



2018-11-01

# Facilitating Student Autonomy: An Exploration of Student-Driven Curriculum Development and Implementation

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Facilitating Student Autonomy: An Exploration of Student-Driven  
Curriculum Development and Implementation

Edwin James Keyes

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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## ABSTRACT

### Facilitating Student Autonomy: An Exploration of Student-Driven Curriculum Development and Implementation

Edwin James Keyes  
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In order to improve his own teaching practice, the researcher observed and studied student-driven approaches to public art education that not only achieved the aims of the national standards, but also encouraged secondary students' engagement with art in personally relevant ways. Inspired and informed by these observations and studies, the researcher developed a curriculum based more on student concerns, which was studied using action research. The action research approach was driven by experimentation with the curriculum's content as well as its implementation and is fundamentally about improving the researcher's own teaching practice. Hence, the study focuses largely on the researcher's curriculum and teaching. Relationships or correlations between intrinsic motivation, engaging with art in critical ways, and classroom autonomy are explored in the present study. This thesis investigates what students might accomplish when given more autonomy over their projects and learning opportunities. This study focused largely on how a student-driven approach changed the researcher's own feelings and understandings about teaching and learning. The results of the present study lead to a variety of conclusions regarding teaching, curriculum, and student learning.

Keywords: student autonomy, secondary education, student motivation, art education

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I first and foremost would like to acknowledge my wife, Lisa, the love of my life, and my most key supporter—without whom I would not have completed this degree. Our children, Camry, Sadie, Phoebe, Seri, and Koadia, who have tirelessly kept me in their prayers and sacrificed having daddy to play with, so he could work on his “PHESIS,” as my youngest daughter says in her prayers. My committee members, professors, and friends: Mark Graham, Daniel Barney, and Tara Carpenter who taught, mentored, and stretched me spiritually, physically, and academically. A special thanks to Dan who invited and encouraged me to come into the program, a decision I will ever be grateful for. They provided experiences that changed my teaching and my life forever. Thank you to all my other BYU professors. Roane Noel, for helping and encouraging me through the process and helping me organize my thoughts as I progressed through my research. He is a true friend. Debbie Randall, Teresa Binkerd, Stephen Bhoehme, and Michael O’Connor from Viewmont High School. Mr. Mark Woodfield, formerly with Farmington Junior High School, who was a mentor to me through the process of learning more about what students can do on their own when I am willing to get out of their way. Adam Figueira for sharing all his deep dark secrets with me about his curriculum. My parents and my wife’s parents who are always so supportive. All of my siblings, especially Nathan, who encouraged me while he worked on his own master’s degree. I am so proud of him.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
A Brief Outline of This Study .....	5
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	8
Making Meaning and Big Ideas.....	8
Motivation and Autonomy .....	9
The Role of Technical Mastery.....	14
Technical Mastery, Autonomy, and Inquiry-Based Learning .....	15
Olivia Gude and Principles of Possibility.....	16
Reggio Emilia Approach to Student-Choice.....	17
Reggio Emilia: Making Learning Visible.....	18
The Montessori Approach.....	20
The Learner-Directed Classroom.....	21
Chapter 3: Methodology .....	24
Research Objectives.....	24
Research Questions.....	24
Research Methodology .....	24

Action Research .....	25
Research Methods.....	28
Methods of Collecting Data.....	28
Chapter 4: Results .....	30
Observations of Other Teachers.....	30
Mr. Figueira.....	30
Mr. Woodfield .....	32
Reflections on My Own Teaching .....	32
2016-2017 Academic Year–Spring Semester .....	33
2017-2018 Academic Year–Fall Semester .....	36
Reflections on Teaching.....	41
Chapter 5: Discussion of Results .....	43
Art Education Standards, Choice, and Personally Relevant Artwork .....	43
Student Attitudes and Accomplishment .....	45
Gauging Student Interest in Choice-Based Education.....	45
Designing and Teaching a Student Choice-Based Curriculum.....	48
Conclusion .....	50
REFERENCES.....	52
APPENDIX A: National Core Arts Standards.....	55
APPENDIX B: Davis Essential Skills and Knowledge (DESK).....	56
APPENDIX C: “Drawing Studio” from Mr. Woodfield’s class .....	57
APPENDIX D: Art Work Calendar from Mr. Woodfield’s class .....	58

APPENDIX E: Student-Centered/ Inquiry-Based Curriculum .....59

## Chapter 1: Introduction

I, like Sydney Walker (2001), have asked myself: Why am I having my students “paint landscapes, fashion clay pots, construct collages, and render self-portraits” (p. xii)? Are my students completing assignments simply for a grade? Or are they engaging with art in ways that are personally meaningful to them? While evaluating my students’ artwork in preparation for art shows and Sterling Scholar interviews, I’ve noticed that often much of the submitted artwork looks similar, and to an extent prescribed. In an attempt to teach standards, as set by national and local school authorities, a number of student-produced art projects, submitted in response to my assignments, look too much like efforts aimed at getting a good grade rather than authentic personal expression. All too often, these assignments have been abandoned in my classroom “Return Box.” I glean from this that the students are not becoming invested in the projects and are not proud enough of what they are creating to take them home. Perhaps there are other reasons why the students are not seeking to keep their work, but I must think that had the experience with the project been personally relevant to the student and represented a victory for them that they would pick up their work and take it home.

One reason why I have structured my class assignments as I have, was to make sure we “check off the boxes” and cover the necessary subject matter outlined by national and local standards. In other words, I used the structure of the standards to help define the parameters of classroom assignments and projects. But I wonder if this type of structured approach is too directed and does not allow students enough opportunities to become more invested in their work.



## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

The standards (both national and local) for public art education have evolved to include fostering analytical and critical thinking skills along with the development of artistic concepts and techniques. For example, The National Core Arts Standards (2014) include, “Analyze artistic work,” “Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work,” “Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work,” and “Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding” ([Appendix A](#)). On a local level, the Davis School District has similar standards in the Davis Essential Skills and Knowledge document (2014), which include standards for painting classes. These standards include, “Critique paintings,” “Evaluate paintings,” “Align paintings according to history, geography, and personal experience,” and “Evaluate the impact of painting on life outside of school” ([Appendix B](#)). This is all much more than simply teaching how to mix colors on a color wheel. Although I have sought to align my classroom projects with local and national standards, I have had less of a focus on analytical and thinking skills related to describing and interpreting artwork. I wondered if these skills might give student artwork greater meaning for the students.

In Nan Hathaway’s “Smoke and Mirrors: Art Teacher as Magician,” an article written for *Art Education* in May 2013, she describes the phenomenon I have been experiencing with respect to student-produced projects being shortsighted and focused on achieving only a grade for the class. According to Hathaway (2013), “The art teacher plans experiences, often called ‘visual problems’ for pupils to execute. Students are then encouraged to ‘solve’ these problems in their own way, but the end result, more often than not, is predetermined” (p.9). Such has been my experience. I have good intentions to foster student creativity, but ultimately I have not created the authentic learning experience I had hoped for largely because I had too much of a rigidly enforced agenda. I have experienced the painful reality check described by Hathaway:

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

(2013), “Upon closer inspection, the artwork may in fact be recognizable as belonging to one particular artist. Unfortunately, that artist is the teacher” (p.9).

Hathaway (2013) continues, “When product trumps process, art teachers may be managing projects instead of facilitating learning” (p.9). “When the teacher monopolizes so much of the creative process, what is left for the child?” (p. 11). How do I balance meeting requirements established by national and local standards with giving students the latitude and creative space to truly create and experiment? How do I achieve this balance while developing analytical and critical thinking skills?

I have observed that analytical and critical thinking requires engagement with the subject or project. Engagement requires interest and motivation. In Daniel Pink’s book *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us* (2009) he writes about motivation. According to Pink (2009), extrinsic motivators can kill the intrinsic drive people naturally have, particularly in creative activities. Although skills can be increased through extrinsic incentives, creative work needs other motivators. In reading this book I began to wonder what limitations or affordances might come from putting a grade on an artwork. In my experience, I have noticed that finished, or not finished, after the grade is given on a project that the chances of students touching the work again to improve it are next-to-none. So, am I really teaching them to love learning, or am I driving them to an end that is only important to me? An alternative I have considered, and explore in my research, is to grade the process rather than the end product. In the end, it is the students’ process of creating art that concerns me the most—their engagement with their projects and the related exercise of critical thinking.

From time-to-time, I have had a classroom routine with my students—when they would walk into the classroom, my instructions on the board would tell them what to get out for the

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

day, and hint at the day's plan. Students would still ask, "What are we doing today, Mr. Keyes?" which could be translated by some as, "What are you going to make us do today, Mr. Keyes?" I came to realize that an autonomous, student-driven, constructive curriculum might change all of that. With such an approach, I would be able to ask the students when they enter my room "What are YOU going to do today?" This type of curriculum and classroom approach changes the balance of control and puts more of the responsibility of learning on the student. But this lack of personal control can feel risky. It feels exciting for its potential to motivate and engage the students, but its unpredictability makes me anxious. The potential of student autonomy and the loss of teacher control and classroom unpredictability are questions I seek to study and begin to answer in this thesis.

Throughout my career, I have sought ways to light a fire of enthusiasm in my students with respect to their art education experiences. In particular, I endeavor to find ways to teach the technical and critical thinking skills outlined by the national and local standards for public art education with an effort to create interesting and engaging art projects that apply those skills. How to effectively facilitate my students' engagement with art in personally meaningful ways, while also covering the technical and critical thinking skills outlined for each course, is one of the questions underlying this project.

I have been intrigued from what I have observed from other teachers who have offered "student choice" programs or learning opportunities to their students. Specifically, these teachers grant project autonomy to the students who are able to work on projects of their own design using the technical skills taught in the class. I have been interested by what I have read in the field of research related to the impact of student autonomy on students' intrinsic motivation. As a response to these interests, I developed my own student-driven curriculum, customized to my

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

own circumstances as a public-school secondary art teacher. This curriculum was, and continues to be fine-tuned over time using an action research approach that includes trial, observation, refinement, and then retrieval.

It is a hypothesis of the present study that a student-driven approach to public art education will not only address the list of skills to be covered per the national and local standards for public art education but will also heighten student enthusiasm for the educational experience and facilitate student engagement with art in personally relevant ways. There are things I am looking for in a successful class, such as enthusiasm; the types of questions the students ask me; the quality of student work; whether or not the students desire to keep their projects after turning them in for grading; and how well the students' project plans are developed in their sketch books.

The questions that drive this thesis are:

1. How might a student-driven curriculum engage students in personally relevant ways while addressing art education standards?
2. What is necessary to design and implement a student-driven curriculum and how might this approach influence my own teaching practice and feelings about and understandings of teaching and learning?
3. How would curriculum and teaching that use a student-driven approach influence student artwork, accomplishment, and attitudes toward art making?

### **A Brief Outline of This Study**

The present study engages in an action research approach to my own teaching as well as observing and documenting how other art teachers facilitate student autonomy. I developed and continue to develop—via an iterative process informed by experimentation—a curriculum that

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

encourages student autonomy that addresses national and public education standards and engages students in meaningful ways. Implementation of this curriculum is also a form of personal experimentation and analysis of my own teaching. I am exploring how I can be a more effective teacher. I have learned many things from the ways students respond to instruction and from their artwork. An essential part of my teaching is the interaction with students. As a teacher, I am constantly reflecting on my teaching practice and trying to improve my work. This thesis focuses on how student autonomy and teaching for artistic behavior influences my teaching practices and how these practices influence student participation, student artwork, and student enthusiasm.

Chapter Two is a literature review that explores experiences, theories, questions and proposed answers published by those who have also ventured into this realm of autonomous and student-driven educational opportunities. The concern of achieving curriculum requirements set by standards, balanced with taking the time to achieve mastery, is introduced. The role and importance of mastery is also discussed. Chapter Three is a description of the methods and means employed to study my classroom. Chapter Four presents my reflections on my teaching experiences while implementing a more student-based curriculum.

Chapter Five provides a discussion of what I have learned and what I might propose for my future teaching. Chapter Five offers new questions that have been raised through the course of the study. Chapter Five also offers, by way of conclusion, a summary of the main points of the study—including the significant findings and limitations that were discovered and discussed.

Also presented are the researcher's thoughts and goals with respect to the field, and the paths of experimentation and discovery he hopes research in the field will pursue. The researcher offers an invitation to collaborate—the invitation is extended to all educators, regardless of where and what they teach, to reach out and share thoughts and questions from their own efforts if they

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

share an interest in contributing to and benefiting from association with like-minded professionals.

### Chapter 2: Literature Review

This review of literature will explore the themes of making meaning, motivation, student autonomy, mastery, inquiry based-learning, Reggio Emilia Schools, the Montessori approach, and the learner-directed classroom. This background will be connected to my own research with respect to my approaches to teaching.

#### **Making Meaning and Big Ideas**

According to Walker (2001), an approach to art education based solely on the creative self-expression offers a limited notion of the complexity of artmaking. Placing primary emphasis on creativity and the child's personal development may obscure other important aspects of art including the cultural contexts of art making. A number of researchers, including Brent Wilson, have observed that adolescent artistry is highly influenced by cultural conventions regarding image making (Graham, 2003). Walker (2001) argues that the primary responsibility of art teachers is to engage students with what she calls "big ideas," and in the process, provide students with opportunities to encounter various kinds of media, techniques, and conventions of image making.

Walker (2001) recommends engaging students by placing an emphasis on meaning and making art with reference to big ideas investigated by artists such as Andy Goldsworthy, who, for example, explores ideas about the human relationship with nature through his natural constructions using natural materials. Walker suggests incorporating these big ideas through a constructivist approach that encourages students to understand ideas and be engaged with meaning making. For Walker, the goal of teaching is students' understanding important issues and being able to respond to them in creative ways. Students need to construct knowledge, not simply reproduce it through memorization, recall, or routinized application. Artmaking

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

conceived as an exploration and expression of big ideas reflects a constructivist approach. Walker points out that the implications of a constructivist approach are that students no longer produce artworks from rote formulas or create products that have little meaning beyond the exploration of media or the development of technical skills, but instead, students make artwork to investigate and express ideas. In other words, students aren't encouraged to reproduce someone else's ideas, rather, they are given the tools to pursue their own ideas within the context of overarching themes that are deemed important. The intent is that by so doing, they are constructing their own meaning.

This is relevant to my own research because of my concern about the lack of engagement of students with their artwork. By providing them with more autonomy, my intention is to adjust my teaching so that they would find important ideas that would provide motivation for them to create artwork that is personally meaningful.

### **Motivation and Autonomy**

Researchers, including Pink (2009), claim that autonomy is an essential part of motivation. This is important to my study because I am always trying to find ways to motivate my students. In a learner-driven educational environment, it is imperative that the learners be adequately motivated to drive the experience. According to Pink (2009), there are basically two ways to motivate: extrinsic rewards and intrinsic rewards. For unstructured tasks such as art making, intrinsic rewards work best. Intrinsic rewards include the personal satisfaction derived from the work itself.

With respect to intrinsic motivation, Pink (2009) shares the experience of CEO, Jeff Gunther, who decided to change the working conditions of his employees to test how productivity would change. Gunther said, "Management isn't about walking around and seeing if



## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

people are in their offices ...” (or in my case working on their projects) “It’s about creating conditions for people to do their best work” (p. 86). Even though I am not giving my students the option to show up to class whenever they want as long as the work gets done, I can create conditions for them to have more autonomy and hopefully become more intrinsically engaged, because of the environment I create. Up to this point I have been a project manager-type of teacher hovering over my students making sure that they work through to the last minute of class. I want them to become so engaged that they are choosing to work diligently on their own volition instead of me forcing diligence from them.

Considering management and the attitudes and assumptions of those of us that manage people, Pink (2009) says “It presumes that to take action or move forward, we need a prod –that absent a reward or punishment, we’d remain happily and inertly in place. It also presumes that once people do get moving, they need direction– that without a firm and reliable guide, they’d wander” (p.88). I could not have found a more accurate description of the fear I feel if I don’t have something prepared and ready to push on my students to get them and keep them BUSY. I try to keep them moving for moving’s sake, but part of the problem might just be that I am pushing from behind rather than leading out in front. I am almost like a dam wanting to control the flow of the river instead of allowing the river to flow freely and create the path it sees fit to follow. I want to trust that if I back off, and stop breathing down the necks of my students, they will feel the freedom to explore and that they will do so gladly. Pink (2009) further adds, “It requires resisting the temptation to control people–and instead doing everything we can to reawaken their deep-seated sense of autonomy. This innate capacity for self-direction is at the heart of motivation...” (p.89). This is a battle I fight almost every day with myself as I try to step back and let students create while other students tend to just sit and stare while others get on their

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

phone and waste time away. I think the key is to guide them to “play” and help them believe that it truly is ok to play. My classroom is not a pass/fail class, yet despite having to give grades, I also want them to play. But some of my students need to be reminded of what it was like to be a child before they will jump into the driver’s seat and go exploring with me.

“Autonomous motivation involves behaving with a full sense of volition and choice ... whereas controlled motivation involves behaving with the experience of pressure and demand toward specific outcomes that comes from forces perceived to be external to the self” (Pink, 2009, p.90). There’s the rub, so to speak. How to enable a “full sense of volition and choice” while guiding students’ progress in the direction it needs to go (to satisfy national and local standards).

According to a cluster of recent behavioral science studies, autonomous motivation promotes greater conceptual understanding, better grades, enhanced persistence at school and in sporting activities, higher productivity, less burnout, and greater levels of psychological well-being. Those effects carry over to the workplace. (Pink, 2009, p. 90-91)

Our student, and our teachers need more of these benefits from their educational experience.

The role of “bosses” or circumstantial influencers in creating motivating opportunities for autonomy is addressed by Pink, who observed that in 2004, researchers in collaboration with Paul Baard of Fordham University, carried out a study of workers at an investment bank. The researchers found greater job satisfaction among employees whose bosses/supervisors offered support for autonomous working environments. These supervisors were able to see circumstances from the employees’ points of view and “gave meaningful feedback and information, provided ample choice over what to do and how to do it, and encouraged employees

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

to take on new projects” (p. 91). This example is a perfect template of what I want to do with my students—it describes beautifully how I desire my role to be in relation to my students. If they aren’t working, or if they are struggling, I need to ask them why and listen to what they have to say. I could then give them meaningful feedback and information. According to Pink, “... encouraging autonomy doesn’t mean discouraging accountability. Whatever operating system is in place, people must be accountable for their work” (p.106-107). I can give my students choice on what they could do to move forward and how to do it, and if they are stuck or disengaged—encourage them to take accountability for their experience and to start a different project that they feel they can engage with.

There have been countless times where I have seen students struggle for days on a project while nothing is progressing. Eventually, they come to me and complain about all the reasons their project isn’t working, and luckily when this has happened I have been able to redirect them or help them move to something new. Relief floods their expression and they bounce back to their seats seemingly motivated to carry on. I am realizing I need to better observe and move on to these students sooner, so they can transition from stressed to being engaged much quicker.

What matters in motivation, according to Pink, is “... autonomy over four aspects of work: what people do, when they do it, how they do it, and whom they do it with ... Productive and intrinsic motivation develop when people enjoy autonomy over the four T’s: their Task, their Time, their Technique, and their Team” (Pink, 2009, p. 94). The most difficult of these factors for me to give free reign on is the “where.” It is very difficult to get students out of the classroom, and especially to allow them to work where they please and when. This would be an upside to teaching virtually as opposed to being in a classroom. The freedom to go wherever, whenever to really experience art and the production of art in all environments would be an

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

interesting liberty. I can however try to get them out of the classroom and into spaces where they may feel more inspired.

Pink describes companies like 3M and Google who allow their employees twenty percent of their time to work on side projects of their choosing (p.96). I have implemented this with my students with projects such as their “altered book”—a project with which they can do whatever they want if they use some paint somehow and alter the book artistically. After further consideration of these insights, I think I will increase the time I give my students to work on “side projects” of their own choosing. Something I began in my classes last year, because of my study of student choice, was to encourage my students to create a list of art challenges, things they would like to do in art when I give them free creation time. “Autonomy over task has long been critical to their ability to create” (Pink, 2009, p. 97-98).

Pink has additional insights about autonomy in art. “Think for a moment about the great artists of the last hundred years and how they worked—people like Pablo Picasso, Georgia O’Keeffe, and Jackson Pollock ... Nobody told them: You must paint this sort of picture. You must begin painting precisely at eight-thirty A.M. You must paint with the people we select to work with you. And you must paint this way” (Pink, 2009, p.106). These artists all did their own thing, but we really don’t know what the structure of their early-mentoring or learning was. Looking at their early works and sketchbooks, they all had developed discipline and skill before they claimed independence and strayed from what we may consider the academic way to autonomously create art. But ultimately it was their autonomy that allowed them to find their style and lose themselves in art.

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

### **The Role of Technical Mastery**

Mastery is another aspect of autonomy that Pink says helps in intrinsic motivation (Pink, 2009). As teachers, we are all too familiar with the feeling that course standards are overwhelming with respect to lesson and semester/term planning. As such, it is hard to let students spend too much time on a project because there is so much material to cover. As I rush my students, trying to introduce them to all the genres, elements, principles, and techniques that I have felt the standards outline, I don't give them a chance to even consider mastering any certain style or skill. However, research literature, such as that compiled by Pink, suggests that mastery is an important component of motivation. The implication for my teaching is that more time is needed to develop mastery.

In my experience as a teacher, developing a degree of mastery could help with the student who quickly finishes a work, with a low level of craftsmanship. "It is finished," they say. This is a challenging area for a teacher. To acquire any level of mastery, students must be willing to work with a medium over an extended period. However, this can often be boring for them if they lack the initial motivation to spend the time to master the medium. My approach of giving them more autonomy and connecting them with big ideas will hopefully give them enough motivation to do the preliminary work required to obtain the necessary mastery to go beyond superficial work.

The role that technical mastery plays in motivation is supported by Howard Gardner's research. Gardner equates mastery with fluency within a medium (Gardner, 1994). The idea of fluency as an important element in artistic mastery was also addressed in long-term studies focused on adolescent artistry conducted by Burton, Horowitz, and Abeles (2000). According to Gardner, "... Until a person has achieved fluency with a medium, he will likely lack the distance

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

that permits noting its stylistic aspects” (Gardner, 1994, p. 263). Gardner, like Pink (2009), argues that fluency is required before a student can begin to really think within a medium.

Could it be, that given the opportunity and guidance to master the required skills, the students would then feel they could produce something of greater quality or of greater meaning or personal impact? From my own experience, I find that some students don’t start something they can be truly interested in because they are afraid they won’t be able to finish it properly, so they think: “Why should I bother?” Art can be a very time sensitive enterprise, especially when you have an overly fearful and timid student attempting to master something, who is unwilling to take time-consuming risks. All these factors point toward creating a learning environment that provides a strong sense of student autonomy with many opportunities for students to develop the necessary skills, fluency or mastery within a medium that is required for them to engage with personally meaningful work.

### **Technical Mastery, Autonomy, and Inquiry-Based Learning**

It would seem prudent to seek out a balance between technical instruction and autonomy over projects that aim to practice and develop a newly taught technical skill. An important question for my research was: “How do we spark interest in learning the technical skills, and help guide students into meaningful projects incorporating those skills?” One possibility is using inquiry-based learning. Brian Parr and M. Craig Edwards (2004) note that inquiry-based learning is an effective means for helping students do more than just report on a topic. They observe that this type of student-driven learning goes beyond the simple memorization of facts and regurgitation of information. Inquiry-based learning leads learners into a realm of creating new and deeper understanding via identification and application of solutions to a specific topic (Parr & Edwards, 2004).

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

Applied to art education, there is powerful potential with the inquiry-based learning scheme. Students armed with “fluency with a medium,” as described by Gardner (1994), are enabled to create new and deeper understanding of impactful solutions as described by Parr & Edwards (2004). As I contemplated how to improve my own practice, I often heard anecdotes from other students about influential art teachers they had before. Since I knew these teachers, I thought I could include their approaches to student autonomy in this study. Consequently, this study describes examples of how these theories and principles might be put into practice in other classrooms, including the instruction of Messrs. Woodfield and Figueira—both secondary art teachers in the State of Utah.

### **Olivia Gude and Principles of Possibility**

Olivia Gude (2007, 2013) describes how students can come to a better understanding of how and why artists did what they did and how they accomplished the look, technique or mood they achieved and how these artistic methodologies are relevant to current art practices. I recognize that I have rarely had these types of conversations with my students. My students, all too often, submit simple observations of artists’ work without making much effort to understand why the artist may have done what they did, and why what the artist did speaks to the students. Through coaching my students how to evaluate and understand these aspects of art, they may be able to take away more of an approach to create a similar but unique piece as opposed to simply copying it. Gude asserts that the goal for art teachers should always be to reflect, as closely and as much as possible, the actual methodologies used by artists in making artwork (Gude, 2007, 2013).

Gude in her article “New School Art Styles: The Project of Art Education,” cites the voice of Arthur Efland, noting that school art projects are almost a genre unto themselves. They

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

are devoid of creativity. She points out that good art projects are not simply assignments to illustrate or symbolize a theme, even an important theme, in students' lives. Rather, effective art projects help students explore why certain events or themes are in fact important (Gude, 2013).

### **Reggio Emilia Approach to Student-Choice**

Our school principal has requested that we be in the halls welcoming the students between classes. I believe this is an integral part of creating an effective learning environment. Since I began doing this consistently I have seen and have felt the students' energy level rise and my relationships with them build more quickly. The rapport I have gained with students just in the greeting process has opened much more dialogue and opportunities for conversations than I have had in the past.

My principal told us of a similar situation when he went to Notre Dame for a football game as University of Utah fan and hating the Irish team. He described how he quickly changed his attitude by the kindness that was shown. Everywhere he went he said he was greeted, helped, amicably directed and kindly thanked for being there. He said the environment was one of reverence and one of tradition, and as a red-wearing hardcore Ute fan he felt comfortable and cared about by what would seemly be the "enemy." When my students come down the hall towards my room I want them to feel that same way: important, accepted and able to learn because of the welcoming environment.

Reggio Emilia schools reflect this welcoming attitude and are organized in a very student-friendly manner. The physical environment demonstrates this approach; students are welcomed and invited to plan along with the teacher. The preparation, execution and cleanup are all part of the learning. "This preparing together stimulates expectations, curiosity, and desire, and it broadens the scope of the forecast and the search for tools. The children sense this, which



## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

explains their interest in helping” (Strozzi, 2001, p.67). These schools foster the importance of belonging, not only in the classroom but in the community and the world. “The entire staff is attentive to the aesthetics of the school. Caring about the environment where you live contributes to creating a sense of belonging and to showing respect for those who live there; it is an integral part of the educational process” (Strozzi, 2001, p.68).

According to Strozzi, in a Reggio Emilia school, collaboration amongst the teachers as well as co-teaching provides an important opportunity to model social learning. Students are encouraged to take learning materials from school to home, and vice versa, in order to expand the learning environment. The objects students are interested in are seen as educational and are worked into the learning plan of the student. The students are provided spaces to put their belongings. Students work in groups and take turns being the audience or the protagonist and all learn together through experience. Mingling and learning with a range of ages creates an atmosphere that mimics the home learning environment where older siblings can teach younger siblings. The schedules are fairly flexible, but much like the Montessori Method, where students that are in the middle of a project are allowed to finish or get to a good stopping point before they rejoin the group.

### **Reggio Emilia: Making Learning Visible**

*Making Learning Visible* is a book of research compiled from teams from Reggio Emilia (originated out of the namesake city in Italy) and Project Zero. Project Zero is a research center founded in 1967 that explores topics in education such as deep thinking, understanding, intelligence, creativity, and ethics. Howard Gardner was one of the initial founders of this research center. Project Zero teamed up with Reggio Emilia in Italy in 1997 to explore questions

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

about the nature of learning in groups, and how documentation can make that learning visible (Giudici, Rinaldi, & Krechevsky, 2001).

Gardner and other researchers were interested in learning more about individual and group learning and creativity. They stress the importance of strategic observation and precise documentation. Assessment through observation and documentation is something that I want to improve upon in my teaching as well as creating learning opportunities for my individual students. I am also interested in collaborative work and how to better create a sense of community in my classroom. The concepts of community and collaboration are emphasized throughout the research produced through Project Zero and Reggio Emilia.

According to Howard Gardner, a learning group comprises individuals who are emotionally, intellectually, and aesthetically engaged in solving problems, creating products, and making meaning in ways such that each person learns autonomously (Gardner, 2011). One of the questions he considered was: To what extent is individual learning enhanced or stifled in a group? In order to answer questions about learning and observation, Gardner determined that documentation was a very important in the Reggio Emilia assessment method. Documentation helps to ensure that individual and group learning are interdependent and tightly correlated—all while simultaneously retaining the unique qualities of both types of learning (Gardner, 2011).

All of this is relevant to my own research because strengthening my students in their abilities to observe their own progress and be self-directed learners is an important aim for my own teaching. As I observe and document my work as a teacher, I also encourage my students to document and reflect on their work so that we can learn from each other and learn from our own efforts. When documented, children and teachers can revisit and thereby interpret their learning experience and reflect on how to further develop these experiences (Gardner, 2011).

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

According to Gardner, there are four features that are central to the conceptualization of group learning: first, children as well as adults are included in the learning group and the adults' position should be that of guide or facilitator. Second, to make the learning visible and shape the learning, relevant documentation of the children's learning process should be taken. Third, learning should include emotional, aesthetic and intellectual aspects. Fourth, a collective body of knowledge should be achieved by reaching beyond the learning of individuals (Gardner, 2011). Gardner further notes that educators at Reggio Emilia have never been satisfied with rote forms of learning. Building on the natural interest and motivations of children, they have helped young children enthusiastically explore areas that interest them.

An important emphasis for this study was on student autonomy, which is closely related to the idea that students will begin to direct their own learning, which requires a degree of self-reflection. Along with self-reflection, Gardner notes that self-reflection leads to lifelong lessons on learning. Specifically, that each individual learns not only how to learn, but also becomes aware of the value of learning as a quality of life itself (Gardner, 2011).

### **The Montessori Approach**

Maria Montessori started in medicine while working with children that displayed learning and social disorders. She developed her famous Montessori Method from years of close observation of children with disabilities and giving them opportunities informed by her observations of how they learned. When the children were brought food, they would move to the floor looking for crumbs. Over time it occurred to her that this behavior was a distinct effort on their behalf to try to learn about the world around them through and with their hands. The idea that the path to intellectual development is through the hands is a major theme in her method.

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

She was influenced by Jean Itard, whose approach was to stimulate the mind systematically through the senses (Britton, 1992).

According to The American Montessori Society, "Montessori students work with specially designed learning materials, manipulating and investigating until they master the lesson inside" (amshq.org, 2018). Uninterrupted work periods enable the development of coordination, concentration, independence and order, and the assimilation and application of information" (amshq.org, 2018). The Montessori Method supports students' being able to investigate and practice principles until they understand what is intended to be taught. According to Britton (1992), the involvement of the family is also key to the Montessori Method.

Other practices deemed of high importance for a Montessori educational setting, that I believe are also key to the success of a student-centered and student-driven secondary art classroom experience include: having students of various ages work together (e.g., a mix of sophomores, juniors and seniors), and a curriculum that is varied with extensive opportunities for cross-project or cross-discipline learning (Britton, 1992). The Montessori Method is centered on student autonomy. Researching, understanding, and implementing the key elements of the Montessori Method is relevant to the effectiveness of the student autonomy I seek to facilitate in my classroom.

### **The Learner-Directed Classroom**

I am researching how to be an educator that can, as Jaquith & Hathaway (2012) say, "provide self-directed learning opportunities for students to inquire, think divergently, and engage in work that has personal relevance" (Jaquith & Hathaway, 2012, p.1). My own aim is well-expressed by Jaquith & Hathaway (2012), "When children can consistently direct their work in school, their ideas flow and develop over time. With practice, children are adept

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

managers of their creativity and capable of far more than adults require of them” (Jaquith & Hathaway, 2012, p.1). Jaquith & Hathaway suggest that despite increases in numeracy and literacy skill there is a cost to standardized learning. Students are losing the ability to think divergently. A number of companies are looking for 21<sup>st</sup> century expectations in employees that can think and solve problems creatively. Bronson and Merryman, as quoted in Pink (2009), observe, that various industry leaders are concerned over the decline in creative thinkers who they feel are critical in keeping our economy healthy and competitive (Bronson & Merryman, 2010; Pink, 2006).

Autonomy is closely related to creativity. According to Pink, “The opposite of autonomy is control” (2009, p.110). Pink further explains, “Control leads to compliance; autonomy leads to engagement” (p.110). “Solving complex problems requires an inquiring mind and the willingness to experiment one’s way to a fresh solution” (Pink, 2009, p.111). In an art classroom, autonomy is the space where creativity thrives. Facilitating enough room to operate, to experiment, to collaborate is key to enabling inquiry and interest.

An important concept in autonomy and the learner-directed classroom is the idea of flow, described by Csikszentmihalyi (1975). “The highest, most satisfying experiences in people’s lives were when they were in flow” (Pink, 2009, p.114). More specifically, “Most important, in flow, the relationship between what a person had to do and what he could do was perfect. The challenge wasn’t too easy. Nor was it too difficult. It was a notch or two beyond his current abilities, which stretched the body and mind in a way that made the effort itself the most delicious reward” (Csikszentmihalyi, as cited in Pink, 2009, p.115). This is the type of stretching and exhilarating victories I am seeking to facilitate in my classes. I hope to help students find the kind of challenge that will push them but that is also attainable. I have seen students in “the

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

flow” and it is by far the most rewarding of times that I encounter as a teacher. The student is fully engaged and enjoying the process of mastering the skills they are practicing.

I occasionally have students that really want to learn, and they will be fearless in playing and experimenting with the materials, and they will produce all kinds of work that they enjoy. Conversely, I also have students that just want the grade and they ask what they should do, and they do it, but often leave the finished product in the turn-in box or the garbage showing no evidence of joy in having created or learning from the project at all. Research about autonomy, the learner centered classroom, and flow suggests that they may feel that the task was either too easy or too difficult and did not feel that any amount of effort would produce the desired outcome. As an educator, I want to help my students have experiences that help them get into “the flow” so the tasks aren’t too easy or difficult. I want to close that gap, dissipate anxiety and boredom for my students through differentiation and personalized work plans so that they can achieve “flow” at their own pace and in turn have greater creativity and productivity.

By giving students choices on subject matter to practice specific skill-building activities or by allowing them to alter their projects however they want after mastery is achieved allows the students that opportunity to personalize and therefore play with the process more freely and facilitate higher-probability scenarios when and where they will experience “flow.”

### Chapter 3: Methodology

My research uses an action research approach. The primary motivation of action researchers is to improve their own practice. Hence the emphasis throughout the research process is on self-reflection on my own work as teacher.

#### Research Objectives

My research objectives include: 1) To experiment with a curriculum that facilitates learning autonomy, and via action research, develop and improve my own teaching practice and the curriculum's effectiveness and 2) To experiment with, and seek to improve, how I implement the curriculum.

#### Research Questions

The questions that drive this thesis are:

1. How might a student-driven curriculum engage students in personally relevant ways while addressing art education standards?
2. What is necessary to design and implement a student-driven curriculum and how might this approach influence my own teaching practice and feelings about and understandings of teaching and learning?
3. How would curriculum and teaching that use a student-driven approach influence student artwork, accomplishment, and attitudes toward art making?

#### Research Methodology

The action research approach was selected because the findings of the study directly benefit and inform my own professional teaching experience and goals. I am a secondary art

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

teacher and have endeavored to improve both my curriculum and its implementation via an action research-informed iterative process in connection with the present study.

Additionally, taking an action research-based approach to my own curriculum development provides me an opportunity to contrast the effects or results of a student choice-based curriculum with my curricula of the past that do not base projects and learning opportunities on student choice. I have first-hand knowledge of how my classes performed with previous curricula that were not as focused on student-choice, and I am therefore in a good position to be able to observe the effects or impact of attempting a new student-driven approach on my teaching with a student population that is similar to my previous classes. Because of these experiences, I was able to compare my courses that were more teacher directed with my newly implemented student-driven classes, I was able to compare my courses that were more teacher directed with my experimental student-driven classes.

### **Action Research**

With respect to action research, Mills (2007) states that there are “interests” or “commonalities of intent” that include: “1) A shared interest in processes for enlightenment. 2) A shared interest in liberating individuals from the dictates of tradition, habit, and bureaucracy. 3) A commitment to participatory democratic process for reform” (p.6). These shared interests and commitment are what I hope to instill in my classroom with my curriculum.

Throughout my career, all too often, I have attended teacher training opportunities, becoming excited and motivated to try something new with my classes from what I learn from the training, and hit the ground running only to then, all too soon, run into a wall, so to speak. I quickly become overwhelmed with the changes and run into uncertainty about how to continue in the implementation of the new idea—over time I then fall back into the rut of old routines.



## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

Mills (2007) cites Kennedy (1997) in identifying the reasons for why this happens. "... The lack of influence of research on practice has been attributed to the following qualities of educational research:

- It is not persuasive and has lacked the qualities of being compelling to teachers.
- It has not been relevant to teachers' daily practices - it has lacked practicality.
- It has not been expressed in ways that are accessible to the teachers" (Mills, p. 7).

Mills' and Kennedy's points ring true for me as I have had a desire to get a quick fix, but fall short with long-term, or semester-long classroom effects I am striving to establish. With these types of situations—where my efforts to effect change in my classroom fall flat over time—the scenario rarely was planned for, and the participants (students) were caught unprepared to implement the knowledge in a practical way because of lack of information and preparation materials. I did not go about the implementation in an organized and measured way.

Mills (2007) says. "The postmodern perspective addresses many of these concerns by advocating for research that challenges the taken-for-granted assumptions of daily classroom life and presenting truths that are relative, conditional, situational, and based on previous experience ... action research conducted in one's own classroom/school is more likely to be persuasive and relevant and the findings expressed in ways that are meaningful for teachers themselves" (Mills, p.7). Through action research, the objective of the present study is to effect real and lasting change in my classroom via a more measured and disciplined approach, i.e., via a more systematic approach based on observations associated with monitored trials. "Action research conducted by art teachers has more a specific focus: It investigates how teaching practice and student learning can be improved at a classroom level" (Pfeiler-Wunder & Jaquith, 2015, p.1).

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

The types of impacts or results that I will be watching for at the classroom level will be those that impact classroom organization, student-to-student interactions, student-to-teacher engagement, project pitches and performance and ultimately—the students’ enthusiasm and what they learned. These impacts or results will be monitored and measured via a variety of data collection means.

Mills (2007) notes that action research, unlike other trendy fads for a “super classroom experience,” is different for one simple reason: “Good teachers have always systematically looked at the effects of their teaching on student learning” (Mills, p.13). I appreciate the truth of Mills’ point about “good teachers” as I have observed such in the practices of other teachers that I would deem to be “good.” And I have observed my own effectiveness as a teacher to be improved when I adopt a similar approach.

My approach to action research uses qualitative research methodology. Per Pfeiler-Wunder and Jaquith (2015), “Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings (not in laboratories)” (Pfeiler- Wonder, Jaquith A. 2015, p. 3). Focusing on my methodology and practice in my classroom, using a qualitative research approach, has always made the most sense to me. I didn’t want my research to be a theory that may or may not be used after development and testing. I wanted to apply what I was learning daily and benefit my students as soon as I possibly could.

To effect change in the class experience that would afford real results I have had to bite off and chew experiences with the curriculum and really dig deep into my beliefs and put myself in emotionally-vulnerable situations to more honestly assess how well what I am experimenting with is working. According to Pfeiler-Wunder and Jaquith, when working with action research,

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

teachers form open-ended questions that ask what might happen when certain changes are made in instructional procedures. These open-ended questions must be answered with carefully and accurately recorded data and with honest and objective impressions. Pfeiler-Wunder and Jaquith also describe the process of planning the study by first identifying the research problem and forming research questions. For me, this might look something like, “How can affording students choice over their projects, and guiding students through the creative process, more naturally bring students to fulfill the standards?” This is the question driving the current study.

### **Research Methods**

I observed my own teaching and classes over 2 semesters: the spring semester of the 2016-2017 academic year and the fall semester of the 2017-2018 academic year.

### **Methods of Collecting Data**

A variety of methods were used to collect a variety of data points in the present study. I made my own observations about my teaching and how students responded. These were recorded in my personal research journal. These observations included interactions with students during my classes. I wanted to see how my approach to instruction influenced the classroom experience for me and for my students. Most of the information for the present study came from student interactions with me during class and in our before and after-class conversations. This direct interaction included in-class mentoring opportunities, before or after class discussions, and student interviews. It was during these direct teacher-student interactions that student attitudes and intentions were most clearly understood.

I also observed other teachers and recorded these observations. I used student work collected in my students’ E-Portfolios and sketchbooks to determine how they responded to my teaching approaches. E-Portfolios are online student accounts where students save photos of their

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

art projects as well as other assignments, reports, and notes. Students maintained E-Portfolios during each of the three semesters under observation in the study.

I also gathered data from Project Accountability Reports and sketchbooks. Project Accountability Reports are one-page worksheets that students would fill-out and attach to all completed art projects. The reports required the students to identify their objectives with the project, their intended achievement with the project and what they learned while working on the project. The reports were utilized during the fall semester of the 2017-2018 academic year. In each of the three semesters under observation for the present study, students were encouraged to track ideas for projects in their sketchbooks. End-of-semester self-assessments were similar to the project accountability reports but were designed to evaluate the students' activities and class experience in totality for the entire class/semester. These assessments shed light on what the students felt they learned and how effective they felt the curriculum design had been in achieving the objectives of the project, including national and local standards and in sparking student enthusiasm and interest.

After analyzing my reflections and field notes, reviewing student interactions and recorded observations, I set about making adjustments and changes to my curriculum and approach. Upon implementation of the adjustments and changes, I monitored their effectiveness, recorded my observations, and continued the cyclic/iterative process of refining and improving the curriculum and my implementation of it.

### Chapter 4: Results

In this section, I have gathered data from my observations of other teachers, my own reflections about my teaching, my conversational interactions with students, and my observations of students and their work.

#### Observations of Other Teachers

I observed two other teachers who used different strategies to incorporate student choice within the art curriculum.

#### Mr. Figueira

Mr. Figueira teaches at DaVinci Academy, a charter school, which further intrigued me to see if and how the charter school setting affected his efforts to incorporate a student choice/learning autonomy-centered curriculum. I immediately noted that his class sizes were significantly smaller than mine, naturally allowing Mr. Figueira to spend more one-on-one time with his students on their personalized projects.

Knowing that Mr. Figueira taught classes similar to mine, and given our close personal relationship as in-laws, I felt comfortable sharing my research interests with him and seeking his feedback. He, in turn, shared with me some of his efforts to promote student autonomy. Specifically, he shared that he had developed a game that gives choice and accountability to the students. I set up appointments to observe him and how his class engaged in the game he had designed.

When students first arrived at his class, he called roll with a daily question. Through the questions he allowed students to share something about themselves. I could tell if this was something that happened regularly because the students were fairly comfortable sharing and

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

interacting during this starter activity. Mr. Figueira went on to ask students what they were going to work on that day. This particular class was a film class, so this was beneficial to all students because some of them were working in groups and some alone. Those that were working on a solo project could express if they would need any help that day. It gave Mr. Figueira an idea of what they were hoping to accomplish and gave the teacher an opportunity to assess where students were and know what they may need to move forward with their projects. If anyone was stuck or in need of immediate assistance, he spoke with them after he let the others go to their respective projects. This routine would be nearly impossible to do with a larger class, due to limited time.

Once he sent the students on their way they seemed pretty autonomous—students would come and ask if they needed something otherwise they were pretty engaged in their separate projects. Students supported each other and worked well together.

While they were busy creating videos, Mr. Figueira showed me some decks of cards he had created. It was a role-playing type game that encompassed a whole video productions course curriculum. The organization was fascinating to me. He was inspired by a school in California that bases their curriculum on a role-playing game. He created his own version and had decks of cards custom-made for his classes. Each student plays the game through the semester, first choosing a role to play, (director, grip, actor, editor, “camera guy”), and from there they choose different scenarios and types of projects that can be made (commercials, short film, documentary, or make your own). The students are awarded for points for each role and theme taken on and they get extra points for additionally helping with lighting, props, extras, etc. Mr. Figueira’s way of encouraging the students to not only choose their own projects, but to also collaborate with each other, was intriguing and exciting to watch.

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

### **Mr. Woodfield**

Another intriguing way in which students were encouraged to choose their own projects and drive their own learning experience was exhibited by Mr. Woodfield in his Farmington Junior High art classes. Mr. Woodfield made use of the “Drawing Studio” ([Appendix C](#)) as a way for students to choose their own project that would be approved of, and monitored by, the teacher. To help track and monitor the progress of these student-selected projects, Mr. Woodfield also had the students fill-out and regularly updated the “Art Work Calendar” ([Appendix D](#)). The Art Work Calendar was pre-set with holidays and other scheduled events that would impact typical classroom work days. The students would plan out, specifically, how much time each project would require completing. I noted that inherent in the calendaring of their projects the Art Work Calendar also prompted the students to lead out on their own preparation efforts for upcoming projects.

Both Figueira and Woodfield demonstrated means by which they engaged their students in learning autonomy. I was inspired and decided to create exploration packets with big ideas similar to those created by Mr. Figueira, also to incorporate the concepts of an Art Work Calendar and Drawing Studio worksheet—from Mr. Woodfield—with respect to project tracking in my own curriculum. I am grateful to both Messrs. Figueira and Woodfield for their time and willingness to share what works for them in their classes.

### **Reflections on My Own Teaching**

An action research approach to curriculum development was undertaken for two contiguous semesters: spring semester of the 2016-2017 academic school year and the fall semester of the 2017-2018 academic school year. At the onset, the curriculum comprised an approach to art project selection similar to a buffet at a restaurant. Students were presented with

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

an array of project options that I had pre-selected and prepared for with respect to materials. The projects were designed to address the elements of the National Core Art Standards, ([Appendix A](#)), and the Davis School District Essential Skills and Knowledge ([Appendix B](#)). The students would plan their work in Art Work calendars similar to what Mr. Woodfield used in his classes. Students would account for their work in E-Portfolios where I would grade them and where the students could keep a record of what they had accomplished. The buffet approach to laying out options was intended foster student enthusiasm by virtue of their ability to choose and plan their own projects and educational experience.

The iterative adjustments made to the curriculum, as well as the details of the implementation of each iteration of the curriculum for each of the three semesters under observation for the present study are described below. A detailed description of the data gathering methods including E-Portfolios, project accountability reports and end-of-semester-self-assessments employed during the action research process over the course of this three-semester period is included in Chapter 3.

### **2016-2017 Academic Year–Spring Semester**

My student choice-based curriculum design started in the spring semester of the 2016-2017 academic year as a simple and very open type of approach to meeting the national and local standards. The curriculum included the elements of the Messrs. Figueira and Woodfield classes that I had observed to be effective and to have a potential for success in my classes. These elements included the interactive offering of project ideas along with an Art Work Calendar. The class was a Painting II class, which is an art-studio-type of class. The buffet-style approach to laying out project options from which the students may choose how they would spend their semester in the class was accompanied by requirements that the students fill-out and update as



## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

needed: 1) E-Portfolios, with which the students would document their projects; and 2) an Art Work Calendar with which the students would note their project selections and plan out when they would start and finish each of their selected projects. On the first day of class, I unveiled the buffet, and invite the students to dive in.

I quickly realized that the students would need additional guidance on how to plan their projects. I anticipated that there would be a learning curve when students were given more choices, but I did not anticipate how much of a learning curve would exist. The students, understandably, didn't have a framework or previous experience with such an approach to art projects to give them a sense as to how to plan their projects. There were students who jumped right in and embraced the free reign nature of the curriculum. There were students who were uncomfortable with the lack of what they perceived to be organization. And there were all the students in-between those two polar ends of the spectrum who found themselves experiencing varying degrees of both excitement for the freedom to choose their own projects mixed with uncertainty on how to utilize their new-found freedom.

I quickly determined that more structure would be needed for future iterations of this type of a student-choice approach to project design and planning. We finished the semester with an expected array of appreciation for, and frustration with, the open nature of the class and its curriculum. Grading was difficult. They weren't all doing the same project and they weren't all doing the same number of projects. Grading the class in a fair way proved challenging. I determined that, similar to how Mr. Woodfield approached grading his students, I would need to adjust my grading system from one that grades projects to one that grades how time was spent working on projects. In other words, I would need to change my approach to grading student learning rather than grading artwork.

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

After finding a way to mix class participation with project performance, I did ascertain that the end-of-semester grades were at least 15% higher (20% more As and Bs than Cs and Ds) relative to previous semesters when students were not given choice over which projects they would work on. Although I determined that there needed to be a change in how students were evaluated for the purpose of assigning grades, I was encouraged to see that grades had improved, generally. I was most encouraged by how the quality of effort on the projects had improved. There seemed to be more students, relative to past semesters, talking to each other and exchanging ideas during the projects. And I noted that the class, generally, spent more time than previous classes on the projects.

I noted that the most students who had found projects to be of personal relevance to them did seek to keep their projects. In response to these results, the next time I attempted this curriculum approach, I encouraged more use of the E-Portfolio, which involved students uploading photos of their work so that they can keep their work as soon as they have completed it. I planned to make the E-Portfolios a more significant element in the elevation of the students' work during the semester.

Once I cut my students loose from my own expectations and assignments and gave them more autonomy with their work, I noted that the students' projects, initially, were not as unique and interesting as I expected them to be. Frankly, the students' artwork struck me as bland. I observed that their learning needed to progress through a learning curve of its own. The students still needed to work through technical skill development, feeling out the limits of their free space in which they had to operate, and how to work with each other. As they did, over the course of the semester, the increasing quality of their work products reflected their growing more confident and comfortable with the autonomy that had been entrusted with. For example, one of my

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

students, although finishing her projects, hesitated to venture out on her own with exploring and expressing her own ideas. Instead, her work mimicked the work of others. However, as the semester progressed, so did her willingness to get into one of our relatively larger projects. I noted how, for the first time, she lost herself in the project. Whereas earlier she had turned in hastily and sloppily-completed projects, I noted that with this project she lost herself in the detail and complexity of her work. She paid attention to detail. She was careful and thorough. I could tell she was enjoying herself more, with this later project, than she had with previous projects in the class. It was the first project that she ever retrieved and took home after turning in. She was not the only one in the class to transition from uninterested to engaged, with an end product that was personally meaningful art.

I discovered an interesting trend with the end-of-the-semester surveys and student feedback: although, as expected given how the semester went, there were students frustrated by the lack of organization and structure, there were more students than usual that gave glowing reviews of the class and that noted that they had enjoyed a positive learning experience.

A summary of the adjustments made with the next semester of student choice-based approach (fall of the 2017-2018 academic school year) included: 1) provide more structured guidance with respect to project selection and planning; 2) grade on how time is spent working on projects versus on how projects were completed, 3) have the students post photos of their work in the E-Portfolios such that they can keep their work product.

### **2017-2018 Academic Year–Fall Semester**

This semester, I again taught and attempted the student-directed curriculum in a Painting II class. Responding to the need to plan for additional details for the students' projects identified the previous semester, in addition to monitoring what projects they were choosing to do and how

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

much time they anticipated would be required to complete the projects, I required that they also now note on their Work Art Calendars ([Appendix E](#)) what they would need to complete those projects and what they aimed to learn from those projects. To guide them in this thinking and planning process related to project design, I gave them one-page worksheets that we called project accountability reports ([Appendix E](#)) that incorporated the same elements that Mr. Woodfield captured in his “Drawing Studio” ([Appendix C](#)). These accountability worksheets were to be filled-out with each project.

Specifically, the project accountability reports included the following questions to guide the students in their project planning and to offer more structure to the curriculum/learning process: 1) What project are you proposing? What is your “Big Idea?” 2) What are the guiding questions or goals with this project? 3) Which of the national and local standards are you addressing with this project? 4) What are your chosen art mediums? 5) Please provide a thumbnail sketch of what you plan to create. 6) What risks did you take on with this project? 7) How did you expand on a thought or concept in this project? 8) How did you work through mistakes? 9) What did you learn with the mediums you used?

The project accountability report also included questions that I, the teacher, answered after the student had completed the project. My answers to the questions related to project grading. Those questions included: Was the student assessment documented? Was the project posted in the student’s E-Portfolio? Were the standards covered effectively?

Included with the project accountability report, I attached a document that detailed each of the national and local standards and offered ideas how each could be implemented with the projects made available to the students. The plan was that we, as a class, would go over and discuss the project accountability report and the standards reference document on the first day of

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

class. It ended up taking several days to review, and I could tell we were already off to a rough start with this semester. The students were overwhelmed with the standards reference document.

Although they easily understood and responded well to the project accountability report worksheets, most the class was thrown off by the need to match their projects with the standards listed in the reference document. As the semester progressed, it became apparent that the class was not acclimating to the standards reference document, and it became apparent that in the end, it would likely cause more harm than good with respect to encouraging creativity. As a result, I told the class to disregard the standards reference document, but to continue using the project accountability reports. The standards reference document proved to be an over-correction from the lack of structure concerns expressed the previous semester. I determined that the students, given past experience, would naturally address many of the standards over the course of the class, and for those standards that were not naturally addressed—I decided I could guide the students towards implementation of those standards as needed and as opportunity arose.

I changed the grading approach for this semester as a response to concerns from the previous semester. Rather than basing grades on how students had performed with particular projects, I now graded them on how they used their time working on the projects. For example, instead of grading them on a possible 100 points for a project, I graded them as to whether they had earned the max of 10 points each day for how they spent their time working on their projects. This resulted in a more uniform and streamlined grading process (I spent significantly less time grading at the end of this semester than I had the previous semester), and again, grades were at least 15% higher (20% more As and Bs than Cs and Ds) relative to previous semesters when students were not given choice over which projects they would work on. In addition to improved grades, relative to previous semesters, there was a notable improvement, generally, in

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

the students' quality of work. Whereas before there were a few standout examples of high-quality work, I noted this semester that there was, overall, less copying of other art and more exploration of new ideas and personal themes. There was more discussion and exchange of ideas between the students as they worked on their projects (even more so than the improved amount of such during the previous semester when I experimented with autonomy). I noted this time that there was more student-initiated engagement with me about technical questions that fell both inside and outside the breadth of instruction I had already provided—this hunger for additional instruction excited me.

Student satisfaction with the class rebounded after I had them disregard the requirement to tie their projects to the standards reference document (Appendices A & B). In fact, at the end of this semester, an estimated 25% of the class noted that they had enjoyed a positive learning experience this semester. This amounts to a 10% increase over the previous semester. I noted that there were fewer students, per the survey and end-of-semester-assessment results, that cited issues with “lack of organization” in the class. It would seem that this accounted for the increase in the student satisfaction statistic. And it would seem that the project accountability reports and new grading scheme attributed to this positive change.

Students were coming in and pulling out their projects and getting to work on their own volition. There was a buzz of activity in my classroom and it was running almost without me having to persuade anyone to be excited about what they were doing. As I graded the students' time spent on their projects I really enjoyed the diversity in their chosen projects, and I began to see the students start to explore more and be more invested in their projects.

I was pleased to see the effectiveness of the project accountability reports and the Art Work Calendars this semester. I regret to see how, inadvertently, these documents/guides have

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

rendered the students' sketchbooks less important to their classroom experience. Knowing that sketchbooks will be very important to those students who pursue art in college, I have determined that I want to elevate the role of the sketchbooks in the students' classroom experience. During the next iteration of this curriculum, I will consider how to associate with, or incorporate in, either or both project accountability report and/or the artwork calendar with the students' sketchbooks. Consolidating the student's recordkeeping and planning documentation to just the sketchbook is the new goal in this regard.

With respect to my concern from the previous semester that students post their work to the E-portfolio, I no longer required the students to turn in their completed work product. I only required them to post photos of their art work. This change was met with approval by the students, however, I discovered that there arose discrepancies between what I saw students working on in class and what was posted in their E-Portfolios. Because of this, I determined that the next time I would have students continue to post photos of their work in their E-Portfolios, but I would also present their work in a formal presenting area of the classroom or school. The students would then be able to take their work home at some point at the end of the semester.

As a summary/recap of the adjustments that I would look to make with the next semester that I would attempt a student choice-based approach: 1) continue use of the project accountability reports and consider a new less-overwhelming way for the students to identify which national and local standards they are addressing with their proposed projects ; 2) either associate with, or incorporate in, the project accountability reports and the art work calendars with the students' sketchbooks so as to elevate the importance of the role of the sketchbooks for the students; and, 3) to continue to have the students post photos of their work on their E-

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

Portfolios, but also require them to publicly present their work to their classmates in an specified art gallery-type of environment in the classroom or in the school.

### **Reflections on Teaching**

Although my general observations were positive, there were, not unexpectedly, challenging days throughout the course of the semester. For example, one day I observed:

Today was a tough day. I talked through most of the class and some kids were bothered by it. Most of the complaining took place when I attempted to discuss what art is and the creative process. I felt like I was asking good questions and had good information to share but the crowd seemed tough. Unlike a Reggio Emilia school, I can't just leave crayons out and just watch what happens. Or maybe I could? But I have a hard time feeling like I can.

But these hard days are potentially the most helpful/insightful in finding ways to improve as a teacher and finding opportunities to improve the curriculum and its implementation.

I noted, towards the end of the semester, that several my students expressed an increased excitement and appreciation for art. Specifically, they expressed an increased interest in expressing themselves creatively. Such was the experience, I sensed, from most of the class. Many of them were experiencing the “flow” described by Csikszentmihalyi (1975). This was the beginnings of exciting answers to the research driving questions: the students were being engaged in personally-relevant ways; this in turn was influencing my own teaching approaches.

I also noticed the impact the autonomous approach was having on the development of analytical and critical thinking skills. I observed that more students relative to previous classes were exploring themes and technical skills with their personal projects in greater depth. They were exchanging critiques of each other's projects—whereas this was a rarity before it was



## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

starting to happen with more frequency now. The students had a genuine interest in what their classmates were doing—whereas before such inter-project interest was limited.

### Chapter 5: Discussion of Results

My study was concerned with the following questions:

1. How might a student-driven curriculum engage students in personally relevant ways while addressing art education standards?
2. How would curriculum and teaching that use student-driven approach influence student artwork, accomplishment, and attitudes toward art making?
3. What is necessary to design and implement a student-driven curriculum and how might this approach influence my own teaching practice—and feelings about and understandings of—teaching and learning?

#### **Art Education Standards, Choice, and Personally Relevant Artwork**

As I introduced the concept of a student-centered curriculum to my students and taught them how to work in a student centered classroom I expected the students to take off right away. I thought that just because I had backed off teaching them formally that they would know what style they were interested in and that they would work in that style and creativity would flourish. But I quickly learned that there were fundamental techniques that they needed. They needed to find their voice before they could work with their choice. So the artwork tended to be more typical and bland in the beginning but as my students struggled through the first couple of projects before they realized they really had freedom to explore the creations began to go in all directions.

The first semester I structured the students' proposals so they had to write how they planned to incorporate the standards specifically to each project. While some of them struggled,

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

initially, with the free reign with projects, with guidance and explanations most of the students were able to work through it and still achieve work that was unique.

The second semester, first term, I expected the students to be more involved, and take more responsibility, with incorporating the standards into their planning and project design. Most students didn't respond well, and said it was stifling to their ideas. Having my students dissect the standards and implement them themselves was overwhelming for me as a teacher, as well. The students were supposed to express how they utilized the standards in their work in their electronic-portfolios, but as I read their explanations what they wrote was not reflective of what I was seeing, and it was clear they were experiencing something but they were having difficulty expressing it in words. Through observation of their work I could see that more of the standards were being met than they realized or could express. I concluded that the standards were and would be met, naturally, if we removed them from being a primary focus of the students' project design.

The second semester, second term, I decided that I wanted to allow the students to create their work and we would discuss the standards as they spoke to me about their progress, and I used the standards as more of a guide of conversation which felt much more natural and informal. Many of the standards were still addressed, but without the upfront stress for the students. I found this approach much more effective. There are some standards that the students almost have to be led to in order to meet them, but I have found through my observations of my new student-centered approaches that when students are playing, exploring, creating, with materials they choose and subject matter they care about—they are more likely to (per the standards) naturally observe, analyze, respond, connect, and perform, and they will do it more

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

freely and naturally. This semester I noticed that projects became more unique and personal to the students, and I rarely had to encourage them to start working.

### **Student Attitudes and Accomplishment**

There was more exploration on themes and ideas that went more in depth and the subject matter became more unique. There was also more interaction within mediums, which created more depth through technique and collaboration of materials. I was actually seeing variety and more voice in the work of the students. More students were illustrating issues from their lives, and this was very exciting for me as a teacher. Students were asking fewer questions, but were exploring more and more on their own. When questions did arise there was more of a maturity or sophistication in the questions. Their questions to me were being driven by their own genuine inquiry and curiosity. Both of my classes, these past two semesters, started rough. They were not used to the structure or the freedom I was giving them. But in the long run I observed my students take hold and grow in ways my past students never did.

### **Gauging Student Interest in Choice-Based Education**

During the course of my Painting II class of the fall semester of the 2016–2017 academic year, I endeavored to ascertain, from my listening to them and noting their questions and feedback, what their expectations and hopes with respect to a student-driven classroom approach might be. I was curious how open, initially, the class would be with a student-driven approach to the class. I was also curious as to what purposes of an art education (at least that existed in their minds) I could tailor my curriculum to address.

During the semester, I learned that most of the class of 24 students felt that an art class curriculum should include traditional instruction focused on teaching a common body of information that students in that field should know. However, most the class also agreed on a

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

preference that traditional instruction not be followed by “traditional practice,” i.e., practice that is tightly-controlled (e.g., assignments and class projects), specifically, where students are constricted to explore principles within firmly-set parameters. The students expressed a desire to go on field trips and explore how various artists have creatively employed principles taught in the class.

Most of the class seemed to agree that class art projects be “free reign” enough such that they (the students) could explore social issues of the day in their artwork. They wanted the projects to be relevant and provide opportunities for them to express their commentary on the goings on of the world and current events around them. Along with being able to personalize their projects, a strong majority of the class seemed to agree that they would like to be able to interact with each other in the creation of their projects. They wanted to collaborate. They wanted to discuss their objectives with their projects, and be able to ask questions of each other, encourage each other, and challenge each other.

A finding that surprised me because so many of the students agreed with it, was the notion that the purpose of the class curriculum and school as well is to help students better understand themselves, better appreciate their distinctive talents and insights, and discover their own unique place in the world. It dawned on me that given their stage of life, such an aim of art education could play a pivot role in students’ pursuit of finding their own way in the world. The potential impact for good a student-driven curriculum could bring about among high school students excites me.

A year later, in my fall semester Painting II class at Viewmont High School (2017–2018 academic school year) I tried to incorporate more student choice in class projects and to give a student-driven class curriculum a try. During the semester, I sought to discover how my students

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

had enjoyed, benefitted or not enjoyed and not benefitted from a more student-driven approach. To gauge the students' reaction to the new curriculum I paid attention to class motivation, excitement and the types of questions they would ask over the course of the semester.

I paid careful attention to comments students made over the course of the class related to their comparing the class with previous art classes they had taken. I noted that the initial lack of precedence and the unfamiliarity with this approach, was the most commonly-identified reason for initial hesitancy and anxiety about my class. However, I also noted that as the semester progressed most of the students became comfortable with the class routine and expectations. Furthermore, I noted that some of the students who strongly preferred a more "traditional" approach to an art class softened in their stance and warmed up to the idea—some of them even admitted to being pleasantly surprised by how the experience had played out for them. Not all the feedback that I picked up on was positive, but I was encouraged that most of it was.

There are a lot of factors that need to be considered as the students choose what they are doing. Because of the action research method, my curriculum is still very organic and constantly improving and changing. This is largely because of the involvement I am affording my students in the decision process of how the class will work. Every time I think I have it figured out, I ask the students for their reactions, and I end up tweaking the plans. I am starting to feel like if I don't do this process with each class I will never really be giving students the power to reveal their potential because I would be basing the learning experience off prior student's experiences who had different needs and interests.

The process I feel I need to perfect in my advisement and guidance of the students is how to get them on their individual paths faster, and how to spread myself so that they can move forward without me feeling that I am holding them back because I can't teach everyone

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

individually right away. In my other class I had given students choice on whether they wanted full class lecture type lessons with demos or if they wanted to work in small groups, or individually. The majority chose individually. I have provided many resources and the students have just gone for it. From what I have seen so far, the students have gone through many of the lessons much faster than I would have taken the class and they appear to be learning the concepts. I need to iron out some things, but I have enjoyed feeling like there is high energy and productivity in my classes. I am not spending so much time in front of the class blabbing away I have been able to spend more time on the students that need more one on one help. So far, I am feeling really good about giving the students the options I did.

### **Designing and Teaching a Student Choice-Based Curriculum**

An important area of inquiry in this project was: What is necessary to design and implement a student choice based curriculum and how might this approach influence my own teaching practice feelings about, and understandings of teaching and learning? I realize now, that I have spent a couple semesters experimenting with implementing a more choice-based curriculum that the most important insights were about my approaches to teaching. Instead of concentrating so much on student actions, the project became more about changing my own teaching. I went into it thinking I needed to change what the students were doing but realized that it was also about changing my own teaching actions.

An example of how I learned I needed to change, was just saying “yes” when students approach me with a new idea. This was difficult change to make, in the past I would try to finagle their proposal to create a more favorable and easy-to-grade outcome, according to my style or liking. I would try to influence them and their ideas. I am trying to back off and ask questions such as, “What are you experimenting with or learning from this choice?” I am trying

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

to listen to their ideas and just say “yes.” From my observations in my classroom, students seem to explore more when they are running with their own ideas.

Almost any time I start suggesting different approaches or altering their ideas to fit certain requirements or styles the students’ eyes instantly seem to glaze over, and the energy and enthusiasm falls from their countenance. It is a tricky balance from wanting to help students create more depth to their idea and letting them discover those things on their own.

At first, I wanted to focus on student outcomes, and a lot of my efforts were put into observing and discussing with students about student choice scenarios for my classroom. This helped me learn some things that I needed to change, and how to set up some of the structure for my classes initially. However, most of the changes were in my teaching practices, and how I interacted with the students. My focus changed from what I couldn’t change, the reactions of the students, to what I could change—my approach and my attitude toward teaching and my attitude towards the students.

I overheard a student say on his own that he is learning that it is better to not cake on the paint but to build it up. This is not something I taught him, it is something he discovered for himself while problem solving through a project. I am seeing this more and more as I am striving to give students as much autonomy as possible in each of my classes. The interesting thing is that the main change I have made is just backing off and allowing the students more room to just be curious.

A belief that I have particularly struggled with, as I have been making these changes in my curriculum, is that many students are inherently lazy, i.e., that they will always seek to find the path of least resistance to accomplishing what is being required of them. I have gone from



## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

thinking or assuming that students need to be prodded and threatened with a loss of or lower grade in order to producing something artistic to believing that students who will work hard on their own when given direction, and freedom to explore and learn. I have learned the value of proper motivation. If there are conditions that give student autonomy, then this will spark enthusiasm and drive for a project—it is a downhill effort at that point to get to full “flow.”

### **Conclusion**

The present study has stirred my interest in seeking out other curricula, and/or developing my own, that organizes standard learning objectives along with project ideas, techniques and genres, into a packet that allows students to pick and choose, mix and match, and create their own projects while working within the parameters of the standard objectives to which educators are held. As has been reported in this study, I have been made aware of such curricula, and look forward to seeking out more examples that could inform and refine my own approach with my own students.

Although the learning curve with new curricula can be steep, I feel it worthwhile for myself and other educators to give such a try. My studies in this field lead me to believe such curricula have significant potential to give students more autonomy/opportunities to yield higher intrinsic motivation—thereby creating more student-driven products while more thoroughly enjoying the learning process.

I invite all those colleagues in education, no matter your expertise and background, to join me in this effort to partner with students in the learning experience. As the old saying goes, “We seek to be a guide on the side rather than a sage on the stage,” when it comes to assisting our students in their interest-led pursuit of discovery and expression. If you reach out to me and

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

share thoughts, questions or think out loud about any aspect of student-led education, please don't hesitate to seek me out. I would enjoy collaborating with you in this important endeavor.

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APPENDIX A: National Core Arts Standards

# NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS


Dance, Media Arts, Music, Theatre And Visual Arts



**What Are The Standards?**


A process that guides educators in providing a unified quality arts education for students in Pre-K through high school.

[Read more →](#)




**Creating**

- Anchor Standard #1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- Anchor Standard #2. Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.
- Anchor Standard #3. Refine and complete artistic work.




**Performing/  
Presenting/  
Producing**

- Anchor Standard #4. Analyze, interpret, and select artistic work for presentation.
- Anchor Standard #5. Develop and refine artistic work for presentation.
- Anchor Standard #6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.



**Responding**


- Anchor Standard #7. Perceive and analyze artistic work.
- Anchor Standard #8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- Anchor Standard #9. Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.




**Connecting**

- Anchor Standard #10. Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.
- Anchor Standard #11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

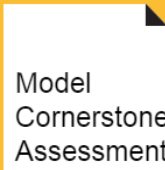
**BROWSE THE HANDBOOKS:**




Standards at a Glance



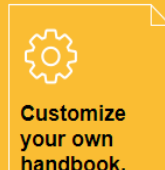
View the Anchor Standards



Model Cornerstone Assessments



View Student Artworks



Customize your own handbook.

Copyright Guidelines
Credits
Glossary
Resources
Inclusion
FAQ
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**APPENDIX B: Davis Essential Skills and Knowledge (DESK)**

**DESK**

# Painting

*Essential skills and knowledge for this Davis School District course*

**Making – Assemble and create paintings by manipulating art media and by organizing images with the elements and principles.**

- a. Refine techniques and processes in a variety of media.
- b. Create paintings using art elements and principles.

**Perceiving – Find meaning by analyzing, criticizing, and evaluating paintings.**

- a. Critique paintings.
- b. Evaluate paintings.

**Expressing – Create meaning in paintings.**

- a. Create content in paintings.
- b. Curate paintings ordered by medium and content.

**Contextualizing – Find meaning in painting through settings and other modes of learning.**

- a. Align paintings according to history, geography, and personal experience.
- b. Synthesize painting with other educational subjects.
- c. Evaluate the impact of painting on life outside of school.

**STATEMENT**

The development of proficiency in any art form requires a steady sequential study and development of skills. These basic concepts are also the same from beginning through intermediate to advanced study. Although the fundamental concepts are the same, the level of skill and performance abilities will increase over time. Even though the progress to more advanced study occurs, attention to the fundamental skills and practices of the art form are found at every level.

Davis Essential Skills & Knowledge

APPENDIX C: “Drawing Studio” from Mr. Woodfield’s class

## Drawing Studio

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

A thumbnail must be drawn for each project and have the teacher's approval before beginning the assignment.  
Failure to do so will result in a grade loss for that project.

<b>Assignment Drawing of Your Own Choice</b>						
1. date started _____ approval _____	Thumbnail or description					
2. date completed _____	days worked <table style="display: inline-table; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; width: 50px;"></td> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; text-align: center; font-size: small;">Mid Term</td> <td style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">End of Term</td> </tr> </table>			Mid Term	End of Term	Grade ____/____
Mid Term	End of Term					

<b>Assignment Drawing of Your Own Choice</b>						
1. date started _____ approval _____	Thumbnail or description					
2. date completed _____	days worked <table style="display: inline-table; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; width: 50px;"></td> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; text-align: center; font-size: small;">Mid Term</td> <td style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">End of Term</td> </tr> </table>			Mid Term	End of Term	Grade ____/____
Mid Term	End of Term					

M 1    E 1    T1	M 2    E 2    T 2	M 3    E 3    T 3	M 4    E 4    T 4
Revised 01/7/17			



APPENDIX D: Art Work Calendar from Mr. Woodfield's class

# Art

Work Calendar  
3rd Term 2017

*woodfield*



Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>January 16</b> M.L.King Day	<b>17</b> Teacher Work Day	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>February 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>20</b> President's Day	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> Mid-Term
<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>March 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> End 3rd Term

My goal this term is:

08226

### APPENDIX E: Student-Centered/ Inquiry-Based Curriculum

I am creating this curriculum to give my students more choice in what and how they learn. I am attempting to remove myself from the front of the classroom and trying to emulate Larry Gelwix, a great Rugby coach, who found it a worthwhile investment to spend, one on one, time with his athletes on the sidelines. My goal is to create a space where inquiry and exploration can guide learning that is based upon my students' interests. I am experimenting with ideas found in readings of Sydney Walker, Jane K. Bates, Olivia Gude, and many more. I hope to find that as I let go the students will carry the load and become much more invested in their learning and work harder as they inquire about the things they are passionate about.

The standards build on the idea of the creative process and the ability to solve problems in different ways. They want students to be able to incorporate the creative process and problem solving across curriculum and into daily lives, or at least that is how I interpret them. I am aware that not all my students will become artists, but I do know they can find value through the creative process and come to appreciate the avenue art gives them to solve problems.

This curriculum is based off Student choice and Inquiry based learning. I am stepping aside and am hoping to have the students take the reins. It turns the tables so that it is not viewed as what the teacher does to teach the students, but what do the students do to learn? I simply guide them through.

I have created a packet of documents that I will give my students at the beginning of the semester. The contents of the packet are as follows:

Section 1- Davis school District Painting Standards and Objectives ([Appendix B](#))

Section 2- Student Semester Checklist ([Appendix E](#))

Section 3- Big idea list ([Appendix E](#))

Section 4- Individual project accountability sheet ([Appendix E](#))

Section 5- Studio calendar ([Appendix E](#))

Section 1 contains the Desk standards created from the State Core. The District provides this document. Within this document are the Standards I am expected to make sure my students complete through my course. It is very much discipline based. I read through this with the students and help them understand vocabulary and expectations of the contents of the standards. When they have a basic understanding of the general concepts they are being held accountable to they can go to Section 2.

Section 2 is a checklist of what they will receive a grade for in the semester. I keep a copy in my grade book and they receive a copy to keep their own records and to help them plan, create goals, and be held accountable for the standards they meet on each of their chosen projects. There are certain requirements. However, each assignment is distributed like a blank canvas. The first part is a simplified list of the standards with spaces they can check off when they have met certain standards and what projects they achieved with each standard. I give extra points for projects that meet every single standard. The rest of the sections gives a rubric of minimums they must build upon, such as building and stretching a canvas. How they achieve these things can be open to

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

their interpretation and imagination. But they must build a canvas and create a work on it. It should complement the canvas, much like an installation.

Section 3 contains big idea ideas. It also contains prompts and ideas for the students that need or prefer some prodding. They can choose from these options or propose their own. Once again, they are just ideas to spark ideas, but each work of art should be created with a big idea or question of inquiry.

Section 4 is the individual project accountability form. Before each project they begin by filling out the top part of this sheet. They write their big idea or inquiry question. They create smart goals tied to the standards and their own learning interests. They provide a thumbnail and photo references if necessary of their subject matter. They then check this off with me and we discuss materials and execution. I lead them in the direction for tutorials or I demonstrate needed techniques or processes. I check with them throughout the process. As they go or when they are finished they answer the bottom questions. As they finish the project at hand they bring me their paper as well as their project. We discuss what they learned. They upload it onto their e-portfolio and blog about what they learned and their processes. They then begin the process over again.

Section 5 is a studio calendar. It is a quick daily accountability. On this they document their daily progress and should be coupled with a daily picture they take of progress on their phone or class camera. I may look at this daily. For midterm and final grades, I look at this and evaluate their work ethic and daily progress for their participation grade.

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

Project Accountability Name \_\_\_\_\_

Big Idea \_\_\_\_\_. Your idea proposal \_\_\_\_\_

Guiding questions or goals \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Standards addressed? Explain.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Chosen Medium/s

\_\_\_\_\_

Thumbnails.

Assessment: Documented Y / N Posted on E-Portfolio Y / N Standards covered effectively Y / N

Answer the following questions completely.

1. What risks did you take on this project?
2. How did you expand on a thought or concept in this project?
3. How did you work through mistakes?
4. What did you learn with the mediums you used?
5. How did you push the boundaries or stretch yourself with the medium?

# FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

## Painting II Studio Calendar

Art Making	Art Making	Art Making	Art Making	Art Making	Art Making	Art Making
Feb	23	27	March	1	3	8
10	14	16	20	22	24	End of 3 <sup>rd</sup> term  /150
29	31	April	11	13	17	19
21	25	27	May	1	3	5
9	11	15	17	19	23	25
30	June	1	Summer			

# FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

Painting II- Semester Project Check List Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Standards

1. Making- use variety of media, and elements and principles
  - a. refine techniques \_\_\_\_\_ projects \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Create with Elements and principles \_\_\_\_\_ projects \_\_\_\_\_
2. Perceiving- find meaning by analyzing, critiquing, and evaluating.
  - a. Critique Painting \_\_\_\_\_ projects \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Evaluate Paintings \_\_\_\_\_ projects \_\_\_\_\_
3. Expressing- create meaning in work.
  - a. Create content in work \_\_\_\_\_ projects \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Curate paintings by medium \_\_\_\_\_ projects \_\_\_\_\_
4. Contextualizing- Find meaning in painting through modes of learning
  - a. History, Geography, and personal experience \_\_\_\_\_ projects \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Synthesize with other educational subjects. \_\_\_\_\_ projects \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Evaluate the impact of painting on life outside of school. \_\_\_\_\_ projects \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Create E- portfolio \_\_\_\_\_ 25 points

Maintain E- Portfolio \_\_\_\_\_ 50 points

Create a canvas \_\_\_\_\_ 50 points Project completed on canvas \_\_\_\_\_ 25 points

Create a series (3 or more works with related content) \_\_\_\_\_ 25 points

Showed piece of work in art show \_\_\_\_\_ 50 points

Tutorial Video (based off of a difficult technique learned) \_\_\_\_\_ 50 points

Studio clean up \_\_\_\_\_ 10 points

Sketchbook \_\_\_\_\_ 25 points Sketchbook \_\_\_\_\_ 25 points

Share an inspirations/ work of art artist \_\_\_\_\_ 10 points Share an inspirations/ work of art artist \_\_\_\_\_ 10 points

Extra points for each assignment that all standards are addresses \_\_\_\_\_ up to 50 points (10 per assign.)

Brushes cleaned and returned \_\_\_\_\_

Midterm grade \_\_\_\_\_ Final Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Midterm grade \_\_\_\_\_ Final grade \_\_\_\_\_

## FACILITATING STUDENT AUTONOMY

### **BIG IDEA- What is....? to you**

Heroes  
Power  
Family  
Growth  
Change  
Culture  
Education/Learning  
History  
Future  
Hopes  
Fears  
Dreams  
Identity  
Beauty  
Worth  
Characters  
Everyday objects  
Narrative  
Art redefined  
Society Politics  
Monsters  
Rear view mirror

### **Assignment ideas**

- Painting objects- furniture.
- Map-texture.
- Paint a mirror- painting on glass-layer
- Combo of gradients and line- cartoon realism lines.
- Finger print painting.
- Installation –specific work for a specific space.
- Spray paint.
- Build a canvas.
- Silhouette- negative/ positive space fill it with imagery.
- Paint your fears, nightmares, surrealism.
- Focus painting.
- Leaves nature, light
- Work inspired by fav. Media, social media, musicians.
- Paint favorite scene from book.
- Capturing or creating motion.
- Opposites- juxtaposition.
- Paint from personal photograph reference.
- Culture study-portrayal.
- Objects under water the ocean.
- Transparencies (light)
- Scenarios- fantasy-unnatural space scenes.
- Dumpster setting.
- Skeletal structures new skins.
- Perspective- worms eye, view birds eye.
- Ellipses.
- Boxes|
- Morphing animal- collaboration.
- Anatomy- people, portraits.
- Drawing yourself.
- Paint girl with dress leaves lipstick.
- Mosaic.
- Comic animation character development.