultural, and pedagogical, of a democratic classroom community. The researcher hypothesized that cultivating a more socially just, democratic classroom community, through care, empathy, big ideas/issues, contemporary artists, and the artmaking process, can help provide a higher quality arts and education experience for elementary students. Despite the limited scope of this study's participants, the researcher was still able to compare, contrast, and analyze some best pedagogical practices current elementary art teachers are implementing in

their classrooms. In executing this study, the researcher intended to spark and open a conversation about ways to push and extend the boundaries of elementary art pedagogical practices towards a more progressive, democratic model. In other words, the elementary art room has the potential to teach children more than the traditional and structured “school art style” projects (Efland, 1976, p. 38). The researcher intended to look into different elementary art classrooms to understand some of the practices of others so that they may help improve or build the researcher’s own practices (as well as any individual who reads this paper).

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher can draw the conclusion that the structure of a democratic classroom community falls on a spectrum, in that there are many key features and possibilities for creating a democratic community for one’s classroom. There is no one perfect or right way of cultivating a more socially just, democratic classroom community inside the elementary art room, or inside any classroom for that matter. All the components discussed in this research study have the potential, to a certain degree, to create a more socially just classroom community, to a certain degree. Placing a democratic classroom community on a spectrum requires elementary art educators to be reflective, flexible, and fluid in their pedagogical classroom practices. It is important to understand that cultivating this type of community inside elementary art rooms will be a continuous work in progress.

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## Appendix A

### Initial Email Invite to Participants.

Dear \_\_Name of Selected Participant,\_\_\_\_

I am currently a Masters in Art Education student at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). I am conducting case study research for my thesis on best pedagogical practices elementary art teachers are using to help them cultivate a more democratic community in their classrooms. By democratic, I am researching ways elementary art teachers create their classroom communities through a variety of big ideas and art making. For example, such ideas might be social justice orientated, visual culture orientated, student centered orientated, and/or choice-based orientated. As part of my research, I would like to invite you to participate in an interview about your best teaching practices. Would you be interested and available to meet with for an interview? The interview should take no more than one hour.

I have also attached my research participant consent information as well as link to my digital survey for you to look at.

If you are interested and available to meet for an interview, I have listed below some suggested dates for possible meetings.

January 21  
January 25  
January 28  
February 15  
March 6

Of course, these dates are all suggestions. I am very open and flexible with scheduling. Again, the interview should only last about an hour. I am free to meet on whatever dates work for you.

Sincerely,  
Kelly Fergus

---

### RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT INFORMATION FOR ONLINE SCREENING SURVEY

**STUDY TITLE:** Cultivating A Democratic Community Inside the Elementary Art Room  
**VCU INVESTIGATOR:** Kelly Fergus  
**SPONSOR:** Dr. Pamela Lawton

#### ABOUT THIS CONSENT FORM

You are being invited to participate in a research study entitled Cultivating a Democratic Community in the Elementary Art Classroom. **It is important that you carefully think about whether being in this study is right for you and your situation.**

This consent form is meant to assist you in thinking about whether or not you want to be in this study. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose to not take this screening survey, stop

the survey at any time, or skip any questions with no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

### **WHAT AM I BEING ASKED TO DO?**

The purpose of this five minutes screening survey is to see if you meet the criteria to be in a research study. If you agree to take the survey, you will be asked questions about if you are a Virginia art educator, your classroom community and pedagogical practices, and if you are interested in participating in a research study regarding some of the best pedagogical practices in art education.

### **WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF TAKING THIS SURVEY?**

The screening questions might make you feel uncomfortable. Every effort will be made to keep your answers confidential, however, this cannot be guaranteed. There is also a small risk that someone outside the study could see and misuse information about you. You will not benefit directly from taking this survey.

### **HOW WILL INFORMATION ABOUT ME BE PROTECTED?**

Information that you give me will be kept as confidential as possible by storing it in secure databases accessible only to the following people: study personnel, authorized people at VCU or VCUHS who oversee research, the study sponsor, Dr. Pamela Lawton, and authorized officials of the Department of Health and Human Services

The information collected in this survey will not be used or distributed for future research studies, even if identifiers are removed.

### **WHO SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?**

If you have any questions, complaints, or concerns about your participation in this research, contact:

Kelly Fergus at 703-999-5312 or [ferguskm@mymail.vcu.edu](mailto:ferguskm@mymail.vcu.edu)

OR

Dr. Pamela Lawton at 804-828-1198 or [PHLawton@vcu.edu](mailto:PHLawton@vcu.edu)

The researcher/study staff named above is the best person(s) to call for questions about your participation in this study. If you have general questions about your rights as a participant in this or any other research, you may contact:

Virginia Commonwealth University Office of Research  
800 East Leigh Street, Suite 3000  
Box 980568

Richmond, VA 23298  
Telephone: (804) 827-2157

Contact this number to ask general questions, to obtain information or offer input, and to express concerns or complaints about research. You may also call this number if you cannot reach the research team or if you wish to talk to someone else. General information about participation in research studies can also be found at <http://www.research.vcu.edu/irb/volunteers.htm>.

**If you have any questions, please contact the study team before taking the survey.**

**STATEMENT OF CONSENT**

I have been provided with an opportunity to read this consent form carefully. All of the questions that I wish to raise concerning this study have been answered.

Do you consent to participate in this screening survey?

YES  
NO

---

<https://goo.gl/forms/21NPHQDcPfd8hmR72>

## Appendix B

Figure a

### TEACHER EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Teacher Educational Attainment: 2017-2018

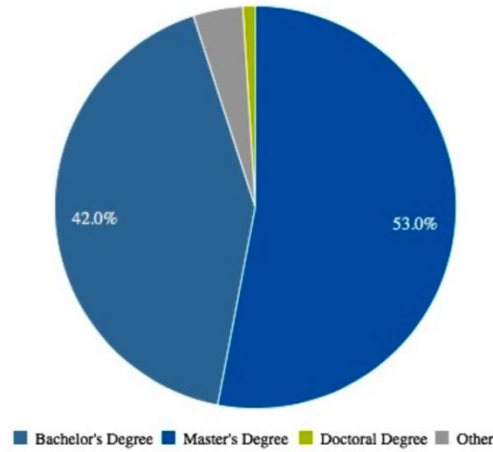
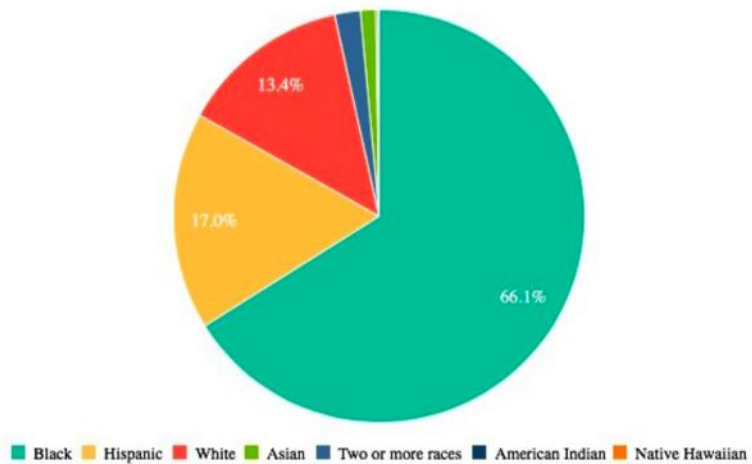


Figure b

### FALL MEMBERSHIP BY SUBGROUPS

2018 Fall Membership By Subgroup: Racial and Ethnic Groups



**Appendix C**  
**Field Notes (FN) Interview (Mrs. Patty)**

<b>Code</b> [SR, FN, ON, IN, JN, PR, VR, QR]	PR, JN, FN, IN, PI 1		<b>Raw Notes</b>	<p>-BEEHIVE -&gt; classroom community-&gt; teamwork          -provided a lot of freedom but still address standards          -not all choice-&gt; class is based on point system and students get choice art day when they reach the number of points          -on choice day-&gt; post note system to assess what art students want to do          -all about teaching basic life skills-&gt; art reflects life          “Yeah, we all are different”          -Physical space-&gt; first year was on a cart so worked with the space that was given. When got her own classroom, wanted to arrange the space so kids knew where to get the basic art materials/tools          -Carpet time- starts every class on the carpet where teacher introduces lesson and allows students to pose any questions          -Materials in classroom all have feelings and so she wants her students to respect them          -believes in looking at history and comparing it to the now</p>
<b>Observer</b>	Kelly Fergus			
<b>Participant(s)</b>	Mrs. Patty			
<b>Place</b>	Elementary art room, Richmond Public Schools			
<b>Time</b>	Feb 6, 2019 at 3:00pm			
<b>Duration</b>	60 mins			
<b>Event</b>	interview			
<b>Planned Agenda</b>	10 preplanned interview questions about (PI 1)’s classroom practices. Interview will be audio recorded.			
<b>Overview of Key Concepts</b> <b>Creative Self-Expression</b> <b>Listening</b> <b>Interacting</b> <b>Teaching/leading Roles</b> <b>Decision-making</b> <b>Collaboration</b> <b>Conflict/Resolution</b> <b>Communication Styles</b>	<b>This fieldnote illustrates....</b> -one-on-one/face-to-face interview -asking 10 preplanned questions -active listening to responses and taking quick, initial bullet form notes -communication & develop initial understandings			
<b>Setting</b>	Participant’s art classroom			
<b>Atmosphere</b>	No kids around; empty, quite space provides privacy for interviews			
<b>Artworks</b>	Student artworks should all look different			
<b>Photographs</b>	Material, physical culture of art room			
<b>Videos</b>	n/a			
<b>Analytical Comments</b>	<p>-More teacher-directed instruction          -Students have to earn freedom/choice art          **BEEHIVE analogy -&gt;visual journal entry?!</p>			

## Field Notes (FN) Interview (Mrs. Bell)

<b>Code</b> [SR, FN, ON, IN, JN, PR, VR, QR]	PR, FN, IN, JN, PI 2	<b>Raw Notes</b>	-Power-> open but structured -> like to keep it very simple
<b>Observer</b>	Kelly Fergus		-younger grades more step by step instruction
<b>Participant(s)</b>	Mrs. Bell		-upper grades more choice in their artmaking with teacher guidance
<b>Place</b>	Elementary art room, Richmond Public Schools		-PROCESS-> "I'm not going to make 'pretty'"
<b>Time</b>	Feb 11, 2019 at 3:00pm		-students should understand that there is more than 1 answer and more than just right or wrong
<b>Duration</b>	60 mins		-brave space to take risks
<b>Event</b>	interview		-physical space-> COLOR and MAKE ALIVE; projector up front for demos; teacher reaches every student with "clover leaf" walk; students know where basic materials are; seating chart depending on the day and class
<b>Planned Agenda</b>	10 preplanned questions to ask participant about their classroom practices. Interview will be audio recorded.		-reflects on old lessons and makes them more big idea orientated; meaningful
<b>Overview of Key Concepts</b> Creative Self-Expression Listening Interacting Teaching/leading Roles Decision-making Collaboration Conflict/Resolution Communication Styles	<b>This fieldnote illustrates...</b> -one on one/face-to-face interview -active listening and quick, bullet form notetaking -communication & developing initial understandings		-teach students how to communicate and articulate
<b>Setting</b>	-participant's art room	-teacher's role-> coaching, guidance-> "artistic social worker"	
<b>Atmosphere</b>	-no kids; empty, quiet-> private to conduct interview	-art criticism-> build communication skills	
		-know you students and their stories	
		-global classroom community-> consistency, high expectations, students have a voice	
		<b>Artworks</b>	Student artworks should all look different
		<b>Photographs</b>	Material culture, physical space
		<b>Videos</b>	N/a
		<b>Analytical Comments</b>	-definitely implements big idea lessons around contemporary artists such as Kehinde Wiley -gives students choices (more with upper grades)  *COLOR-> CLOVER LEAF-> visual journal?!

### Field Notes (FN) Interview (Mrs. Holt)

<b>Code</b> [SR, FN, ON, IN, JN, PR, VR, QR]	FN, IN, JN, PR, PI 3	<b>Raw Notes</b>	-teacher is head of classroom-> experiment everyday with choice art and encourages students to share and question -lower grades- play & movement is emphasize more-> sharing power depends -PROCESS/PRODUCT: Art should all look different -teacher was taught art ed very aimed at DBAE and big ideas -teacher today emphasizes student ownership but balancing power -No chairs-> stations/centers- material-based-> experimentation and movement -MINDFULNESS- classroom structure is simply- teach compassion -brings in visiting artists from community into classroom -Safety strongly emphasized, fun, wants art to be enjoyable' discuss with students what makes a safe space at the beginning of year -PROGESS-> representing students' voices, choice & freedom -should teach how society should be like
<b>Observer</b>	Kelly Fergus		
<b>Participant(s)</b>	Mrs. Holt		
<b>Place</b>	Elementary art room, Richmond Public Schools		
<b>Time</b>	Feb 25, 2019 at 10:00am		
<b>Duration</b>	60 mins		
<b>Event</b>	interview		
<b>Planned Agenda</b>	10 preplanned questions to ask participants about her classroom practices. Interview will be audio recorded.		
<b>Overview of Key Concepts</b> Creative Self-Expression Listening Interacting Teaching/leading Roles Decision-making Collaboration Conflict/Resolution Communication Styles	<b>This fieldnote illustrates...</b> -one on one/face-to-face interview -active listening & quick notetaking -communication & interaction with participant in interview -developing initial understandings		
<b>Setting</b>	Participant's art room	<b>Artworks</b>	Student artworks should all look different
<b>Atmosphere</b>	-participant's planning period; no kids, empty, quiet space for privacy during interview	<b>Photographs</b>	Material culture, physical space
		<b>Videos</b>	n/a
		<b>Analytical Comments</b>	-Choice art everyday -Movement & experimentation -"materials-based" lessons -however, teacher still holds power and control of classroom  *movement, no chairs,->visual journal (JN)?!

## Appendix D

### Interview 1 (AR) Transcription (Mrs. Patty)

*Interviewer:*

*Question 1: What is the power dynamic/power structure like in your classroom (i.e. is it a shared power dynamic)? What role/roles to you, as the teacher, play in that classroom structure? What role/roles do your students play in the classroom structure?*

Participant's Response:

“Because it is elementary level, I think of us as a working team so I have been using the analogy that this art room is a beehive and that we work together and we have different roles in order to make something, which bees make honey and they go out to get pollen and pollenate so I kind of use the bee as we all have to work together or we wouldn't get the work done, we wouldn't get our honey and if we sting each other we wouldn't get our work done either so we don't hurt each other. I call it “BEEhaving in the BEEhive”. If they can learn a little bit of that here, I am hoping that they will pollenate and spread that kindness and group mentality to others. I just use that as a metaphor and that is my thing we are bees and I am the queen bee and I have already been the worker bee and the drone bee before. I am in charge but we are working together. They seem to really like it and they are always saying “you gotta BEEhave in the BEEhive.”

*Interviewer: So do you give roles or tasks to students? How do you give power? Power as in duties or responsibilities:* Yah, we all pitch in together and someone always gets left out. I usually give jobs and responsibilities to people who are following directions. I will ask them to do a job and then If they don't want to the job then they can pass it on so someone else who is following directions. Generally, the kids who aren't following directions want to get up and move and want responsibility, I usually say to them to look I will get you next time if you begin the work and are participating. I never pick on people who are like me, me me! Because it usually cuts in front of someone who has been waiting their turn. I try to teach patience. We all get jobs, we all get to work together, but it is kind of too much when you got paint and charcoal, it becomes too messy. I try to get everyone to be a part of it and it seems to be working okay.”

*Interviewer:*

*Question 2: How much power and decision-making do your students have when it comes to the curriculum? How much choice or power do your students get in their artmaking process and how do you, as the teacher, distribute that power/choice? How is that power seen across different grade levels and ages?*

Participant's Response:

“Because I have a lot of freedom in my curriculum and I don't necessarily have to follow a curriculum even though I do have to attest to some standards of learning which just come naturally anyway, you hit those. I come up with lessons that I think they will be interested in like I don't want to do something they will be like ughhh. Not everyone is gonna like the lesson. We do projects that last from 2-4 weeks and each class if they “BEEhave in the BEEhive,” they get 5 pts and when they reach 35pts then they get choice-based art for one day. They work towards a sense of freedom in what they want to do in the art room. My big thing is that you need to do what I am asking you to do and then you get a reward. If you try these things you may not like



then you will get 5 extra points. On that choice-based day, I will have stations out and let the students choose, like this is one thing you can do, this is another. As long as you put back the supplies, you can choose what you want to do. It is a make-n-take on that day. I have them write on a post-it note what they want to do that day. I try to take what they tell me what they want and I try to give them, to make them feel like they have choice or power. I love the organic style of choice-based but I can't visualize it being done with 20 kids per class and back-to-back 5 different classes. Because it is so intensive, I feel you have to do it like" this is our painting unit," break it up by materials. I have not seen yet but I am very interested in it."

*Interviewer:*

*Question 3: Can you describe what the art process and art product look like in your classroom community? What do you believe the art process and art product should look like in a more socially just, democratic, and inclusive elementary art room? (i.e. does the students' artwork all look the same to one another or is their artwork all look different and is unique to that individual child?)*

**Participant's Response:**

"I kind of use this art room as a place to teach basic life skills. I see it as an excuse to teach everything and use art as an excuse to teach how to behave, how to relate to others, how to problem-solve, how make mistake and get over it, make mistakes and have your feelings and get back and try again, a place to try new things. This room and art is just philosophical, art reflects life and the way you approach it. It is so individualized. No one will ever try the same thing in the room. Lets say you draw a still life of fruit, every student's fruit will not look the same. It says hey look we are all different. I hope this art room and art creates a strong child with strong esteem and they feel like they can tackle the world and it is all just through artmaking. Art is a disguise for teaching good stuff to kids. Socially just and democratic is coming up a lot in art ed. Kids have gotten away from working with each other because everyone is so into this tablet and phone. Kids have lost the art of watching people behave and dealing with people, making relationships."

*Interviewer:*

*Question 4:How did you approach setting up the physical space of your art room (describe how you chose to arrange the materials of your room)? How do the power structures of your classroom affect your arrangement of the physical space of your art room? Do you believe the arrangement of the physical space of your classroom directly relates to your students' behavior and/or learning styles?*

**Participant's Response:**

"It has changed so much. I have been at this place for 10 years. First year, I was on a cart where I had lost of boxes of things and went room-to-room and just used whatever the space was. Second year, I was in part of a room with a sliding doors then organization was key, labeling where things were so kids could feel that they could get up and get what they need if I could not get it for them. Then there is a problem if everyone decides to get up. There is this organized chaos that goes with this room. I don't like to say to students to stay at their station but I prefer if they all stay at their station and if they need to move somewhere to tell me but that is mostly for

grades K-2. The upper kids have more autonomy to get up and move around because they are more mature and keen in on everything. I like to make sure every one knows where the basic materials are. I very open to allowing the kids if they don't have a material they need, then they can go up and get one. My rooms have changed but they have always been organized with like bins. I would love to trust a choice-based thing so kids could come in, know what they need and get it, and start creating. But it is like with 45 mins by time you get it all out, it is like time to go. I try to make sure everything they need is up front and they and I can get to it. I have a highway, no tape, but people know where I have to walk to during class. I would love a permanent highway or street that is marked off so everyone knows nothing can block it because I need to move around. I am your waitress, I will get you what you need to make sure you can do your work. The kids always start on the carpet, they know they have to come in and sit without asking any questions. As soon as kids are ready, I greet them, introduce them to the lesson, and ask them for any questions of input and because we are all a beehive and we all have to start there, no excuses or they owe me carpet time, time out of their artmaking (give and take relationship, respect). Passing out materials is like give before you can get. Put two or three bucket of markers instead of one to avoid kids grabbing at them and risk kids fighting over colors. Everything has feelings in the sense like markers have headaches if you don't put the top on, so we need to treat all materials with respect. Be silly with materials can help in an elementary situation.

*Interviewer: What about the visuals hanging in your room? With visuals, it changes. Sometimes it feels over stimulating if I add too much so I am aware of that. I feel it is good right now. I have my rules and this ridiculous Bob Ross poster, little photography, loose goosy, some masks. I want them to intuitively pick up on different ways of approaching art. There is calligraphy lines to help one get into cursive and practice one's font and we have a library full all books I pull related to science, art, math, language arts, artists, and artmaking. They are welcome to get a book when their done working. A cabinet of curiosity that they can explore and think about certain products. Lighting is important to me. I like the low lights when I turn off fluorescent. I'll use music to go with the mood of lights for a calming. The more organized I am, the more comfortable I feel. I try to make it comfortable, tidy, and approachable."*

*Interviewer:*

*Question 5: As an elementary art teacher, what are your thoughts about implementing an art curriculum in your classroom that is more big idea/issue-based orientated (i.e. social justice issues, bring in personal interests of students from the outside visual/pop culture, choices)? How does this type of curriculum allow children the opportunity to learn and grow artistically and personally into more civic-minded and social responsible citizens? How can this curriculum help children to become more socially and culturally aware?*

Participant's Response:

"I could go to my art SOLs and talk about hmmm well the SOLs are really dry. I like to pull them in but I don't like to live on them. I like to look at the history of stuff and then compare it to the now. Anything I am going to teach, they want to learn, has to be relevant to their interests. We talk about Kehinde Wiley and all that is excluding people of color, blacks (African Americans), I will often say peach and brown when referring to colors. I am interested in going around the world and not just teaching the "white male artists." I wouldn't be a successful teacher if I don't teach something I am interested in. It will look as if I don't care if I am not teaching something I am interested in. I put a spin on what others have done to make it fun for

me then I take it to the kids to add what they like. It's like this woven tapestry of what has been done, what can we do, what can we learn from it, how can we modernize that, how can we make this into your world. I am not going to teach Van Gogh skies unless I am talking about swirls and texture. Big ideas are a big thing. What do you want them to know and what do you want them to leave this room with, knowledge and skill.

*Interviewer: What are thoughts on teaching students how to be socially responsible citizens, socially and culturally aware:* It can mean taking care of each other and taking care of our world. Being sensitive to the fact that people look different and feel differently. Learning about different cultures and how symbols could mean one thing here and have a completely different meaning elsewhere. Understanding different cultures and their beliefs, celebrations, myths, legends, and storytellers and how art enriches and serves that. I feel that our culture is very reactive and that we don't really carry on traditions like other cultures do and we can respect that and acknowledge that we modernize some of other culture traditions.”

*Interviewer:*

*Question 6: What are your strategies for encouraging your students to explore their own personal, social, and/or cultural identity, narrative, and lived experiences through art and artmaking? How do you teach such a young audience about real-world issues and issues and social justice?*

**Participant's Response:**

“Storytelling, looking at hieroglyphics but then instead of copying them, students put their own spin on it. Here is what they did, now what can we do. How can tell our stories through symbols. Art is reflective of our lives. Fossil projects, I would have the kids think about what would people in the future see in our fossils, perhaps cell phones. What would people discover what is important to us through our art, archeology, or artifacts? I like to refer to the future, present, past and how everything is always changing. I am very into culturally sensitive projects, for example, I am into the afterlife or I have done a project looking into terracotta warriors. Students can put their own spin on projects or they just want to copy a famous work they can just do that.”

*Interviewer:*

*Question 7: How do you think the artmaking process can help children develop a better social and cultural understanding to the individuals in their classroom community, their school community, and the outside community? How do you teach and help your students to notice deeply and think more critically about visual images and art that exist in the outside community?*

**Participant's Response:**

“I am fortunate to teach in a place where there is so much diversity. We have a nice variety of people of color and different backgrounds, socioeconomically and ethnically. Everyone here is respectful and if there are not, well, it is completely intolerable. It is not just dismissed. A discussion takes place to find out why they are saying what they are saying. How can you say it in a way that is not hurtful? I like to foster an open dialogue without being critical. We don't let people criticize others' art. We will ask them what do they like about the art and what don't they like about the art but generally always be kind. Understand that people get in bad moods but they need time to crawl out of that mood and strive for a better mood. Being an open-minded teacher, I know have my own racial biases, I learn from that too when I assume things.”

*Interviewer:*

*Question 8: What are your thoughts on fostering brave spaces rather than safe spaces? Do you believe that for successful democratic classroom community, there should be clear definition of a fine line between what is brave space and what is a safe space? How do you, as the elementary art teacher, encourage bravery but also at the same time make sure every student feels safe in this kind of classroom community?*

**Participant's Response:**

“Group mentality and look out for each other. If you don't know how to do something, ask someone at your table to help you. We go into that a lot, what can offend people or what a child and adults can misunderstand something. I want to be as transparent as possible. Kids are very defensive, some kids, of what they hear at other tables so having them talk about what they heard and why they did not like what they heard. Try to get kids to talk and discuss, to untangle the tangles. There is gonna be knots and webs but getting them to realize that and it is not necessary to get upset about something you don't understand or think are wrong. Of course talk about it but also listen to one another and respect what they have to say. Brave spaces I like the sound of that. In elementary, I fear getting into trouble talking about topics such as religious beliefs, but I do say that we must respect everyone's beliefs because that is their thing. I make sure to have eyes in the back of my head and make sure no one physically or emotionally hurts anyone. Students can have time outs and go to a space in the room where they can be by themselves to cool off. Magic cloaks for kids to wear if they feel that they want to be alone off in their own world. I try to attend to each student's needs but there is no guarantee to I can help all the students. I think most of the kids feel safe here. A lot of the kids come here from unsafe homes and I struggle with that, I just know to be consistent and to always be there for them and respond positively and necessarily. I love this being a space to take chances. But a lot of students aren't ready for that and they do just want to draw what their neighbor is drawing and I feel those kids are no growing.”

*Interviewer:*

*Question 9: How important to you feel it is to cultivate a sense of community inside the elementary art room? Please Explain. How much do you value (i.e. place on) democracy inside the elementary art room?*

**Participant's Response:**

“I always like to point out who is being a good leader someone who is not “stinging” another person. The more you point out the positive behaviors of students then eventually those students who aren't ready or aren't behaving positively, the more they will want the attention so they will change their behavior. A lot of rewarding. Some kids do earn the reward of being the teacher in my room, a guest teacher. I switch roles with them and have them come upon and share. When kids aren't listening to their fellow students, I use the opportunity to teach them how disrespectful it is when you speak and others aren't listening or are talking over you. I feel that everyone is important and there is no divide. I try to mix it up where sometimes I am silent.”

*Interviewer:*

*Question 10: In your opinion, what should be the purpose of a socially just, democratic classroom community in the elementary art room? In what ways, do you see yourself as a*

*culturally inclusive elementary art educator who strives to create a more democratic classroom community?*

Participant's Response:

“I don't use those terms but that is okay and those terms are important. Everyone has a role to play and everyone works together. It doesn't work when you just work on your own. I want to make sure everyone learns flexibility, patience, and the principles we must live by in order to get along. That is the big thing. I don't like what is going on in the world right now. It is not very just. It is very polarized. It is in your face all the time. But we can practice in here, we can teach out parents how to behave, without telling them how to behave, if we behave. We can get our students to pollenate goodness and kindness. If this was a classroom where I was yelling all the time or shaming, it would be toxic and I would be raising bees with stingers. I want kids to want to come to school and try new things and fall and get back up. Make mistakes. Maybe you did say something really mean but make sure you own up to it. Don't lie and we can work through it. I am not perfect. I think you can do that in every classroom not just the art room. Every classroom has a role. Here we have houses and try to mix up the grades where a 4<sup>th</sup> grader could have a buddy in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. We want to extend that openness. This place is this giant, nurturing, and loving place.”

## Interview 2 Transcription (Mrs. Bell)

*Interviewer:*

*Question 1: What is the power dynamic/power structure like in your classroom (i.e. is it a shared power dynamic?)? What role/roles to you, as the teacher, play in that classroom structure? What role/roles do your students play in the classroom structure?*

Participant's Response:

"I have found that with this age group it is pretty, like structure, like rules, so there is this framework they work inside of but outside of that it is fairly open, especially with the older kids. The older they get, the more freedom and choice they have in how they do things in here. My structure and rules are pretty simple, just work hard and be nice and a lot of little things fall into that umbrella. In the beginning, I used have more structure in giving tasks for example "blue table go and do this" but then it got too confusing. Now, I use it as a tool so like if there is a kid who is behaving in a disruptive and need to get up and move, I give that student a job."

*Interviewer:*

*Question 2: How much power and decision-making to your students have when it comes to the curriculum? How much choice or power do your students get in their artmaking process and how do you, as the teacher, distribute that power/choice? How is that power seen across different grade levels and ages?*

Participant's Response:

"I gotta say especially with my littles, my kindergarteners, I have some kids come in here who like know who Kehinde Wiley is and other kids who are like "what are these?" as they don't even know how to hold a pair of scissors or they have never been expected to follow through like with paying attention or understanding the concept of learning. So with the littles there is not a whole lot of choice/power I mean they are really focused on like how to hold, squeeze glue bottles and stuff. A lot of that stuff takes time straight up until like April. Definitely with the older kids, right now I am doing a project with 5<sup>th</sup> graders, its collaborative where they all have to pick and agree on a quote, their choice, but no profanity. I try to like let them come to their conclusions but guide them to choose a quote with a positive spin. They get to choose where it will be displayed, what materials they want to use. The only thing I tell them is it has to be, each letter must be in an 8 X 8 format. With younger grades, I have to give them to it a little at a time because like kindergarteners are so little."

*Interviewer:*

*Question 3: Can you describe what the art process and art product look like in your classroom community? What do you believe the art process and art product should look like in a more socially just, democratic, and inclusive elementary art room? (i.e. does the students' artwork all look the same to one another or is their artwork all look different and is unique to that individual child?)*

Participant's Response:

"This morning, it's interesting, I had a meeting with the principal who wanted to discuss an observation she did. She was really concerned that I did not have like a premade project for the

kids to copy. She asked well how are the suppose to know what to do, I told well because it is a process not about the product, and they usually come to their own conclusions that can be similar but she could not get it. It has not been until recently where I felt confident enough to push back to my administration and be like “I am not going to make pretty.” So I have been really trying to focus on a lot more process and adding a lot more choice in for the kids. The other thing is when they come in and observe, it is chaos in here. Choice and process is not organized and if it is, I have not figured out how to do it. So it just doesn’t look right to them. But I am getting back to that and letting the kids do it and making my class more democratic instead of just you know talking about color wheels, terrible art projects that have been made for decades. More choice, definitely for a more socially just classroom. It is hard to because kids are so in tune with what they have been taught in their regular classrooms like what is the right or wrong answer. So they either give up really fast and say they can’t do it or they don’t understand that the room is a safe space to explore and take chances and make mistakes.”

*Interviewer:*

*Question 4: How did you approach setting up the physical space of your art room (describe how you chose to arrange the materials of your room)? How do the power structures of your classroom affect your arrangement of the physical space of your art room? Do you believe the arrangement of the physical space of your classroom directly relates to your students’ behavior and/or learning styles?*

*Participant’s Response:*

“Well when I first I got this room, it was literally so dreary looking. I focused on just bringing color into the room and making it alive. It was just so institutional and sad. Some things have changed over time. I found myself saying these things over and over again like here we go I am going to have these posters and they will all be in this one place. Posters where kids can look up and remember the basics. The space has not change so much, tables have not moved, and the desk has moved some. I always keep my desk up from next to my projector camera, which makes it so much easier to do demos. I am not into being the front of the class teacher except sometimes I need to be like with demos. I am constantly going in this “clover leaf” walk so that I get to everyone, I had someone map my traffic route and I realized in certain classes I was only going to certain kids so I consciously go to that “clover leaf” pattern in order to reach every kid. All the supplies are in the back of room and I have like no storage and really low volume of things but they know where to get everything. With some of the kids, I notice that some kids shouldn’t be interacting with each other. I have the seating chart, which I will spend hours on making sure kids don’t seat together to avoid any physical altercations. Some classes, the seating arrangement is designed to be really interactive and some are designed to keep them away from one another. I never sit at my desk and use it as an island where kids who need to cool off or just be by themselves can sit.”

*Interviewer:*

*Question 5: As an elementary art teacher, what are your thoughts about implementing an art curriculum in your classroom that is more big idea/issue-based orientated (i.e. social justice issues, bring in personal interests of students from the outside visual/pop culture, choices)? How does this type of curriculum allow children the opportunity to learn and grow artistically and*

*personally into more civic-minded and social responsible citizens? How can this curriculum help children to become more socially and culturally aware?*

Participant's Response:

"I don't do it as much as I would like to. But what I have been doing is taking some of my old lessons that I think are great and putting a twist on it. For example, I love teaching Faith Ringgold's tar beach but what I do is teach the kids about the ideas of fantasy/superheroes like if you could fly where would you go and what would you do. I want to get this excited conversation going where they are sharing instead of just replicating. I am just doing things that go away from what is usually expected in the art room. I think just having a big idea, like identity, that kids don't truly understand but they learn to articulate meanings and it encourages more dialogue and critical thinking."

*Interviewer:*

*Question 6: What are your strategies for encouraging your students to explore their own personal, social, and/or cultural identity, narrative, and lived experiences through art and artmaking? How do you teach such a young audience about real-world issues and issues and social justice?*

Participant's Response:

"It is so hard especially they older they get, it takes a lot more coaching. The older kids need a lot more one on one and asking more guiding questions. It is helping them get over the stumbling box where they can better articulate their words. For 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade, kids start to think critically about their art and it not being good enough. So I think you really need focus on counseling one on one like an "artistic social worker."

*Interviewer:*

*Question 7: How do you think the artmaking process can help children develop a better social and cultural understanding to the individuals in their classroom community, their school community, and the outside community? How do you teach and help your students to notice deeply and think more critically about visual images and art that exist in the outside community?*

Participant's Response:

"It helps them to see each other through an artistic lens especially when we start teaching about the aesthetics and criticism and how to relate those ideas and thoughts in way that is constructive and making them use the appropriate language and avoid sentences like "I like it because it is pretty." It helps them work through how to communicate which ends up being a life skill."

*Interviewer:*

*Question 8: What are your thoughts on fostering brave spaces rather than safe spaces? Do you believe that for successful democratic classroom community, there should be clear definition of a fine line between what is brave space and what is a safe space? How do you, as the elementary art teacher, encourage bravery but also at the same time make sure every student feels safe in this kind of classroom community?*



Participant's Response:

“With those spaces I feel that you really need to know your groups of kids. These babies want safety because they are already brave everyday in so many ways. In this environment, I create safety for them because they could really probably teach me about bravery. It depends on who your kids are. What are their stories? What are they bringing to the table? I am a safe space maker. There are a lot of kids who come out class to this space for quite time, very therapeutic. Safety is definitely important to a democratic classroom community.”

*Interviewer:*

*Question 9: How important to you feel it is to cultivate a sense of community inside the elementary art room? Please Explain. How much do you value (i.e. place on) democracy inside the elementary art room?*

Participant's Response:

“I place a very a high value on it. I think it is very important to have basic humanity rules in the art room and being consistent with them. It is really a juggling act. It has to be fair and equal to every kid but also need to take in consideration the different characteristics and traits that each kid brings to the room.”

*Interviewer:*

*Question 10:*

*In your opinion, what should be the purpose of a socially just, democratic classroom community in the elementary art room? In what ways, do you see yourself as a culturally inclusive elementary art educator who strives to create a more democratic classroom community?*

Participant's Response:

“I do consider myself to be a culturally inclusive educator. Our school is in a unique zone where we will have kids who come from all over like Norway. It is truly global here which is awesome and provides so many opportunities. That is why I keep all the globes in here. I encourage the kids to really look at them and try to grasp an understanding of all that there is to learn from other cultures and people. For a socially just, democratic classroom, everyone needs to have a voice, there needs to be consistency, and understand that the art room is not just recess. Consistency, high expectations, and just really being challenging. Expecting them to be themselves and to be reflective and kind.”

### **Interview 3 (AR) Transcription (Mrs. Holt)**

*Interviewer:*

*Question 1: What is the power dynamic/power structure like in your classroom (i.e. is it a shared power dynamic?)? What role/roles to you, as the teacher, play in that classroom structure? What role/roles do your students play in the classroom structure?*

**Participant's Response:**

“So the teacher is still the head of class being elementary and I only see the kids once a week so I think it is important to have that tone. When they first come in, there is sharing time and I introduce the plan for the day and allow them to ask questions if they are wondering about something. We start on the carpet with that. Then often it is a teacher directed lesson but I have been experimenting with choice in the classroom and so I do have a centered based instruction a lot of the year. Right now, we are in a drawing lesson where they chose from the materials I have laid out but then I will also allow them to choose the material they want to use. I think it is empowering for them to be given that choice but it also it helps to have structure. However, they love asking about whether they are going to do stations today. Stations are more process and make and take where I don't have a final product that they need to create. They have 4 or 5 materials to choose from that day and they can work in groups. Movement as you can see, I don't have any chairs out meaning they can move around the room more freely during the artmaking time. There is definitely a sense of empowerment with this. I have been here for 9 years so I have built strong relationships and gained enough experience to give students that much freedom.”

*Interviewer:*

*Question 2: How much power and decision-making to your students have when it comes to the curriculum? How much choice or power do your students get in their artmaking process and how do you, as the teacher, distribute that power/choice? How is that power seen across different grade levels and ages?*

**Participant's Response:**

“Yes, so with younger students I have a more controlled environment because they don't seem like they can handle that much freedom without having behavior problems. It really just depends on the class and the weeks. But I try to across the board allow everyone to have the same experience. The younger kids do really well with stations because they are very in to process art and they don't care too much about the final product. With kindergarteners, it really is hard to make them understand them not have enough time and have to get it done next week. That is why experimentation and play is crucial for those young kids to engage in.”

*Interviewer:*

*Question 3: Can you describe what the art process and art product look like in your classroom community? What do you believe the art process and art product should look like in a more socially just, democratic, and inclusive elementary art room? (i.e. does the students' artwork all look the same to one another or is their artwork all look different and is unique to that individual child?)*

Participant's Response:

"I think it should look different for everybody. My art education experience was very formal. It was about big ideas but then also discipline based art education and the elements and principles of design. I have gotten away from that a little bit. I definitely include vocabulary and example of artists but we do not make art based on specific artists. We do not make art that all looks the same. I don't like that personally. Those were my memories of my elementary art. I didn't feel ownership. We just did a collaged unit with all grades using magazines to make funny faces and every collaged face look differently. Every child has their own response to it and I encourage that. That is what art is. It is teaching for artistic behaviors side of things. A real artist would not be copying what the teacher did. I like to give them a broader understanding and then give them the freedom to go from there. It is not chaotic for me but for some not everyone is okay with the movement. As long as the kids are happy about what they create, that is all that I care about."

*Interviewer:*

*Question 4: How did you approach setting up the physical space of your art room (describe how you chose to arrange the materials of your room)? How do the power structures of your classroom affect your arrangement of the physical space of your art room? Do you believe the arrangement of the physical space of your classroom directly relates to your students' behavior and/or learning styles?*

Participant's Response:

"When I came here, there was a lot more structure and there were tables around the room and kids had assigned seats. I would prep the materials for each table and place it on the table. It was very controlled. Now, it is more movement where I have stations for example the drawing station there and water color pencil station here and then when they finished they could choose to build or read by the carpet. We always start on the carpet where I could show them a video or do mindfulness practice with them to everyone can start with a calm moment. It is only 45 minutes a week so I create this space where yes the kids are here to learn but they are also here to feel safe, to create and play and be with their classmates in a positive way. When I first started, I was doing different lesson and materials with different grades. Now, I am more focused on material-based lessons like we are doing a clay lesson and each grade will do different projects. I believe in simplifying your life as a teacher so I teach in a way where we all work with the same material and approach it together but each students and each class have different takes on it. You try and meet the kids where they are, keep it simply instead of having this complex lesson plan. If I was teaching middle/high schools then my plans would be more beefy because I see them every day so we can really dive deeper into the lesson."

*Interviewer:*

*Question 5: As an elementary art teacher, what are your thoughts about implementing an art curriculum in your classroom that is more big idea/issue-based orientated (i.e. social justice issues, bring in personal interests of students from the outside visual/pop culture, choices)? How does this type of curriculum allow children the opportunity to learn and grow artistically and personally into more civic-minded and social responsible citizens? How can this curriculum help children to become more socially and culturally aware?*

Participant's Response:

“My focus is more on the mindfulness stuff and focused more on compassion and kindness and friendships as the norms in here, what we say to each other and how we treat each other, and basically teaching how to be decent human beings or managing those big feelings. I have a space over there where kids can take a break. This school is actually very diverse. I don't really tackle those social justice issues but if it comes up then I address it. For me, I only see them once a week so I feel as the classroom teacher, parents, and administration are more equipped to handle those issues more deeply like with issues of race and privilege. I do try to share a variety of artists to my students, famous past artists, women artists, or artists of color. That is my offering. Because I feel social justice is a typically tricky topic when it comes kids at a young age. I focus on my room and the school community on how we must respect and treat each other nicely. I shy away from it because I don't feel it is my place but more the parents.”

*Interviewer:*

*Question 6: What are your strategies for encouraging your students to explore their own personal, social, and/or cultural identity, narrative, and lived experiences through art and artmaking? How do you teach such a young audience about real-world issues and issues and social justice?*

Participant's Response:

“For me, it all depends on the student. I do bring visiting artists from the community to come talk to my students. I shy away from tackle social justice issues especially since I only see my kids once a week for 45 minutes. I do practice more mindfulness and showing compassion. If something does come up, I do address it issues but allow students to problem-solve and come up with a solution together.”

*Interviewer:*

*Question 7: How do you think the artmaking process can help children develop a better social and cultural understanding to the individuals in their classroom community, their school community, and the outside community? How do you teach and help your students to notice deeply and think more critically about visual images and art that exist in the outside community?*

Participant's Response:

“I bring in a lot of visiting artists, we have a very artsy community. We have a lot of parents, uncles, and grandmothers who are artists who have come. I try to bring community members in definitely when we are doing stations they work in groups. They are always interacting, moving, and talking with one another during the artmaking process. I feel that helps build the practicing of being in a community with different people and points out how other environments in the building can be restrictive. Allowing them to move around and move their bodies. I call it the art factory. I don't do super long art projects because then the kids might lose interest after a while. I like allowing the kids more opportunities to take chances. Some of the projects we have done are rain barrels, a mural, and a medicine wheel that we will do with the gardener teacher. Do things to push out from the “norm.”

*Interviewer:*

*Question 8: What are your thoughts on fostering brave spaces rather than safe spaces? Do you believe that for successful democratic classroom community, there should be clear definition of a fine line between what is brave space and what is a safe space? How do you, as the elementary art teacher, encourage bravery but also at the same time make sure every student feels safe in this kind of classroom community?*

**Participant's Response:**

“The norm in here is safety first like the way you walk in here, the way you carry scissors, the words you use, or the way you keep your body to yourself. Also, the way your brain works in that if you don't feel safe, you're not going to learn, you are in a different part of your brain. I have books on brains and how your brain works. My thing is mental health and understanding your minds in my little time with them. For that is the first step in the conversation: How can we create a space where people feel safe and happy and enjoy their time together? If a child needs to talk with someone, I will send them to the counselor or administration because I am not equipped to handle that. For me that would be unsafe space because I am trained well enough to handle that. I feel that kids feel much empowered to share and talk but they also have somewhere in the building to go talk and have long conversations with the administration. I want it to be a good experience for everyone. I feel I have a good trust with the kids and they know they can approach and talk to me. I have not heard of the brave space but I do like that. I want to build resiliency in my kids. To be in the world you are going to have to be brave. It is a disservice to them to shelter them from conversations about reality. If there is conflict, then each person in that conflict gets to share their side of the story and figure out how to come to resolutions together. It really just depends on the class, the age, and the child. It is a lot of juggling but that is a conversation to have at the beginning of the year. I have very high expectations for how the kids treat each and treat me.”

*Interviewer:*

*Question 9: How important to you feel it is to cultivate a sense of community inside the elementary art room? Please Explain. How much do you value (i.e. place on) democracy inside the elementary art room?*

**Participant's Response:**

“That is a work in progress. It depends on what the classroom teacher does with them. Our school, I feel it is definitely a place where students have a voice and know they have options. Democracy is just about choice and having the freedom to express yourself the way you want to. They really love, if I could give them choice based art every day I would but we also have art shows and art in the building. It is a balance between preparing for them to what art teacher they will have in middle school walked it back to where it is a balance between teacher-directed and student-driven. It is definitely a work in process and stepping away from what I was traditionally taught which I guess is more democratic.”

*Interviewer:*

*Question 10: In your opinion, what should be the purpose of a socially just, democratic classroom community in the elementary art room? In what ways, do you see yourself as a*

*culturally inclusive elementary art educator who strives to create a more democratic classroom community?*

Participant's Response:

“I think the purpose is to show the kids what society can and should function like, especially right now. If there is anywhere in their life where they can have memory of a safe space where people can share and be themselves, I just want to create that. So, there is something to look back on and be like oh at this time in my life that existed, I am really lucky to be at school that is diverse and inclusive where teachers and students are represented and come from different cultures, races, religions, and socioeconomic backgrounds. For me, it is about bringing in people from outside, what do you share with them and it is not just white male artists.”

## Appendix E

### Mrs. Bell Lesson example:

Teacher: Participant 2: Mrs. Bell	Date(s): February
Grade Level or Course: 2nd Grade ART	Content or Unit: Faith Ringgold: Tar Beach



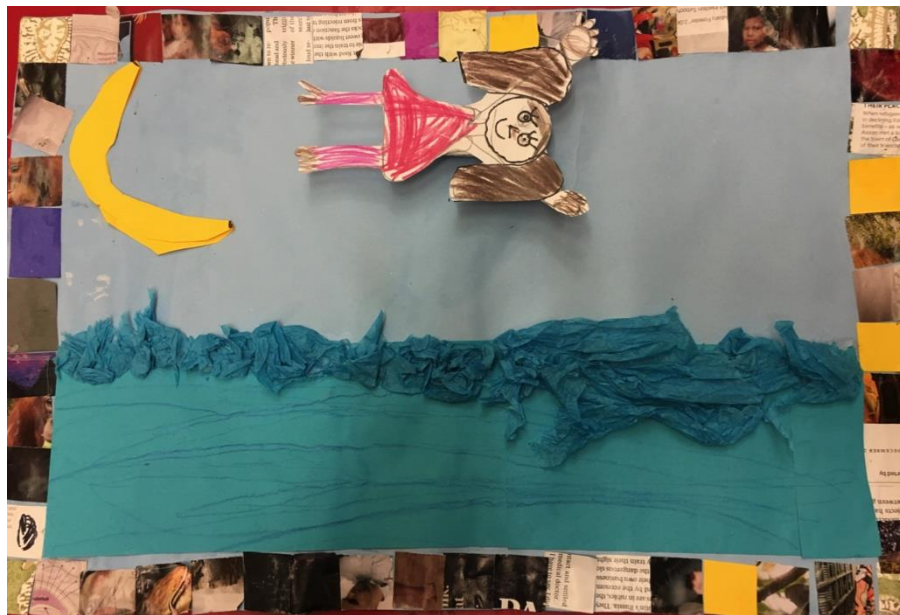
STAGE 1: Desired Results ~ What will students be learning?	
SOL/Learning Objective	<p>The student will generate a variety of solutions to art-making problems. The student will incorporate unanticipated results of art making into works of art.</p> <p>The student will identify and use the following in works of art:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Color—secondary</li> <li>2. Form—three-dimensional (cube, cylinder, sphere, pyramid, cone)</li> <li>3. Line—vertical, horizontal, diagonal</li> <li>4. Shape—geometric, organic</li> <li>5. Pattern—complex alternating and repeating</li> </ol> <p>The student will use foreground and background in works of art.</p> <p>The student will distinguish between objects that occur naturally and objects made by people.</p>
Essential Questions & Understandings/Big Ideas	<p>*Fantasy</p> <p>* If you could “fly” over any place you wished and could keep it forever, where would you fly? (Referencing “Tar Beach” by Faith Ringgold.)</p> <p>*Experimental design in scientific inquiry</p> <p>*Faith Ringgold</p>
Key Vocabulary	Texture, shape, foreground, background, collage, storytelling
STAGE 2: Assessment Evidence ~ What is evidence of mastery?	

Assessment Part 1	Verbal: Show students the famous Faith Ringgold artwork, "Tar Beach". Ask the students to identify the artistic elements used to communicate the story.		
Possible misconceptions or learning gaps	Confusion how the textures were accomplished. Misunderstanding of the word texture and concept of quilts (story quilts).		
STAGE 3: Learning Plan ~ What are the strategies and activities you plan to use?			
Snapshot / Warm-up Activity	Review questions from previous project: How many primary colors are there? What the 3 primary colors? What are the 3 secondary colors? What is a color wheel?		
Instructional Strategies	<p>Day One: Read the story "Tar Beach" to the class. Discuss how the story is about fantasizing about flying over specific places in NYC and that she would then "keep" those places as her very own.</p> <p>Show students how to cut and paste "quilt" squares out of fabric and patterned paper to glue around the edges of the paper. (This may go into day 2) Students will use project planning worksheets to organize what or where their fantasy fly over will be.</p> <p>Day Two: Students will explore the concept of foreground, background, depth and 3D elements. Students will be shown how to create building silhouettes out of construction paper. Use different sizes of buildings and different windows, not just rectangles.</p> <p>Have students draw a simplified self portrait of themselves flying (Refer to the book Tar Beach again if necessary) Cut out the picture and make a "spring" out of paper to create the illusion that the self portrait is flying over the cityscape.</p>		
Teaching and Learning Activities	Students will complete the steps on their project planning worksheets. Students will gather around the demo table at the front of the room to discuss the story quilts made by Faith Ringgold. Display finished work as a collection and conduct a peer critique. The student will identify and use a variety of materials. The students will experience unexpected results.		
Differentiation	Higher Level Thinking APPLY and CREATE	Technology Use Video about the life and art of Faith Ringgold.	Connections to other subject areas and/or authentic applications Science: 2.1,2.3,2.7 Math:2.15,2.11,2.16,2.20 Social Studies: 2.6, English: 2.1,2.2,2.3
Checking for Understanding	Circulate in the room- Do visual checks while students are working. Demonstrate as needed.		
STAGE 4: Closure ~ What did the students master & what are they missing?			



Lesson Closure & Student Summarizing of their Learning	Ask questions for review. "What is a quilt?" "What is 3D?" "What did we do to communicate that this picture takes place at a specific time of day?"
Assessment Part 2	Lesson summarization, artwork assessment by peers, self and teacher.

Teacher Reflection / Effectiveness of Learning



## Mrs. Holt Lesson Example

### Stage 1: Desired Results- What will students be learning?

Standards/ Learning Objectives	<p>K.11 The student will use motor skills (e.g., pinching, pulling, squeezing, twisting, pounding, rolling, folding, cutting, modeling, stamping) to create two-dimensional and three-dimensional works of art.</p> <p>1.1 The student will examine a variety of solutions to art-making problems.</p> <p>1.12 The student will use motor skills (e.g., cutting, modeling, molding, tearing, weaving) to create two- and three-dimensional works of art.</p> <p>2.1 The student will generate a variety of solutions to art-making problems.</p> <p>3.4 The student will use imaginative and expressive strategies to create works of art.</p> <p>4.7 The student will make artistic choices to create compositional unity in works of art.</p> <p>5.1 The student will use steps of the art-making process, including brainstorming, preliminary sketching, planning, reflecting, and refining, to synthesize ideas for and create works of art.</p>
Essential Questions Understandings Big Idea	<p>What materials do artists use to make art?</p> <p>What techniques do artists use to make art?</p> <p>How is making art like an experiment?</p> <p>How is making art like play?</p>
Key Vocabulary	<p>Centers</p> <p>Choice</p> <p>Experiment</p>

### Stage 2: Assessment Evidence- What is evidence of mastery?

Assessment Part I	Are students comfortable using centers. Do they make proper use of materials and are they working well with classmates.
Possible Misconceptions or Learning Gaps	Some students may not feel comfortable making art without teacher directed instructions. In this case, teacher may work with student one on one or in a small group.

### Stage 3: Learning Plan- What are the strategies and activities you plan to learn?

Snapshot/ Warm up Activity	Mindful Breathing
Instructional Strategies	Demonstration, Direct Instruction, Modeling, Q + A,

Teaching and Learning Activities	Variety of art centers around the room provide student artists the opportunity to experiment and play with art materials, ideas and engagement in art play/ sensory experiences. Centers to include: Clay/ Ceramics Sculpture - Cardboard, legos, wire, paper mache Crafts- Weaving, tye dye, quilting Drawing- Mixed media options Painting Reading Art Appreciation Printmaking Origami Coloring
Differentiation	Students are given a choice of activity to suit their learning style, art making preferences and behavioral needs
Higher Level Thinking	Students are doing their own thinking during art centers.
Technology Use	Powerpoint presentation to introduce new concepts and student may utilize computer for art research
Connections to other areas/ authentic applications	Art can connect to all subject areas
Checking for Understanding	Teacher will be monitoring the centers and allowing for students to share their learning and art making at the end of each session with a discussion/ critique

#### Stage 4: Closure- What did the students master and what are they missing?

Lesson Closure and Student Summarizing of their Learning	Students participate in show and tell at the end of the art making centers to share their individual creations with classmates while their classmates are sharing comments and ideas with their peers.
Assessment Part II	Teacher is conducting informal assessments of student progress throughout the class time and final assessments include the opportunity for students to display their art.

Teacher Reflection/ Effectiveness of Learning	TBD
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## Appendix F

### Photographic Records (PR) of Mrs. Patty's art room



Figure 1: basic materials are organized so students know where they are and may get what they need

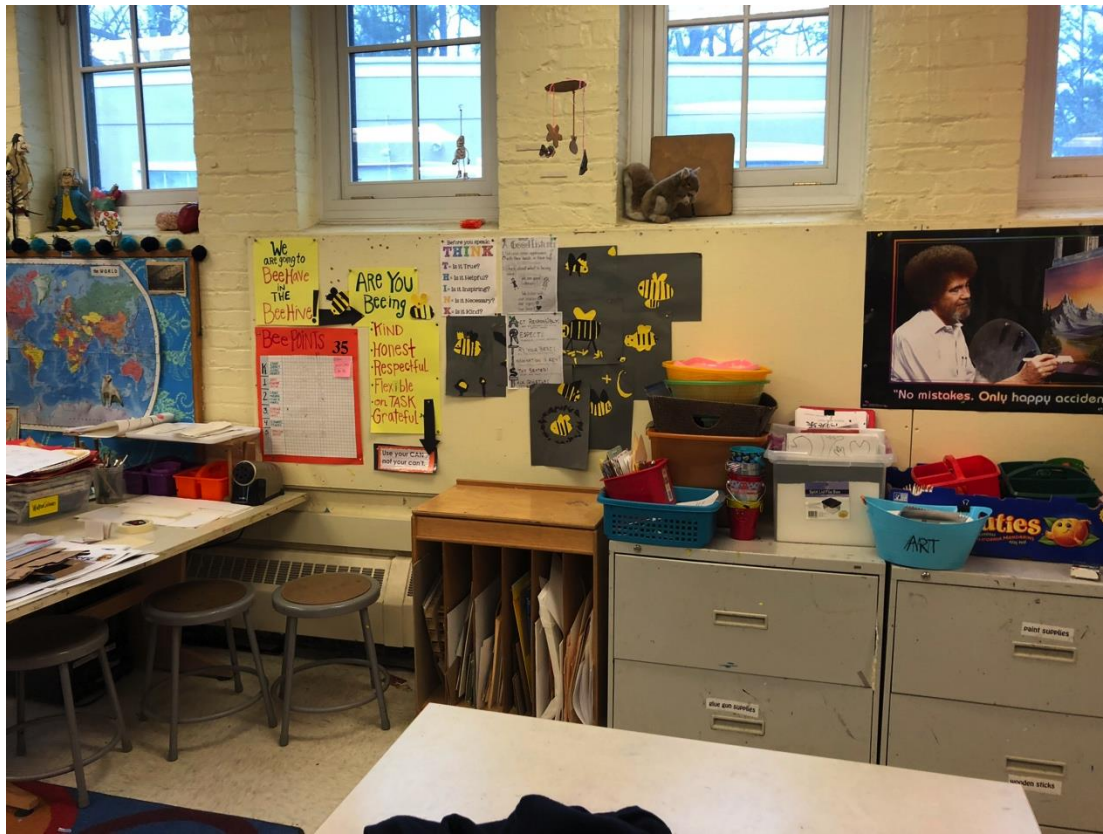


Figure 2: Visuals of “BEEhave in the BEEhive” classroom rules and visual posters of Bob Ross (who students seem to really like and connect with) and world map poster (connects to some of the culturally sensitive projects the teacher implements)



Figure 3: Panoramic picture- the whole classroom; (front) tables and stools in the middle of classroom where the students engage in the artmaking process; (back) class library and carpet where each class starts with teacher-directed instruction.

## Photographic Records (PR) of Mrs. Bell's art room



Figure 4: Projector up in front of classroom for teacher-directed demonstrations at the beginning of each class. Teacher's desk in the corner but teacher hardly ever sits there in that it is used as a space for kids who need a break or time to be by themselves (i.e. a safe space for a student)



Figure 5: With not a lot of storage space in this art room, the teacher organizes all materials along the back wall. Students know where to get basic material when needed. Tables are arranged in middle of classroom in the shape of a square, which correlates to teacher's "clover leaf walk"



Figure 6: Upper wall- visual posters for inspiration and reminders of basic skills or knowledge students should be aware of. Lower wall- Globes are a visual representation of how the teacher emphasizes the need to foster global and cultural understandings in the classroom space and curriculum. Students are encouraged to engage with the set of globes daily.

## Photographic Records (PR) of Mrs. Holt's art room



Figure 7: Panoramic picture of the whole physical classroom



Figure 8: A close up photograph of tables, which represent the different stations/centers students can go to during the artmaking process of class. Removing the chairs so students are creating art while standing emphasizes movement in this teacher's choice-based art and material based lessons practice.

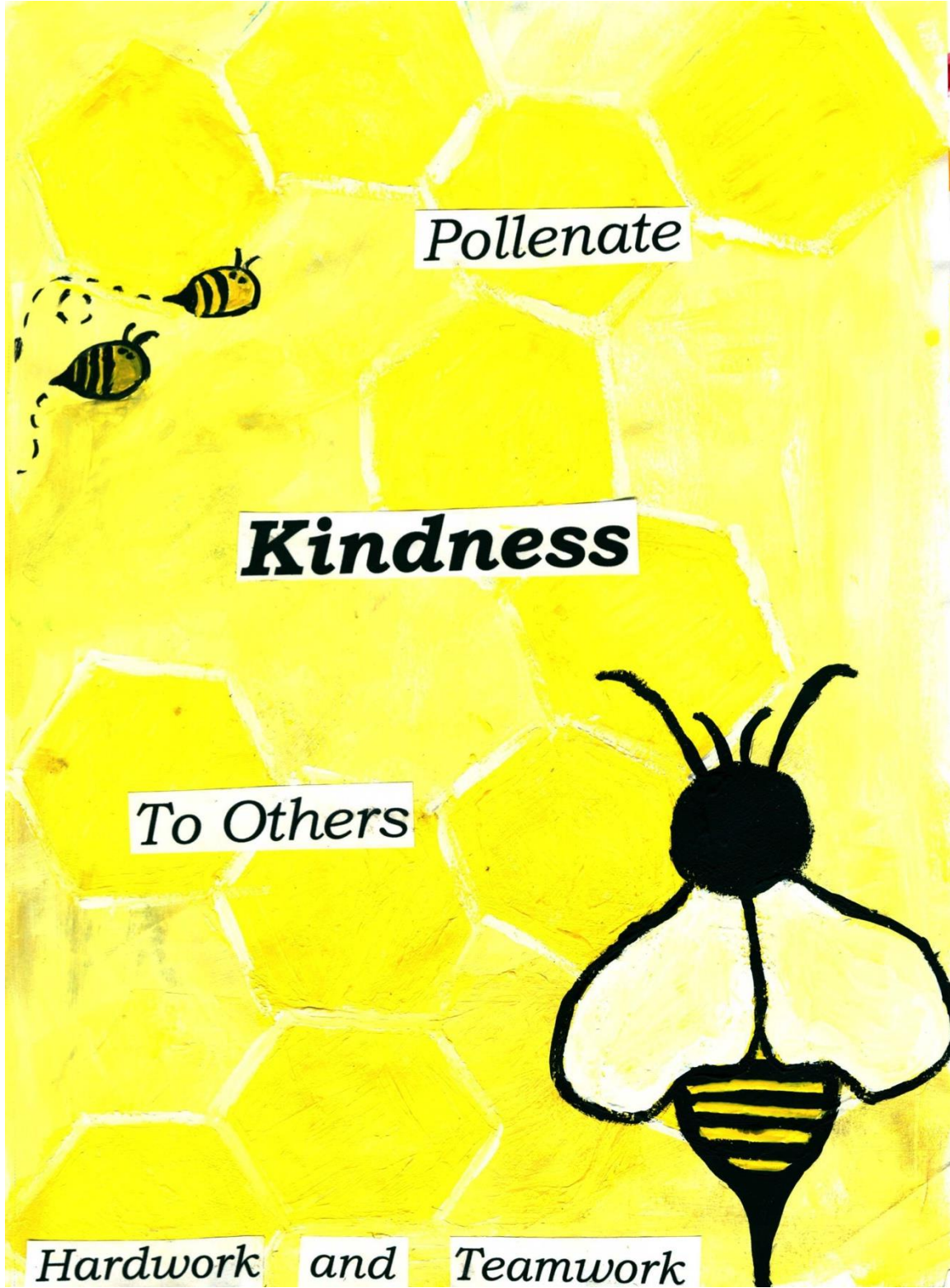




Figure 9: Project materials of lesson are placed out on one table then later distributed evenly to each center/station.



Figure 10: Carpet is placed in center of classroom where teacher begins each class by introducing the project to the students and taking questions. Also, carpet time is used to engage students in some mindfulness exercises at the start of each class.



*I am constantly*

*moving*

*in this*

*"clover leaf"*

*walk*

*so that I can  
reach  
every  
student.*

*Bring color in the room*

*and make it alive!*



