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Listening to Voices of Exceptional Students to Inform Art Pedagogy

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LISTENING TO VOICES OF EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS TO INFORM ART PEDAGOGY

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Abstract

This study explored the pedagogical practices that fostered engagement for seven participants with physical disabilities and in some cases multiple exceptionalities who successfully earned a credit in a high school Visual Arts course. It answered the key question: What can art educators learn from students' stories of art education that would better enable art educators to enact a pedagogy that engages students with disabilities in the Visual Arts classroom? A narrative inquiry methodology was employed to gather stories and art work from these key informants acting as active agents in their own storied responses that were triangulated with field notes from the researcher's own "lived-experience" and the literature surrounding the topic. The researcher draws from literacy engagement theory purporting that art is a language that can be used to engage students with physical disabilities if careful consideration is given to media employed, contemporary art education practices, teacher and student relationship including the teacher's perspective of students with disabilities, and Universal Design for Learning concepts in classroom organization. Due to the fine motor control issues, students with disabilities in this study prefer more fluid media involved in the discipline of sculpture, painting, printmaking, or new media to create projects where the subject matter and artistic expression are ultimately self-determined. The findings of this thesis may be applied to *all* subject areas as they indicate that the teacher's capacity to communicate effectively, have a flexible approach to accommodating curriculum content, possess problem-solving ability, and a positive personality, can be linked with student engagement for exceptional students in the classroom.

Key Words: Ableism, Art Education, Disability Studies, Engagement, Pedagogical Practices, Multimodalities, Narrative Methodology, Physical Disabilities, Special Education, Universal Design for Learning

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List of Abbreviations, Symbols, Nomenclature

CAST- Centre for Applied Special Technology

CDT - Critical Disability Theory

EA - Educational Assistant

ICF - International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health

IEP - Individual Education Plan

IPRC - Identification, Placement and Review Committee

ISP - Intensive Support Program

MI – Multiple Intelligence Theory

SETT- Student, Environment, Task and Tools

UD - Universal Design

UDL -Universal Design for Learning

WHO - World Health Organization

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Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to Stephanie who quietly passed away amidst the revisions of this thesis. Her strength, her positive attitude, and her willingness to share her story openly despite her hardships were admirable. She has caused me to deeply reflect on the importance of my role as an educator working with youth today and the reason I embarked on this educational journey. I would also like to thank all of the respondents for their honesty, their good humour, and their candor throughout the interview process. They do not realize what courageous lives they lead.

A grand thank you goes out to my family Eric Matusiak, Erica, Michaela and Nathaniel Yarmol-Matusiak, my mother, Elsie Yarmol and my mother-in-law Merle Mastusiak who have supported my efforts throughout the process of working to complete course work and thesis writing over the last three years. I truly appreciate my supervisor Dr. Kathryn Hibbert for her continual support and guidance in this endeavour, and Dr. Sharon Rich for being part of my review committee.

Prologue

The following is my journal entry that grew from contemplating the participants' storied responses, pondering the practical applications of theoretical readings for my literature review, and reflecting about the educational practices occurring in my own Visual Arts classroom. It is my hope that through this prologue, the reader is brought to a deeper understanding of the inception of this thesis and the environs where its findings will ultimately jump off the page and propel into action to affect students ─ in the world of the classroom. I have italicized these journal entries throughout the thesis to cue the reader that they are my transcribed thoughts.

Actively listening to respondents' interviews, I got the general sense that the interviewees often felt like separate entities existing outside of the high school social milieu. Through their discourse I suspected that this feeling was prompted by their peers focusing on their visible assistive devices (or on their Educational assistants) which, on one hand support their mobility and learning issues, but on the other hand set them physically apart from their classmates. Often this physical separation lead to feeling socially and emotionally apart from their peers and a desire "to be treated like everyone else" (Stephanie, personal communication, January 10, 2012). At the same instance, a sense of individuality emerged as several participants noted that not all people with disabilities are the same even though individuals in society tend to categorize them as such.

While reading Eisenhauer's (2007) article, "Just Looking and Staring Back: Challenging Ableism Through Disability Performance", I thought about how participants voiced their separateness and realized that we still live in a climate where ableism is quite dominant. I considered how important it is to reflect upon our own role in ableism just as we contemplate

"other socio-political issues [which] reference a combination of discrimination, power, and prejudice related to the cultural privileging of able–bodied people" (Eisenhauer, 2008, p. 8).

As a practicing artist and art educator, I thrive on continuously creating new units of study endeavouring to make my art room a place that Eisenhauer might say, "challenges the discrimination, stigmatization, and marginalization of disabled people" (2008, p. 20). I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to introduce topics that elicit discussion encouraging teens to engage in the creation of meaningful art work based in their personal lived-experiences (van Manen, 1990).

To bring the theories that I have been reading and learning about into practice. I designed a unit about comic strip and graphic novel illustration entitled "Framed". First students viewed a range of art works from artist Tim Burton whose fictional characters like Edward Scissorhands live on the fringes of society. Second, together we read a series of interviews from Tim Burton Interviews (Fraga, 2005) that explored Burton's lonely childhood. Art students read about how the famous artist, director, producer, and cinematographer constantly felt like an outcast in every social situation he encountered growing up in suburban Los Angeles. Burton credited his Burbank high school art teachers with encouraging his imaginative, emotive self-expression and spurring him on to continually create what others considered "bizarre" characters in his art work. Visual Art class gave him the opportunity to visually express his frustrations, his poignant commentary about his social environment, and his discomfort with his home life. His teachers opened the door for him to release his anxiety enabling Burton to really find his place in the world.

As a third step, students viewed a range of historical and contemporary comics and graphic novels where they learned about comic book conventions such as thought bubbles, inking, sans serif fonts, gutters, sound effects, and figure-ground relationships. Some of these comics included X-Men (Lee and Kirby, 1963) a team of mutant superheroes who works to fight crime, and BONE (Smith, 2004) about a hero's journey after being run out of town with his cousins. I also included a range of highly political comic book examples like Persepolis (2000) an autobiographical graphic novel by Marjane Satrapi about her teenage years in Iran during and after the Islamic revolution, and Maus (Spiegelman, 1991) depicting experiences as a Jewish Holocaust survivor personified through a mouse character. Students were afforded the opportunity to bring in any comic examples that they knew to share with the class. Grade 10 students quickly realized that these art works were all about characters' stories that likely emerged from their authors' personal hardships.

Fourthly I introduced students to "It's Not Fair Having 12 pairs of Legs" (2009, March 11), and "The opportunity of adversity" (2010, February 17), TED talks sessions featuring Aimee Mullins, a wearer of assistive technology in the form of prosthetic legs. I knew that this might be a sensitive topic for two of my students in wheelchairs but contrary to my initial concerns, both students agreed that it was refreshing to finally have a teacher openly discuss disabilities. They asserted that most people shied away from such discussions. Mullins herself openly challenges societal views on disabilities and beauty from her own experiences. Initially she shares her research about the term "disabled" believing that this definition affects how people view her. She offers the following definition she found in the Merriam-Webster Thesaurus (2009):

Disabled: blind deaf, mute; halt, lame, paralyzed, quadriplegic; immobile, immobilized;

ailing, diseased, ill, sick, unfit, unhealthy, unsound, unwell. Near Ant. bouncing, chipper,

fit, hearty, robust, sound, well, whole, wholesome. Ant. Able-bodied, nondisabled.

(Merriam-Webster Thesaurus: 2009 Edition)

Mullins confesses that these terms are <u>not</u> how she sees herself. She encourages her viewers to

challenge their own notions about disability and "start the conversation".

My grade 10 students were completely silent during the viewing of Mullins' (2009, March

11 & 2010, February 17) podcasts. During the debriefing I could see that students had carefully

considered her message. When I asked them to write down what their own definitions about

what "disabled" meant, few could put the pencil to the sketchbook page. I knew that the

screening of "It's Not Fair Having 12 pairs of Legs Aimee Mullins: 12 Pairs of Legs" and "The

opportunity of adversity" had an impact on them. A few days later, the viewing of Mullins'

speaking engagement elicited an open dialogue between an able-bodied student and a student

with a disability in my class regarding the cost of the student's prosthetic legs. The unfolding of

this unscripted dialogue was proof that conversations about disabilities and ableism are

definitely a worthwhile endeavour in the art room. Conversations in the context of units like

"Framed" may influence my pupils as they envisage their own views about disability.

After providing students with some practical, technical studio skills and assigning the

task of developing a central character for their comics, I slowly walked around the room

listening to the conversations transpiring around each table; I heard many students' descriptive

storied responses about their own lives. I halted my jaunt around the room and asked students to

silently consider the types of disabilities they have personally encountered. One student put up

his hand and blurted out, "I have Asperger's syndrome which is why I am so odd!" With this

pronouncement I surmised that students are willing to be risk-takers in front of their peers when

they feel they are in a secure environment. Smiling reassuringly at the student, I acknowledge

his declaration knowing that I will continually strive to build a safe environment for all students

in my Visual Art room.

Chapter 1

Listening to Voices of Exceptional Students to Inform Art Pedagogy

Victor Lowenfeld (1957) states:

It is one of my deepest innermost convictions that whenever there is a spark of human

spirit—no matter how dim it may be—it is our sacred responsibility as humans, teachers,

and educators to fan it into whatever flame it conceivably may develop. I venture to say

that the ethical standard of a society can be measured by its relationships to the

handicapped. We as human beings have no right whatsoever to determine where to stop

in our endeavours to use all of our power to develop the uppermost potential abilities in

each individual. We are all by nature more or less endowed with intrinsic qualities and

no one has the right to draw a demarcation line which divides human beings into those

who should receive all possible attention and those who are not worth our efforts. One of

these intrinsic qualities is that every human being is endowed with a creative spirit. (p.

430)

My research begins with this quote from Lowenfeld, a pioneer in Art education for

exceptional students. His words resonate with me as I draw upon my twenty years of "lived-

experience" (van Manen, 1990) working as a Visual Art and Special Education teacher as both

fields try to focus on students' abilities and to find creative ways around students' limitations

(Gerber, 2011, p. 2). Hostetler (2005) contends that, "[e]ducation researchers have a right and an

obligation to understand what they are doing, to stand for something worthwhile that gives their

personal and professional lives meaning, and to articulate that thing to themselves and others"

(p.17). I embarked on this research journey to better understand successes and barriers found in existing curricula with an aspiration to optimize levels of challenge and support to meet the needs of *all* learners (Center for Applied Special Technology, 2011) in Visual Art, Graphics, Photography, Film and Video courses offered in my school. This work has implications for educators who teach Visual Arts or other subject areas as they see parallels to their own teaching practice or environments enabling them to enhance instruction for exceptional students.

The participants' school is located in 1960's era suburb of a large urban centre. In this three-term, public, secondary school there is a sizeable multicultural population as students and/or their parents have immigrated from all over the world. Approximately 110 languages other than English are spoken in the homes of the students. In addition to the regular course offerings in Mathematics, English, and Science, there is a wide range of course options offered to students in various departments including: Business, Drama, Geography, History, Modern Languages, Music, Physical Education (High Skills Major Program), Technology, and the Visual Arts. Courses are offered at a variety of levels including the Gifted, Academic, and General levels; only a few "locally developed" or Basic level courses are taught. There are approximately 330 out of 1235 students who are formally identified with exceptionalities (See Appendix A for a definition of exceptional students) by an Identification Placement and Review Committee Process (IPRC). The school has a comparatively large Special Education staff to other secondary schools in the Board. The department staffs four full-time Special Education teachers and eight Educational Assistants to support students. There is also a Gifted Program and an Intensive Support Program (ISP, see Appendix B for a description). The latter program "supports students who have documented needs in a variety of areas, one of which is cognitive impairment. Other needs may include one or more of the following: communication, physical

and/or behaviour. Some students in these programs require a small-class setting and intensive support from a qualified Special Education teacher and an Educational Assistant (EA)" (School Board, 2005, VII. 15). Many more students in the school have never been formally identified by an IPRC but receive some measure of support through the School Board's "Student Success" mandate. For the purposes of this study, the focus is on students with physical disabilities and/or multiple exceptionalities:

> A physical disability is defined as a condition of such severe physical limitation or deficiency as to require special assistance in learning situations to provide the opportunity for educational achievement equivalent to that of pupils without exceptionalities who are of the same age or development level.

> Multiple exceptionalities are defined as a combination of learning or other disorders, impairments, or physical disabilities that is of such a nature as to require, for educational achievement, the services of one or more teachers holding qualifications in special education and the provision of support services appropriate for such disorders, impairments, or disabilities. (School Board, Special Education: A Guide for Educators, 2001)

Now that an outline about the participants' educational environment has been provided, the following section discusses the key research question and the supplementary questions used in this study.

1.1 Key Research Question

The School Board directive clearly states that schools will follow an inclusive curriculum model to create a more just and equitable society (School Board website, 2012). In this Board, an inclusive curriculum means, "an approach to learning and teaching that recognizes, reflects, affirms and validates the diversity and the complexity of human life experiences of all students, regardless of gender, place of origin, religion, ethnicity and race, cultural and linguistic background, social and economic status, sexual orientation, age, and ability/disability" (School Board website, 2012). The Board acknowledges that "inequities have existed in the curriculum; therefore, it is committed to enabling all persons with disabilities to see themselves reflected in the curriculum. It is further committed to supporting all staff members with information and resources to support equity for persons with disabilities" (School Board website, 2012). Multiliteracies theorist James Cummins (2012) claims that educators, both individually and collectively, can and must be agents of change in their own schools. Reflection of pedagogical practices is necessary to continually refine the curriculum, class program and practices in the Visual Art, Graphic Art, Photography, Film and Video class (Art and Technology courses). It is from this educational milieu that my key research question arises: What can art educators learn from students' stories of art education that would better enable art educators to enact a pedagogy that engages students with disabilities in the Visual Arts classroom?

Using a narrative inquiry methodology, the analyzed data is gathered from interviews with former students. The data was triangulated from these interviews with personal reflective journaling or the researcher's own storied experience completed over the course of the study and/or after the interviews, and a review of literature from the fields of Visual Art Education and Disability Studies to investigate the key question.

The following supplementary questions guided the investigation:

1. What disciplines and media may be more or less conducive to engagement among students in the Visual Art and Technology classroom(s)?

2. What themes (e.g., social, political issues) and activities foster or inhibit engagement among students in the Visual Art and Technology classroom(s)?

3. What teaching strategies, instructional decisions, approaches, procedures, or routines help or hinder students' success in the Visual Art and Technology classroom(s)?

4. What 'conditions for learning' may be optimal for student engagement and learning opportunities?

I define the term "success" in question number three as completion of assigned work according to the criteria or the expectations set out for the assignment. Participants' perceptions of degree of "success" regarding their art work and their experiences is explored in the context of their storied responses. The following section states the reasons why this study is undertaken.

1.2 Why This Study?

An examination of the research by critical disabilities, disabilities and art and disabilities theorists relating to Visual Art education for students with disabilities is examined to determine the places for this study's relevance and further research needed in this area. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) researchers Rose and Gravel (2009) assert that:

Education should help turn novice learners into individuals who are expert at learning—individuals who know how to learn, who have already learned a great deal, and who want

to learn even more. At commencement all graduates should be well prepared in their

own individual ways for a lifetime of learning as content area experts (if they choose),

masters of trades and crafts, artists, scientists, or whatever else life has in store (2009, p.

5)... [G]oals [for education] are not merely to improve immediate performance but to

build future capacity—the capacity to be effective in almost any setting because the

learner is more knowledgeable, more skillful and strategic, more engaged and motivated.

The goal of education is to increase independence not dependence. (p. 16)

Rose and Gravel's UDL theories relate to my study that focused on learners' stories of their

experiences in the art classroom and what strategies did or did not bring learning alive for them

building their learning capacity.

In their study of the potential contribution of narrative inquiry to Disability Studies,

Smith and Sparks (2008) assert that "[n]arratives can illuminate a great deal about the personal

as they 'impart' information about their or others' 'internalized' work thereby allowing

researchers to explore lived-experiences and preserve a sense of the individual person" in the

world. Narratives also have the potential to investigate agency and structure (p. 18). Smith and

Sparks also assert that "narrative inquiry bears within it the promise of fashioning a kind of

scholarship that seeks to practice a deep fidelity to the possibilities of societal and individual

transformation, resistance and living life differently" (p. 19). By listening to the participants'

narratives, I can work to change existing barriers in the classroom in order to promote students'

success. Others who read this study's findings may see parallels to their own classroom

environments and consider attempting some the suggestions offered to them.

Rose (2009) claims that a wealth of research-based practices have proven their effectiveness for students with disabilities. Unfortunately, these researched practices have only been employed primarily, if at all, in Special Education and supplemental programs, and not in the mainstream educational curriculum. This results in students with disabilities failing in the mainstream in order to gain access to effective evidence-based practices that would have prevented their failure in the first place. Rose proposes that the next essential step is to implement practices informed by research directly into the general education curriculum ensuring that goals, materials, methods, and assessments are considered so that all can succeed

Disability Studies and Art Education scholar John Derby (2011) notes that Visual Art Education has a longstanding tradition of exploring social justice theory and advocacy as part of the curriculum but that the topic of disability has often been excluded from that tradition. He contends that, "the field continues to resemble orthodox Special Education discourses that largely ignore the first-hand perspectives of disabled students, teachers, researchers, artists and others" (p. 95). By listening to, recording and analysing participants' stories, first-hand perspectives about Visual Art education I gained insight from students with disabilities themselves.

In *A Policy Reader In Universal Design For Learning* Gordon, Gravel and Schifter (2009) explore the need to define curriculum that will meet the needs of all learners. They claim that "[t]he field is still nascent, and much work remains to be done in addressing key issues in education policy via Universal Design for Learning (UDL) at all levels—federal, state and local. To date the most significant work in policy has occurred at the national level (p. 2)". It was my aim to investigate at the local level or actual site of engagement, to place this research in context

with published research. Educators could use the findings of this research to improve their understanding of the concepts of disability and equity, enhance learning and engagement of exceptional students, inform the course offerings or make revisions to the learning environment at the school, in the district, or in the School Board guiding teacher pre-service and in-service professional development.

To help to contextualize this study, I reviewed the paths of Special Education legislation in the United States of America and the legislative history pertaining to the rights of people with disabilities in Canada. Since there are limited Canadian research sources on the subject of Visual Art Education and Disabilities Education I look to Canada's closest neighbor to the south who shares the language and many of democratic systems.

According to Doug Blandy (1991) Visual Art education literature in the United States has been interested in disability since the 1930s. In the 1970s it became linked with the civil rights movement attempting to gain rights for those with disabilities in society. Art education paired with Disability Studies grew into a remedial effort designed for both rehabilitation and esteem building for students' with disabilities. In this era, the medical model of disability that is, disability regarded as a problem necessitating therapeutic attention from nondisabled professionals framed inside the doctor-patient relationship (Derby, 2011, p. 96) superseded all thinking. In the United States, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975), which grew out of parental legislative advocacy, legally mandated Special Education for all children with disabilities. Art Educators were among the first to welcome students with disabilities into general classrooms (Guay, 1994). The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1993 mandated reasonable accommodations in public and in the workplace. The ADA marked a cultural shift toward understanding disability in terms of social justice and diversity noting that

disability is not an inherently biological condition, but a result of disabling environments (Derby, 2011, p. 96).   The idea of 'disabling environments' has further permeated U.S. law as it was revised further with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) in 2004.

In Ontario, Canada, a similar legislative history pertaining to the rights of people with disabilities exists stemming from the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Ontario Human Rights Code (1962), the Canadian Human Rights Act (1977, 1985), the Constitution of Canada Act (1982), the Ontarians with Disability Act (ODA) (2001), and more recently the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability: Accessibility Standards (AODA) (2005). AODA legislation applies to every designated public sector organization. It works to identify and remove barriers with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures, premises while respecting the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities must be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the goods or services being provided (S. Sen, personal communication, December 4, 2012). This study seeks to understand if and how the needs of students with disabilities were met in the Visual Art and Technology classrooms.

Currently, trends in Disability Studies draw from the humanities, social studies, and fine arts disciplines adjacent to critical fields such as cultural studies, literacy theory, queer theory, gender studies, and critical race studies (Derby, 2011, p. 96). Approximately two decades ago, Disabilities Studies and Art researcher Douglas Blandy (1991) called for a change in the sociopolitical orientation of disability. Blandy (1989) asserted that:

[t]he teaching of art for the purpose of achieving artistic goals is not emphasized. There

are several reasons which make the use of a medically-influenced approach to art

education undesirable. This approach to art education implies that the student with a

disability is "sick" and is in need of a cure. "Sickness" is associated with deviancy.

Deviancy implies a significant negatively-valued difference (Wolfensberger, 1979).

Within this model, goals and objectives of art education which are art oriented are

replaced, suppressed, de-emphasized, or become secondary to educational goals that

prescribe measures to compensate for, or eradicate negatively-valued behaviors or

characteristics associated with disability and deviancy. Consequently, the disabled

student, who is perceived as deviant and in need of "special" art education curriculum

goals, objectives, and learning activities, is likely to be segregated within the educational

system. (p. 9)

Often Blandy's views are in contrast with leading Art and Disabilities Studies researcher Doris

Guay (2006) who attempts to provide practical suggestions for art and generalist teachers for the

art classroom. His theories purport that many curricula and other publications that address the

art student with a disability, ignore or de-emphasize many recognized goals of art education

designed for non-disabled art students. In their research, Heydon and Iannacci (2008) see many

students as "pathologized" by the curriculum, that is, students "entering school spaces as people

with desires, experiences, world views, and mean-making abilities, [who are turned] into 'others'

who are seen as deficient and in need of curing" (p. 5). Art education for the students with

disabilities tends to concentrate on goals which attempt to compensate for behaviours and

characteristics associated with a diagnosed disability. Thus, the student receives a kind of

impoverished curriculum that is developed by a teacher who thinks he or she knows what a

student is capable of achieving in lieu of an "asset oriented curriculum" which Heydon and

Iannacci (2008) suggest is a positive approach towards curricula that begins from children's

knowledge (p. 5).

John Derby, (2011) an Art and Disability Studies researcher, observed that often studies

in joint fields of Visual Culture and Disability Studies resemble orthodox Special Education

discourses that largely ignore the first-hand perspectives of disabled students, teachers,

researchers, artists, and others. Disability Studies usually explore "the practices of teaching and

learning and focus on lived-experiences with the intention to disrupt, contest, and transform

systems of oppression" (Tavin, 2003, p. 198). This study directly examined the perspectives of

students with disabilities who have enrolled in inclusive Visual Art class settings to examine how

not only the physical environment to which Guay (2006) refers affected students but how the

Visual Art curriculum content and delivery engaged them in learning about art. Critical

Disabilities theorist David Hosking (2008a) states that, "traditionally, the voices of disabled

people have been marginalized: CDT centres their voices to produce narratives of disabled lives

to contest the too common attitudes that depreciate the value of the disabled life" (p. 1)

embracing rights for their inherent abilities. I acknowledge respondents' voices in order to gain

insight into their experiences to potentially adjust the curricula or its delivery to support students'

future engagement.

In summary, educators working in the domains of Visual Art and Special Education have

traditionally encouraged students to work through barriers and use their abilities to achieve to

their full potential. In order to review, evaluate and refine the curriculum and pedagogical

practices in the Art and Technology classroom(s) narrative inquiry is employed to delve into the

stories of former Visual Art students with Special Education needs. These participants act as key informants whose voices will be triangulated with my own reflections noted in journal entries about my teaching experiences and a review of literature in both related fields. In Chapter Two, I guide the reader through a review of literature focusing on literacy engagement theory, an examination of perspectives about people with disabilities, Universal Design for Learning concepts, and contemporary Visual Art pedagogy which helps to situate the research within the gaps of the literature.

Chapter 2

Review of Relevant Literature, Experience and Concepts

Yin (2003) states a researcher can "use [a] literature review to develop sharper and more insightful questions about the topic" (p. 9) and the potential research avenues. The question: What can art educators learn from students' stories of art education that would better enable art educators to enact a pedagogy that engages students with disabilities in the Visual Arts classroom? requires an investigation of literature that takes in a complex, interwoven tapestry of educational models in various domains. In this chapter, literature related to student engagement theories, art as a form of language, understanding views on disability, Universal Design and Universal Design for Learning, paraeducators/paraprofessionals, classroom organization, contemporary art pedagogy and teachers as learners in their own classroom is reviewed.

2.1 Student Engagement Theories

In order to comprehend the components of engagement theory and research the key question about art educators enacting a pedagogy that engages students with disabilities in the Visual Arts and Technology classroom(s), a review of engagement theory as it pertains to literacy and specifically to art curriculum is necessary. Literacy engagement theorists Tara Lynn Scheffel and Brian Cambourne delve into how students appear when they are engaged in classroom learning. In a later chapter, Visual Art educator Olivia Gude's contemporary themes, ideas and methods that help lead students to an engaged state in the Visual Art classroom are explored.

Scheffel (2008) investigated literacy engagement in primary classrooms. Scheffel probes into a variety of both dictionary and academic definitions of engagement concluding that engagement is as individual as the students in the classroom; it is complex and built on observations of students at work, with students' understandings at the forefront of varied paths that may be taken to engagement. She recognizes that individual perception of the classroom and how the student interacts with that environment is a central theme in her study of students' engagement. Scheffel states:

> The idea of engagement invokes more than a physical presence and visible involvement in learning. It is about how students are drawn towards or invited into a lesson and subsequently, also includes questions of which students or which moments lead to exclusion or rejection of this invitation. There is an element of interaction with another and the material itself as well as the understanding that perception influences another's assumptions about engagement. However this interaction may not always require the presence of another, also involving a type of self-engagement or reflexivity. (p. 222)

This self-engagement is intrinsic and propels the student forward in his or her learning. Scheffel deduces that students who are engaged as young learners will be more likely to remain engaged as they approach their high school years.

Cambourne (1988) presents a dynamic and evolving model for literacy learning called the *Conditions of Learning,* which can also be fostered and integrated across the curriculum content. His (1995) framework includes eight conditions that support both the student and the teacher in their discovery of learning and helps provide a context within which to learn. The conditions are (a) immersion, (b) demonstration, (c) engagement, (d) expectations, (e) responsibility, (f)

employment, (g) approximation, and (h) response. Cambourne states that students must be first *immersed* in the culture, knowledge and curriculum to make meaning of the curriculum content; they can then can use their own learning style to investigate it. He asserts that classrooms need to provide a range of contextually relevant *demonstrations* which are appropriate to the particular literacy task that a learner is trying to complete in order to pique their interest. Cambourne (1995) provides his readers with an analogy to illustrate his concept of *immersion*:

> The classroom is like a diner at a smorgasbord style dinner, a learner can move amongst what is being made available, sampling here and there, (metaphorically) nibbling at something which looks (cognitively) appetising, filling his (metaphorical plate) from those dishes (*demonstrations*) that best satisfy his needs at the particular time, ignoring those which have no appeal at the time but all the time knowing that there are plenty of dishes to which he can return again and again until his hunger is satisfied. (p. 50)

Now that the learner's appetite is whet, he or she can begin to engage in the learning process. Brain researchers Rushton, Eitelgeorge, and Zickafoose, (2003) posit that Cambourne's *Conditions of Learning* and brain principles are applicable to learners of all ages (p. 13) and when they are applied help foster a creative learning environment for students to develop their knowledge and grow as independent problem-solvers (p. 12). These *Conditions of Learning* help forward an understanding of engagement or disengagement in this study serving as a framework to further elucidate the participants' descriptions of events.

In the art classroom, the teacher can immerse the students in the world of the medium through gallery visits, a review of particular artists who employ the medium or diagnostic exercises. The teacher then demonstrates various technical possibilities with the chosen art

media so that students can learn about a medium's potential drawbacks and advantages.
Students can then explore their own selected themes with this newfound knowledge.

Cambourne contends that "[c]hildren need to be active participants in their learning".
Rushton, Eitelgeorge, and Zickafoose, (2003) have linked Cambourne's model to brain
development asserting that, "talking, discussing, sharing are critical ingredients for children in
their language development. Opportunities need to be provided that allow for both independent
and shared discussions and writing" (p. 14).

The teacher communicates the *expectations* to the learner in a variety of subtle ways
which directly affect the student's engagement. *Expectations* are messages which help to inspire
confidence in a student's abilities to be ultimately successful in whatever that pupil is trying to
master. Cambourne (1995) highlights the need for a positive tone in a teacher's *expectations*.
He suggests that if engagement is to occur, the text and the subtext of the oral and physical
communication should mirror the following ideas:

> I am extremely confident that you have the ability and the skill to eventually master the
> skills and/or processes that you and I and the rest of your peers in this class are setting out
> to master. Furthermore, I think that you are a worthy and likeable human being with
> many fine, unique and valuable qualities which make you a special person. I like you and
> value you and I will joyously receive and respond to the gains you make no matter how
> small. (p. 57)

This statement is important when considering the third supplementary question in this study
pertaining to what teaching strategies and routines help or hinder students' success in the Visual
Art and Technology classroom(s). The educator needs to set *expectations* high enough so as to

challenge students yet not be so elevated that they will not attempt a task for the risk of failure.
A positive set of expectations and confidence in the learners' abilities builds the bond between
the teacher and the students which in Cambourne's view is essential to active classroom
engagement.

Students can then master the content and take *responsibility* for their learning.
Cambourne (1995) proposes that responsibility means being given practice in making decisions
that are commensurate with one's state of knowledge and skills. He asserts that "learners
displaying a willingness to make decisions about learning independently of the teacher and
teachers trusting learners to engage with demonstrations which are made available and to select
from those demonstration what they, the learners, decide is necessary for time to learn or
experiment with at the particular time " (pp. 61-62).

The teacher needs to provide many opportunities with the skills learned so that the learner
can *employ* the learning. Providing experiences for a student to *approximate* the desired
outcome without fear of criticism is essential. The learner needs to possess the confidence to *use*
or try out the skills acquired as this trial "is open to public scrutiny by another" (Cambourne,
1995, p. 69). Cambourne states that "without the opportunity to *approximate*, the whole smooth-
running learning cycle is stopped and progress and/or refinement becomes impossible" (p. 69).

The concept of *approximation* is necessary in an art classroom where students should
first be furnished with the opportunity to manipulate a given medium before they are asked to
create a finished art work. They require a chance to experiment and play without reproach. In
this way they can ask for support and eventually gain confidence with the medium before
beginning more complex projects. Students will build their knowledge base by applying the

skills learned with one medium to other new media. For example, the experience of creating

tonal variation with pencil maybe transferred to generating tonal variations in acrylic painting.

Eitelgeorge, Rushton, and Zickafoose (2003) paraphrase Cambourne's *response* phase

suggesting that teachers are facilitators in the learning process. When the students create a

response with a learned skill it is also the teacher's role to circulate among the students in order

to provide constructive feedback or a *response* to the student's learning experience. From time

to time in an art class, students are asked to stand back from their work, self-assess it looking for

successes and areas of improvement. Opportunities to informally assess the art work by peers

are crucial to art making as much of what students produce will be seen by a public. This

ongoing self-reflection is a continuous part of the creative process and gives students the

opportunity to constantly better their skills and to reach the desired outcomes.

Cambourne's framework propounds four main principles to create an interactive and

dynamic experience between the learner and the content. The first focused on learners seeing

themselves as potential 'doers' of the demonstrated activities. The second, the skills or

knowledge being demonstrated furthered the purposes of the learners' lives and the third

considered the risk involved in attempting a demonstration. The fourth was that of a significant

teacher-student bond which influenced a student's willingness to engage. Engagement has

"more to do with the way they have been treated as learners rather than any inherent or deep-

seated weakness in their make-up" (Cambourne, 1988, p. 51) with a results-based goal without a

focus on measurement. This belief aligns closely with my own conviction that the teacher

should expect achievement from his or her students regardless of the students' developmental,

physical, intellectual or social states. In the art classroom co-creating rubrics and establishing

the criteria with specific "look-fors" sets the backdrop for students' success as they know what is expected of them and usually rise to the challenge if the assignment interests them. The conclusions of both Cambourne and Scheffel's research on literacy engagement can be aptly applied to the Visual Art and Technology classroom as the concept of art as a language is considered. An exploration of this notion is reviewed in the next section.

2.2 Considering Art as a Language

Cambourne's *Conditions of Learning* as they connect to literacy could be directly applied to a Visual Arts classroom if a substitution of "*art* or *visual language*" is made where Cambourne's term "text or language" is present. The *elements of art* including line, shape, form, space, texture, value and color and *the principles of art* including movement, unity, harmony, variety, balance, contrast, proportion, pattern and rhythm are in themselves the building blocks of a kind of text.

There are often comparisons between visual language and verbal language. In *Art is a Visual Language*, Paula Eubanks (1997) explores definitions of the term "language" as "signals or symbols with conventional meanings; a code or system that organizes the set of symbols; and the use of this system for communication" (p. 32). Eubanks (1997) contends that the symbols with conventional meanings are phonemes in verbal language, or the *elements of art* in visual language. The symbols and the code paired together create meaning, *semantics* in verbal language, or the *meaning* interpreted by the viewer in visual language. Another way of looking at verbal language is receptive and expressive language. Receptive language refers to the understanding of words used by others and decoding of verbal symbols. Comparatively viewers read and interpret the visual symbols encoded in art work as a visual language (p. 32). Eubanks

asserts that "[e]xpressive language refers to communicating ideas by speaking or writing, in effect, the creation of coded verbal symbols" (p. 32) while in "visual symbol systems in art the expressive component is the creation of visual symbol systems, the making of marks or objects that communicated ideas" (p. 32). Viewers read and interpret the visual symbols encoded in art work.

Another way to look at language is a verbal model which includes three overlapping components of language: *form*, *content*, and *use* (p. 32). In this model, one can consider form in verbal language to include sounds, words, and the way the words are arranged to achieve goals; the equivalent in visual language refers to the physical evidence of the artist's expression, described in terms of the *elements and principles of art* used to satisfy an artist's agenda or purpose. Content in language can be considered equivalent to meaning in the Visual Arts which is often embedded in symbols or the emotive qualities of colour. Some artists use and organize symbols with a conscious intent of creating meaning.

Differences between the visual and verbal languages are based on the extent to which they are codified: Broudy (1972) (as cited in Eubanks, 1997, p. 72) who views visual language as less codified than verbal language states, "The arts present us with images of feeling for which there are no dictionary save that of the totality of human experience". The codification of verbal language may change over the time but it is relatively stable. The codification of visual language has changed drastically in 300 years (Eubanks, 1997, p. 32). It is important to note that the codification of art cannot be as directly translated as English can to French because often significant meaning or symbols differ from one country to another as there is no system of correct application however, it can be "[a] code whereby ideas about the world are expressed through a conventional system of arbitrary signals for communication" (Eubanks, 1991, p. 31).

Eubanks (1997) asserts that we learn to read visual language, without formal instruction, earlier and more spontaneously than verbal language (p. 33) and understand words before they can say them. Expressive visual language in visual mark making does not normally occur before age 3-4. Mark making or drawing, the expressive component of the visual language is a step from the internal visual representation of ideas and feelings to the external visual representation of those ideas and feelings. Graphic symbol systems that develop have a structure similar to language and therefore, graphic symbol theory is often presented as analogous to language (p. 33). Children's drawings from different cultures share graphemes or universal units of visual form which like phonemes are assembled according to a syntax or a set of rules to form meaningful drawings.

Eubanks insists that art criticism has been helpful to learn to read because deciphering the code in art works is preparation for decoding the printed word (p. 34). Eubanks suggests a partnership between the art specialist and the classroom teacher might maximize the benefits of art criticism in developing verbal language and augment the potential for developing art as a means of communication, a cognitive pathway. All these similarities between art and language point toward the idea that art is a language and that it can move from the fringes of the curriculum toward the core of learning for students especially for those for whom language acquisition is difficult.

Paul Duncum (2001) Visual Culture theorist portends that contemporary art education itself has moved to the study of images all around us. He cites "[I]n the present intensely visual age, everyday life is visual culture" (Duncum, 2001, p. 103). Akin to a language, art and its extension can become a form of visual culture which we all possess and practice daily. Even literacy educators, who have long focused on words alone, now refer to multiliteracies where

language texts are related to audio, behavioral, and visual modes of making meaning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Researchers like Eubanks view the link between art and language through a social semiotic lens but, a review of art as a language through the perspective of Multiliteracy theorists presents another direction in the literature.

Cope and Kalantzis (2009) assert that traditionally, literacy teaching has confined itself to the forms of written language dominated by the book and printed page (p. 361). Some literacy educators like Sanders & Albers (2010) believe that the interconnected multimodality of the digital era has expanded the scope of conventional literacy teaching. "Literacy, no longer confined to communication through reading and writing of traditional printed text, has expanded and figuratively exploded, particularly within the past decade. Messages are now created, inscribed, sent, and received in multimodal ways steeped in the use of new technologies" (pp.1-2). Technological advances and changing cultural practices alter the way we view our world in the 21st century. Modes of meaning that were fairly separate in the past are now been integrated as hybrid and multimodal textual manufacture emerge (Cope and Kalantzis, 2009, p. 361). These researchers suggest that our everyday representational experience is intrinsically multimodal and that some modes are naturally close to others, so close in fact, that one easily melds into the others in the multimodal actualities of everyday meaning.

Sanders and Albers (2000) assert that young people immerse themselves in arts, multimodality, and 21st century literacies. Some see such engagement as problematic but Sanders and Albers see these actions as redefining the world of literacy and our most basic understanding of what it means to be literate (p. 2). Cope and Kalantzis (2000) suggest that written language, oral language, visual representation, audio representation, tactile representation, gestural representation, spatial representation should be included in a *pedagogy of*

multiliteracies. They affirm that each mode of meaning has the capacity to express many of the

same kinds of things and also have representational potentials that are unique unto themselves (p.

363) and therefore in this view in mind, art can be considered as a language:

1. Visual Representation: still or moving image, sculpture, craft (representing meaning
    to another); view, vista, scene, perspective (representing meaning to oneself);

2. Tactile Representation: touch, smell and taste: the representation to oneself of bodily
    sensations and feelings or representations to others which 'touch' them bodily. Forms
    of tactile representation include kinaesthesia, physical contact, skin sensations
    (heat/cold, texture, pressure), grasp, manipulable objects, artefacts, cooking and
    eating, aromas;

3. Oral Language: live or recorded speech (representing meaning to another); listening
    (representing meaning to oneself);

4. Audio Representation: music, ambient sounds, noises, alerts (representing meaning to
    another); hearing, listening (representing meaning to oneself);

5. Spatial Representation: proximity, spacing, layout, interpersonal distance,
    territoriality, architecture/building, streetscape, cityscape, landscape (p. 362).

Contemporary art works can employ a range of diverse audio and visual media in individual

stand-alone or installation pieces such as tactile media, film, and video. Sometimes these art

works simply involve the human form and its interaction in space or interactions with the

viewers around it. Such art works actively engage the viewer and are "intrinsically multimodal"

(Cope and Kalantzis, 2003, p. 363). Cope and Kalantzis (2009) portend that images work like language: "Actions expressed by verbs in sentences may be expressed by vectors in images. Locative prepositions in language are like foregrounding or backgrounding in images. Comparatives in language are like sizing and placement in images" (p. 363). Even written artists' statements and art critiques linked to visual objects offer modalities more akin to traditional written and oral language which Cope and Kalantzis (2003) argue is closely connected to the visual in its use of spacing, layout and typography.

Cope and Kalantzis (2009) explore parallelism contending that "you can do a lot of the same things in one mode that you can do in the next so that the starting point of meaning in one mode may become a way of extending ones representational repertoire by shifting from favoured modes to less comfortable ones" (p. 364). Cope and Kalantzis offer the example that if words don't make sense, the diagram might, and then the words start to make sense or conversely words make sense because the picture conveys meaning that words could not. Parallelism allows the same thing to be depicted in different modes, but the meaning is never quite the exactly the same. Cope and Kalantzis maintain that parallelism puts forth the idea that our bodily sensations are holistically integrated, even if in any particular moment we might be using one particular mode. These researchers name the psychological process of switching of representational modes to convey the same or similar meanings as *synaesthesia*. It is the representational parallels which make synaesthesia possible.

Peggy Albers (2007) discusses the psychological process of transmediation which is the means of moving what you know from one sign system (language) to another sign system (art). Because the units of meaning in various sign systems are not the same, moving across sign systems (transmediating one's knowing) can be very generative in that it unfreezes what was

thought known and opens up new spaces for discovery (p. x). Sanders and Albers' (2010) ideas concur with Cope and Kalantzis'(2009) and Albers (2007), "No one particular mode (written language, visual, gestural, music, digital and so on) carries the entire message. They also serve to demonstrate how 'entangled' literacy really is. That is, modes media, and language systems are in symbiotic relationship and offer humans the potential to express what they want to say in innumerable ways, forms and combinations" (p. 4).

Cope and Kalantzis allege that society is in the midst of a seismic shift in communications, from the world told through the medium of writing on the page of the book, magazine or newspaper, to the world shown through the medium of the visual on the screen. The interconnected multimodality of the digital era has changed the scope of traditional literacy teaching which "simply adds urgency to the call to consciously deploy multimodality in learning" (Cope and Kalantzis, 2009, p. 364). Art as a meaning making activity can move from the fringes of the curriculum toward the core of learning for all children especially for those for whom language acquisition is difficult, thus an expanded view of Visual Art as a multiliteracy requires immediate consideration; I look to multimodality theory and literacy student engagement theory as they relate to the Art and Technology classroom(s). Through my teaching experience, I see direct intersections between literacy engagement theory purported by both Cambourne (1995) and Scheffel (2008) and students' engagement in Visual Art classes. It is students' investment or divestment in the curriculum that I seek when analyzing the interviews with my participants.

2.3 Understanding Views on Disability

The review of literature moves from art as a language and multimodalities as they relate to literacy engagement theory, to the review of the appropriate language when referring to people with disabilities while investigating views about disability. According to Mobility International USA (MIUSA, 2012) it is very important to be aware of the language educators use when talking to, referring to, or working with the Disability community as disrespectful language can make people feel excluded and can be a barrier to full participation in activities. MIUSA (2012) suggests that if possible one should refer to the individual by his or her name. If a reference needs to be made regarding someone with a physical disability the terms "wheelchair user, physically disabled, person with a mobility or physical disability" (MIUSA, 2012) may be employed. The authors of *Disability Etiquette: Tips on Interacting With People With Disabilities* (2008) recommend putting the person first, "person with a disability" rather than "disabled person." It is prudent to say "people with disabilities" rather than "the disabled." If a certain reference to a specific disability is needed, say the "person with Tourette syndrome" or "person who has cerebral palsy"; the guide encourages the reader to ask the individual if one is unsure. The idea of appropriate language stems from Critical Disabilities Theory (CDT) which is a framework for the analysis of disabilities centering on disabilities and challenging the ableist, "deficit-oriented" (Heydon and Iannacci, 2008) assumptions which shape society. According to Hosking (2008):

CDT understands language to be inherently indeterminate and examines how language both reproduces and contests the social oppression of disabled people. Traditionally, the voices of disabled people have been marginalized: CDT centres their voices to produce

narratives of disabled lives to contest the too common attitudes that depreciate the value

of the disabled life. (p. ii)

CDT embraces rights for people with disabilities' potential. In the context of this thesis the

qualification of the vocabulary used to describe participants is imperative to keep their interests

in mind.

According to disability researchers Dubois and Trani (2009), the total number of people

with disabilities worldwide, known as the "prevalence of disability" is not accurately known.

The data collection to arrive at an accurate number remains a challenging, complex endeavour

given the various conceptual paradigms that define disability. Dubois and Trani maintain that

various theories and models compete for the definition of disability range from a "medical" view

to a "social" one. In the medical model, disability intrinsic to the individual is considered to be a

deviation from the physical norm which compares the quality of life and ability to actively

participate in society of the person with disability to that of the "normal functioning" (p. 195).

Prevalence is based on the number of individuals who are neatly assigned to the various

categories of impairment, which are viewed as limitations of the functions and structures of the

body. In this model, disability is therefore only experienced by a small number of individuals

and the power lies in the hands of professionals who can provide rehabilitation to them. The

disability phenomenon is "not considered part of general human experience" (p. 195) and does

not take into account the environment which usually has a significant impact on the well-being

of any individual.

The social model does not focus on a specific health condition and indeed rejects the idea

of impairment as a departure from an average level of human functioning which is considered to

be "normal" (p. 195). It looks at existing barriers which, within a social context, prevent a person with disabilities from achieving the same level of functioning as a non-disabled person. Dubois and Trani declare that the focus has shifted from a limited biomedical perspective to a wider perspective incorporating rights, justice, empowerment, and choice. The social model's goal is to redesign society in order to be more inclusive of people with disabilities mending the negative social attitudes disabled persons face in everyday life (p. 196) and adjust to their needs.

In both models, disability is related to the existence of an impairment understood as a health condition that differs from a benchmark health status perceived as "normal". "What distinguishes the two paradigms is that the social model identifies disability as a lack of adaption of the social environment whereas the medical model identifies it as a restriction of activity caused by impairment" (Dubois & Trani, 2009, p. 196).

A major step has been in reconciling both views focusing on the *disabling environment* or "the interaction between the individual and the environment in which he or she lives" (Dubois and Trani, 2009, p. 194). By considering this interaction between individual situations and collective resources and limitations, the issue of individual impairment is extended into that of social disability leading to The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) currently promoted by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2010). The ICF model (WHO, 2001), considers disability to be the result of a combination of individual, institutional, and societal factors that define the environment surrounding a person with an impairment or a "biopsychosocial" model (Hosking, 2008, p. 8). Environmental factors include physical environment, the social environment and the impact of social attitudes and personal factors which relate to the personality and characteristic attributes of the individual (Dubois and Trani,

2006, p. 6). This approach balances the contributions of impairment, personal responses to impairment and the barriers imposed by the social environment to the concept of disability. According to Hosking, disability is a complex inter-relationship between impairment, an individual's response to that impairment and the physical, institutional, and attitudinal (together, the 'social') environment. The social disadvantage experienced by disabled people is the result of the failure of the social environment to respond adequately to the diversity presented by disability (p. 7). The ICF defines the term functioning to mean, "all the body functions, activities and participation; disability is an umbrella term for impairments, activity, limitations and participation restrictions" (WHO, 2001, p. 3). Disability simply becomes a part of the general human experience and part of human diversity.

The very exploration of the narratives of people with disabilities in this study considers the inter-relationships between the students, the teacher, the physical space, and the curriculum in the classroom learning environment; it is therefore important to keep definitions of disability and appropriate language at the forefront. In the next section a review of aspects of the curricular delivery and the physical environment for all students as they are described in Universal Design and Universal Design for Learning theory are reviewed so that the experiences of the study's participants can be triangulated.

2.4 Universal Design and Universal Design for Learning

Visual Art students need to be able to manoeuvre around the classroom in order to fully engage with the range of diverse media presented. Not only the physical aspects of a Visual Art need to be considered but ways in which content is presented to students thus, a review of Universal Design and Universal Design for Learning concepts is imperative if one is to discuss

successful engagement of students in the Visual Art and Technology classroom(s). Ronald Mace (2011) of The Centre for Universal Design defines Universal Design (UD) as, "[the] design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible without the need for adaptation or specialized design" (p. 3). "Universal" implies that methods or designs are not specific to an individual or to one ability level but can support all people. Universal Design concepts first came about in architecture and product design which focuses on proactively removing barriers within the community to create access for all individuals. One example is automatic doors which facilitate those using wheelchairs to independently enter and exit buildings which also provide easier access for individuals carrying packages, using canes or pushing strollers.

The concept of "pure access orientation" (UDL Guidelines, 2011, p. 3) which considers the barrier-free design in the physical environment of the classroom, is paired with the instructional methods, materials and goals used by the teachers and the students.

> This scientifically valid framework is a guide to educational practice that: a. provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged; b. reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited in their English proficiency. (Higher Education Opportunity Act, 2008 cited in UDL Guidelines, 2011, p. 6)

UDL focuses on the entire educational process including how information is taught, which materials are used, how students engage in the learning activity and how progress is assessed

(Thomas, Bartholomew, & Scott, 2009, p. 9). It works on the premise that "individual variability is the norm, not the exception" (UDL Guidelines, 2011, p. 4). UDL recognizes that a goal of education in the 21st century is not simply the mastery of content knowledge or use of new technologies but the mastery of the learning process. "Novice learners" should be turned into "expert" learners that is, individuals who want to learn, know how to learn strategically, and who, in their own highly individual and flexible ways, are well prepared for a lifetime of learning (p. 4).

Bartholomew, Scott and Thomas (2009, p. 10) outline three practical Principles of UDL educators should consider when planning and implementing their curriculum:

Principle I.   Principle I, Provide Multiple Means of Representation also termed "recognition" (CAST, 2011) as they think about how students are expected to identify, interpret, or recognize the given information or the "what" of learning. Students diverge in their approach to comprehending the curriculum content. Those with sensory disabilities (e.g., blindness or deafness), learning disabilities (e.g., dyslexia); language or cultural differences, and so forth may all demand a different way of breaking down the same content. Ways to present "the what" include: visual and auditory means, hands-on activities, utilization of technology, utilization of multiple supports, links to other content and goals, multiple instructors and/or through student-driven preference.

Principle II.   Bartholomew, Scott and Thomas (2009) ask educators to examine Principle II, Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression or the "how" of students are expected to "express" (CAST, 2011) or communicate their understanding of "the what". Principle II acknowledges how learners differ in the manner in which they steer through the

content and articulate what they know. For example some students have the ability to present the content through written forms while others may be better at oral presentation. Bartholomew, Scott and Thomas provide a variety of strategies such as formal and informal assessments, group projects, students choosing from a menu of options, portfolios, application of technology, community-based projects, oral presentations, and products.

Principle III. Principle III, Provide Multiple Means of Engagement or the "why" of learning is the final principle in the framework. Principle III promotes the idea that one must consider the "variety of sources that can influence individual variation in affect including neurology, culture, personal relevance, subjectivity, and background knowledge (UDL Guidelines, 2011)" as well as an array of other factors which learners can "engage" in their learning. It asks: What are the interests of the students or what is the motivation/value in learning the information? This "engagement" (CAST, 2011) or motivation may come through independent work, cooperative learning, use of technology, station teaching, use of school resources and personnel, community-based instruction (Bartholomew, Scott and Thomas, 2009, p. 10). The authors of the UDL Guidelines assert that while spontaneity and novelty engages some learners others are disengaged, even frightened, by those aspects, preferring strict routine. Some learners might like to work alone, while others prefer to work with their peers.

All three principles must function in unison if an engaging curriculum is to be delivered. "True Universal Design requires that educators think deeply about what each lesson is about and the goals then guide how UDL is implemented" (Samuels, 2009, p. 130). UDL stresses that it is important for the educator to offer entry points for all students in the classroom. This study not

only explores how the three principles function together, but how the respondents' engagement experiences in Art and Technology classrooms are perceived.

UDL (2011) framework claims to help educators identify the barriers found in existing inflexible, "one-size-fits-all" curricula prevalent in schools and universities where curricula are designed to meet the needs of an imaginary "average" and do not attend to the reality of learner variability. Grounded in neuroscience research which says that our learning brains are composed of recognition, strategic, and affective networks which are necessary for learning, the three primary principles steer the UDL framework: "recognition to representation, strategic to action and expression, and affective to engagement" (UDL Guidelines, 2011, p. 11). UDL was in existence before research about brain functioning came to the fore but, Rose and Meyer (2002) interpret new research forging connections between neuroscience and the classroom. In brief they outline the interconnected networks of the learning brain:

Recognition networks are specialized to sense and assign meaning to patterns we see; they enable us to identify and understand information, ideas, and concepts. Strategic networks are specialized to generate and oversee mental and motor patterns. They enable us to plan, execute, and monitor actions and skills. Affective networks are specialized to evaluate patterns and assign them emotional significance; they enable us to engage with tasks and learning and with the world around us (2002, pp. 12-13)...These three networks share two common characteristics that have particular significance for learning: (1) processing is distributed laterally across many brain regions operating in parallel (enabling, for example, simultaneous processing of colour and shape); (2) Processing is hierarchical, enabling simultaneous processing of sensory information

entering low in the hierarchy ("bottom-up") and contextual influences entering high in the hierarchy ("top-down"). (p. 13)

Despite the fact that all brains share these general characteristics they differ considerably and understanding the functions of the recognition, strategic and affective networks can help teachers better understand students' needs. Rose and Meyer (2002) state that in the "learning brain there is not one global learning capacity, but many multifaceted learning capacities, and that a disability or challenge in one area may be countered by extraordinary ability in another" (p. 6).

In the early years, the organizers of UDL focused on helping individuals adapt or "fix" themselves – "overcoming their disabilities" (CAST, 2011, p. 3) in order to learn within the general education curriculum through the use of Assistive Technology (AT), compensatory tools (such as spell-check) and skill-building software. What they later realized is that these strategies obscured the critical role of the environment in determining who is or who is not considered "disabled". They had to ask how limitations in the environment "disable" learners? They realized that "the burden of adaptation should be first placed on curricula, not the learner. Because most curricula are unable to adapt to individual variability, we have come to recognize that curricula, rather than learners, are disabled, and thus we need to 'fix' curricula not learners" (p. 3). Curricula are frequently "devised for the fictional 'average', because such curricula do not account for learner variability" (p. 9) and not the actual students who present in educators' classrooms. Mainstream curricula are often designed to deliver narrative and expository content and remain largely constructed around print-based media rather than honing in on 21st skills learners need to comprehend, evaluate, synthesize, and transform information into usable knowledge that they can use in the future as they understand ongoing processes, relationships,

computations, or procedures in the real world. The UDL Guidelines (2011) suggest that disabled

curricula do not propound key concepts of evidence-based pedagogy such as "the ability to

highlight critical features or big ideas, the ability to provide relevant background knowledge as

needed, the ability to relate current skills to previous skills, the ability to actively model

successful skills and strategies, the ability to monitor progress dynamically, the ability to offer

graduated scaffolding, among others" (p. 9). A systematically designed plan considering the

goals, methods, materials, and assessments from the beginning addressing individual differences

is essential to transform inappropriate curricula; educators must intentionally plan with the end

result in mind.

In *Project Forum* (2007), Moherek-Sopko (2009) surveyed National Association of State

Directors of Special Education to determine the effective implementation of principles of UDL

in their respective education agencies. Moherek-Sopko concludes that conceptually, UDL

assumes that the physical structure of buildings, classrooms, equipment, and materials as well as

the technology infrastructure follow standard Universal Design guidelines (p. 110) but in the

classrooms many teachers teach in, this is not the case. Not all boards have the budgetary means

to retrofit classrooms to meet the UDL standards and small classrooms often have excessive

student numbers which are beyond set caps. What can be altered is a school staff`s outlook on

curriculum. Interviewees in Moherek-Sopko's (2009) study state that championing of UDL by

general education staff is essential for the effective integration of UDL in the schools (p. 117).

Moherek-Sopko's research participants assert that motivated, creative teachers who are willing to

take risks, be flexible, believe in the usefulness of UDL and expand concepts and practices by

working collaboratively are the key to successful implementation. Due in part to the use of

UDL, teachers in the study believe that student behaviour improves and students demonstrate a greater love of learning, are more engaged, have fun, and show excitement in learning.

A review of Universal Design for Learning is essential to consider the engagement for Visual Arts students due to the need to physically move around the classroom to draw from the range of media presented and fully partake in the curriculum content in order to produce art work. UDL considers the barrier-free design in the physical environment of the classroom. It asks the educator to consider how limitations in the environment "disable the learner". It is paired with the instructional methods, materials, goals and assessment of learned tasks used by the teachers and the students.   It works on the premise that "individual variability is the norm, not the exception" (UDL Guidelines, 2011, p. 4) and that in order to increase student engagement in the classroom, a range of accomodations might have to made.

2.5 Environmental Domains in the Visual Arts Classroom

Cambourne's framework for the *Conditions of Learning* (1988) provides a context within which both students and teachers can be engaged in learning itself. Art education and disabilities theorist Doris Guay (2006) offers educators a framework as it applies to students with physical disabilities in the Visual Art classroom environment. This section not only surveys Guay's (2003, 2006) research but reviews the literature of Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli, Evans, & McFarland (1997), Giangreco, Edeleman & Broer (2003), Guay & Gerlach (2009), Loesl (2006), Nevin Villa & Thousand (2009), Rose, Hasselbring, Sahl and Sabala (2009), Skär & Tam (2009) who through their inquiries help me to deepen the knowledge of Guay's framework. Guay (2006) lists, and names *Five Environmental Domains* as an approach to problem solving and

organizational strategy in the inclusive Visual Art class. These domains comprise the UDL idea that it is the environment that constrains learning. Guay's domains include:

1.   Students' Potential: students with disabilities where possibilities for self-monitoring, becoming more independent and responsible for personal actions are considered;

2.   Paraeductors/paraprofessionals: peers, paraprofessional, and other classroom assistants where possibilities for working cooperatively or collaboratively and co-teaching are considered;

3.   Classroom organization: student environment where room spaces and places including signs, visual installations, learning centers and each student's placement and personal space are considered;

4.   Art Curriculum Design: where goal orientation, flexibility, and differentiation are considered to meet the needs and interests of the diverse students;

5.   Teachers as Learners in Their Own Classrooms: where proactive problem finding, knowledge seeking, and understanding assistance are considered. (p. 10)

Guay's *Five Environmental Domains* serve as a way to organize the discussion in this thesis about both the physical classroom and some curricular aspects. A discussion about Guay's *Five Environmental Domains* and a review of what other art education and disabilities theorists have written follows in the next segment of the thesis.

   Students' potential. Guay (2006) asserts that the teacher as classroom leader can develop a clear vision of each student's learning potential.   The students are taught to share

responsibility for classroom routines and these expectations and responsibilities are monitored, reminded, and actively encouraged by the teacher, paraprofessional, and peers within the classroom. Cooperative and collaborative group processes are structured for participation by classmates (p. 10). These skills are further developed through positive physical and emotional classroom environment, supports and engaging Art curriculum which challenges students. Consideration of Cambourne (1988) Conditions of Learning and Sheffel's (2008) literacy engagement theory support this domain.

Paraeducators/Paraprofessionals. The definition of a *paraeducator* is someone who supports students with physical disabilities, academic, social or emotional difficulties. The question of who a paraeducator is and what he or she does in an Art classroom is essential in the review of literature for this study. Due to the Intensive Support Program (ISP) located at my school, there are usually several students with orthopedic disabilities in my art classes. Paraeducators are enlisted to support these students with studio art work processes. According to Nevin, Villa and Thousand (2009), a paraeducator is:

[a] school employee who provides instructional, safety, and/or therapeutic services to students. Paraeducators work under the supervision of a professional in a position that might have one of the following titles: teaching assistant, paraprofessional, aide, instructional aide, health care aide, educational technician, literacy or math tutor, job coach, instructional assistant, or educational assistant. The two most frequently used terms for describing a person in this role are *paraprofessional* and *paraeducator.* (p. 4)

The paraeducator or educational support person in the Art classroom can either act as an valuable resource to help instruct a classroom of students with a range of disabilities or can be an obstacle to students' successful artistic achievement and positive self-image.

Nevin, Villa, and Thousand (2009) claim that "children's voices are strikingly absent from the literature" (p. 8) about paraeducators who work with them. A 2001 study in northern Sweden by researchers Skär and Tam (2009) interviewed participants from age 8 to 19 years about their perceptions of their assistants: some perceived their assistant as a substitute for their parent (mother or father); others perceived their assistant as a professional or as a friend; and some interactions were perceived as unequal and ambivalent. All participants interviewed formed "distinct perceptions of their relationships with their paraeducators" (p. 4) articulating how the "ideal assistant" should work with them. The results of the study emphasize the importance of clearly defining and clarifying the roles of paraeducators for the paraeducators, the educators who supervise them and for the students they service.

The benefits of a paraeducator according to Guay and Gerlach (2006) are that he or she can support student learning carrying out individualized instructions, reinforce learning, implement teacher-designed management programs, and record data about students' performance (p. 192). Guay's (2003) research study examines paraeducators' roles in the art classroom lending understanding of how disability is defined and perpetuated by classroom interaction:

Without the paraeducators' assistance, many of the observed teachers [in the study] would have been overwhelmed by the demands of large, diverse groups of learners... Without the quieting, calming, assisting, reminding, and directing attention of a paraeducator, maintenance of any form of art instruction would have been quite difficult, dangerous, or

impossible in many of the observed art classrooms. With little or no assistance or intervention by art teachers, the observed paraeducators played the roles of teacher, nurse, friend, translator, and disciplinarian as the situation required. They retaught, reminded, reiterated, and mentored...With watchful eyes and open ears paraeducators protected students from a few unkind peers. They reprimanded for occasional teasing or putdown behaviors or for accidental or purposeful potentially harmful actions and explained constraints to intrusive or curious classmates. When chairs tipped or needed repositioning and when tools and media were put near mouths or eyes, paraeducators protected those [students] in their care. (p. 25)

Loesl (2006) reminds teachers that it is the paraprofessionals who may accompany students to many of their classes daily; these paraprofessionals have first-hand knowledge of the adaptations that have worked well in the past and about the students' general attitudes toward adaptations (p. 129). The physical presence of the paraeducator can add extra support for the teacher to survey and monitor classroom activities adding helpful assistance when necessary.

A drawback of a paraprofessional in the classroom is that they present an ambiguous situation for the students they support (Guay, 2003). On one hand, students with disabilities are included or integrated into the classroom learning the curriculum taught and gaining skills necessary for societal participation; on the other hand, even when the classroom organization would allow interaction and cooperation, the presence of a paraprofessional was an isolating factor as many students felt separated from typical students creating the antithesis of inclusion. In many classrooms the students were seated at tables with other students with disabilities so that a paraeducator could assist everyone without moving around a classroom. The paraeducator

retrieved their work, chose their supplies, and cleaned up after them (p. 35). Students with

disabilities were provided with few opportunities to communicate and participate in class

interaction.

In some settings, paraeducators rewarded inattentive behaviours with attention and

assistance, and teachers did not hold their students with disabilities accountable for assignments

(p. 34). Students learn that there is no reason to pay attention as they know that the

paraeducators will give them, step-by-step instructions about the assigned task including setting

up and cleaning up that other students were expected to do for themselves (p. 32).

Loesl (2006) cautions that art teachers should be conscious of the kinds of marks, images,

and movements that a student with a disability makes independently as opposed to the work done

by the education assistant. Sometimes by placing his or her own creative hands into the work

under the guise of 'supporting the student', the education assistant may inadvertently

communicate to the student that he or she cannot do or fully engage in the task presented. Guay

(2003) observed that sometimes the paraprofessionals worked on the students' art or created their

art for them (p. 32). Frequently a student's own mark making attempts were thrown away during

cleanup (p. 32). Guay comments that the inclusive or integrated art classroom paraeducator hid

or covered up, minimized or suppressed difference (p. 31) rather than adapting or differentiating

instruction to meet diverse student needs. Guay observed that in an effort to "have the work of

students with disabilities look more like teacher models or peer efforts, paraeducators commonly

imposed their aesthetic ideas or did the creative work for their assigned students. Choosing

iconology and design directions, adding to or changing student work, and even substituting their

own work for student work-with or without student knowledge-was common" (p. 32). The

paraprofessional's personal pride might be involved in the student's art as they feel that a completed, "first-rate" project somehow reflects his or her own work with the student. It is important to emphasize to the paraprofessional that the student must be allowed to discover, make mistakes, create by himself or herself, telling his or her own story with the medium rather than a paraprofessional completing the task to the paraprofessional's standards. In order to support the student, one thing is sure, both the teacher and the paraprofessional must actively communicate with the student about his or her artistic choices including colour, textural and tool selections. It is these choices that help to support the pupil's art-making process.

In her study Guay (2003) concluded that diminished student engagement, thought, and learning in art classrooms was a direct result of art teachers' reliance on the assistance of well-meaning but unprepared paraeducators. Guay states, "As individuals interact with each other, their definitions of situations, of things (including disability), and of each other, derive from, or arise from the social interaction that one has with one's fellows...meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process" (p. 22). The authoritarian interactive patterns of paraeducators that dominated most of the classes Guay researched defined students with disabilities as having few ideas or experiences, little or no knowledge or ability to solve problems and no opinions (p. 38).

Guay's (2003) interviews with paraeducators revealed that training outside of the classroom for their paraeducator positions was minimal or nonexistent; they provide instruction, yet, they generally have little or no formal training or preparation for their instructional or other roles (p. 25) and that sometimes well-meaning but generally untrained paraeducators can, "diminish learning, marginalize, and disempower students" (p. 20) or "can interfere with student

interactions, promote dependence, and limit choice making" (Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli, Evans, & MacFarland, 1997, p. 16). Guay (2003) asserts that one of the chief reasons why this occurred is that art teachers spoke minimally with paraeducators in their classrooms. Interactions between art teachers and paraeducators, when they did occur, were generally very brief, typically concerning techniques, processes, or media (p. 29). Particular responsibility falls on the art teachers who might feel a sense of relinquished leadership due to a feeling that they have little authority, responsibility, or ability to direct or manage an EA as their direct supervisors usually reside in Special Education departments. This may have occurred because teachers believed that the paraeducators knew the students with whom they worked and that they could not or should not intervene in paraeducator job behaviors (p. 34).

A Giangreco, Edelman and Broer (2003) study that collected data about the impact of school-wide paraeducator planning to improve paraeducator supports and implementation efforts on school personnel concluded that, "[T]eachers learned how valuable paraeducators could be by understanding their role" (p. 71); increasing awareness of their roles led to reports of more effective utilization of paraeducator supports (p. 71) as general educators were "more aware of the variety of ways they can utilize instructional assistants within the classroom" (p. 72).

Guay (2003) advises a variety of actions for art teachers in order to ensure positive results with students and alleviate misunderstandings with paraeducators. She advises that art teachers should "plan for students with disabilities; train and mentor parareducators; plan and carefully choose the tasks paraeducators will perform; monitor the interaction of students and paraededucators; and teach and provide feedback to students with disabilities in the same way we do our typical students" (p. 192). If this is done, the paraeducators can "feel more comfortable

and informed about the direction of instruction and thus, better able to encourage the student" (Giangreco, Edelman and Broer, 2003, p. 73). Paraeducators frequently consider themselves as "really teachers" because they instruct (Guay & Gerlach, 2006, p. 192) but ultimately, "it is the classroom teacher's role to direct the activities of the classroom, including the activities of instructional assistants in their charge" (Giangreco & Edelman, 1997, p. 16).

Guay (2003) insists that preservice art teacher education and inservice art teacher education must address the issues of: "1. How to train paraeducators to participate in the learning focus of Art classrooms; 2. how to use paraeducators in ways that allow more art teacher and peer interaction and more independence for students with disabilities; and 3. how to adapt instruction and assignments in ways that maintain the primary objectives for learning in art" (p. 37) in order to improve the climate of the Visual Art classroom and to provide equity for all.

The literature about paraprofessionals in the Visual Art classroom shows that open communication about roles and responsibilities is essential if successful art work and positive relationships are to develop between paraeducators, the students they are servicing, other students in the art classroom and the Visual Art and Technology teacher. The literature finds that the teacher needs to understand his or her leadership and supervisory role that is: to communicate thoughtfully developed objectives, to set parameters for the engagement of adult paraeducators in helping to teach individual students with disabilities and to recognize the needs of the particular students requiring additional support. In this study, the perception of the engaging encounters with content, the perceived roles, and the areas of need experienced by former students in the Visual Art classroom are gauged through the analysis of participants' narratives.

Classroom Organization. The literature indicates that the classroom organization needs to be carefully thought out by the Visual teacher as a large number of consumable items, and tools are used in the studio. A consideration of the: age of the students, class size, discipline of instruction (e.g. drawing, sculpture, printmaking), accessibility to the sink, placement of tools and media, storage of drying 2 or 3 dimensional work, availability of assistive technology and location of students' portfolios so that all students including those with orthopedic disabilities can readily access supplies if required. Sometimes a paraprofessional may be present in the classroom to help support students with disabilities while at other times the students are left to their own devices. Both Guay (2006) and Loesl (2006) provide a number of suggestions to art teachers for classroom practices and helpful suggestions for the organization of materials acquisition and maintenance when working with students with physical disabilities.

Loesl (2006) asks the reader to "consider the wheelchair as an extension of a student's person" (p. 115) and a path should be cleared for the student to the workspace, the materials and the cleanup station. If the classroom space is too small for moving around, the art materials and cleanup materials must be accessible on a table near where the student with the disability is sitting. If the student can get out of the wheelchair or uses a walker or crutches, a safe, accessible resting place agreed upon by the student and the teacher needs to be found.

Guay (2006) outlines classroom practices that enable students; the first practice is reinforced classroom expectations which become a routine to build a structure for learning. Based on her research, Guay concludes that children thrive in environments where the expectations are known, time is structured, and routines are well taught. A few minutes

reviewing expectations and preplanning goals with the student and the paraprofessional who may be present can save class time (p. 12).

The second practice is organizational predictability: the attention signals, supply distribution, movement in the classroom, and cleanup expectations that remain consistent encourage independence and enable success. Guay asserts that stable organization and access to labeled, orderly drawers, shelves, and cabinets becomes a catalyst for self-reliance and creative thought (p. 12) so that art production is uninhibited.

The third practice is "Group Share" which involves open-ended or thought-provoking questions of critical inquiry, aesthetics discussion, and peer critique (Guay, 2006, p.12). The teacher should organize small group discussions which enable students to dialogue amongst themselves and to learn from one another and about each other as these types of settings are less stressful than having to respond in front of an entire class.

When designing a learning environment for exceptional students, Assistive technology (AT) is another consideration in the literature. Rose, Hasselbring, Sahl and Sabala, (2009) argue that UDL and AT are complementary initiatives that support the learning of all individuals; "technology is just a means to an end" (p. 133). These authors define AT as devices which, "increases, improves, or maintains the functional capabilities of students with disabilities" (p. 137). Low–tech AT like canes, wheelchairs, and eyeglasses have been available for a century but high-tech AT has come about over the last two decades and has impacted education. The latest technology includes: electronic mobility switches, alternative keyboards for individuals with physical disabilities, computer screen enlargers and text-to-speech readers for individuals with visual disabilities, calculators and spell-checkers for individuals with learning disabilities

(p. 135). These high-tech options are assisting individuals in overcoming barriers to educational access, participation and progress.

According to the literature, a consideration of both the individual student's needs and the physical environment are essential when considering an Art classroom which promotes active learning and growth. The organizational practices for supply and tool management, teaching the pre-knowledge of routine, encouragement of social interaction in "Group Share" and assistive technology in the classroom, all link back to a functional UDL environment which supports positive *Conditions of Learning* (Cambourne, 1995) in the classroom.

Art Curriculum Design. A careful, thoughtful approach to the themes, subject matter and media is needed in order to engage students in the contemporary Visual Art classroom. Lowenfeld's (1957) initial research in art education perceived the value, the efficacy of creative art experiences in working with handicapped individuals. He felt all of one's senses should be actively used in life (Michael, 1981, p. 7). Siegesmund (1988, p. 212) asserts that through art taught as a "realm of feeling, sensory concepts, and exquisitely varied forms of human representations" students become reasoning perceivers having greater "knowledge of the world". Kinaesthetic sensibility or the "haptic touch" (Bowen, 2006) intrinsic in working with artistic media is vital to the engagement of exceptional students. The very nature of the diverse and media such as clay, felt, plaster, silkscreen, pastel, wire, ink, paint are exclusive to the Visual Art classroom and assist in giving students an opportunity which is unparalleled in comparison with the curriculum of other academic areas. These media engage the five senses. Consider for example the 'earthy' odour, the terra cotta colour, the sticking sound it makes as one wedges clay on a table, and the cool, wet feel, sight and taste left in an artist's mouth after several hours of working in a dry clay studio. The plethora of media coupled with subject matter relevant to teens

explored in the Art room can most definitely appeal to diverse range of students. Smith (1979),

the founder of the "Washington Lab School", described the body-kinaesthetic value of the Arts

for students with learning disabilities. Her model uses art-infused academic coursework to

address the specific neurological passageways in the brains of students with learning disabilities.

She states:

> The arts lend themselves to the imaginative use of concrete materials and experiences to
>
> teach abstract ideas. Neural immaturity makes it very hard for the learning disabled child
>
> to grasp abstractions. He has to be introduced to them through his body, through objects
>
> and pictures, and then through symbols. The arts offer opportunities to strengthen visual,
>
> auditory, tactile, and motor areas. Through the arts, a child can order his world, make
>
> sense of what he knows, relate past experience to the present, and turn muscular activity
>
> into thought and ideas into action. (p. 130)

Using such a wide range of media necessitates time to experiment to ascertain the unique

properties inherent in each material so that students may craft work formulated in their minds'

eye. Newmann, Whelage & Lamborn (1992) assert that, "Learning can be hard work, but to

sustain engagement, the tasks should also provide opportunities for lighthearted interaction, for

play-like and imaginative activity. Fun reduced the distress of intense pressure to succeed and

the boredom of unchallenging, but perhaps necessary routines" (pp. 27-28) in the classroom. In

her article *The Principles of Possibility*, art educator and researcher Olivia Gude (2007) develops

contemporary art engagement strategies suggesting, "that learning begins [with a] deeply

personal, primary process of play. Such play must be truly free, not directed toward mastering a

technique, solving a specific problem, or conscientiously illustrating a randomly chosen

juxtaposition" (p. 1). Gude (2007) portends a series of best practices called *Post-modern Principles* which help to engage youth in art programs. Recently she has renamed these as *Post-Post-Modern Principles* (O. Gude, personal communication, July 4, 2013). She asserts that a defined Visual Art curriculum is erroneous as, "[N]o one can sensibly claim to give a definitive answer to questions such as "What is art?" or "What is Art education?" as art by its nature is "an open concept that is always evolving and changing" (Gude, 2007). Art has always developed from the social, cultural, economic issues from the society in which it was created and that issues are often meaningfully interwoven into the Visual Art curriculum.

Gude (2006) says that her *Post-modern Principles* articulate the most important goals of 20th century art education but restates them in terms of 21st-century theoretical perspectives underscoring a sense of agency (p. 11) that is a way to structure a quality Visual Art curriculum which investigates big questions about the uses of art and other images in shaping our interactions with the world around (p. 7) including: *Forming Self, Investigating Community Themes, Encountering Difference, Attentive Living, Empowered Experiencing, Empowered Making, Deconstructing Culture, Reconstructing Social Spaces,* and *Not Knowing.* For example, through using the process Gude terms as *Not Knowing*, pupils will not only learn how to play with physical artistic media but engage in playing with ideas. Through analysis and questioning of representations of constructed "realities" prevalent in their society's language and images, they can formulate their own creative and responses. Like Gude, Guay (2006) asks art educators to "enable students to become mindful of their lived experience by learning to think about what they see in world of art and in the mass media, by enabling them to ask whether the images are true representations of the social world and if not, why not (p. 11)?"

The literature finds Gude (2007) underlines that moving to 21ˢᵗ century art education students become familiar with, and are able to use the languages of multiple art and cultural discourses, and are thus able to generate new insights into their lives in contemporary times. These abilities to investigate, analyze, reflect, and represent are critical skills for citizens of a participatory democracy (p. 10) to feel confident with their explorations and increase classroom engagement. Gude assures the reader that the "list is structured, not according to principles of form, media, or disciplines, but from the respondents' viewpoints, imagining what important ideas about the uses and making of art we want students to remember as significant" (Gude, 2007, p. 7).

In Gude's (2004) Chicago, Illinois studio called the Spiral Workshop, her team focuses on three criteria in their curriculum: "a. curriculum based on generative themes that relate to the lives of students and their communities; b. studio art projects based on diverse practices of contemporary art making and related traditional arts; c. art as investigation-understanding the art of others and seeing their own art making, not as exercises, but as research that produces new visual and conceptual insights (p. 8)". She wants to provide a loose framework that teachers can use to create meaning-making experiences to empower their students yet feel free to change activities based on students' engagement needs.

Gude (2006) strongly believes that quality arts-based education in the 21ˢᵗ century will include a wide range of technical, theoretical, and cultural perspectives. She purports that a Visual Arts curriculum that is focused on understanding the role of artists, artistic practices, and the arts in reflecting and shaping history is far more engaging than one that focuses on incorporating objectives related to formal properties, analytic techniques, or media processes into

these larger themes. One thing all curricula should have in common is that they, "investigate big questions about the uses of art and other images in shaping our interactions with the world around us" (Gude, 2007, p. 6). Gude (2004) asks: What do our students need to know to understand the art of many cultures, in the past and in the 21st century? What knowledge do the students need today to stimulate and increase their creative powers? In order for students to ask probing questions and make meaningful art work, Gude (2004) proposes a series of 21st century art making techniques: *Appropriation, Juxtaposition, Recontextualization, Interaction of Text & Image, Layering, Hybridity, Gazing, Representin'* (pp. 9-12). She articulates that a basic tenet of postmodern theory "is suspicion of what are called totalizing discourses and grand narratives— the belief that there is one right way to organize and understand things" (2004, p. 12).   In true postmodern and even post-post modern fashion, these principles are not a set of discrete entities, but are rhizomatic. (p. 11) because they overlap and crisscross; are messy and complex. Gude asserts that, "Postmodern thought embraces the heterogeneous, the local, and the specific. It affirms the choice-making capacity of individuals who select from the past those things that will best serve them as starting points for today" (p. 13). Educators and students will make choices based on the history and present issues of each school community shaping contemporary cultural conversations which engage students in the Visual Art classroom. Gude's *Principles of Possibility* closely align with Cope, Kalantzis, Harve's (2003) beliefs that "effective learners will increasingly need to be autonomous and self-directed, flexible, collaborative, of open sensibility, broadly knowledgeable, and able to work productively with linguistic and cultural diversity" (p. 16) in a 21st century knowledge economy.

Education researchers Douglas and Gaspardi (2001) promote "Teaching for Artistic Behaviour" (TAB) which involves choice-based Art education. TAB provides both a philosophy

and a practical structure for instruction to be given in the context of work chosen by students. Students take on the role of the artist and are challenged to create images and structures that reflect their lives and interests. The real work of artists is to have an idea and find the best medium to express it, or to use a material that leads to an idea (Douglas, Gaspardi, 2010, p. 1). In order to meet the artistic and learning needs of their diverse students, TAB teachers use principles like those of Universal Design for Learning (2011) UDL which lead to intrinsic motivation.

Speaking about contemporary art education curriculum and students with special needs, Guay (2006) asserts that art takes students into the world in different ways. It takes them beyond the classroom and provides them with opportunities to learn about the place or function of art making in a diverse world (p. 11). Guay contends that contemporary art education looks upon student art-making processes as means for students' stories to be told, communities celebrated, ideas revealed, values considered, and concerns communicated (p. 11).

The environment of an art classroom can be one where the teacher can promote and encourage individual expression and creativity as there is no set "right" or "wrong" answer when creating art work. In fact researchers Graham and Goetz Zwirn (2010) describe distinctive dispositions associated with learning in the arts called "studio habits of mind" which include developing craft, attending to relationships, and developing the abilities to observe, envision, express, reflect, explore, and understand contemporary art practice and critique (p. 220). They assert that, "The studio can be a refuge, a place to have conversations, and a place to work on things students and the teacher care about" (p. 219). A welcoming atmosphere can support

engagement for a diversity of learners who can delve into pertinent meaning-making ventures in their creative and personal work. Discussing engagement, Gerber (2011) asserts:

> Art education is different. Learning differences are not a negative—in fact, they generate more creative possibilities. Studio art lessons have encouraged individual creativity and problem solving and allowed students to tell their own stories through art. Art is relevant to them. Children and adults learn best when a subject is relevant to them. Art teachers have provided a personal educational oasis for students with special needs for as long as art teachers have been teaching...long before we heard the works 'mainstreaming' and 'inclusion'. (p. 4)

In short, the curriculum and the atmosphere of the Art and Technology classroom can be a welcoming one that provides a place for students to explore their thoughts about the world around them through a wide range of technical, theoretical, and cultural perspectives. Given this vast array of media and broad based topics students can engage in meaning making experiences creating imagery which they envision their minds' eyes. "Studio habits of mind" encourage the development of craft, an attention to relationships, development of communicative, artistic abilities and provide an opportunity to critique the world in a safe way and help to shape contemporary cultural conversations which engage students in art making. The Visual Art classroom is a place where students with disabilities can learn that difference can be valued and not deterred.

Teachers as Learners in Their Own Classrooms. Guay (2006) propounds that teachers continually see themselves as learners in the classroom. Pondering teachers' role in the art classroom, Weitz and Suggs (2000) also propose that we "might first ask: Do we know enough

about ourselves and art? Are we prepared to be lifelong learners?" (p. 133). They suggest that, "[i]nertia or fear may threaten our quests for knowledge but stimulation, accomplishment, and professional authenticity are our rewards" (p. 133).

Guay (2006) supports the idea of teachers as lifelong learners and suggests that teachers need to attend in-service workshops to learn about students with special needs (p. 11) seeking out peers and Special Education educators to support them. Chalmers (1996) states, "Rather than viewing teachers as transmitters of huge bodies of knowledge, we should see them as leaders and facilitators who are able to focus on the process and assist students in their investigation and understanding of commonalities in the functions and roles of art across cultures" (p. 38). The teacher can also demonstrate his or her alter ego of an artist who actively makes or brings his or her art work into the classroom.

Another part of teachers as learners in their own classrooms is leadership and advocacy. Guay (2006) purports that many in the general public do not understand the arts and their potential impact on the individual and society so we must showcase student accomplishments and annotate students learning in audience-directed news venues, installations, and exhibits (p. 12). Ed Check (2000) attempts to expand notions of the teacher which allow student agency and voice. Check looks to Freire's (1970) "problem posing" model which focuses on student-generated learning or active agents in their own learning. Check (2000) maintains that students' interests, life experiences, and knowledge form the backbone of the curriculum (p. 139). He asserts that, "good teaching is about complexity where power, history, community, agency, and identity converge" (p. 139). Understanding the possibilities, advocacy for students with disabilities, advocacy for art learning, and advocacy for access to art programs are essential tasks

for teachers, individually and with one another. Teachers need to connect with others to share stories, and listen to the stories and proposals of others to consider alternative policies and practices among peers sharing with society at large. To promote student advocacy about contemporary issues the literature finds that teachers need to be well-read and aware of current trends in the media so that they can speak to students about what interests them; this requires continuous learning. Art educators should acknowledge that both our challenges and our solutions constantly evolve in their thinking.

This review of literature explored literacy engagement, a consideration of art as a language, Disability Studies, Universal Design and Universal Design for Learning principles, environmental domains in the Visual Arts Classroom and contemporary art curriculum theory. Cambourne's (1995) and Scheffel (2008) literacy engagement theories serve as a grounding for engagement in the Visual Art and Technology classroom if one argues that art is a language within semiotic theory if we consider a pedagogy of Multiliteracies (Cope and Kalantzis, 2009) including: written language, oral language, visual representation, audio representation, tactile representation, gestural representation, spatial representation. A brief examination of views on disability through an exploration of the medical model, the social model and a model integrating the two viewpoints was explored. This led to a review of the importance of *Universal Design for Learning* concepts in the classroom in order to avoid delivering an impoverished curriculum for students with disabilities. Gude's (2008) 21st century art theories highlight "students' capacity to make meaning in their art work" (p. 98) through art making, viewing art and critically analysing art work and visual culture around them is imperative if students are to be fully engaged in the Visual Art curriculum. Consideration of how to accommodate or to modify for students with physical disabilities in the Visual Art classroom is essential for the teacher of an

inclusive classroom. A review of studies involving paraprofessionals in the art classroom was included as a paraprofessional can be integral to the smooth running of daily studio activities. All of these topics are integral to this study which listens to the voices of exceptional students to inform art pedagogy.

Chapter 3

Methodology, Methods and Data Sources

3.1 Why Narrative Inquiry?

With key concepts of researchers brought to the fore in the review of literature, I now move to discuss the methods, methodology and data sources employed in this study. In order to investigate the key question – what can art educators learn from students' stories of art education that would better enable art educators to enact a pedagogy that engages exceptional students in the Visual Arts classroom? the rationale for using narrative inquiry methodology is highlighted.

Schwandt defines narrative inquiry as an interdisciplinary study of the activities involved in generating and analyzing stories of life experiences (e.g., life histories, narrative interviews, journals, diaries, memoirs, autobiographies, biographies) and reporting that kind of research (2007, p. 20). According to Bach (2008), the philosophical underpinnings of narrative inquiry are situated in John Dewey's (1938) views of experience. For Dewey, humans are not simply "subjects" or "isolated individuals" they are originally and continually tied to their environment, organically related to it, changing it even as it changes them; they are deeply attached to what surrounds them. The study is rooted in the idea that listening to participants' experiences and taking their "personal biographies" (Rich, 2010, p. 14) or ways of being into account is vital to understanding their perceptions of happenings in the Visual Art and Technology classroom(s).

Knowing that narrative inquiry is, "a way of understanding experience" (Clandinin & Connnelly, 2000, p. 20) brings about the question of who constructs, records, draws conclusion and prepares reports about this narrative? Clandinin and Connelly assert that narrative inquiry is "collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or

series of places, and in social interaction with milieu. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social" (p. 20). The researcher must acknowledge that "the stories are created for the researcher; influenced by the way the teller has understood the purpose of the study, his or her aims in telling the story and interpersonal interaction. When narratives are collective the researcher influences them in the documentation; in interviews the researcher's influences are more prominent for the data is embedded in the interactions" (Hibbert, 2013). The narratives become creative productions that stem from the researcher's cognitive processes for recognizing patterns and similarities in texts (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 483). The philosophical hermeneutics approach of a narrative inquirer which holds that the "interpreter" encounters a text from within his or her "prejudices" is used. Interpretation is like a conversational dialogue through which meaning is a product of interaction. The philosophical hermeneutic position holds that one cannot transcend one's own historical and situated embeddedness; thus, textual interpretations are always perspectival (Pokinghorne, 2007, p. 483). According to Dodge, Ospina and Foldy (2005) narrative inquirers do not claim to document reality, but to capture individual interpretations of reality as well as shared social constructions among a given community (p. 289).

As a Visual Art and Special Education teacher, I realize that I have developed a relationship with some of the participants. Through journal entries I not only reflected on my observations in participants' interviews but on my own involvement in their lived-experiences. Ellis (2004) contends that narrative researchers may focus an investigation on their own personal experiences or stories in order to look at how these reflect, and also resist, larger social or

cultural patterns or interpretations. They may use the 'self' as a means to reflect on their

research of 'others', and they may use other people's experiences to reflect critically on their

own (p. 48).

Through a triangulation of sources I attempted to do as Polkinghorne (2007) suggests of

narrative research and extend understanding of a story by contextualizing it, developing

implications by comparing and contrasting assembled stories with one another and with other

forms of social science literature (p. 483) "fashioning a kind of scholarship that seeks to practice

a deep fidelity to the possibilities of societal and individual transformation, resistance and living

life differently" (Smith and Sparks, 2008, p. 19). By listening to and sharing the participants'

narratives I hope I can connect with educators to work to change existing barriers in the

classroom in order to adjust behaviours promoting and increasing students' success.

Josselson (2010) underscores that narrative research is not generalizable to populations

but rather highlights the particularities of experience. She asserts that often narrative researchers

try to place individual narratives in a broader frame, considering their conclusions with the work

of others with related concerns (p. 875). Polkinghorne (2007) declares that interpretative

analysis of storied texts deepen the reader's understanding of the meaning conveyed in a story

acting as a commentary that uncovers and clarifies the meaning of the text (p. 483).   Those

reading the narrative research are urged to utilize what they have learned relating the findings to

experiences in their own lives. Hibbert (2013) maintains that openings for social change emerge

by giving voice to marginalized groups, representing unusual or traumatic experiences that are

not conducive to control group designs, and by investigating the ways in which social life (and

attendant oppression) is mediated through meta-narrative. Smith and Sparks (2008) too affirm

that narratives have the potential to investigate agency and structure (p. 18). Another "special characteristic of narrative inquiry is that it appears to inhabit both social science and artistic spaces" (Blumenfeld-Jones, 2006, p. 25). I used the narrative paradigm outlined by Gabriela Spector-Mersel (2010) as a structure to guide the questioning strategies and analysis of the narratives presented.

3.2 Narrative Framework of Gabriela Spector-Mersel

Spector-Mersel is a narrative researcher who collects data about people in contexts of culture, gender and life stories. She promotes narrative inquiry as a paradigm. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994) a paradigm is the basic belief system or world view that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways. Spector-Mersel's (2010) paradigm grows from the ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions of Connelly and Clandidnin (1998a) who believe that "a font of information can be learned from narratives" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxii). Spector-Mersel (2010) highlights six major dimensions of her narrative paradigm which she uses to organize her research: ontology, epistemology, methodology, inquiry aim, inquirer posture, and participant or narrator posture.

Ontology. Ontology examines the form and nature of reality, that is: What kind of being is the human being? What is the nature of reality? (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). This is the "storied nature of human conduct" (Sarbin, 1986 cited in Spector-Mersel, 2010, p. 211) which maintains that social reality is primarily a narrative reality. Spector-Mersel (2010) declares that "narrative understanding emphasizes the central place of stories in our existence" (p. 211).

Epistemology. From an epistemological perspective, that is, one that questions what is the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 108), the narrative paradigm shares underlying assumptions with the constructivist paradigm, where we understand ourselves and our world by way of interpretative processes that are subjective and culturally rooted (Spector-Mersel, 2010, p. 212).

Methodology. Methodology asks the question: How do we know the world or gain knowledge of it? (Spector-Mersel, 2010, p. 209). Spector-Mersel maintains that qualitative researchers employ an extensive array of: (1) materials that serve as data; (2) methods of collecting or producing these materials; and (3) methods of analysis and interpretation (p. 213). She contends that narrative methodology differs from other qualitative methodologies mainly in the first and third aspects. Since social reality is considered a narrative reality, the research materials are the stories collected corresponding with narrative ontological and epistemological aspects. Spector-Mersel points out that if social reality is a narrative reality, then narratives are the "natural channel for studying it" (p. 217) professing that the researcher is not "the exclusive owner of truth but as contributing to the understanding of a kaleidoscopic reality" (p. 217) and thus the research report is always a partial version of the reality. The researcher's narrative is not more correct or true than the participants' or alternative interpretive narratives. This aligns with Pinnegar and Daynes' (2007) consideration of "way[s] in which narrative inquiry allows wondering, tentativeness, and alternative views to exist" (p. 25).

Inquiry aim. Considering the inquiry aim, I use the interventionist approach to narrative in research, that is, to "endeavor to develop practices based on narratives as a tool in improving teaching, advising or mental treatment, as demonstrated by the uses of stories in therapeutic settings (Spector-Mersel, 2010, p. 216). My aim is "to 'give voice' to marginal populations by

publishing the narratives told in research" (Spector-Mersel, 2010, p. 215) knowing that I am an interpreter of their stories. Advocacy and activism are part of the narrative process as the researcher "is cast in the role of participant and facilitator in this process" (p. 215) as the narrative paradigm "maintains that researchers and the phenomena they study are inseparable". It considers the relationship between the "known and the knower" or "reality as it is" and the researcher "discovering" it (p. 216).

The inquirer's voice is that of a "passionate participant" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 114) actively engaged in facilitating the "multi-voice reconstruction of his or her own construction as well as those of all other participants". Lincoln and Guba assert that change is facilitated as reconstructions are formed and individuals are stimulated to act on them (pp. 114-115) creating praxis (Freire, 1970). From a constructivist viewpoint, the inquirer is an "orchestrator and facilitator of the inquiry process and values in inquiry are not to be avoided, changed, or resisted. Excluding them would not be tolerated" (p. 114) as the inquirer's aim is uncovering and improving constructions (p. 115).

Inquirer Posture. The inquirer is cast in the role of participant and facilitator in this constructivist inquiry process (Guba and Lincoln 1994, p. 113). Spector-Mersel suggests that an interactive voice aims at expressing the mutual influence between the researcher's and the narrators' voices, focusing on the researcher's interpretations and personal experiences (2010, p. 218). The aim of a constructivist inquiry is "understanding and reconstruction of the constructions that people (including the inquirer) initially hold, aiming toward consensus but still open to new interpretations as information and sophistication improve (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 113). Everyone formulates more informed and sophisticated constructions and becomes more aware of the content and meaning of competing constructions leading to advocacy and activism.

Readers glean information from the resulting narrative text which includes both the data from the

research and the researcher's interpretations. [1]

3.3 Participant/Narrator Posture

Often the focus of narrative inquiry is to collect stories of lived-experience (van-Manen,

1990). Narrators are at the centre of narrative inquiry, however, not as informants, but as active

agents inseparable from the phenomenon under inquiry. "If we wish to hear respondents' stories,

then we must invite them into our work as collaborators, sharing control with them, so that

together we try to understand what their stories are about" (Mishler, 1986, p. 249). Democratic

relationships are developed with participants who share control over the various aspects of the

inquiry with the researcher which is marked in writing the final research report as most narrative

researchers inform their participants of their reports' drafts, asking for their agreement and often

for their comments (Spector-Mersel, 2010, p. 217). Spector-Mersel's approach follows a

narrative ontology that emphasizes a holistic nature in four major ways: first adopting a

multidimensional and interdisciplinary lens; second treating the story as a whole unit; third

regard for form and content; and fourth attention to contexts (Hibbert, 2013).

3.4 Validity

Narrative research makes claims about the meaning life events hold for people. It makes

claims about how people understand situations, others, and themselves (Polkinghorne, 2007, p.

476). David Polkinghorne asserts that the validity of the story is attested to by its rich detail and

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[1] Summarized from Spector-Mersel, G. (2010). Narrative Research: Time for a paradigm. *Narrative Inquiry*, *20* (1), iii, 204-224. doi:10.1075/ni.20.1.10spe

revealing descriptions (p. 483) it provides for the reader. The interpretation and the validity of the narrative are often questioned by the reader who brings his or her own experiences, "background beliefs and assumptions" which help to ascertain what they accept as legitimating evidence and sound reasoning (p.475). Polkinghorne postulates that the reader must be convinced of the believability of the statement or knowledge claim by the author who knows that validity judgments do not yield simple acceptance or non acceptance responses. Instead, they are about the likelihood or probability that the claim is so (p. 477) and can serve as a basis for understanding of, and action in, the human realm (p. 476).

Dodge, Ospina and Foldy (2005) affirm that narrative inquirers do not make a claim to "capturing or reflecting the exact record of what has taken place, only a person's or community's understanding of [his or her or their] reality" (p. 295). They continue that "rather than testing the validity of a particular construct or set of relationships against an objective reality, we assess their authenticity—to the individual or to community involved, as well as to other readers". Polkinghorne asserts that the confidence a reader grants to a narrative knowledge claim is a function of the cogency and soundness of the evidence-based arguments presented by the narrative researcher (pp. 484-485).

In his article *Validity Issues in Narrative Research* (2007) Polkinghorne insists that "validation of claims about understandings of human experience require evidence in the form of personally reflective descriptions in ordinary language and analyses using inductive processes that capture commonalities across individual experiences" (p. 475). "A statement's validity rests on a consensus within a community of speakers" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 474); in this research, individuals who have some form of a physical disability and have succeeded in passing a Visual Arts course become the community of speakers. Questions are being asked about events which

occurred in Visual Art and Technology classrooms to learn about what they remembered and how they felt about the experience; what they deemed was helpful or not helpful; and what advice they would give to educators to improve future instruction.

Polkinghorne cites four possible threats to the validity of interview-generated evidence declaring that "stories are simulations of participants' meaning, and not the meaning itself" (p. 482). The first vulnerability is the limit of language to capture the complexity and depth of experienced meaning in course of an interview (p. 480). Description of the experience itself is simplified as it is usually more intricate in its internally felt meaning than can be articulated in language (p. 481). The second is the limits of reflection to bring notice to the layers of meaning that are present outside of awareness (p. 480). Experienced meaning is not simply a surface phenomenon that can easily be shared; it permeates through the body and psyche of participants and participants can only articulate the portion of meaning that they can access through reflection (p. 481). The third vulnerability is the resistance of people because of social desirability to reveal fully the entire complexities of the felt meanings of which they are aware (p. 480). People are often resistant to revealing self-explorations of their feelings and understandings to others, especially strangers. The revealed information often projects a filtered, positive self-image to others. In the case that the participant knows and trusts the interviewer, there is more open sharing of his or her experienced meanings without fear of judgement (p. 481). The fourth vulnerability is the complexity caused by the fact that texts are often a co-creation of the interviewer and participant. Generated texts are creations of an interaction between interviewers and participants (p. 480) a type of textual artifact that mixes the interviewer's tone, voice intonations, demeanor, body movements and the interviewee's generated responses in terms of personal experience and read of the interviewer's agenda. Given that interview texts are co-

created, interviewers need to guard against simply producing the texts they had expected. Assuming an open listening stance and carefully attending to the unexpected and unusual participant responses can help to ensure that the participant's own voice is heard and empower a participant by acknowledging that the informant is the only one who has access to his or her experienced meaning (pp. 481-482). Polkinghorne warns that four threats to the validity of interview-generated evidence cannot be eliminated because stories are simulations of participants' meaning, and not the meaning itself. The researcher should attempt to produce interpretations which "produce articulations that lessen the distance between what is said by participants about their experienced meaning and the experienced meaning itself" assembling "storied partial portrayals which do not overly distort participants' meaning" (p. 481).

Finally Hostetler (2005) concludes "that the 'answers' to research questions do not end things but offer new circumstances for exploring the persistent question of what is good for people" (p. 21) and thus areas of further research are frequently noted at the end of the study.

3.5 Participants

There were seven participants in this study: two male and five female. All are former students enrolled in the Intensive Support Program (ISP); they have a physical disability and/or multiple exceptionalities and successfully earned a credit in Visual Art, Graphics Arts, Photography or Film and Video between 2002 and 2012. They volunteered for the study after seeing the snowball sampling poster. They are between the ages of 19 and 30 years of age and are able to provide written consent to participant in the study.

3.6 Data Sources and Collection

There are three primary sources of data used in this study: video recorded interviews including visual representations of participants' art work, field texts as well as journal entries and a review of existing literature in the Visual Art and Special Education fields. The first form of data is video recorded interviews with former students of Visual Art and Technology classes ensuing from the key research questions. The narrative form of participants' "personal stories" (Glazier, 2005) were told beginning with the "dailiness" (Harding, p. 129) of exceptional students' lives in the classroom. Participants were given the option to voluntarily select an artifact kept from high school which they could discuss during the course of the interview. Video documentation was used in order to review facial expressions and physical gestures during the course of the narrative to help to understand the nuances in the messages communicated. Facial expressions, pauses, and word inflections often created emphasis indicating signs of pleasure or dislike of a storied event. Recording interviews allowed me to replay segments to accurately transcribe the text or to spend time focusing on specific responses for analysis.

The second data source is field texts and personal reflective journal entries derived from narrative heard in the data gathering stage. These entries also include my emerging thoughts about my own teaching practice as well as the practices of educators as they relate to participants' voiced experiences. Field texts were made during the course of the interviews to remember participants' body stances, and comfort levels. Journal entries are included in the data analysis and interwoven into the conclusions of this study. Also included is a collage accompanied by an artist's statement. This artifact represents aspects of the newly acquired

knowledge that has changed the way I approach curricula implementation, expectations and the types of projects assigned.

Thirdly, a review of literature triangulating and deliberating on the deductions of other researchers' working in the Visual Arts and Disability Studies joint domains to look for places of intersection with or departure from my own findings and my journal entries is included. Close attention was paid to themes, description of context, and issues highlighted in the participants' narratives.

3.7 Procedures

This thesis was written with the standards of the Tri-Council *Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (2010) in mind. Respecting the guiding principles of ethical standards, "all research by UWO [sic] Faculty, staff and students that involves human subjects requires review and approval by a Research Ethics Board (REB) *before* the research is started" (Kueneman, 2010, p. 1). An application was made to Western University's REB. Permission was then sought from the principal of the school. After ethical approval for the study was granted by Western University's Ethics Board, ethical approval for the study was gained from the School Board.

An effort to find volunteers for the study was then begun. With approval from the principal and department heads of Special Education and Guidance, posters were affixed (Appendix F) in the Special Education department, and in the Guidance office advertising the study. Students currently enrolled in the ISP program were asked if they were aware of any participants who met the criteria for the study. An electronic version of the poster was sent to colleagues at other schools and universities who might come into contact with students matching

the criteria. Snowball sampling for recruitment of study participants was used to inform and to gather potential participants. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique employed by researchers to identify potential subjects in studies when enlisting subjects of a specific or hidden population are difficult for researchers to access or to locate (Crossman, 2013). A study participant or an individual refers a friend or acquaintance to the researcher as a potential participant. Current ISP students mentioned the study to others; these students provided the researcher's contact information by a business card, email address or forwarding a *Letter of Information* (See Appendix D) to them. If the potential participant was interested in the study he or she contacted the researcher. The goal was to have a total of 5 or more participants who would agree to participate in the study. Seven participants were interviewed in total. This was a small enough number to closely analyze for the allotted time and scope of this study yet provided a diversity of responses.

After a participant was found, contact was made using the information he or she provided such as his or her email addresses or cell telephone number. An arrangement was made to give the participant a *Letter of Information* (See Appendix D) which explained the purpose and the details of the study. The interested participant signed *a Participant of Consent Form* (See Appendix E) giving his or her written approval to participate in the study. Due to the fact that most participants experienced mobility issues, each participant was asked to opt for a convenient interview location (e.g. at the school, at his or her home, at a local library). Participants were also invited to select and include the art works still in their possession from high school Visual Art and Technology courses in the interview context. To ensure a measure of anonymity, participants were asked if they wanted their names shielded on the art work before publication. Participants consented to the use of these art works in the study knowing that their style could

expose their identities even if their signatures were concealed. The initial anticipated time investment estimate did not exceed two hours of the participants' time and in the end took much less time depending on the participant's responses.

Interviews were transcribed from the video recordings. Copies of each participants own transcribed interview were provided for participants to 'member-checked' for accuracy and provide feedback. Some participants opted to use their names and in all cases briefly mention their medical conditions in the course of the interviews for publication. They were given an opportunity to review this definition. Any changes requested were made according to the participants' requests. Polkinghorne (2007) suggests that texts generated by the participants and the researcher "can be given to participants for their check on whether the description captures the essential features of the meaning they felt; if it does not, they can suggest alterations or expansions of the text to more closely display their meaning" (p. 481). Participants interested in receiving a summary of the research findings were invited to contact me via email. Study findings will be made available to board and school administrators and Art educators.

3.8 Spector-Mersel's Model for Interpreting Narratives

Gabriela Spector-Mersel's (2011) *Mechanisms of Selection in Claiming Narrative Identities: A Model for Interpreting Narratives* were used to analyze the data collected. Spector-Mersel (2011) considers narrative as overt texts, oral or written, recounted sequentially by a teller (instead of exchanges of questions and answers) and comprising typical characteristics. She states that the different types of narratives are the result of the teller's purpose in a particular situation, often determined by the audience's invitation: "Tell me about your childhood"; "Tell me the story of your life" (Spector-Mersel, 2011, p. 183) or in this case "Tell me about your

experiences in the Visual Art and Technology classroom". Polkinghorne (1998) describes

Paget's (n.d.) interview approach:

> By describing similarities between her own and an interviewee's experiences, by asking
>
> searching and open-ended questions, and by supporting extended responses Paget builds
>
> a context in which the interviewee feels less need to tell stories that are primarily
>
> designed to present the self in socially valued images. Narratives are context-sensitive,
>
> both in their telling and in the meaning they give to events, and their form and content are
>
> responsive to the aims and a condition of the interview situation. p. 164)

Open-ended questions allow participants to create responses within their cultural and social

experiences instead of the researcher's experiences (Neuman, 2000). Spector-Mersel's (2010)

inquirer posture allows the storyteller to structure the conversation, with the researcher asking

follow-up questions (Gray 1998, p. 2 cited in Bell, 2005) regarding the story told.

Spector-Mersel (2011) portrays the narration of an identity as a selection process. She

asserts that researchers should establish an "end point (EP) or the point of the story to be told"

(Spector-Mersel, 2011, p. 174) or the "core of the identity being claimed through the story"

(p.174). It is important to note that the EP recognized at the beginning of the inquiry may alter

throughout the retelling process so that a different EP is claimed as it is an unconscious act (p.

174).

The story comprises what Spector-Mersel terms a *macro context* or broad social,

political, and economic conditions in the larger society; a *micro context*—the narrow circle of the

narrator's life (i.e. events that occurred recently or that are expected to take place in near future,

general mood, and so on.); and an *immediate context*—time, place, audience, setting (research, therapy), and direct trigger for narration (question, remark) (p. 173). This research inquiry looks to interview participants in an *immediate context* to learn their direct experiences with engagement in a Visual Art.

Spector-Mersel's (2011) model consists of *six mechanisms of selection*, through which biographical facts are chosen, filtered, and sorted, with the purpose of confirming an established EP and treating narrative as a whole unit regarding form and content, paying attention to contexts, and employing a multidimensional interdisciplinary lens. The six mechanisms for constructing narrative identities and story analysis follow and move beyond the work of narrative researchers Connelly & Clandinin (1998a, 1998b, 2000). The mechanisms for constructing narrative identities are: *inclusion, sharpening, omission, silencing, flattening, and "appropriate" meaning attribution.* The most direct way of explaining Spector-Mersel's established mechanisms is to relay her photography analogy in relation to narrative analysis:

> The mechanisms of narrative selection might be further clarified by thinking of a camera changing its focus depending on the photographer's purpose (the EP): Certain events enter the picture (inclusion) and others remain outside (omission and silencing). Some of the former appear at the center of the picture (sharpening), whereas others are seen only at the margins (flattening). Finally, desired nuances are enhanced by changing the lens or the film ("appropriate" meaning attribution). As illustrated by this image, the mechanisms of selection are by no means unique to claiming narrative identities. (2011, p. 176)

Spector-Mersel's metaphor remained at the forefront of the researcher's as data analysis for each interview began.

The researcher task is to interpret the participants' storied experience. Gray (1998) states that the power of a story is dependent on the storyteller's use of language to present an interpretation of personal experience. The skill of the narrative researcher lies in his or her ability to structure the interview data into a form which clearly presents a sense of a beginning, middle, and an end, to formulate an interpretation of the given narration. The responses were categorized thematically for the research inquiry "coding for repetition across individual participants' responses" (Glazier, 2005, p. 4); for example, for preferred or disliked disciplines, themes, media and teaching strategies. I carried out the analysis using hermeneutic techniques for "noting underlying patterns across example of stories" (Polkinghorne 1998, p. 177). Interview field notes noting the participants' comportment and my thoughts were also considered in order to get a complete picture of the interview process. Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest that the aim of a constructivist inquiry is:

[U]nderstanding and reconstruction of the constructions that people (including the inquirer) initially hold, aiming toward consensus but still open to new interpretations as information and sophistication improve. The criterion for progress is that over time, everyone formulates more informed and sophisticated constructions and becomes more aware of the content and meaning of competing constructions. Advocacy and activism are also key concepts is [sic] this view. The inquirer is cast in the role of participant and facilitator in this process. (p. 113)

Guba and Lincoln's ideas mesh with Spector-Mersel who suggests that an interactive voice aims

at expressing the mutual influence between the researcher's and the narrators' voices, focusing

on the researcher's interpretations and personal experiences (2010, p. 218).

Through the analysis to the conclusion of the thesis, I gave considerable time to reflection

about the information that I learned from the interviews including how the role of the teacher can

affect students' engagement and how this information might be used to alter or influence my

teaching practices in the future. I became both a participant and a facilitator in this data

collection process.

3.9 Ethics

The procedures followed to engage in this study are described in the *Procedures* section

of Chapter 3. All prospective participants had the ability to give informed consent; were able to

understand the information presented; have an appreciation of the potential consequences of a

decision; and can weigh the potential harms and benefits of the research to themselves personally

(Kueneman, 2010); or due to their mobility issues and/or medical histories, a parent or guardian

is closely involved in their decision-making and may want to have knowledge of the study. The

concern of potential harms and benefits of the research were addressed by explaining that this

study was designed as an exploration of their experiences with the presentation of the curriculum

in order to better understand if/how it engages and/or supports exceptional students.

The goal for the data was comprehensive, rich descriptions of classroom experiences and

population or theoretical generalizability in themes, treatment or approaches across students'

narratives. Listening and hearing the respondents' voices about their lived-experiences formed

the basis of the study. By its very nature this study demonstrates a "respect for human dignity; respect for vulnerable persons; respect for justice and inclusiveness" (Kueneman, 2010, p. 7) and "fairness and equity in research" (p. 13).

The study had minimal harm or risks that were "no greater than the risks encountered by the participant in everyday life" (Kueneman, 2010, p. 14). The maximum benefit of the study is possibly to change the state of the *Conditions of Learning* (Cambourne, 1989) for students with disabilities in the future and participants' knowledge that their stories have been shared, heard and acknowledged. Participants agreed to be interviewed. If students did not feel comfortable talking about their experiences they had the option of exiting from the study. Appendix D outlines the participants' options.

Although the name of the person being interviewed was known, careful attention was given during the data collection and study presentation not to divulge names or other identifying information unless the participant agreed. All interviewees were given a pseudonym when recording the data unless they agreed to use their own names. Anonymity was preserved as the audience could not identify a given response with a given person. Personal information was not linked to interview responses, and some information was changed to protect the identity of a participant without changing the meaning of the story told. Participants gave their consent for the use of art work samples in the study and understood that others in their former classes or in the world at large could recognize the identity of the artist through the unique nature of the art work. The option of covering the artist's signature before publication was made available if the participant desired.

David Polkinghorne discusses the importance stating the major position from which a narrative inquirer situates his or her interpretation in reformist research (2007, p. 13), *Verstenhen* (Weingartner, 1967, p. 7) or *philosophical hermeneutics* was deemed as an ethical consideration. Interpretation and analysis of the data was done from a philosophical hermeneutics position:

> Philosophical hermeneutics, holds that the interpreter encounters a text from within his or her "prejudices"; interpretation is like a conversational dialogue through which meaning is a product of interaction... The philosophical hermeneutic position holds one cannot transcend one's own historical and situated embeddedness; thus, textual interpretations are always perspectival. Narrative researchers engaging in interpretation will make different claims about their understanding of a text depending on which position they take. They need to let readers know which approach informs their interpretative claims. (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 13)

Acknowledging that "textual interpretations are always perspectival" (Polkinghorne, 2007), the participants' storied responses are contextualized by using my own lived-experiences in order to gain deeper understanding of them. The narrative interpretation of the textual data is a "creative productions that stem[s] from [the researcher's] cognitive processes for recognizing patterns and similarities in texts" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 13). Hostetler (2005) too asserts that in considering the question of the validity of research and the research question in regards to "human well-being" one must consider one's own experience and positionality about the issues (p. 16).

Hibbert (2013) asserts the "integrity and ethics of the researcher, such as the ways in which he or she maintains emotional integrity with, and where relevant, from the participants" is important. Hibbert declares that it may be "more useful to speak of researcher reflexivity rather

than objectivity" (2013, Module 4). A consideration of what Luttrell (2000) put forward about researcher reflexivity including how the researcher's background affects his or her relationship, identifications, and exchanges with participants. I judiciously deliberated on the analysis and the representation of data during the research process giving meticulous consideration to what [was] lost, and what [was] gained as a result (p. 500). Much of reflexive discourse occurs within my personal journal entries.

Within the umbrella term of researcher reflexivity, the researcher must attend to the ethical issues of power relationships, how work is "to be conducted, entered into, arranged, written about, how people are to be identified, and how ownership of the work is to be attributed" (Lyons & Laboskey, 2002, p. 23). I, the researcher was a few of the participants former Visual Arts educator. Within the interviews there could be a desire to shape the story into something that I "may want to hear", to omit or silence feelings so that, the interviewer, would not feel uncomfortable or slighted. Through the progression of the course(s) and through daily interaction and presence in the Special Education room for the remainder of their high school careers, I built rapport with these students. This affinity is one that encourages honest communication of feelings with few holds barred. Participants thoroughly understood that the purpose of the thesis was to hear "what worked for them as exceptional students and what didn't work" in order to elicit change. Many of the participants were elated that someone was actually requesting their opinions as this was not often the case through their academic careers. As a result, the fact that I was their educator did not seem to hamper their discourse. They have now moved on to a world beyond the Visual Art and Technology classroom where self-advocacy reigns over the my emotional welfare. One of the purposes of this study was to embark on an educational journey in order to be self-reflective of teaching practices. In part, this thesis

becomes an examination of the *Conditions of Learning* in my classroom to more deeply engage my learners. From a data analysis standpoint, I acknowledge that participants' noting their concerns are a requirement to the road to improvement.

After the ethical standards of the REB were satisfied, my multiple roles of Visual Art and Special Education teacher, parent, artist, student and researcher lay a ground work that could lead to a solid understanding of the research question and provide alternate lenses to the primary experiences to which the participants refer. My lived-experience in these roles affects the interpretation of the narratives presented, however, I can only truly postulate about the feelings of the participants. Given my positionality, it isn't possible to ever accurately reflect the true felt experiences of another individual but only to interpret them.

Chapter 4

Data Presentation and Analysis

In this chapter the approach to the data analysis is explained. This data analysis includes: a summary of the primary data of videotaped interviews which ranged from 20 minutes to 1 hour in length, figures of the art work participants offered at the time of the interviews, and journal entry from my own notations. A collage I created with an accompanying artist's statement is presented. Each participant's account begins with a brief description of his or her identified disability which was 'member checked' with the participant, followed by a synopsis of the key findings.

Hamilton, Smith, and Worthington (2008) declare that a characteristic of narrative inquiry is the identification of experience as story. People shape their lives through story and the story is an entry point by which the experience is made noteworthy. Through narrative inquiry a researcher can bring education and the educational process to life through recording and interpreting these stories. In their study of the potential contribution of narrative inquiry to disability studies, Smith and Sparks (2008) believe that "narratives can illuminate a great deal about the personal as they 'impart' information about their or others' 'internalized' work thereby allowing researchers to explore lived-experiences and preserve a sense of the 'individual person' in the world" (p. 18). With these concepts of narrative in mind at the outset of the interviews, I began the analysis with a seemingly functional approach. Based on Spector-Mersel's (2011) interpretive schemata, I employed the following codes to identify data: [INC] inclusion, [SHA] sharpening, [OMI] silencing, [SIL] flattening, [FLA] flattening, [APP] appropriate meaning attribution coding for repetition across individual interviews. The open ended question is indicated by the *Question Number* in Table 1. The [OBS] observations are my own notations

which indicate the participants' facial expressions, body language, and voice inflections while

communicating their narratives. The coded interview data is reviewed for repetition across

individual participants' responses (Glazier, 2005, p. 4) and "noting underlying patterns across

example of stories" (Polkinghorne 1998, p. 177). Table 1 indicates the way the data is organized

and collected.

Table 1: *Table Indicating Potential Coded Interview Data*

Description of Coding [Short for to facilitate coding]	(Line number) Respondent's statement noted by first letter of name
Question Number	
Inclusion [INC] **Certain events enter the picture**	(Line #)
Sharpening [SHA] **Some events appear at the center of the picture**	(Line #)
Omission [OMI] **Other events remain outside**	(Line #)
Silencing [SIL] **Other events are mentioned then silenced**	(Line #)
Flattening[FLA] **Others events are seen only at the margins**	(Line #)
"Appropriate" meaning attribution [APP] **Desired nuances are enhanced by changing the lens or the film** **Notes/Observations [OBS]** [2]	(Line #)

[2] Coding Mechanisms are adapted from Spector-Mersel, G. (2011). Mechanisms of
Selection in Claiming Narrative Identities: A Model for Interpreting Narratives. *Qualitative*
Inquiry. 17(2), 172-185. doi: 10.1177/1077800410393885

The mechanical process of data analysis using the organization outlined in Table 1 also

facilitated a clear identification of the stories and themes that emerged which were not part of the

dominant themes within the narratives. This technical approach seems privileged in this analysis

but as my understanding of the process grew, and layers of storied experience were peeled back,

themes embedded in these stories became apparent. Viewing and reviewing the fluidity of the

conversation, the demeanor of the participants in the videotape and interview notes became just

as important as the actual content in the participants' storied texts. Hearing from these

participants helped me to consider classroom stories that were sometimes similar and

occasionally different from my perceptions.   Table 2: *Sample of Stephanie's Coded Interview*

Data is included to show how raw interview data was coded for a segment of the first question;

the reader can readily understand the initial process taken.

Table 2: *Sample of Stephanie's Coded Interview Data*

Coding [Short form to facilitate coding in interview transcripts] -Description of Coding	**(Line number) Respondent's statement noted by first letter of name, Interviewers statement noted with a 'Y'**
Q1. Talk to me about the things that we did in that class that brought learning alive for you – or, conversely made it even more difficult to learn.	
Inclusion [INC] -Certain events enter the picture	-(12) S: Well I really enjoyed art. The only thing that I didn't like was that I couldn't get my own materials so I was always asking someone to get me something or like the EA or like the EA didn't know where everything was…pause…um. It just wasn't the greatest accessibility because it is such a small room. [INC] -(14) S: And there are so many kids in that one space.[INC] -S: And some things are just not within our reach. [INC] -(28) Y: That grade 10 Art class had a lot more people in the classroom setting. [INC] -(28) S: <u>Definitely</u> larger.[INC] -Y: You are older, and more mature. [Laugh] -S: Yeah.[Smile]
Sharpening [SHA] -Some events appear at the center of the picture	-(20) S: And she (the EA) didn't know how to help me.[SHA]

Omission [OMI] **-Other events remain outside**	-The number of students and sometimes immature behaviours the teacher had to deal with on a constant basis bothered her. This was unsaid but acknowledged in line 28 -Y: You are older, and more mature [Laugh].[OMI] -S: Yeah.[Smile]. She leaves out some of the incidents she witnessed in the course of her time in the classroom.
Silencing [SIL] **-Other events are mentioned then silenced**	
Flattening[FLA] **-Others events are seen only at the margins**	-(32) She refers constantly to "the younger students" then stops or sighs and looks downward.
"Appropriate" meaning attribution [APP] **-Desired nuances are enhanced by changing the lens or the film**	-(18) S: For the whole year yes, I had the same EA. It was hard because she wouldn't really help as much as I needed it. [APP]
Notes [OBS]	-S voice was calm and as a matter of fact in her retelling about the environment. -S's definite emphasis on the class size. Highlighting the difficulty about getting around the space. -The sometimes helter-skelter, active, student-filled atmosphere with so many students in the classroom can be disconcerting to her. -Very conscious of her inability to move around in the class. -S seems to be trying to take responsibility for her own life. She does feel more mature than many of the students around her. -She is realizing the severity of her health issues and her errors with caring for her own health have set her back. -There is a underlying theme of the independence S's need for it and the physical reality of the support she requires from a support worker.

_____

4.1 Stephanie's Interview

Stephanie's interview was completed on December 16, 2012. Stephanie has Spina Bifida

and is a double amputee. She openly discusses her disability. Even though she has already

technically graduated from high school she is taking a 6th year as she was not quite ready to attend college last fall. She requires personal care support from an EA and academic support for Math and Science. She is quite self-confident and social with several friends who come connect with her on a regular basis. She uses a power chair to navigate her way around the city independently.

Stephanie voiced her lived-experience (van Manen, 1990) about the physical classroom environment. She said that there were usually too many students in the studio space and students with disabilities did not have enough room to move around the classroom in order to gain access to the materials they need. This became an overall theme within Stephanie`s responses. Stephanie asserts, "Well I really enjoyed art. The only thing that I didn't like was that I couldn't get my own materials so I was always asking someone to get me something or like the EA or like the EA didn't know where everything was…pause…um. It just wasn't the greatest accessibility because it is such a small room". She included this experience in the interview and then sharpened the picture by coming back to it again and again. For example Stephanie states that, "I felt kind of claustrophobic in that room with all of those students around me". To become a fully participating member of the classroom both collecting materials and tools clean up becomes an integral part of the entire art-making process. Having accessibility issues she relied on the support of the EA and when she did not feel the EA was in tune with the classroom process or her needs she highlighted her dissatisfaction with the EA's support. Stephanie vacillates between requiring support in an extremely small sized classroom area and the need to feel independent.

Stephanie expressed dislike of any assignment where students were asked to draw as the main art discipline. She claimed that meticulous drawing was frustrating due to her fine motor

deficits. What really brought learning alive for Stephanie was the range of tactile media in the

Sculpture classroom. Stephanie states, "I like hands-on stuff [laugh] … Drawing just isn't my

strongest point… more of the sculpting with the hands, or getting your hands dirty". Her choice

of mentioning the mosaic assignment where students got to smash tiles and then reconfigure

them on a new surface demonstrates this appreciation for sculptural media. The cathartic ─

destruction and recreation process seemed to intrigue her, "The things I really liked were when

we did the mosaic boxes that was a lot of fun 'cause we got to smash up tiles and it helped to get

out our anger [Laugh]" (Line 34). The introduction of wet media linked with one's own form

through the mold making of students' faces also appealed to Stephanie. She appreciated the

process of working with a partner to make dry plaster bandage wet, then the excitement of

forming it on her partner's face. Stephanie declares, "I also really liked when we did the

plastering with models. That was a lot of fun and messy [Laugh]" (Line 36)! The ability to

control the mixing of the plaster and then pouring it into the mold created through to painting the

resulting form was a process she thoroughly enjoyed. The collaborative experience of working

in pairs, one model and one artist then reversing roles was an important part of the creation

process which Stephanie remembered clearly, "Kristal that was my partner for that (Line 42) !"

The combination of the wet media, the body image as the subject of the mold along with the

social aspect of the project engaged her.
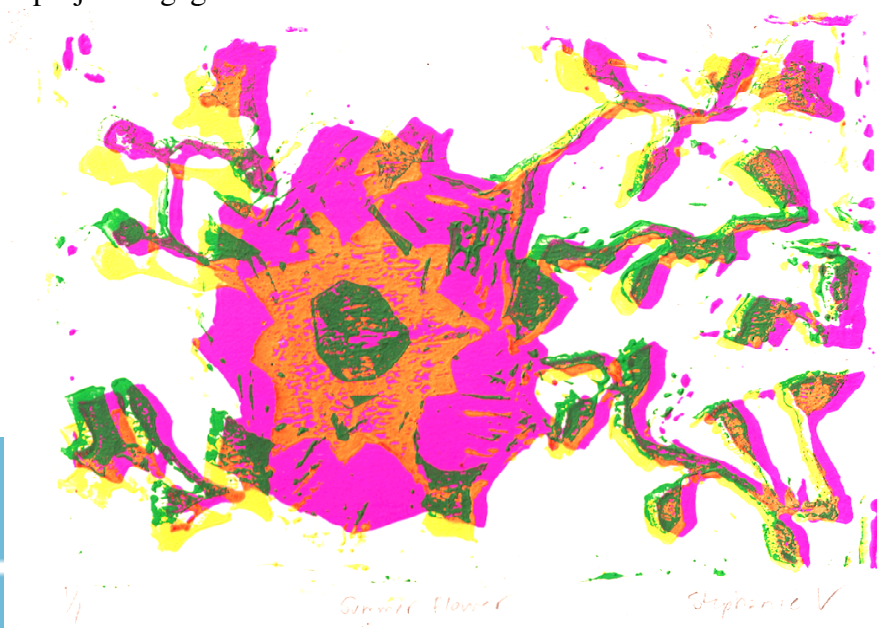
Stephanie appreciated the range of techniques explored in the Printmaking course. Most of her resulting images are linked to self-image and what she describes as "pretty things" like the brightly coloured flower print Stephanie made depicted in *Figure 1*. She explained, "I have my t-shirt I made [Big smile] with shoe on it and it said 'Glamorous' (Line 57)".   She explains

Figure 1: Stephanie, Flower print, 4 "x 6", Acrylic ink on paper.

further, "It had a lace going up the shirt from the shoe (Line 63)". She asserts, "It was a definite statement about me (Line 165)... I love getting dressed up (Line 169)!"

Stephanie delighted in the fact that I saw her at the graduation formal all dressed in her finest attire and that I even mentioned the event from the previous year. I recall that the unit to which Stephanie was referring had much depth. Students were given the technical instructions about how to create a silkscreen and explored the work of Andy Warhol's silkscreen art work, Keith Haring's wearable work, and the graphic images accompanying text in Barbara Kruger's collage work. After the Art History inquiry, they paired the use of text with imagery to create a statement about a subject dear to them.

In this exchange Stephanie acknowledges her appreciation for the art of printmaking but concedes that accessibility to the printing press, a 50-year-old mechanical device, was frustrating. She mentions that the introduction of a "new power chair" which she received after the completion of the course would have been helpful and then quickly silences the discussion:

Yarmol: So you liked printmaking (Line 64).

Stephanie: Yeah. I really enjoyed that. It was just really hard to get to the press, the printing press (Line 65).

Yarmol: Because the press is higher right (Line 66)?

Stephanie: Yes,...[pause] because at that time I didn't have my power chair that went up and down (Line 67) .

Yarmol: So the power chair is also important right (Line 68)?

Stephanie: Yup (Line 69).

When responding to the question about her experiences as an exceptional student in the Visual Arts classroom, Stephanie felt that she was treated the same as all the other students in the classroom. She asserts, "Um…no I felt like I was like everybody else. Nobody really noticed that I was in a wheelchair. They treated me like everyone else" (Line 87). When I asked about the my treatment of her she claimed, "If I didn't do my work, you were on my case just like everyone else [Smile]! (Line 89)"

As far as the teaching strategies, approaches, instructional decisions, procedures or routines that helped students to achieve success in the Visual Arts and Technology classes Stephanie declared that I, "did a lot of one-on-ones with me" and that, "you explained it [the task at hand] slower to me than to the rest of the class" (Line 105). She maintained that I, "helped me a lot with the printing press and just helped me get my supplies (Line 107) and help[ed] keeping me on task" (Line 109). Stephanie noted that the attitude of the teacher is of paramount importance in a Visual Art classroom, speaking about me she states, "Just because

you [the teacher] are so creative you inspired…. us to make art… with her energy (Line 127). She concluded that a teacher's positive attitude often motivated the students.

I told Stephanie that I had overheard a conversation between her and a student who was in my class in the hall about her prosthetics and that I was very proud of the way she had handled the situation. She replied, "Well I think it was also that I was hanging my purse off of my legs that day, so you could definitely tell that they weren't attached to my body [Laughing]" (Line 99). It felt good that he was just asking questions not just … like staring at me like I'm some weird person. Like …I like when people actually ask me why I have prosthetics or how I feel about them. I like that people ask and not just go, 'Oh she is in a wheelchair. I'm not going to talk to her or ask questions about it'" (Line 91). Witnessing this interaction gave me confidence in the selected theme of ableism. Through the artistic process, an open dialogue could transpire.

When asked, what advice would Stephanie would give to Visual Art educators to improve engagement for students with disabilities or all students in the Visual Art and Technology classrooms she responded with "Be yourself and not to try to change or alter an assignment in any way but let the student express what they want!" (Line 99).

Figure 2: Stephanie, Self-Portrait Cup, 3 ½ " length x 4" width x 5" height, Earthenware and Glaze

Stephanie discusses the self-portrait cup shown in *Figure 2* which she produced after creating some simple, preparatory, contour line, portrait drawings developed through looking at her reflection in a mirror. She also mentions the functional object of a light switch cover that she created in Sculpture class as one of the first art objects she would present. She states it is "because I love fashion ...and it had purses and shoes on it. Um and music… notes….and it had my favourite colours on it" (Line 134-136). The most telling object she puts forward is a work I assigned which was related to the boxes of Joseph Cornell as I knew that Stephanie would be in the hospital for a procedure for several months. The following excerpt from the interview indicates how effective, when made personally relevant, an art assignment can be to help a teen work through adversity they may be experiencing:

Stephanie: The box that I made in the hospital?

Yarmol: Yes. We did a study of Joseph Cornell…

Stephanie: Yep.

Yarmol: And how he collected things about his life. So can you talk a bit about that box?

Stephanie: I was in the hospital at the time and you told me to tell a story about my hospital visit...so I just collected a lot of medical materials that they were using on me and I made a box with the colours of the hospital logos and the red cross on the back of it.

And I remember that I put an I.V. line in it, a prescription bottle the kidney basin that they bring your pills in, syringes [pause]….

Yarmol: Syringes…

Stephanie: So on the backdrop on the inside I had taped a latex allergy alert poster on it because I have a latex allergy and it was always on, taped on the outside of my door. It was always on my door.

Yarmol: Okay.

Stephanie: I also, I think I also put something from Christmas and something from my sweet 16 in it cause I did spend those in the hospital.

Yarmol: Not a fun way to spend your birthday…

Stephanie: No. I also had…I also remember I put pictures of the rods that I had and the scars that it left. And the kids were very curious about that.

Yarmol: And how do you think that helped people understand what you had gone through?

Stephanie: Because it kind of …the pictures kind of showed the pain I went through. Umm because it left deep holes when it was first taken out. Um and it showed, it just explained what I saw everyday, seeing the latex sign, the I.V. the poles.

Yarmol: Do you think that making the box helped you in any way?

Stephanie: Umm… yes, it gave me something to do as I was lying on my bed. And it made me think of what actually I go through. Because I never actually thought about what I go through everyday.

Yarmol: You just go through it.

 Stephanie: Yeah, [pause] basically it's just routine for me. (Lines 144-160)

The final counsel Stephanie offers to teachers is, "Just treat us like everyone else. We're not different. We just want to be like everyone else" (Line 171). She continues, "They (teachers) sometimes baby us. Like even the EAs...I see that a lot. They want to do <u>everything</u> for us! I'm independent" (Line 173)! This statement affirms my knowledge that it is extremely important to ask a student about his or her needs so that you can assist the student accordingly. As Stephanie reflects on the support of her former EA in middle school she reports, "Oh yeah. It's like she never did anything for me unless I asked. She never assumed I needed help! And she just like asked my mom what my boundaries were and she just let me do whatever.... And she would say, "She can get hurt like anybody else just let her fall" (Lines 184)! She vents her frustration with the EAs who try and support her every move and do not allow her to make mistakes or to learn on her own.

Stephanie's insistence that students with disabilities want to be treated like everyone else makes me reflect on my own teaching practices begging the question-do I treat these students differently? Stephanie's message to educators is an important one for all educators to keep at the at the forefront of their minds.

4.2 Mina's Interview

Mina's interview was completed on December 20, 2012. Mina has Cerebral Palsy, Spastic Diplegia and learning disabilities. She had full academic support in all classes requiring a note-taker and double time to complete tasks. Currently she uses a power chair and a walker to navigate her environment. She is a very positive person who is a little shy and reserved until you get to know her. Mina is bright, very friendly, observant and has a sharp sense of humour.

To begin her interview, Mina discusses the class size and the attendance of the assigned EA in her Grade 9 Art class. She states, "Kind of it is like big and there was a lot of students. It was like...It made me kind of nervous or something. I had anxiety before. Because I have anxiety issues. But anyways, so it was nice but I felt like whenever I went in there that class I was kind of nervous. And then there was that class I had an EA with me but like a lot of that year no one was there. And sometimes we had to take notes or draw something and I didn't know if I could take the notes or do the project or do the thing that we had to do" (Line 4). She continues, "But out of all of my classes I was always nervous going into Art (Line 9). It was just like, it was just..um..[pause] I'd say maybe... maybe cause I was alone there and so many kids and there was a lot of stuff we had to do and I didn't....didn't know if the teacher knew what I could do or like if umm.. she was gonna take marks off or whatever..." (Line 11). Mina is even tense talking about that grade 9 class as observed by her stops and starts and her body language including her uncomfortable smile and eyes darting back and forth as she told the story.

Mina's demeanor altered as she discussed the grade 10 Sculpture class. Her words flowed more easily with less pauses and she smiled comfortably remembering the experience. Mina said, "Well the Grade 10, I was comfortable, because it was me and other students that I

know and it was like a smaller class and we did do a lot of art work, but like, I didn't feel like I

had to finish it, and do it right away and since you were my GLE teacher in grade 9,… and it was

just more relaxed and it was a lot of fun. I had a lot more fun" (Line 15). Art work and art study

was described as "fun".

Mina's previous experience in middle school caused her to formulate pre-notions about

her high school experience, "Coming here it was a bit different from middle school because in

middle school umm, like I didn't really talk a lot to my teachers and stuff. Mostly my EAs and

most of the help they gave was like with school work not with the fact that I was in a wheelchair

like the teacher would explain something and I wouldn't understand it and so they would like re-

teach it and they were teaching me" (Line 23). This quote suggests that Mina's relationship and

comfort level with the teacher is extremely important. Later she mentioned that she felt at ease

with her Visual Art teacher because she liked the way she explained things and she didn't feel

intimidated asking questions. In contrast, she relied a great deal on the support of her EA in her

grade 9 class as she felt uncomfortable with the teacher. Later in the interview she suggested

more open communication between the teacher and the student with disabilities, "Maybe the

teacher should like talk to them more or get to know how they learn. But that is kind of hard

though. I don't know how they would do that with so many kids in the class. I don't know how

they can but see if there is any possibility to see what they need and what they don't need to help

them" (Line 139).

Explaining by a physical demonstration of the art skill to Mina seemed to work well. The

instructional decision of circulating among students providing constant support and feedback

was also helpful to Mina, "And you were just out walking around always asking questions, the

music on, helping some kids that were really behind" (Line 53). Providing supporting guide

sheets and reviewing at the beginning of each class was also helpful to Mina. With regards to

accommodating curriculum to meet each student's needs Mina observed, "For each student, you

[the teacher] had a different way of dealing with them because everyone is… we were all doing

different things so, um you [the teacher] gave them what they needed (Line 129). We all seemed

to achieve" (Line 130).

Allowing some students who were ahead to move or giving more time to some students

to get caught up worked well in the class according to Mina, "Like, like it was okay if like

someone was behind or whatever… Like it didn't really affect a lot of the things in the end

because I think that you got it all done in the end with everyone else" (Lines 57 and 59). This

was in contrast with Mina's grade 9 class where similar instructional decisions were not made;

Mina claimed that she and a lot of other students did not complete their projects. She does not

have work to share from that class.

Laying out the whole project at the beginning and then revisiting information by

reviewing the described steps throughout the creative process seemed to help students succeed

through each artistic venture. According to Mina, "You [the teacher] explained in between so it

wasn't just like you explained in the beginning and we were done…like us doing the art

work….you like…remember this is the next thing that you do, this is the next thing we do (Line

66)… break it up….into chunks" (Line 67-70). When describing the routines in the classroom

Mina highlights the goings on in the studio. She described that they would come into the class,

"[T]hen we would start working like. Start on what we were doing. 'Cause we were all at

different works. We would start working. We would get stuff done instead of talking about it"

(Line 84). She mentions that the support of EAs was instrumental in continual habitual studio activities. She required their support to attain the media she needed to complete her projects.

What was less effective for Mina were written assignments at the grade 9 level, " Like, the assignments that I felt I couldn't do were not about the actual making of art it was like writing assignments, writing assignment that I did. I actually wrote. Someone did show me how to do it but it was kind of funny because I did it…And then [laugh]. It was kind of weird because other people asked me how I did it. [Laugh]. Like I'm the one who thinks I'm always lost about things and like here I did it" (Line 39).

Mina claimed that the teachers did not treat her differently but that there was a physical awareness of her, "Cause, you're not just one person, there is an EA or EAs are also there" (Line 113). She did not have much interaction with students in the grade 9 class, "Sometimes since there was, there were a lot of people the teacher was always busy. I didn't talk to many of the students in the classroom, like students in the classroom. But, like students that who came over and asked me if I needed help with anything. I did talk with them" (Line 117). The sheer number of students in the class made it difficult to get the teacher's attention. As the adult in the room the teacher should try and reach out to get to know his or her students. Mina advises, "Like if the teacher just comes up the first time, it makes it easier on the student. So she knows what the student needs" (Line 141).

Art which is personally relevant helps students to engage students. Mina describes the clay project shown in *Figure 3* for creating a functional object that was challenging to create, "Yeah, functional [Smile and Laugh]. And all that I could think of was: I don't think…. Maybe I was confused about what was a fruit plate or stuff. But all I could think about when I was

making it was Eid and when we have a lot of guests over and stuff we drink a lot of tea [Laugh]

(Line 155). We use a lot of plates. But we use a plate to put desserts on. So I was thinking of

that. But it ended up looking more like something that we put fruit in, so it came out fine even

though it wasn't what I had first thought of" (Line 156).

Figure 3: Mina, Eid Dessert Bowl with Trees, 11 length" x 6 width" x 8 height",
Earthenware and Glaze.

Mina who was yet unfamiliar with the potential of earthenware ended up creating

fantastic bowl which her family still uses for Eid celebrations. She acknowledges that her initial

anxiety disappeared as she delved into a project. The resulting art work created gave her

confidence in her abilities.

Mina stated, "Yeah…I really didn't know in the beginning [Laugh]. Then I got that bowl

and it worked! (Line 162).

Through the application of personally relevant subject matter of basketball, Mina selects

to display a sculpted altered book shown in *Figure 4*. Mina achieved results that surprised her.

Discussing her work she said, "Altered book... and we were supposed to do umm..[Laugh]….I

don't know why mine just turned out [Laugh]!   It was just one thing, l like I thought it was

going to be a big assignment. I cut into it and then I put a little Michael Jordan, the signature

Michael Jordan's dunk (Line 174)…I like basketball especially Michael Jordan, and I thought of

Michael Jordan because everyone knows Michael Jordan. That's his signature dunk and like

everyone knows him! Like…so I did that" (Line 180).
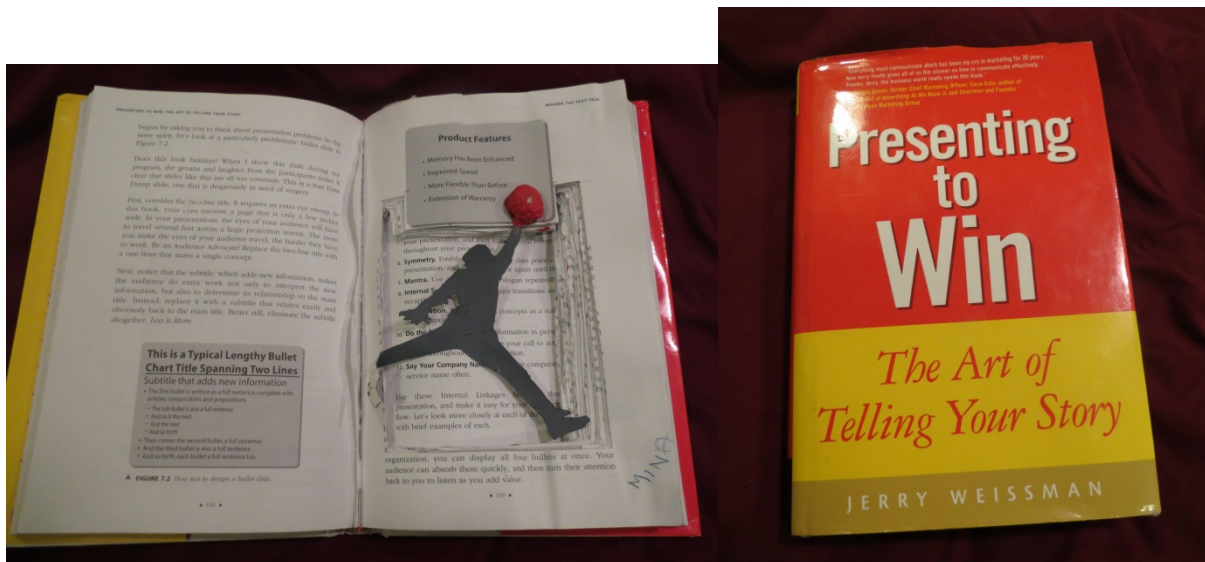
 Figure 4: Mina, Altered Book Sculpture: B-Ball, interior, 10" Length x 1 1/2" width x 9 "
height, Altered Book, Acrylic Paint, (left panel) and Altered Sculptural Book, B-Ball, exterior,
10" length x 1 ½ " width x 9" height, (right panel)

Jerry Weissman. This title of the chosen book seems particularly relevant to her art work as

during the course of the interview, she tells the story of her experience playing on a basketball

team and winning games which could link with *Presenting to Win. The Art of Telling Your Story*

reminds me of both Mina's retelling of her story and the narrative methodology used to collect data in the thesis.

4.3 Tommy's Interview

Tommy's interview was completed on Monday December 17, 2012. Tommy has Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. He uses a power chair to travel through his environment. He is a very hard worker who always strives to do his best. He is an extremely positive, friendly, outgoing, happy, reasonable individual who wants to actively advocate for students with disabilities. He is taking a break from post-secondary education and plans to advocate for people with disabilities.

Tommy appreciated taking the Sculpture class; he stated, "It was a good class 'cause it was hands on. I like building stuff that is 'hands-on'" (Line 4). He easily described some of the projects such as the wire sculpture, figure/ground relationship and ink drawing even though he completed the course several years earlier. Tommy claimed that, "the hands on rather than paper and pen type readings made the class more entertaining for him [me]" (Line 12).

Tommy asserted that access to all parts of the classroom was not available, "... not much room. Because there was always some type of object in the way like chairs or someone's art work in the way (Line 14).... didn't want to run it down (Line 20)... or not banging into chairs 'cause you need one hand to drive and the other hand to push or pull the chair to make room" (Line 24).

He enjoyed the class routine of music being played... "which is very calm and relaxing (Line 32)... So when I work with music I feel I get the energy to do what I need to do...same

thing with homework as well. I always have music going then. I find that very good when working with working with art supplies" (Line 34).

Tommy appreciated the routine knowing that an overview of the media would be given followed by some instruction about both the historical and technical aspects. This was a standard occurrence with most assignments although Tommy acknowledged that sometimes a small amount of a medium was given to the students to provide an opportunity for them to "play" or to experiment before formal instruction. Students would then be assigned the project and then technical procedural skills were reviewed as necessary through each stage of the creative process. Tommy reflected, "So, that was an easy project to do 'cause we understood how to use the clay and how the clay works and the designs to put with it. So when we start each art theme we basically started with basic knowledge ...what we know about this specific art work and how can we use to make arts (Line 42)...We started with the simple stuff and had to make more complex like, how to prevent the clay from exploding in the kiln" (Line 48). He also remembered the Art History project about themes and forms of sculpture where students had to research online and create a PowerPoint for their selection of the best and most appealing sculptural works. He liked that they had the chance to share their opinions.

When asked about his experience as an exceptional student and if he ever felt as if he was viewed differently than other students in the classroom Tommy responded with the following:

I don't think so. I mean most students know me pretty well and I knew them well. And the things that we did in the Art room were manageable for us. In fact there was never a time you couldn't do it. We always did it. Whether it was drawing and sculpting, even watching videos. We all managed to do it. And that was a good thing! Some teachers

may have activities where you can't, just can't do it. There is no way. And may have to

give an alternate assignment. It happened back in my middle school. So when I came to

Art at this school I thought it might be the same thing but it wasn't. Different... I had

stuff I could actually do! (Line 70)

Tommy began to discuss his experiences in elementary school where accommodations

such as desks or clip boards to draw on in an outdoor setting were not provided and he felt

unable to complete the assignments, "Only certain things we would do like maybe go outside for

sculpture or drawing what was around us. There was no table or desk out there so you can't draw

very well. All the kids are sitting on the,... the concrete floor" (Line 74). Tommy would ask

teachers to consistently engage students with disabilities by providing them with supports. He

gives an example, "Let's say we have a hard time building sculptures, cause your hands get tired

easily (Line 84). Maybe getting a helper to help them out. Say if you're sculpting a bowl... So

basically get them engaged as much as possible, not just sitting out not doing anything" (Line

86). Many of these recommendations stem from Tommy's elementary school experience where

he was not fully able to participate in the art program due to the lack of accommodations to the

physical aspects of the program. Regarding his high school Art program Tommy states, "We

haven't been excluded, we've been included in everything...so you say, "This is a good class I

like it! (Line 89)...So it is definitely a class you want to take" (Line 91)!

In the following excerpt from the interview the reader can easily note that Tommy's self-

esteem and view of himself as an artist definitely improved after taking the tactile Sculpture

course:

Tommy: It doesn't matter if you are a good artist or a bad artist [Laugh] (Line 93).

Yarmol: Laugh. Is there such a thing as a bad artist (Line 94)?

Tommy: I thought I was but in the end, it's all different. Okay so I have some talent, there it is I got it out. Drawing in Art class just wasn't my thing. I did a lot of that back in elementary so. I couldn't get that going there. Different aspects definitely...Paper and pen art is just not my thing. Maybe the hands on type is for sure, like maybe the building and sculpting (Line 95) .

Tommy chose to show his plaster cast of his face mask pictured in *Figure 5*. He remembers much about the process of creating the mask:

That was quite an experience! [Laugh]. It was a pretty 'sic' experience. Because your

face is being messed up for sure (Line 119). Yes and you have to stay still while the

plaster goes over the plastic on your face (Line 125).   You lay your head against the

table while your partner put the plaster on your face. When it hardens you take it off (Line 131).

So for me that was good. Only problem was I started to lose the feeling in my arms 'cause I was

bending them for too long then it came back (Line 135). Then we molded the mask. And after

that we got to paint and   decorate them,

design them (Line 139).

Figure 5: Tommy, Mask, 10" x 6", Plaster, Feathers, Wire, Pom-pom, Acrylic Paint.

I asked, "Did you get motivation from any of the masks you looked at" (Line 140)? Tommy replied, "I did. They were more like cultural stuff. Different designs, aspects. Pretty good in general. Mine was the half clown and the half joker. [Laugh]. Yep! I hung it up (Line 141)! And I hung it up in the room" (Line 145).

Tommy also described the process used to create a wire sculpture based on the work of Alexander Calder. He chose to create a portrait of Will Smith. He describes:

I drew him on the paper first as best as best we can. And make sure the wires connect

while you build the face 'cause otherwise it would just hang and fall off. So you have to

maneuver the wires in and out of the face to make the whole, complete face. Then you

make the stand for it to stand up on as well. And it was good to go too. And that's

hunged [sic] up in your room as well (Line 145)!

Tommy also discussed the objects he created in clay which he considers as "functional objects". He included a bowl which his mother uses to put flowers in the kitchen and he states,

"I made a small box of clay as well. She puts her jewellery stuff in there" (Line 154). When describing these objects his facial expressions and body gestures are those that exhibit a sense of satisfaction and pride in his work.

4.4 Mona's Interview

Mona's interview was completed on Friday January 17, 2013. Mona uses a power chair to manoeuvre. She required academic support in both Science and Mathematics through her high school career. She is a candid speaker who is outgoing, pleasant and has many friends. Mona is not afraid to express how she feels.

Mona's interview was interesting from the perspective of the role the teacher can play in the Visual Art classroom as Mona had two very different educators in her grade 9 year. I did not teach Mona but according to journal entries, "*I recall that the change in staff mid-year was quite a turbulent time for students enrolled in Art classes*." She had one art teacher at the beginning of the year who she claims, "was very lively and knowledgeable about Art. What made me want to go [to Visual Art class] was how excited the teacher was for art itself, for like, she was always very energetic and very into the things that we were doing, and it made our whole mood to do this assignment a lot easier and we didn't take it so hard" (Line 16). At the same time she admits that this first teacher "scared me [her] a bit" (Line 152). She recalls that the second teacher did not have a background teaching art which became clear as the year progressed. Mona discusses the fact that during the latter part of the year she was not as productive because there was, "a lot of writing and it wasn't very hands on, like it was very hands on she wasn't very into the course and kind of like, we all dreaded doing the assignments instead of being proactive and doing it, not like, not procrastinating it and getting ahead on it and stuff, but, yeah but yeah....that kinda

stuff" (Line 16). Mona did not feel as if she was creative or able to create work to meet the

teacher's expectations and therefore had low self-esteem regarding her ability to create

satisfactory work, "Yeah we made pottery, little things, she didn't really like mine, but that's

okay [Laughs]. She [the teacher] thought it wasn't very creative, like as creative as the other

kids, but I'm not as creative..." (Line 24). This left her with a negative memory of her Visual Art

classroom experience.

As a result of her lived-experience she claims that she did not keep much of her art work.

She declares, "I unfortunately got rid of my art work as fast as possible (Line 4)... It was not

even good, so it was like, why keep it" (Line 5)?

She acknowledges that the hands-on work made art class more engaging rather than

pencil and paper study. She states that, "All I remember was that...cause the first half we maybe

got one or two tests, but second half it felt like this teacher gave a lot more for some reason, a lot

more mini quizzes, and I remember once we got a pop quiz because she was angry at us, and we

didn't do so well on it and it was just a lot of like…hands on the second part of the year" (Line

22). In her recounting of her year, she also correctly recalls the technical process of creating a

modern batik on which her first teacher spent 2 months, "One assignment that we did that we had

to do this big table cloth, or cheese cloth or something and we made a big picture on it, and we

used hot wax or something, and then peeled it or something. I don't remember. Something like

that, it was really fun. The first teacher helped me with it a lot and gave me a lot of creative ideas

about how to make my art work better or use my paintbrush like better strokes or something, so

yeah" (Line 18).

The strategies that Mona appreciated were an organized classroom where routines were set and students knew where to get the medium they were using that day in addition to demonstrations with extra support for technical handling of the media:

Well first, she taught us how, you know to hold your paint brush to get the best type of like, strokes, the best types of lines you know, when dealing with the paint and everything, and how to get really thin strokes or very thick strokes. My picture had a lot of thin strokes, so I really learned from her, she really taught me how to hold it so that you get nice fine lines, and umm she was just very, like everything was always the same, so we got into a routine or doing things. We knew, once we got the batik out, each group has to get up and then get like their paintbrushes and water, and we all went in lines, it was all kind of very set and ordered. So we always knew what was happening when she said, "Okay we're doing this today" (Line 30). We knew how our day was going to go. But the second teacher was very bouncy kind of thing, like she'd say, oh we're doing this, oh wait I changed my mind and I actually want to start with this, and it seemed like, like ah like it was always something new (Line 31).

Direct instruction was recollected and appreciated. According to Mona routines and location of materials was required in order for the smooth running of the studio class, "I think the class work, I mean, in terms of organization, it was pretty good, because we always knew where to get the tubs for the paints and where the paintbrushes were, where the batiks were, where to put them to dry, and all that stuff. It was good" (Line 39).

When asked about her treatment by the teacher as an exceptional student Mona could not provide specific examples to support the "feeling" she had that the second teacher treated her

differently.   It could be her general malaise with the second educator that affected her answer.
She indicates that the other students in the class are were very supportive of her as far as
obtaining materials and clean up. Astutely she stated:

> Yeah. I just think that some teachers' views are completely different!… Like you know
> they see it as, "Oh no, like they have a student who has a disability and they say so oh
> no!...Like what do we do? How do we report?" [Pause]...I feel like they...They think of a
> whole new way to do the course, but it is like..they haven't seen what we can do yet.
> They can't just say.... like at my old school they generalized us a lot with what they had
> previous knowledge of what maybe like I feel like some teachers take the worst case
> scenario and like put it in every child. It's kind of like .... No! He's way different
> compared to me; his needs are way different; his strengths are way different! I can do
> something and he can't do it or vice versa and you can't just say that we are all the same
> because we are all sitting down! We are all disabled but were not the same at all (Line
> 118)!...Yeah! I feel like because you can see our disability they just generalize it right
> away! It is like a lot of people have disabilities that you can't see! So... (Line 124)

The advice Mona gives to art teachers is to be understanding of, "what my needs are and how
slow I do work at times and you know when I do ask for a extension it's not because I'm trying
to avoid it, it's because I really do work at a very slow pace so...extra time sometimes is needed
for me..." (Line 50). She asserted that, "Anything like painting or sculpting, to do with my hands
or something probably I'd take double the time" (Line 58). She also mentions that the teacher
must be conscious that, "there are [were] 30 or something kids in one room" (Line 57) and that it
is difficult for everyone to get organized. Mona was extremely self-critical about her work. She
was sensitive to the views of the teachers who try to simplify the curriculum. She wants teachers

to realize that each student with a disability should be "treated like an individual and not lumped

together as a whole" (Mona, Interview, January 17, 2013) similar entity therefore the educator

should modify or accommodate the curriculum for students per the ability of the student. For

example engagement including willingness to attempt projects is increased if the accommodation

of extra time is given or the student knew that they could adjust their work even after it was

resubmitted.

Figure 6: Mona, Rose Top View, 3"length x 2"width x 2" height, Earthenware and Glaze
        (left panel) and Rose Side View, 3" length x 2"width x 2" height, Earthenware and Glaze
        (right panel)

The only two things Mona mentions when asked to share art work are her batik which she says

that she immediately discarded and her clay rose which is pictured here in *Figure 6.* She made

the rose with left over clay from the actual assigned work which she does not believe she

finished. The rose was even fully glazed. Mona said that she really didn't care about it but she

handled it with care when it was returned it to her. Mona mentioned that often Visual Art

students are self-critical of their work. Mona asks, "What do you do as a teacher to help students

having difficulty?" I shared that frequently students are allowed to alter or resubmit their art

work in order to better it so that they are satisfied with it. Mona acknowledges that this is a good

practice that should be continued and wishes that she had had that opportunity (Lines 75 - 76).

In conclusion Mona's experiences in the art classroom were highly dependent on the art educator as Mona looked to the teacher for both technical support with art projects and moral support in order to inspire confidence and motivation to move toward project completion. She asserted that students require an organised class environment and clear technical instructions when exploring any new medium in order to achieve success. She expressed an appreciation for a focus on the hands-on activities rather than the academic pencil and paper activities.

4.5 Lisa's Interview

Lisa's interview was completed on February 4, 2013. Lisa has Cerebral Palsy and a learning disability. She had full academic support in all of her classes. She is a happy student who has many friends and was actively involved in extracurricular sports in her community. She navigates her way through the world with a walker.

When asked about what made learning come alive for her or conversely made it more difficult to learn, the memory that came to the fore was the busyness and the lack of accessibility to get her walker in and out between the studio tables within the room. From her perspective seated by the door, there "didn't seem to be organization" (Lines 14, 16, 20) when students were getting ready to work or cleaning up their art media tools even though work seemed to get completed. She comments that "...even for able bodied people it was a lot of people" (Line 142). That year I recall that there were at least 32 students enrolled in the class, an EA and a teacher in the space despite class caps of 24 students. Not realizing how class sizes are determined by the administration, on several occasions during the interview Lisa blames the teacher for the number of students and the seeming lack of organization in the classroom. She declares that, "If I could get stuff by myself and be more independent it would be ideal" (Line

22). Lisa's mobility issues and limited accessibility necessitated the support of the EA to get art media for her.

Lisa recalled that many instructions were given orally with texts read as a class and hands-on demonstrations to support the learning (Line 32) which she appreciated because she described herself as an, "oral learner". Lisa recalls that, learning was supported through photocopied notes and visual aids glued into students' sketchbooks or placed in duotangs so she could go back and read them out loud if she forgot a concept or an idea.

Lisa acknowledged her preference for tactile work, "The Art History was always boring so I can't really say that it can get any more interesting… [Laughing]. But [Pause]. Like…[Smile] the painting was kind of cool…like… it was more hands on stuff" (Line 38)! She recognizes that, "[w]ith everything there is like steps to everything. Like there is all of these different steps you had to do to get to the finished product. I don't know…it is kind of long..[Pause] [Smile]" (Line 43).   Lisa admitted that she liked learning, playing and experimenting with techniques but that she really didn't like using those new learned techniques in a finished work. She deemed them a pointless activity.

Lisa did not recognize Visual Art as a "legitimate course" with curricular expectations to earn a credit. She thought that the course should solely be based on choice and "free expression" (Line 151) or "free art" (Line 78) unlike Math, English, or Science classes. She shared, "and then, and then um. If like…there wasn't a lot of space like to do whatever you wanted…it was sort of like to do one or the other. I think that I would enjoy it better if I had a personal choice between …like…. [Pause] of what I wanted to do for styles of art. You know what I mean" (Line 45)? On several occasions she repeated that she felt like students should be

allowed to make whatever they wanted whenever they wanted to make it. She even offered the

suggestion that, "[I]f we had been taught like all the techniques (e.g. pencil technique, pastel,

acrylic painting and clay sculpture) in one year at the beginning of the year maybe one from each

different unit ...we could pick one from each unit...or something like (Line 198). I guess you

could put it all in one piece. I guess and create some weird thing [Smile]" (Line 208). I

remember that there were many projects and smaller tasks where students could express their

thoughts, ideas unreservedly under broad themes like landscape, functional clay object or the

culminating task of exploring a career in the arts and creating an art object related to that career.

Lisa's memory of the class focused on her need to freely express her desired imagery alone and

what she thought the grade 9 course should be and not necessarily what the curriculum

expectations guided.

It is only near the end of the interview that Lisa acknowledged the gaps in her elementary

Art education; she did not have Art in grades 5, 6, 7 and 8 at her local school which she later

admitted could have be a possible cause for her views about Art as a "course".   After

communicating the lack of opportunity for personal expression she felt, I gave Lisa the

opportunity to discuss her suggestions to improve the course. Lisa was encouraged to clearly

explain her viewpoint which kept getting lost, flattened or silenced and then cropped up again

and again. She became engaged in the dialogue then reconsidered her comments and silenced

them. It was clear that in her view art really wasn't a course to be graded but should be

considered an extra-curricular activity as she communicated that she did not quite comprehend

the balance between curricular demands, grades, art as social agency and artistic freedom in the

classroom.

Further into the interview it was clear that Lisa lacked self-confidence in her artistic

ability which was probably due to the non-existence of art classes through her elementary career.

The journal entry states, *"I remember working with Lisa in the Visual Art class; she would ask*

me for suggestions about how to improve her work as she was dissatisfied with it and then if I

offered an idea or a technique she would make a face or become defensive. I remember saying

to her that she was the artist and that she could make her own artistic decisions as it was her art

work to take home in the end". In the interview she said, "I think Visual Art teachers in general

are very critical about stuff…" (Line 260). Then she rephrased saying, "Maybe I am too self-

critical" (Line 262)! "I always compare my work to SC, she was one of the most gifted

artists...like...well better than me [Laugh]" (Line 234).

Figure 7: Lisa, At the Beach, 14" x 10", Acrylic on board.

Lisa brought her favourite art work to the interview. The painting is depicted in *Figure 7*.

It was the landscape whose creative process she vented about throughout the first part of the

interview but yet seemed proud to present it:

It was a photograph from my vacation and it is probably one of my favorite photographs

I've taken... one of the best ones I've ever taken [sic]. So I thought I would do a painting

of it. You told us to blend all of these different colours...I had these different colours so it

was difficult but I think it turned out well. And the people...I don't think the people

really belong in there because they weren't that big in the photograph but I felt it had to

be there. (Line 240)

Figure 8: Lisa, Abstract Sunset, 12" x 12", Acrylic on board.

Lisa also selected to bring a reinterpretation of the same holiday sunset scene (See Figure

8) described in *Figure 7* only this time she said she completed the work at home using the

techniques she had learned at school but claimed, "This is my more abstract version. It is

different but I like it too. I like the bands of colour" (Line 248).

When asked about her experiences as an exceptional student she acknowledged that her teacher didn't treat her differently than other students and that she seemed to get along with her peers in the class. She said, "You are funny and weird" (Line 301)! She claimed that students in her class acknowledged her:

Lisa: Okay [Laughing…. Laughing] cause we were like the four students in the class who weren't the 'try hards'! [Laughing] (Line 120)

Yarmol: They weren't try hards? [Laughing] So they were really 'chill'in' (Line 121).

Lisa: Yeah and they were talking to me all of the time. (Line 122)

She felt like most of the time that she "fit in" the class bringing up that she wasn't always socially accepted by her peers. This was a sensitive issue that Lisa did not want to readily discuss. She described how she was received by students in some other classes:

Lisa: When we are doing group work and stuff...I don't know [SIL] …You know people pick me to be in their group, but only the people that don't have a group already…just like I don't get picked first ever (Line 128).

Yarmol: And how does that make you feel (Line 129)?

Lisa: It is fine …I am used to it! But it is like it would be if…cause……. I have friends in these classes and even my friends don't want to be with me in a group so I don't know [Laughing] (Line 129)!

Yarmol: [Laughing] Why (Line 130)?

Lisa: I don't know..because they know me. I don't know maybe it is because I have an

EA? I need an EA can't really control that because I need an EA. I think that they figure

that the EA will push us to do one thing….or another (Line 131).

She continually comes back to the EA being the reason students did not approach her.
The affect of EAs on students' progress and social relationships in the Visual Art is a topic for
further study.

4.6 Matthew's Interview

Matthew's interview was completed on February 12, 2013. Matthew has Cerebral Palsy

(Complex 1 Mitochondrial Myopathy), Learning Disabilities and ADHD. He required full

academic support in all classes and some personal care from an EA. He needed his assignments

and test questions magnified so he is able to read them. Usually his EA read him the questions

and took notes. He was athletic; he played sledge hockey for a private team. Matthew is an

easy-going person who has many friends. He has sharp sense of humour and often finds humour

in life's situations.

In his initial discussion, Matthew remembers thinking about the Grade 10 Technology

class with a positive attitude at the start of the year as the course offered use of the computer and

programs that he had never employed. He discusses his personal logo design using his initials M

and M where he put a "bunch of different fonts and like it was really cool" (Line 19).

As the interview progressed it became clear that his positive expectations of the course

were dashed as some of the personality traits of the Communications Technology teacher really

perturbed him. She would become excitable when students did not understand concepts she

taught or "things were not going her way" (Line 23). At first he silenced or flattened his thoughts about the educator but as he grew more comfortable he explained more about his about his lived-experience, he revealed that she could have provided more instructional accommodations with multi-step processes involved with most projects. Frustrated a majority of the time over the course of the year he continually felt like he was behind and/or afraid to ask questions so he didn't "look stupid" or foolish in front of his peers. He acknowledges the support of his classmate who assisted him with most assignments for the entire year.

He seemed to acknowledge the success of the projects to engage his interest recounting the initial assignments with the Photoshop program, "It was like we took a picture in front of a white screen and then we Photoshopped (sic) it to look different than it did when we took the picture...So I made….myself look like the avatar from the Avatar movie" (Line 36). Matthew also mentioned his group's Public Service Announcement:

My public service announcement was about how we…how I was walking before and then a drunk driver hit the car and I became like in a wheel chair. So somebody was at the top of the stairs and they were walking and all of the sudden and then the camera turns to me and I'm supposed to go…drunk drivers changed my life forever. So I thought that was really cool because…I thought it was really powerful when a lot of them weren't. …like the examples. (Line 40)

I asked, "Wow. So did that actually happen? Is that what happened or was that was the story" (Line 42)?

Matthew answered, "That was the story. [Calmly] I was born like this" (Line 44).

I responded, "Okay. Sometimes some people…something does happen to them in their lives and they make art about it…but that is great that your PSA worked out like that" (Line 45).

Matthew sharpened, "So it was supposed to look like I fell down the stairs and like stuff happened but obviously they can't show that because I am officially…always in a chair [Chuckle]" (Line 46). I felt as if there was something Matthew wanted to tell me about the way he felt about the assignment but omitted it. He then silenced any other commentary about the project.

In response to the inquiry about the things that made learning come alive for Matthew or conversely made learning difficult he expressed his frustration with the teacher's lack of instruction and support when learning new technical programs on the computer:

So I found that part a lot more challenging… like how to fix blemishes on your face and stuff. I didn't know how to.   And I always had to ask her and she would say, "Why aren't you paying attention?" It was hard for me to understand that portion of the course, I didn't really like…I like taking pictures, I love taking pictures I think pictures are awesome but I don't know how to take blemishes out of my face and like the more techie portion of the course (Line 51). The picture taking is easy but it's more the techie take this out of your face or make this bigger, make that bigger… (Line 53)... But they should somehow adapt it in a way so that like… obviously one person's not gonna switch the whole curriculum, but maybe switch to make it a bit easier for a person like me to be able to understand like…(Line 55).

Matthew continually notes his teacher's responses to his inquiries for support, "[s]o that I was kind of just even when I asked for help, like she did help me, Ms. B [Smiling], she did help me, but then it felt like I was scared to ask her because then it made it look like I'm stupid and like I don't understand (Line 61)...Like I don't want to…like I didn't wanna ask her because I didn't wanna look stupid in front of the other kids" (Line 63). Matthew's experience highlights the important role of the teacher in the classroom and the need to adapt the curriculum to support students who did not understand in lieu of laying blame on those students accusing them of not listening or paying attention. He began to compare himself with the other students feeling like he was the only one in the group who struggled with this teacher, "But they got by (Line 67)!" he exclaimed and noted that, "It was a struggle ALL year" (Line 69)!

When asked what could improve his educational experience Matthew provides several suggestions, it could have been given to me in advance (Line 71) or "written down and like explained to me in detail on what we're supposed to do, maybe I wouldn't have struggled that much (Line 73). Step by step instructions, "like pictures would have helped like...examples, more in-depth one-to-one instruction at various points in the process" (Lines 74-80).

Matthew was asked why he did not enrol in a Visual Art course instead of a Technology course and he began to discuss his disability, "Like I can grasp a pencil fine, but when I'm starting to draw something my hand will jump. It'll make a swirl when I don't want a swirl (Line 89)...It's different for each student, and but that's how it is for me. So I've tried and tried, and I cannot draw a straight line. I will admit to this camera right now [Makes a hand gesture to camera with thumb and forefinger together.]. I cannot draw a straight line (Line 91)!.. .I could have done sculpture now that I think about it! [Laughing & smiling]" (Line 95).

Although Matthew discussed at length the teacher's unwillingness or lack of knowledge of how to modify the course content, he concluded that he was treated differently as an exceptional student in the Visual Arts and Technical classroom. He begins to discuss his Elementary Art school experiences with Mr. P. He claims that his elementary art teacher made obscure assignments like, "Warm up: Draw Poverty" (Line 111) on a continual basis. Mr. P, " didn't understand...Mr. P just thought drawing was art (Line 150)." Matthew communicated that Mr. P did not modify the art assignments, "I [L]ike, okay he didn't completely say, oh you just have to draw it....I can paint, I'm a really good painter, I could paint, I did a painting for him and got 75%, everything else [the drawing assignments] I had 60%" (Line 152)! Matthew aptly states, "I'm okay and going to say this straight to the camera. I like art but you need to switch it up so that people with disabilities or other… needs can also participate, but you need to somehow switch it so that everyone can participate! That's a wrap, camera" (Line 160)!

4.7 Lala's Interview

Lala's interview was completed on December 20, 2012. Lala came to me as a potential participant in the study due to the Snowball sampling poster posted in the office and Special Education room. A colleague who had her taught her years earlier emailed her with the details of the study. She has Cerebral Palsy and has limited use of the left side of her body. She was a highly vocal self-advocate. She had completed an undergraduate degree in Journalism and then gained her Bachelor of Education degree. Her profile does not match the established criteria as she was never enrolled in Visual Art or Technology courses while at the school, however, she did take Drama to satisfy her "Arts" high school credit requirements. The question arose in my mind about why she did not enrol in Visual Art and Technology courses as many of the students

in the ISP cohort were in these classes and were quite successful in these subject areas. Her story was intriguing. She was now "on the other side", that is she had completed high school and two university degrees and could offer informative insight into being a student with a physical disability. She cheerfully responded with a "sign me up" and a meeting was arranged at the local library near her home. One result of her interview was that the local school trustee supported and organized a parent night where another participant in the study and Lala presented their experiences as students with physical disabilities in high school and university respectively to an audience of 30 people.

The questions asked of the other participants were readjusted when necessary. The question asked and Lala's response will be indicated in this interview summary. The first question was: Let's talk about your experiences in Drama classes and why you didn't take Visual Art. Lala replied that she did not enrol in Visual Art because she has very severe physical disabilities with very pronounced fine motor issues (Line 4). She sharpened her description:

> I have visual perceptual issues as well. Anything related to fine motor, cutting and pasting and sort of visual/perceptual aspects of creating art are, of course, particular areas where in terms of my learning disabilities, visual-spatial difficulties...so in terms of taking Visual Arts I was never confident in my abilities to... um... create art in a stereotypical way and sense and it was never something that I was drawn to because it was so difficult because of the skills that are inherent with those processes for me. I am very interested in art, but just in terms of being individually involved in creating it, ...it was never something I got involved in just because of the difficulties involved in the process. (Line 5)

I told her that many of students in the art courses taught over the years have difficulties with "visual and perceptual aspects of creating art" and seemed to succeed. Her elementary art experiences were delved into due to her phrase, "I was never confident in my abilities to... um... create art in a stereotypical way" and inquired, "In elementary school did you take any Visual Art?" Lala replied:

> I did because it was required um. A lot of the time I brought things home [Laugh] and my Mom and my brother are very good at making dioramas and doing um... I can't even think of it... mosaics that was another big thing in grade school! And of course cutting and pasting tiny, little pieces and creating patterns and things so...my Mom and my brother got really good at creating mosaics. The hours I spent to create something...The hours I would spend ... I would spend three to four times to create something that everyone else in my class and the end result would be...not up to par with the rest of my class. Like my running joke was always don't ask me to draw because an eight year old could do something better [Laugh]. (Line 8)

Lala's family working as a team to support the success of her assigned art projects without modifications or accommodations in mind could be imagined. Does tearing apart larger pieces construction paper and tacking it to a Bristol board to create an image not achieve a similar expectation of mosaic making avoiding this torment for the student? She was asked about why the art educators in her past did not make allowances or modifications. She tells her story:

> I went to school in a rehab place for kids with disabilities until I was six. Of course in that environment it was very adaptive and they have help on hand for the kids. But going

through a regular school the teachers heard the word "accommodation" they saw my IEP

and they freaked out. And it was always a bit of a battle between my parents and the

school team that the accommodations that I required were actually being given and the

other issue in grade school was that I had a designated educational assistant who was

supposed to be with me, all of the time essentially but she was given other duties. She

was sent off to do laminating or to run copies for a classroom teacher. So it seemed that

whenever I needed my Ed assistant [she] was off somewhere else doing something else

(Line 10). And of course by the time I got to high school, in high school you had choice.

You have to do an arts course but it can be Visual Art, it can be Photography, it can be

Drama it can be.... and I just based on my past experience in school, of course in grade

school art class is not the only class where you make art so based on my past experience

what is my most realistic option for me in terms of an arts course (Line 12)?

Photography, I was interested in it but I was worried about breaking the camera because

my right arm is very spastic so I don't ...it doesn't work very well; I don't use it very

much. So given that I only have use of one arm, I was concerned about the process of

taking pictures and developing film. Physically I knew that would be a challenge for me

as well. So even though I was really interested in Photography, my being able to execute

the expectations of a class would be difficult, And so, Drama just kinda [sic] of seemed to

make the most sense. (Line 14)

I suggested that even with her disability, accommodations could be made. Lala discussed her

reflections about how she felt growing up as a teenager with a disability:

But it's also an issue for the individuals, the individuals who have the limitations and the disabilities, it's difficult for them because they look at what their classmates can produce and create. Especially at a high school level when you're taking art, some of those kids are really talented, you know for kids with disabilities or students who have limitations, like I do, part of their hesitation could be, "Look at what the rest of the class can do, just in terms of visual appeal, and anything I can create will not be up to that... standard". So you kind of look at what the student with the disability can produce, and put it right next to someone who doesn't have a disability who did the exact same project and you look at it and think: the student who didn't have limitations created something that looked much nicer. So the physical limitations also affect the end outcome which is part of the reason for me, that, anything that I produced, it's going to look like a 10 year old did it, just because of the difficulties that I have, and that made me feel like ....(Line 16).

Yarmol, "And that made you feel like..."

Lala continued:

Maybe it's not the best thing 'cause even if it doesn't translate into grades, even if I had a really good art teacher, I mean, I don't know about other people going through puberty with disabilities, but I hold myself to, some would say, impossibly high standards, [Laugh] for me, being a teenager and being in an art class, and constantly having to do things that were difficult for me because of my limitations, psychologically that would be very hard, and I would look at the end product and go, it looks like an 8 year old did it (Line 18).

Lala compared herself to others around her and did not take Visual Art because she did not feel like she could match her colleagues' successes due to her physical differences. She also acknowledges that if she had more of an awareness of the art department at the school and how they would have been able to accommodate for her, her decision would have been different (Line 20).

When I mentioned the existence of written locally developed Printmaking and Sculpture classes with a small number of students in the school she acknowledged that sculpture was good and that she had been to a few creative arts camps before, where she'd been able to do tie dying and pottery making, and those kinds of things, and that she enjoyed the creative process but not in the sense of going to school and taking a Visual Art class.

When moving on to a discussion about her Drama experience Lala highlights how the teacher's inexperience working with exceptional students resulted in an extremely negative outcome:

There were tensions between me and my teacher and my parents and the school, because there was a period of time where he didn't want me on the stage in my wheelchair because he thought it was unsafe for my chair to be on the stage because God forbid I didn't see the edge of the stage and I fell off the stage or something. But there was one in particular, exercise that we were doing or project that we were working on, and it must have been towards...during the beginning on the year, but he was very adamant and didn't want me on stage because he thought it would be unsafe for me to be onstage in my wheelchair. That became a fight, because as a 16-year-old student, you are going, "I signed up for Drama, and you're telling me that it's unsafe to be on the stage." So: a) how

am I supposed to take Drama? b) I don't have the kind of disability that would make it

impossible for me to control my chair. I have good control of my muscles and can control

where my chair goes, I'm not going to run into a wall and not notice (Line 32).

She claims that there were many assumptions made about what she could not do without even

consulting or communicating at all with her.

> And there were a lot of instances too, my right arm is very spastic, so I don't have a great
>
> range of motion or great ability in my right side in my upper body, and a lot of the
>
> physical activities that we would do on stage, like the warm-up activities or the
>
> stretching, whatever you would do when you were getting ready for a performance, the
>
> teacher would just look at me and say, "You'll have difficulty doing this, because it
>
> requires both arms so you can just not do this, you can just sit to the side!" So again, I
>
> spent a lot of time at the beginning of the year, there were exercise that half my body
>
> could do, I could do just fine, I mean my right arm can't reach as high as my left, but that
>
> doesn't mean that I can't. But there was a lot of, "Oh you won't be able to do this, so you
>
> can just watch" (Line 38).

Her frustration grew throughout the course. "So again, by the time that was sorted out, and I was

properly, actively participating in class, it was at least a quarter of the way through the year"

(Line 40). She resigned herself to the fact she just decided to, "Get the credit". At this point

Lala was asked, "[A]t that quarter, did the teacher use any instructional strategies or approaches

or procedures that helped you get more involved?" Lala answered:

> Begrudgingly, is the way I would describe it as, I mean he did, but he didn't figure out
>
> what any of that entailed, you know, he just kind of, well, he would asked me, "What do

you think you can do? Or how do you think you can do this?" Which is fine every once

and a while but when you're 16, you shouldn't have to be telling the teacher how to

accommodate for you through the entire course. It was doubly frustrating because that

class was one where an Ed assistant was sent with me to Drama to assist me because

there were instances or physical activity or where I might need help, and that was fine,

but again, um, the Ed assistant basically had nothing to do because I was only being

included in a very minimal sense. And so again when you're 16, you don't tell your

teacher exactly how to accommodate for you. I mean, I was totally fine with having open

dialogue with my teachers, but at 16, I didn't know how to accommodate a curriculum.

So there's only so much advice you can give at that age and stage of your life. There's

only so many times you can look at your teacher giving you a blank face and saying,

"How am I supposed to help you (Line 42)?

Lala continually sharpened her lived-experience by underlining the need for communication

between teacher and students with disabilities:

 I appreciate the open dialogue, but it happens on both ends. I can give advice as a

student in a specific position, but I'm not the teacher, so there's only so much that I can,

you know, advise, and it was one extreme or the other. In high school, either my teachers

didn't ask and had difficulty getting the accommodations that I needed because it was

such a closed door in terms of communication, or they were so clueless that they just,

they expected me to know exactly how things needed to be accommodated or exactly

what to do all the time. And it wasn't until Grade 12 that I had teachers that were

perfectly in between and I realized, school can be fun! School can be good (Line 48)!

Lala was asked what strategies, instructional decisions, teaching strategies, and approaches help her to achieve success? Lala offered a key piece of advice:

 I think it's important, especially when you're dealing with teenagers and with disabilities, there's all sorts of self-esteem and image issues and issues of achievement, especially when you're talking about subjects that present very specific challenges, it's important to say to them, "I'm here to help you and whenever you need to talk to me you can." And it's fully okay for teachers to admit they don't know everything. I understand your difficulties are but I don't know how to accommodate for all of them all the time, so we'll just talk to each other. For me, this was like, you're going to talk to me? You're gonna let me communicate with you, wow! I'd never experienced that before! In terms of instructional strategies, I'm sure that teachers learn as they go, so that's why it's important to have a two way dialogue with students who need the help to say to them, "You know where are your issues and how can we work through them because it's something the student needs to feel like they have a voice in the process. But the teacher also needs to step up and be the teacher and take the control that only they can take to make those positive changes, but the student needs to feel like that if they have a concern that they bring forward, that they are going to be respected in the concerns that they bring forward (Line 54).

Lala acknowledges that it is alright for teachers to ask and learn how to be supportive of students with disabilities as long as there are open lines of communication.

Lala was poses the question, "You felt then, that you were viewed differently than other students in the classroom" (Line 59)? She responded:

Totally! Totally I was the crippled kid in the corner, for lack of a better...I mean I don't remember particulars, whether I had personal friends in the class or not, honestly I don't remember, but I had a very distinct feeling that, I'm the crippled kid in the corner and whatever grade I'm going to get is going to be "a pity grade". I'm going to pass, but it's not...First of all, I can't participate the way that I should be able to, and I could have participated more fully, and I couldn't because of the blockages between myself and the teacher. I knew that I wasn't going to fail the course, but it was never a class that I looked forward to (Line 60).

The interview then moved to a discussion about ableism and the unit being described in the prologue of this thesis being taught in the Visual Art room and Lala acknowledged that, "Ableism often slips under the radar all of the time, and I've always told people, when you have a disability, this is the type of discrimination the type of discrimination that people in my position face is the kind of discrimination that nobody deals with. It's never talked about, it's never discussed" (Line 68). The conversation then moved to Lala's positive experience with English teachers at the high school and how they motivated and encouraged her to write and how she had completed her practicum at our school because it was one of the only high schools in the west end of the city with functioning elevators whose teachers volunteered to be host teachers. She regards this opportunity as successful remembering it fondly.

Lala was asked what advice she would give to educators to improve engagement for students with disabilities? Her advice was to be open with your students and concede to the fact that "teachers don't know everything" (Line 111). Lala continued:

[Long pause]... And one of the most challenging things and one of the most intimidating things for a student at least from my perspective and my experience is being in contact with a teacher that I don't feel I can talk to if I have issues. Or if I come to talk to them with an issue, they automatically assume they know the answer. And then I have a difficult time telling them that the accommodation that they came up with doesn't actually work. Like it is very intimidating to be a student who needs that little bit of assistance from a teacher who you don't feel you can talk to. And especially in subjects like Drama and Visual Art and Photography and those kinds of things, if you are dealing with kids with physical disabilities, they're probably going to have very pronounced issues um, in relation to what is required of them in that specific course. So you know they might be approaching it with a certain degree of trepidation themselves going, "Holy crap! I don't know if I can do this. So it is really important as a teacher to be there as a support and say like, "We'll both figure out as we go...." (Line 113)... And it's really important for the student to be able to voice their concerns or voice issues and it's really important that the teacher,... be supportive and actually hear those concerns. And it's okay for the teacher to admit to the student to say, "I don't have the answer but we'll figure it out". Because that allows for the teacher treating the student as an equal. And it is kind of like you both don't know what is going on but you are both going to figure out, and you know.... projects may not turn out 'pretty' aesthetically speaking but as long as the student understands what they have done, as long as they understand what they have achieved and as long as they have a sense of fulfillment in what they have done and as long as they've met the sort of markers of expectation (Line 115)...that are within every assignment then you can create an atmosphere. So what if it is not pretty? You still

executed this and this and this and you still did this and this and this. And it might not be as pretty as the kids next to you but...you still achieved something that is very personal for you (Line 117). You must establish a sense of pride in the work. So they don't look at a Visual Art project and go but it looks like my kid sister could have done it! You still have to establish a sense of achievement and a sense of pride in what they've done (Line 123).

In her directive to arts educators, Lala speaks at length about the arts having "end products" which are performed and to be consumed, viewed, touched or listened to:

Which I think especially if you are dealing with art of any kind...the end product, the end performance the end whatever it's going to be on display. It is going to be... you know you go into the school and there are display cases of all the art so I mean if you are dealing with students who are self-conscious about their ability to create something that is worthy of attention and praise that is worthy of anything... you have to help foster that confidence in the students so as they go forward they can understand... you know, "This is good for me and I am proud with what I have achieved" so that eventually they can stop comparing what they do to what the student who sits, ...who sits next to them did. And it becomes, 'This is what I have done. I am proud with what I have done. And who cares about what the rest of the class did' (Line 125)!

Lala makes a statement about her high school experience:

There are so many avenues of my life that got started in high school. Or so many avenues or passions that got started in high school that have grown. And so, I think that whatever students decide to take in school whether it be art, the languages, history or

whatever it is, um you really don't realize the impact that it can have until you are done and you move beyond. And you look back and if I'm going to trace the impact and this is where it started. (Line 153)

A wide range of experiences are discussed in these participants' stories. Closely re-examining the ordered data and viewing the physical presentation and intonation of the interviewees themselves themes emerge organically through the wide range of experiences are discussed in these participants' stories.   In Chapter 5, data will be triangulated through summarized results of the interviews, the review of literature, and journal experiences.

4.8 Christina Yarmol's Personal Journal Entry

As a researcher I have included my own journal entry as a data point in this narrative inquiry. This personal journal entry written while reflecting upon my review of literature, relating these readings to my classroom experience, writing my thesis and viewing the Aimee Mullins video reminds me of a performance I witnessed at the at the Very Special Arts (VSA) conference in Boston I attended at the end of April 2011 with two of my colleagues. We represented our School Board presenting a Canadian educational perspective of teaching students with disabilities providing all of the formal documentation (IEP, IPRC, differentiated instruction) in place in Ontario schools and how this documentation was theoretically enacted into the classroom environment.

At the end of a day, filled with an immense amount of information, there was a reception at the Institute of Contemporary Art on the Boston Harbour; this was a magnificent location with

a view directly onto Massachusetts Bay. I watched an amazing performance by two gymnasts/dancers, one able-bodied male and a female artist with a disability of a double leg amputation. The female dancer pulled herself up to two long, red, silk fabric pieces by her arms and showed great strength supporting her own weight. I asked myself, "Could I do that?" I am "able bodied" and I do not think that I am well-trained or fit enough to accomplish what she had accomplished. I felt a sense of pride; I wanted to shout out, "You go girl!" The following is an account from my journal entry which I wrote shortly after witnessing the performance:

> At the VSA conference there was phenomenal performance by a pair of trapeze artists at the Institute of Contemporary Art right on the stage in the Boston Harbour. The setting was fabulous! The piece they performed was to live music. A vocalist making a variety of sounds ranging from guttural to higher pitched hums sang in the background as the wind blew. An oral "describer" explained the first half of the performance in eloquent detail like a mini novella for those who were visually impaired. The fabric on which the gymnasts balanced themselves was a brilliant crimson red flapping in the wind. The performers were both incredibly fit. They were true athletes. As the woman got closer we realized that she had no legs. She got herself off of her wheel chair and onto the stage. Her able male counterpart lifted her up in order to reach the yards of cardinal red silk above. Using her arms she twisted and turned around the fabric; her partner joined her in the dance. The entire scene was extremely sensual as the pair appeared like a Baroque sculptural masterpiece. It was not only the movement of their forms which added to the romance it was their intense facial expressions and their fixed attention on one another. It grew almost erotic as they twisted the silk around themselves forming a cocoon in which they both settled near the end of the dance. Even though physically

there was a cool spring wind coming off the lake there was stillness in the air. As I

glanced around at the audience I knew that that piece was so moving it brought tears to

many viewers' eyes. The strength and skills of the artist with a disability were

astounding. The fact that she had no legs was unimportant after your initial gaze you

barely noticed. I think that wind, the water, the flaming red silk, the open air, the vocalist

and the dancer's movements all made this was a terribly moving experience.

Looking back at this experience, I returned to school with a new vision of what I had to

encourage all students to do; provide them with opportunities to achieve success enabling them

to look inward drawing upon their strengths.

Considering my research, the assignments I am designing for the students in my

classroom and a performance by a gymnast/dancer I witnessed at the Very Special Arts: Art and

Disabilities conference I attended two years ago in Boston, I created a collage entitled: No

ENFREAKMENT HERE—entrance is FREE. The intention is to do as Aimee Mullins (2009)

suggests and "Start the conversation" about disabilities encouraging the viewer to confront his or

her own conceptions and misconceptions about disabilities.

4.9 Christina Yarmol's Art and Artist's Statement

The art work in *Figure 9* was created after reflecting upon my attendance at the VSA

conference in Boston and my lived-experiences (van Manen, 1990) working with students with

physical disabilities. In my collage, the Bengal tiger is placed beside a woman in a wheelchair

surrounded by severed limbs. The collage itself is also inspired by artist Hannah Höch's

photomontage work whose purpose was often to challenge viewers to question societal

injustices. The tiger, the sign, "Freak Show Enfreakment Free" and red hue of the garment all recall early 20th century travelling circus tents. I have included 12 legs to represent the discourse from Aimee Mullins' (2009) *Ted Talk, 12 Pairs of Legs* mentioned in the prologue of this thesis. Mullins openly discusses her experiences as an amputee and how she believes the world views her.

Figure 9: Christina Yarmol, No ENFREAKMENT HERE—entrance is FREE. 2012. 8.5" x 11", Collage.

The woman's highly manicured, fingers unzip the tent's opening inviting us to enter. Spectators in black and white flank the exterior of the tent either fearful of venturing forth or

halted because society deems it "impolite" to move forward inside the viewing area. We are both attracted and hesitant about what we might experience behind the zipped tarp.

The playful baby shows his bottom to the viewers as mistaken societal norms have not yet affected him. He will fearlessly enter the tent, make inquiries and learn from the answers moving forward with his own views until is otherwise retaught; his position almost mocks the viewer. The child helps shifts the viewers' gaze from the figure in the wheelchair to his gesture, to the legs, to the tiger and back once again to the central figure.

With outstretched arms of the central figure invite us to step into the tent. The mask protects the wearer's true identity. We stare fixedly at the focal point that is the central figure with enlarged human eyes who stares intensely back at the us; it is a kind of challenge. The idea of taking back the gaze seemed so empowering to me. Sometimes we focus helplessly on that which is different when it seems so distant from us. I see the responses of my participants representing those on the inside of the tent who through their storied responses refocus my attention on myself as I examine the strengths and the needs of my own pedagogical practices. This art work is a form of data which visually depicts the topics which I have been studying in depth through my review of literature and experiencing in my teaching practice.

Chapter 5

Triangulating the Data Sources

In this chapter the development of what Polkinghorne (2007) suggests are "persuasive arguments [which] lead readers through a progression of evidence (quotations from the collected text)" (p. 477) acquired through videotaped interviews from study participants is begun. I do as Josselson (2010) suggests and attend to the layering of voices (subject positions) and their interaction as well as the continuities, ambiguities, and disjunctions expressed. I pay close attention to both the content of the narration ("the told") and the structure of the narration ("the telling"). The goal is to develop cross case analysis to discover patterns across individual narrative interview texts or to explore what might create differences between people in their narrated experiences (p. 874). "Interpretative claims" or "thought procedures that informed the interpretation of the meaning of the storied texts" are provided in the journal entries which emerged from the thoughts recorded after the interview process furnishing a "context in which they were [these storied text were] made" (p. 477). "The researcher [will] describe ways in which background experiences produced understandings through interaction with the text" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 477). In order to contextualize the interview data and journal entries, a triangulation with a review of literature from researchers in the fields of: student engagement, multimodality, Universal Design for Learning, Special Education in the Visual Art classroom and designing contemporary art education. The personal journal entries appear in italics in this précis and through the dissertation so that they may be distinguished from the rest of the text.

The key research question was: What can art educators learn from students' stories of art education that would better enable art educators to enact a pedagogy that engages exceptional

students in the Visual Arts classroom?" For facility, the following triangulation is organized into the five topics of my interview questions: Inherent Possibilities in the Art Classroom, Disciplines and Media, Themes and Activities, Teaching Strategies, Instructional Decisions, Approaches, Procedures, or Routines, and *Conditions for Learning*. The data is organized according to summaries of the overall themes which emerged organically through the interviews with the seven participants who responded to four of open ended supplementary questions posed in the research study. These supplementary questions facilitate a response to the key research question.

5.1 Inherent Possibilities in the Art Classroom

Participants acknowledged that the, "Art class is different than other classes....'cause it was hands on. I like building stuff that is 'hands-on'" (Tommy, Line 4). The fact that every day was not about pen and paper activities and by rote learning but geared toward creativity. Gerber (2011) declares that art education is different (p. 4) because it embraces learning differences which can result in more creative possibilities through artistic means which communicate the students own stories.

Smith (1979) described the body-kinaesthetic value of the arts for students with learning disabilities introducing arts through the body, through objects and pictures and then through symbols offering opportunities to strengthen visual, auditory, tactile, and motor areas of the brain. Smith's declaration that through the arts, a child can order his world, make sense of what he knows, relate past experience to the present, and turn muscular activity into thought and ideas into action (p. 130). Siegesmund (1988) professes that Visual Art is taught as a realm of feeling, sensory concepts, and exquisitely varied forms of human representations and that students

become reasoning perceivers having greater "knowledge of the world" (p. 212). Bowen (2006) portends the value of kinaesthetic sensibility or the "haptic touch" is intrinsic in working with artistic media the data says that it is vital to the engagement of exceptional students. In the Visual Art room, participants can express themselves by using the multimodalities explored by Cope and Kalantzis (2009): written language, oral language, visual representation, audio representation, tactile representation, gestural representation, and spatial representation. Due to the expressive possibilities in artistic manifestations, all modalities can be explored in the context of the art classroom in order to communicate a student's thoughts, feelings and stories; through a social semiotic lens art can be considered a form of language (Eubanks, 1997).

A relaxed, welcoming atmosphere in the Visual Art was felt by some participants who acknowledged that this was a direct result of the educator. Others felt extremely anxious when entering communicating that the teacher's personality was the root cause of this tension. Gerber (2006) proclaims that Visual Art teachers have provided a personal educational oasis for students with special needs for as long as art teachers have been teaching as it is a natural fit. The social and emotional classroom environment is truly dependant on the educator's personality.

5.2 Disciplines and Media

The question: "What disciplines and media may be more or less conducive to engagement among students in the Visual Art and Technology classroom(s)?" was asked of participants. Every respondent interviewed seemed to dislike projects purely based on the discipline of drawing. Many openly voiced their personal difficulties with fine motor skills related to their disabilities while others silenced or flattened their personal reasoning. Matthew acutely expressed his inability to use media which required fine motor control due to his

Cerebral Palsy. He verbalized his discontent with his elementary art teacher who knew of his strengths but insisted that he use media which required precise motor control; the use of fluid media or digital technology available through the press of a button was preferred by Matthew and other participants. Participants were also more fully engaged in an activity when personal development of theme and imagery was encouraged.

Lala expressed her dissatisfaction with an elementary art teacher who expected her to complete a mosaic project with tiny scraps of paper. After Lala's interview I wrote in my journal, *"It is a mystery to me why an educator would demand something so ridiculous of student who obviously could not complete the task. I would ask the student to tear paper and create a type of collage or mosaic focusing on the element of colour which would achieve the same end. I would call this a "contemporary mosaic". I would even ask the student to pick a theme perhaps her hero as the subject matter of the collage. As an educator I must creatively problem solve to meet the needs of students; this is the same 'studio habit of mind' required in art making"*. The UDL (2011) concept of "pure access orientation" (p. 3) which considers the barrier-free design in the physical environment is paired with the instructional methods, materials and goals used by the teachers and the students should be constantly considered. The appropriate response to a student experiencing difficulty would be to alter or modify the activity, creatively problem solve changing the medium or ask the student about which options might better work for him or her to complete the project.

Through the interviews the participants have all voiced that the use of wet media such as paint, plaster or clay seemed to be the preferred media and more fully engage students in the art making. The range of tactile media like wire in the sculpture assignment or the ink in the

Printmaking course delighted the students who claimed that they felt that they had achieved success through the competition of art work which they felt measured up to the accomplishments of their classmates.

5.3 Themes and Activities

The question: "What themes (e.g. social, political issues) and activities foster or inhibit engagement among students in the Visual Art and Technology classroom(s)?" was linked with the fifth query to participants which requested students to bring art work to share. Douglas and Gaspardi (2001) promote "Teaching for Artistic Behaviour" (TAB) which involves choice-based art education. Most often participants in my study welcomed the opportunity to personally develop a theme as part of the creative process of art making as the TAB method suggests. Participants' explorations often germinated from the teacher assigning a "big idea" or overarching theme for them to consider. Personally relevant topics coupled with the opportunity to freely experiment with a variety of media created engagement. Respondents felt they had the chance to develop the confidence in the using the media and the tools to propel them forward toward actually creating the work which was previously only in their imaginations or emerged organically as they began to work with a medium.

Gude asserts that art by its nature is "an open concept that is always evolving and changing" (2007, p. 7). The provision of a broad topic or "big-idea" to guide students through the year to engage students and to meet new curriculum requirements is a technique I use. Consideration of Gude's proposal of ways to structure a quality art curriculum which investigates "big questions" about the uses of art and other images in shaping our interactions with the world around (p. 7) is imperative to create student engagement. The following are

examples of the themes for Visual Art courses I write about in my journal: Food and You, grade 10 - The Book and Art of the Story, grade 11 –Garments and Identity, grade 12- The Map as Art and Mapping, Sculpture-Me. It is surprising how far these overarching themes can engage students as they delve into and relate them to their personal stories.

Tommy describes his mask based on the theme "Me" for the Sculpture class, "I learned about different designs, aspects [from the Art History study]. Pretty good in general. Mine was the half clown and the half joker. [Laugh]. Yep! I hung it up! (Line 141)...It was half evil clown and the joker" (Line 143). Mina discusses her 'Book as Art' altered book sculpture, "But like if you ask my dad he would say, "She does nothing about basketball!" [Laugh]. I do sort of do actually. [Laugh]…And I like sports! (Line 182) I like that I could make a book sculpture about what I do outside of school because I like playing basketball and no one would really think that I actually played! (Line 184). The resulting artistic manifestations emanate from broad based themes resulting in a plethora of expressive responses which exude the individuality of each artist and the way that the students interpret the given theme.

The following journal entry explains in more detail a small sample of themed "big ideas" and the lessons used to explore them in a grade 11 Visual Arts course which seemed to engage students:

The overarching theme of Garments and Identity assignments for grade 11 included a comparison of Lady Gaga's 2010 meat dress designed by Franc Fernandez for the MTV Video Music Awards compared with Jana Sterbak, (1987) Vanitas: Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorexic, purchased by the National Gallery of Canada Dress and its political meaning. Fernandez's appropriation of another artist's idea or even vegetarianism was

examined; a collage project looking to the work of German Dada artist, Hannah Höch

relating to various societal perceptions about male and female body image as we explore

such images in contemporary media; a look at costumes that heroes wear concealing

their identities evolving into a study of everyday heroes and what people conceal daily;

designing garments which reflect a social consciousness expressing students' views about

a social or political issue which affects them.

This studio application of these themes can employ Gude's (2006) Post-Post-Modern Principles of: Forming Self, Investigating Community Themes, Encountering Difference, Attentive Living, Empowered Experiencing, Empowered Making Deconstructing Culture, Reconstructing Social Spaces, and Not Knowing.

Gude (2006) and Guay (2006) ask art educators to prepare students for the 21st century by encouraging them to be thinkers who are "mindful of their lived experience by learning to think about what they see in world of art and in the mass media" (p. 11) and to question and relate what they see to their own lives. Expressing who they are and choice in art making was of utmost importance to students with disabilities and in my teaching experience with all teens.

Participants tended to show art work that they were extremely pleased with as they felt it was technically beyond anything they were able to create by themselves in the past or results of processes which they really enjoyed. These shared projects' themes were closely tied to personal experiences or depictions of "the self" as unique individuals in the world. Gude's (2004) idea of curriculum based on generative themes that relate to the lives of students and their communities; studio art projects based on diverse practices of contemporary art making and related traditional arts; and art as investigation or understanding not as exercises but as research that produces new

visual and conceptual insights (p. 8) or "mean-making" experiences were concepts present in various projects that this study's participants deemed as "successful". Guay (2006) too contends that contemporary art practice looks to student art making processes as means for students' stories to be told, communities celebrated, ideas revealed, values considered, and concerns communicated (p. 11).

Expressing who they were and choice in art making was of utmost importance to students with disabilities and in my teaching experience to all teens. Lisa brought her paintings (*Figure 7*) whose inspiration she took from a holiday in Hawaii she went on with her parents. Although she was satisfied with the work, she expressed her feeling that she required more opportunity for personal artistic expression not realizing that indeed it was her rightful prerogative to fully develop and create work she deemed important in her mind's eye. She brought in a second work (*Figure 8*) of the same genre which she had completed at home. The subject matter held fond memories with her family for Lisa. The subject matter or the content of the art often becomes a visual image of the participant's beliefs, ideas or concerns as witnessed in Stephanie's (*Figure 1*) *Flower* print. She discusses at length her silkscreen t-shirt which had a high heel on the side with the word "Glamorous" screened down the side. She speaks about wearing heels with her prosthetic limbs and of her dressing up for the graduation formal. My personal journal entry illustrates the point:

I remember when Stephanie attended the formal at a posh establishment in the downtown core. I saw Stephanie in a different light. I could tell by the look on her face that she was very excited and proud to be there. She had a fantastic white silk dress with blue printed flowers on and a pair of sparkly shoes attached to her prosthetic legs. I

remember her fiery red hair up in an elaborate hair style obviously done by a hairdresser
and her makeup carefully applied. Her jewelry matched her outfit and her meticulously
manicured nails stood out against the light coloured dress; she told me she had spent the
afternoon 'getting herself ready for the event'. With the music blaring in the
background, I remember struggling to speak with Stephanie over the music. We
discussed her plans for college as a nurse's assistant. I encouraged her in her goals; we
spoke about not letting the disability get in the way of her dreams or anyone dissuading
her. We spoke about how she enjoyed taking my classes because I never limited her
imagination. The Macarena by Los del Rio came on and I asked Stephanie if she wanted
to come out and dance I always get out and dance at the graduation formal and gather a
crowd as the "out-there" art teacher!). Stephanie was part of this crowd.

Stephanie always spoke about the things she adored like her love of perfume, flowers,
new hairstyles, painted nails and bright colours. Stephanie could have chosen to draw anything
and she selected a flower (*Figure 1*) for her reductive printmaking assignment. After
Stephanie's interview I wrote in my journal:

Stephanie's positive self-image exuded from her in every conversation. I thought about
my experience in Boston at the conference (See 4.8 Christina Yarmol's Personal Journal
Entry) and how Stephanie was a paraplegic just like the gymnast whose performance I
witnessed. The beauty of the performance still haunts my memory. I felt like Stephanie
was taking back the gaze saying, "Yes, I have no legs but I do think about and focus on
beauty just like my peers even if society doesn't think that I am capable of it or have a
different idea". Her projects, the high heel shoe on the light switch, the t-shirt with

'Glamorous' on it, the self-portrait cup are all contemporary archetypical images of

female beauty gleaned from media. While she was my student we had conversations

about the procedures she had undergone yet the only work which touched on the

seriousness of her medical condition was her Joseph Cornell box which she

acknowledged helped her through her long hospital stay and the severity of her situation.

I admired the freshness of her art work; it was so "alive" even if her body was failing

her. I was in awe with the power of her spirit.

Self-directed projects frequently resulted in products which were linked to body image as

Stephanie's-"Glamorous" t-shirt, Tommy's (*Figure 5*) Mask or Mina's Altered Book Sculpture:

B-Ball, interior and B-Ball, exterior book (*Figure 4*) or even Matthew's self-portrait appearing

like the race in *Avatar* giving the viewer a glimpse into the participant's life or ideas outside of

the educational context. In the classroom, these art works act as conversation starters which help

deepen relationship and understanding about the students "personal-biography" (Rich, 2010).

In a discussion with Lala about a unit I taught involving the topic of ableism, it was noted

that everybody at some point in their lives has something that may not work like the people

around them she stated: "Ableism often slips under the radar all of the time, and I've always told

people, when you have a disability, this is the type of discrimination that people in my position

face, the kind of discrimination that nobody deals with. It's never talked about, it's never

discussed (Line 68). This concept echoes the discussion about disability as a medical or a social

construct. Dubois and Trani (2009) assert that society should be redesigned in order to be more

inclusive of people with disabilities mending the negative social attitudes disabled persons face

in everyday life (2009, p. 196). Lala asserted the teacher should, "Allow students to find their

voices and their confidence in any subject and in any forum" (Line 150)" made available to them. Lala's phrases encapsulate in an extraordinary and succinct way the feeling many of the participants either voiced or flattened during the course of their interviews. Her discourse also points to including ableism as topic to include in the Visual Arts classroom.

5.4 Teaching Strategies, Instructional Decisions, Approaches, Procedures, or Routines

"What teaching strategies, instructional decisions, approaches, procedures, or routines help or hinder students' success in the Visual Art and Technology classroom(s)?" is linked to Universal Design for Learning which works on the premise that "individual variability is the norm, not the exception" (UDL Guidelines, 2011, p. 4). In Visual Art classrooms participants report that a consideration for individual diversity and project completion timelines were considered to match students' needs. Mina notes that "allowing some students who were ahead to move or giving more time to some students to get caught up worked well" (Lines 59); this is linked to UDL concepts. Tommy and Mina both acknowledge the multifaceted approach to teaching. They both felt that it worked for them and other students in the class. The following journal entry was written:

> *I believe that my lessons' clear expectations, encapsulate the technical skills learned, are*
> *accompanied by contemporary or historical artists and they include a message even if it*
> *is about aesthetics. The assignments are designed to encourage success. It is not the*
> *'way' in which I teach, it is the 'how'. Through their stories these study participants are*
> *telling me the importance of the 'how'. I know that I am reaching students but also know*
> *that I am constantly learning…learning from them.*

This is linked to Cope and Kalantzis' (2009) contemporary multiliteracy theories of the teacher presenting material in different ways and allowing students to engage in learning by display their understanding in multimodal ways. Viewing students' art work during critique sessions brings to light Eubanks'(1997) concept of art as a language as students often communicate messages about their lives through their art work.

Both Guay (2006) and Loesl (2006) underline the importance of an accessible classroom. The teacher must strive to create unencumbered accessibility, clear expectations, organizational predictability (p. 12) to which Guay (2006) ascribes are really important. Access to assistive technology like computers increases, improves, or maintains the functional capabilities of students with disabilities (Rose, Hasselbring, Sahl and Sabala, 2009, p. 137); students can seek out this technology in the library and in the Special Education room. It is always staffed with a teacher supervisor who can support students. Wheelchairs and walkers are another form of assistive technology and Loesl (2006) asks reader to consider the wheelchair as an extension of a student's person (p. 115).

Moherek-Sopko's (2009) conclusion that conceptually, UDL assumes that the physical structure of classrooms, equipment, and materials follow standard Universal Design guidelines (p. 110) but she acknowledges the reality that older school buildings often have architecture which must be retrofitted. Repeatedly participants in this study discuss the lack of accessibility in the Visual Arts room and their frustration with the inability to freely engage in art making like other students as they constantly wait for a paraeducator, the teacher or a peer to bring the media. In schools, often small classrooms with excessive student numbers close to or beyond the caps set in yesteryear make it difficult to easily meet UDL's accessibility standards for all students.

Every one of the participants interviewed who had taken art commented on the harried nature of the art room due to the number of students, the size of classrooms with a limited amount of storage space and their accessibility difficulties. The given space and size of the room and the number of desks required to accommodate the school's class sizes contribute to their frustration as they do not feel as if they can access the materials necessary to create the assigned art work by themselves. Participants realized that this was a reality in the school board. In my journal entries I referred to the studio space as a "*shoe box*". My journal entry highlights my anxiety about a situation that is out of my control: "*I gesticulate to students that, "there was an old lady who lived in a shoe, she had so many children she didn't know what to do!..." Like the students I too am frustrated by the fact that we have to tightly move past one another sideways avoiding furniture because we are so crowded in the art room. The program grows but* I am working within the same space."

Dubois and Trani's (2009) concept of a *disabling environment* (p. 194) from a physical perspective of movement in the Art and Drama classroom has certainly come to the fore as every participant has dually noted the difficulties the space and the number of students in that space present. The Technology classroom is an extremely large, accessible space with few encumbrances to movement. Only in the case of Lala was an impoverished curriculum mentioned as her teacher would not allow her to participate in all activities as he was fearful that she would, "roll off of the stage". All other participants mentioned that they were expected to fully participate in all curricular activities with the support of an EA, the teacher or other students accessing their art work and the necessary materials to complete the assignments even if they required support from paraeducators.

All participants mentioned their elementary art experiences. Lack of strong elementary art programs has an effect on participants' views of high school Visual Art courses. If elementary school art programs exist, participants felt there was a focus on drawing skills. Students attributed their lack of success to their teachers' holes in knowledge or the teachers' inability to accommodate for their specific needs to make them feel as active participants in the program. Projects were frequently deemed as "too difficult" as they demanded immense fine motor control and aggravated students. Students might be altogether excluded from the assigned activity.

With proper basic modifications, all students could succeed or even excel in elementary art projects.   In participants' stories the three principles of Universal Design providing multiple means of representation, "what" of learning, providing multiple means of action and expression or the "how" of students are expected to "express", and providing multiple means of engagement or the "why" of learning (Cast, 2011) were in most cases not adhered to in elementary Visual Art programs. In addition to elementary art and generalist educators, teachers of Technology and Drama were mentioned by participants as not providing support for learning concepts of accommodations for students with disabilities. Tommy speaks about not being given anything hard to draw on when his class went outside to draw in grade 8. His classmates could reach down to work on the asphalt; he found it difficult to complete the required task. Matthew emphasizes his displeasure when vague instructions were given or when he was asked to complete detailed pencil drawings at elementary school. Lala too communicates the teacher's ridiculous request of completing a mosaic with minute pieces of construction paper that turned into a family endeavour. In Lisa's case, a discernible Visual Art program was not in place for grades 5-9 and views of art as an actual subject with technical skills, Art History, social agency,

and free expression with curricular expectations embedded into the core program were
unrealized.

Little self-confidence was built through the participants' elementary school years and a
perception that students could not succeed in art projects like their peers was the norm among
participants. These early experiences made respondents them question and doubt the merits of
Visual Art as an academic subject at the high school level. Many of the participants expressed
anxiety over whether or not they would be able to succeed in the Visual Arts classes. Sometimes
this seems to be due to their early elementary art experiences while other times participants focus
more on their physical abilities as the root cause of apprehension. Often they are actually
surprised by the high level of success they achieved in their art work. This newfound self-
confidence gave them the courage to explore new things such as courses or life experiences in
their post-secondary lives as witnessed by Lala enrolling in a journalism program for her writing.
After their "successful" completion of art projects, many students with physical disabilities felt
like they could produce what their peers around them produced. Both Mina and Lisa cite their
initial anxiety entering the art class and learning new techniques but feel more confident
knowing that they can ask questions at any time to complete their work.

According to the data in this study, placement next to peers for students with disabilities
seems to increase opportunities for peer interaction contributing to their level of classroom
engagement. Lisa discusses her relationship with her peer group: "[c]ause we were like the four
students in the class who weren't the try hards [Laughing]" (Line 120)! Guay's (2006) practice
of "Group Share" involving open-ended or thought-provoking questions of critical inquiry,
aesthetics discussion, and peer critique (p. 12) in the form of small group discussions enable

students to dialogue amongst themselves and to learn from one another. These practices are inherent in most Art classrooms. This is due to the classroom organization and the frequency with which art critiques occur in individual, peer and class groupings through the creation process. The teacher's awareness of social interactions also supports engagement. Mina states, "And you [the teacher] were just out walking around always asking questions, [smiling, laughing]….music on some kids helping some kids that were really behind like" (Line 53).   My journal entry states, "*I always try to circulate around the class to make certain that the students are on task and fulfilling their assigned roles for the given time. It is tricky business knowing when to enter and redirect a conversation and when to let it take its natural course. It students are comfortable with their peer group the conversations that ensue can be quite amazing. Students share, debate and argue over ideas attempting to find a way to present their diverse thoughts to the group. 'Group share' is a time when students' personal stories are voiced*".

Participants' responses regarding instructional strategies suggested that students having some flex-time built into the instructional hours was important as students completed their work at different rates. Giving a general description of the entire project at the outset seemed successful in the eyes of the participants. Starting with basic skills and then building to more complex projects after basic skills are mastered put students at ease. The process of a. demonstrating the basic skills in a physical sense, b. orally describing the process, c. providing visual descriptors of the skills like anchor charts or guide sheets, d. teaching the classroom routines for each media e. the art historical relevance of the technique or the art form, f. then reminding students on a regular basis of the steps involved or chunking information and g. circulating among students during studio time to ensure understanding helped to provide engagement, understanding and work completion that is, a successful creation of an art work. A

comment stated in my journal entry reflects that, "*I have always found that reviewing concepts never hurt those who were 'clued into' the art making process and always helped those students who spent time looking around at others asking them what to do still don't know but were just too afraid to ask.*" Participants noted that the teacher's awareness of physical road blocks and an understanding that sometimes students needed extended time lines was imperative to the successful competition of art work and the building of self-esteem.

5.5 Conditions of Learning

The participants' views about the effectiveness of the learning environment are mixed. Cambourne's (1995) asserts that the, "*Conditions of Learning* when applied help foster a creative learning environment for students to develop their knowledge and grow as independent problem-solvers (p. 12). The fourth question considers the emotional and intellectual environment which Cambourne's framework outlines, "What 'conditions for learning' may be optimal for student engagement and learning opportunities?" Several students noted that there was a different "vibe" in art class than in other classes (Tommy. Dec. 17, 2012). It may have begun with music which helped to inspire creativity in the classroom and the teacher who sets the overall tone; permitting the playing of music as small detail is unlike any other class offered to students. Brian Cambourne (1995) identifies eight conditions which support both the student and the teacher in their discovery of learning and helps provide a context within which students can actively learn: (a) immersion, (b) demonstration, (c) engagement, (d) expectations, (e) responsibility, (f) employment, (g) approximation, and (h) response. I write about my recollection of a lesson to which a participant refers, "*Through an Art History lesson fertility goddesses, Egyptian tomb paintings, Greek Kore and the Kouros figures, Eastern medieval*

icons, Renaissance sculptures and paintings, Eastern bodhisattva sculptures, First Nations

masks through to contemporary media divas depicted in advertisements students are immersed in

the world of the human form." Lisa speaks about this lesson as one which she remembered and

enjoyed:

> Lisa: The thing about the sculpture of [Laughing] a woman….[Laughing…laughing] of
>
> woman. The woman …the famous like… what the perceptions of woman were
>
> whatever…[Laughing] (Line 103).
>
> Yarmol: Oh the Venus of Willendorf (24,000 and 22,000 B.C.E.)? Did you like that
>
> lesson? (Line 104)
>
> Lisa: Well, I already said I didn't like Art History but that was kind of funny. I
>
> remember you…It was kind of funny I guess [Laughing] (Line 105)
>
> Yarmol: So we talked about early representations of women (Line 106).
>
> Lisa: I really didn't know that before so it was like new knowledge (Line 107). (Lisa, 4,
>
> Feb. 2013)

Students immersed in historical images of artifacts illustrating examples of the human form are

hung around the classroom. Students are engaged in *approximating* this subject matter by

drawing or painting the human form in a variety of contexts.   At a later date, they will have little

difficulty discussing how the human form is employed in contemporary art work as they critique

it in art work in a gallery setting. They will be easily able to create a response to what they have

seen. Even though Lisa acknowledged that she did not "really like Art History" she conceded

that the way in which the teacher presented the information was humorous and that she

remembers the lesson fondly. Students realize that when they come into the art room they are *immersed* in the art world.

In considering the idea of immersion in the subject area, I included a journal entry about my art room. *"What does a student see when he or she comes into my art room? Students witness class sets of students' art work posted on the walls, stacks of graded and ungraded work, a variety of projects across many disciplines including sculpture, drawing, painting, printmaking. The student sees the anchor charts about colour theory, careers in Art posters, Famous paintings, contemporary magazine and newspaper articles, Monthly Scholastic Art posters pasted on the wall. There are art making tools like pottery wheels, and the range of moveable carts containing media and various works at various stages of completion about the content presented. The Smartboard projects a topic of the day or week. Sketchbooks abound. The students' creativity jumps off the wall at the observer. The room is a tiny shoe box wrapped up by an elastic barely able to contain the imminent explosion of creativity threatening to burst at the seams."*

 Most students cannot help but be immersed and engaged in the boundless energy of the art room if they have a good relationship with the teacher.

Cambourne (1995), Scheffel (2008) and Guay (2006) refer to teacher's "expectations" or "students' potential" and teacher's positive tone as a *Condition of Learning*. When students feel ignored or on the outside of the classroom environment by the teacher and in turn by their classmates the perception that they cannot succeed in completing the assigned task prevails. Instead if they received the teacher's message that they are expected to produce according to their best abilities, they succeed producing art work which meets the expectations defined

rubrics. Some participants knew that in some cases these opportunities were not provided and students were forced to "survive" on their own. Several participants like Mona, Lala and Matthew willingly gave storied examples when they felt like the teacher did not provided adequate encouragement or gave them the feeling that their abilities or contributions were not valued causing them to give up. Matthew expresses that he felt like the Graphics teacher, "thought he was stupid" when he asked her to explain the assignment again; she told him to reread the sheets she had provided in order to learn the new computer program. When asked if she had any art work to share Mona states, "I unfortunately got rid of my art work as fast as possible. (Line 4) It was not even good, so it was like, why keep it (Line 6)"? My journal notation communicates knowledge gained from lived-experience: "*I think that teaching is not only about possessing basic knowledge of the subject area and being able to communicate that knowledge in interesting ways to students but it is about personality...it is about being conscientious about reading the signs from students about what they need and thinking about the most positive ways to give help to fulfill these needs.*" Others like Mina, Stephanie, and Tommy happily described environments where they were expected to complete work and clean up like their classmates. These participants acknowledged that they knew that their work would be displayed.

Cambourne (1995) portends that educators set *expectations* high enough so as to challenge students yet not be so elevated that they will not attempt a task for the risk of failure (p. 57). This journal entry highlights my setting up of expectations in the classroom: *I organize units so that there are multiple entry points for students and that all can successfully create a work they could be proud to call their own. Rubrics are general enough allowing for a wide range of art work. My expectations for clean-up for students with mobility issues are also set to*

align with what they are physically able to accomplish. Cleaning up is part of the art studio

protocol. I want everyone to know that they can do their part. For example I might bring a pail

or yogurt containers filled with water and dirty brushes to the desk of a student in a wheelchair

as I am aware that the sink is almost inaccessible with 30 plus students in the room.

The importance of expectations for studio practices, the creative process and final art

work needs to be made clear to students. Another journal entry notes expectations for cleaning

up personal and group studio spaces: "*Two of my students in wheelchairs in my Printmaking*

class felt it appropriate to simply leave all dirty materials on the table in front of them and roll

out the door for lunch time. They were honestly shocked and surprised when I asked them back

in the room to tidy their mess giving them gloves, detergent and sponges in order to wipe up.

The next time they cleaned up earlier in the class before the lunch hour knowing my expectations

of them," Cambourne (1995) purports students should take responsibility for their own learning;

in the art room they are not only responsibility for making artistic choices in their work but for

cleaning up their studio environment.

Following Cambourne's (1995) teacher's *expectation*s to promote engagement an

additional expectation of students is that their completed works might be mounted. The display

of finished art work was of utmost importance to students. Several participants mentioned that

they felt pride when not only their parents mounted their work as they took it home but that the

work was mounted for public viewing in the classroom, the school library, display cases in

lobbies or in art shows outside the school community. These public displays seemed to

acknowledge students' successes as practicing artists. The response of Tommy's ear to ear smile

that 'My work was even hung up!' affirms my personal mandate that every student's art work

will be hung up in some public location before the end of the year. All expressed their sense of disbelief with the fact that their work was exhibited as this did not often occur in their elementary or middle school years; students liked the fact that their products were valued in a variety of settings including community art shows, administrators' offices, display cabinets and classrooms. As Tommy discussed his clay project he talked about how he is proud that his mother is using it for her jewelry.

Students learn about the imitational, emotional, formalist, and functional aesthetic qualities of art or the aesthetic qualities of art. When they practice art making they employ these skills to create work for these purposes. Cambourne deems this as "employment" of a skill in a real life situation. Participants shared the purpose their works now held. For example, Tommy said his mother was using the clay work he made and that his mask was hung up on his wall for decoration. Mina acknowledges that she is using her bowl for Eid celebrations. Stephanie wears the "glamorous" t-shirt she made.

Art criticism about Art historical or contemporary art works, peer criticism and teacher "response" (1995) to students' art processes and work are an additional *Condition of Learning*. Cambourne (1988) considered the risk involved in attempting a demonstration and students' engagement meant positively responding to the challenge if the teacher helped to mitigate that fear of risk. Mina says that her teacher was, "always walking around asking questions, making us think about what we were doing". By guiding students through conversations and critiques during the creative process, the teacher helps to sharpen students` "studio habits of mind" (Graham and Goetz, Zwirn, 2010). The studio habits of mind ask artists to not only develop their craft but develop the ability to observe, envision, express, reflect, explore, and understand

contemporary art practice and critique (p. 220). The data encourages teachers to increase the frequency of personal visits to all students in the classroom to respond to students' art making.

Due to the nature of their physical disabilities every participant mentioned a paraeducator/Educational Assistant in the course of his or her interview. Lining up with the research of Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli, Evans, and MacFarland's (1997), Giangreco, Edelman and Broer, (2003,) Loesl (2006), Guay (2003), Guay and Gerlach (2006), and Nevin, Villa, and Thousand (2009) the paraeducator can be a critical part of student engagement in the Visual Art and Technology classrooms to support students with disabilities in their academic work, and to physically reach supplies or tidy up when some spaces were inaccessible. This said, there are drawbacks to inviting a paraeducator into the classroom as Guay (2003) attests they can bring about an ambiguous situation for the students they support (p. 35). When classroom organization promotes interaction and cooperation, the presence of a paraprofessional can become an isolating factor creating the antithesis of inclusion reducing the students with disabilities opportunities to communicate and participate in class interactions with their peers. Through the interviews, participants are all acutely aware of their own "presence in the classroom" and how students without visible disabilities perceived them.

Tommy, Lala, Mina, Lisa, Mona, Matthew and Stephanie expressed appreciation or acknowledgement for the presence of a paraeducator to support them. Tommy, Mona and Matthew tried to complete work on their own but in the back of their minds knew that the support of the EA was available. Stephanie, Lala and Mina expressed aggravation when the designated assistant was either not present, did not communicate or was not in tune with the classroom processes.

Stephanie claims, "I had the same EA for the whole year and it was hard because she wouldn't really help as much as I needed it (Line 18)". The participants' data concurs with Nevin, Villa, and Thousand's (2009) assertion that it is important to clearly define and clarify roles for paraeducators with them. If this is not done, the paraeducator can become an encumbrance giving mixed messages, completing students' art work for them or simple sitting not actively working in the classroom rather than act as a support for students. Clearly communicating tasks and expectations of the paraeducator is necessary so they can fully support students as Guay (2003), Loesl (2006) suggest. Guay (2003) suggests that preservice and in-service art teacher educators need to address issues of how to promote teacher/paraeducator interaction, how to train paraeducators to participate in the learning focus of Visual Art classrooms and adapt instruction (p. 37).

Providing experiences for a student to *approximate* the desired outcome without fear of criticism is essential before task *employment* (Cambourne, 1995). Stephanie was given the opportunity to attempt dry point etching before she was asked to complete her art work:

 Stephanie: I like the etching it was really cool (Line 50) !

Yarmol: Why, why did you like that (Line 51)?

Stephanie: [Pause] It was just like fun learning the different techniques on the different surfaces (Line 52).

Stephanie was afforded the chance to approximate the task before being graded on a final work. The result is a successful piece of art work, a positive memory of the technique and an ability to use that skill to create art work in the future. *Approximation* (Cambourne, 1995) another

Condition of Learning or time to play with given media is furnished so that students can

manipulate a medium to see its potential before developing more complex projects which they

envision. Both art educator and researcher Olivia Gude (2007) and Newmann, Whelage &

Lamborn (1992) highlight the importance of play for the creative art process.

Matthew angrily describes his experience when the teacher did not provide an

opportunity to "approximate" what was expected of him. In his Graphics class, the teacher

simply gave the assignment without practice or pre-knowledge of the program necessary to

complete the assignment. He described his frustration as he attempted to read through the

procedural steps on the paper provided by the teacher and her unwillingness to answer his

questions or provide instruction to learn the basics of the program; he credits his passing of the

course to a friend who "barely knew what he was doing" but support him as best he could

throughout the year. He felt disengaged and acknowledged that he never wanted to take such a

course again. This account demonstrates that without *approximation* students might feel lost and

unable to succeed with new concepts we teach them. This is in alignment with Cambourne's

engagement theory of *approximation* which is necessary in an art classroom. Students should

first be furnished with the opportunity to manipulate a given medium before they are asked to

create a finished art work that will be evaluated. In this way they can ask for support and

eventually gain confidence with the medium before beginning more complex projects.

Scheffel's research emphasizing that engagement has "more to do with the way they have

been treated as learners rather than any inherent or deep-seated weakness in their make-up"

(2008, p. 11) is certainly supported by the data in this study. Participants are aware of their

disabilities as they live with them daily. They are quite comfortable speaking about these

disabilities. For example Matthew speaks about his elementary art teacher not modifying

assignments even though he knew that Matthew had Cerebral Palsy. Mina speaks freely about

wheelchair basketball when voicing the motivation for her altered book art work. Throughout

her lengthy interview Lala voices her frustration with elementary art educators and drama

educators about lack of modification despite her disability. She honestly expresses her view that

she felt the "pity some silenced". She said she knew she was going to pass because some

teachers viewed her as "the crippled kid in the corner" who made an effort. Specific language

naming their disability or references to their equipment frequently entered into the conversation.

Fewer participants silenced or flattened mention of their disability as the interviews progressed.

Due to her range of negative experiences at the Faculty of Education, Lala has developed a keen

awareness of Critical Disabilities Theory in order to ensure her rights. Tommy too has become a

disabilities advocate publically sharing his story with others. Participants are quite conscious of

the manner in which others treat them. Lisa begins to express how in the art class, she felt like

she belonged but that normally she is always the last to be picked saying that even her friends

didn't want her to be their work groups. Sometimes these concerns are silenced or flattened but

feeling as if they are different due to their disability is somehow always present. Throughout the

interviews the participants allude to, or like Stephanie, readily state, "I want to be treated like

everybody else!"

All participants made reference to the teacher's personality. A "good teacher" creates

positive *Conditions for Learning* encouraging students to achieve to the best of their abilities in

whatever they attempt while a "poor teacher" did not engender engagement in classroom tasks.

Participants spoke at length about their teachers' demeanors, their teachers' relative comfort

levels in the classroom environment, and their willingness to make changes, modifications, and

adaptations to the rate of instruction or activities presented. Many remembered a teacher they disliked due to the manner in which the teacher treated them, the teacher's lack of interest in their artistic progress, or the teacher's inability to communicate the subject matter. A supportive educator who can point out the merits of the students' work seems to help to build a pupil's self-esteem. Participants' conception of a teacher as a "good" and "caring" teacher increases their engagement.

Opening lines of communication with students with disabilities was imperative to engagement in the Visual Arts and Technology courses. Even speaking with the student on a regular basis helps to develop a rapport where the both parties feel at ease. Mina says, "Yeah…..but even now like, if I know the person, like I'll ask them the question but other people I don't think the person know me that well I won't ask. I will go to the person who knows me like the EA with me to get the answer (Line 37). Many participants expressed that their high school art teachers welcomed the students and they seemed to feel as if they were an active part of the class while others make light of the fact that their teacher(s) did not seem to actively communicate with them. The teacher's treatment of students seems to transmit to other students in the class. I consider how students view me as an educator through some lived-experiences: *I remember the trip last year I took to Chicago with 52 students. A few students on the trip started to call me, 'Art Mom'. I laugh as I consider the number of times a disgruntled student I am trying to get focus on his or her project asks me a question and "Mom, I mean Ms. Yarmol" slips out. Earlier in the year a foreign student with limited language abilities told me that she hoped I would not get upset but that I remind her of her grandmother back in China. She said that I didn't look like her but my spirit reminded me of her; she really missed her. This really makes me think about how students see me: as a caregiver, a nag who annoys them but*

someone they can trust who will accept them for who they are. I believe that my role as a mother with three children at home eclipses the role of art educator as I strive to support students to succeed in the classroom realm. I imagine how I want teachers to treat my own children. I consider my straightforward approach to speaking with my own family and this transmits into the classroom resulting in deeper engagement in some cases (depending upon the relationship with parents at home) nevertheless a knowledge that someone cares about them.

Thus a positive set of expectations and confidence in the learners' abilities builds the bond between the teacher and the students which in Cambourne's view is essential to successful engagement.

The triangulation of data sources including interview data collected, a review of literature and personal journal entries has attempted to demonstrate a layering of voices which focuses on the experiences of students with physical disabilities in the art room(s). The interpretation of the data is rooted in the researcher's multiple roles as artist, parent, teacher, student and researcher. In the final chapter conclusions are drawn from the data presented in order to provide practical suggestions which may provide increased student engagement in the Visual Art room.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to explore students' perceptions of the pedagogical practices that fostered engagement for exceptional students in high school Visual Arts and Technology programs. A narrative inquiry methodology was employed to gather stories and art work from former students in their own storied response triangulated with field notes from the researcher's own "lived-experience" as well as Art and Disabilities Studies literature.

"What can art educators learn from students' stories of art education that would better enable art Educators to enact a pedagogy that engages students with disabilities in the Visual Arts classroom?" was the key research question. The following conclusions portended are grouped according to the supplementary questions which assisted in responding to the key question. The overall themes emerged through the open-ended interview questions with the seven study participants.

6.1 Question 1

What disciplines and media may be more or less conducive to engagement among students in the Visual Art and Technology classroom(s)? Participants interviewed preferred the use of fluid media like those used in the discipline of sculpture including e.g. clay, plaster, wax and media employed in painting e.g. acrylic paint with broad brushes or watercolour or ink in printmaking. One student in a Graphic Arts class expressed the potential facility of using the computer in the discipline of new media as adjustments using the click of a mouse with programs such as Photoshop could be easily employed if careful instruction and support was given. The

open application of these media to create an expressive art work based on personally relevant themes was propounded. Many participants voiced their difficulties with fine motor control and felt frustrated with projects whose focus was on meticulous drawing or copying of shapes with pencil and paper. A range of tactile media was particularly attractive to participants who claimed that they could create more "successful" art work. The opportunity to experiment with a variety of media that participants might not experience elsewhere in classes or at home such as lithography or clay was welcomed by participants.

6.2 Question 2

What themes (e.g., social, political issues) and activities foster or inhibit engagement among students in the Visual Art and Technology classroom(s)? Responses indicated that participants were further engaged by art work which demanded a personal response to an issue or had a practical or functional use. Choice and self-expression in art making was of utmost importance to students with disabilities and in the researcher's teaching experience to all teens in general. Sometimes the resulting art works were linked to body image and to identity a common focus in the art work of teens maturing into adulthood.

6.3 Question 3

What teaching strategies, instructional decisions, approaches, procedures, or routines help or hinder students' success in the Visual Art and Technology classroom(s)? Participants appreciated teachers who understood about the physical road blocks they sometimes faced and offered flux-time acknowledging that students completed their work at different rates. This is 'the gift of time'. In some cases a student's feeling of hopelessness impeded his or her desire for

work completion as he or she felt that physically he or she was unable to reach the expected level of task completion in the given time; incomplete art work and utter frustration was often the result. These participants had little or no art work to present. Providing an overview of the entire project, chunking information, frequent reviews of the technical processes through oral and/or, visual instruction (e.g. anchor charts, set by step worksheets), one-to-one teacher/student support, and setting clear expectations were all instructional strategies which supported students.

Mention of elementary art experiences was apparent in all interviews. A lack of strong elementary art programs though art or generalist teachers' inability to accommodate students with disabilities has definitely skewed participants' views on their ability to succeed in high school Visual Art programs. Their past experiences cause them to question their ability to create successful art work and the very legitimacy of Visual Art as an academic subject at the high school level when they first arrive in grade 9. A more in depth research study on the *Conditions of Learning* in elementary art programs is needed to further explore this topic in more detail.

6.4 Question 4

What 'conditions for learning' may be optimal for student engagement and learning opportunities? Participants noted that in some of their art classes there was a "vibe" or an atmosphere which helped to inspire creative work in the classroom. This "vibe" was unique to the art classroom. It was clear that the educator was responsible for the overall tone of the class.

The allotted space and size of the room and the number of desks required to accommodate the school's class sizes was deemed too small. All participants expressed their frustration as accessibly to materials, teacher, and art work in the art classroom was encumbered

by this fact. UDL design principles need to be reviewed and followed by teachers, administrators and school boards if successful, inclusion models for students with disabilities and /or exceptionalities in Visual Art and Technology classes are to result.

Teachers need to keep in mind the importance of mounting all students' art work in some privileged way. That is in a display cases in the lobbies, neatly framed with a backing board in the classroom, a school art show, in administrators' offices, in the library, at venues outside the school. The display of finished art work was of utmost importance to students. When they saw their work publically visible, participants felt pride in their accomplishments spurring them on to create further work for viewing. Venues for posting art work include classroom, the school library, display cases in lobbies or in art shows outside the school community. Memories of parental appreciation for their art work by featuring or using their work at home also fostered a sense of success or accomplishment.

Participants with mobility issues often required the support of a paraeducator. Clear communication and setting out classroom expectations and duties for the EA needs to be addressed by the classroom teacher. When the EA does not fulfill his or her duties both the students' and the teacher's resentment build and the rapport suffers. However, if lines of communication are kept open and work is completed according to the classroom expectations and routines set, the paraeducator can be a great asset not only to the exceptional students but to all students and the teacher in the classroom.

Participants are extremely conscious of their AT which provides mobility such a wheelchair or a walker and the presence of an EA to support their successes in the classroom. This additional "presence in the classroom" sets them apart from their peers. Participants are

acutely aware of this "presence" sometimes voicing their dissatisfaction while others silenced or flatten their emotions with regards to being set apart by their colleagues. The teacher needs to be attentive to these emotions and group students in a variety of settings so that the same students experience different peer partners when critiquing or analysing work in the context of group work.

The teacher personality's was definitely an aspect of engagement in the art classroom discussed by all participants. Participants remembered those they considered the "good teacher" and those they considered as "bad teachers". The "good teacher" communicated openly, tried to modify or make accommodations for them, presented curriculum content in different ways, had a sense of humor, and could problem solve to support them when they did not understand a concept. When the relationship between the teacher was a trustworthy one and a good number of the *Conditions of Learning* (Cambourne, 1995) were in place successful art work was easily achieved. They could produce what their peers around them produced and were extremely proud to share it. When the relationship with the teacher was deemed negative by the participant, they felt like giving up; even at the end of course they felt like they had little to share.

The teacher's treatment of students seemed to have the ripple effect in the classroom as participants reported that in art classrooms that other students seemed to readily accept them. Participants underscored a key message to educators that, despite their disabilities they just want "to be treated like everyone else". When the relationship between the teacher and pupil was positive it seemed to help promote engagement creating a newfound confidence in artistic ability and willingness to try new media. Participants acknowledged that this leap of faith or spark of

self-confidence in Visual Art class helped to build courage to try new avenues in their future scholastic careers and life endeavors.

When the *Conditions of Learning* were less than ideal, the students tended to discard, misplace, or lose art work as if to bury the entire experience altogether. However, when the *Conditions of Learning* were optimal, participants ultimately brought art work of which they were extremely proud. This work tended to hold importance to the participants with respect to artistic technique or ascribed meaning. Some art works were brought because they helped the artist tell a story of the fond memory of the artistic process associated with the creation of the work or have personal meaning. The art work marked participants' accomplishment(s) as artists in their own right acting as a catalyst to build self-esteem.

Due to the researcher's privileged position of artist, educator, parent, student and researcher narrative texts, the review of literature through the eyes of a range of stakeholders and transcribed thoughts in journal entries have all been included in the interpretation of the data and triangulated. The conclusions presented are produced from first-hand knowledge of the inclusive Visual Art classroom that could help to promote positive transformations in the students' educational lives and help lay plausibility, credibleness, or trustworthiness of the claim(s) (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 474). My multiple roles as researcher, artist, teacher, parent, and student have helped to bridge the gap between the domains of theory in what should happen in an educational context and practice or what actually sometimes occurs in the classroom.

6.5 Moving Forward

Hostetler (2005) concludes "that the 'answers' to research questions do not end things but offer new circumstances for exploring the persistent question of what is good for people" (p. 21). The applications for this research can be far-reaching and have already moved into the community circle. When I was asked by the school trustee to present my research to a parent group, many parents with children with disabilities asked questions about my opinions about art programs, accommodations and if I could "teach teachers how to modify the curriculum" so their children could succeed more readily. I was also asked by the trustee if it was possible to arrange for some of my study's participants to speak about their experiences in the school system. I attended an evening where two of these participants spoke about the positive and negative aspects of daily life in the classroom as well as transition from high school to post-secondary as exceptional students. One student in particular now feels the strength to advocate for himself and other students with mobility and learning issues like himself as he moves forward past high school.

As I was writing this thesis, I was organizing an art show at a local rehabilitation centre. Five offices in the centre have been converted to permanent placements for individuals with multiple disabilities many on life support systems. I worked with the residence's researcher to have my students from grade 9 to 12 mount their work. The residents of the centre were excited to welcome the artists who created the work to an opening which was funded by the centre. The director at the centre has purchased permanent, plexi-glass frames which have recently been installed to house the art work. The centre has recently secured funding for arts and art therapy programs for four days a week. A range of high school art students attended and experienced

one on one contact with residents of the facility discussing the art work they created. This experience affected those students attending and as they build understanding about people with physical disabilities and difference; it also introduced residents to the possibility of inviting youth into their worlds. I have suggested that in the future our students who have physical disabilities and have enrolled in my Visual Arts classes could participate in a cooperative education placement in the facility; the director is eager for this possibility.

I am currently lobbing for the continuation for the *Pathways to Success* Printmaking/ Sculpture/ Craft courses which have all been cut from the course offerings due to funding for teachers at the board level. Perhaps if the board and provincial policy makers spent time witnessing the extraordinary strides students made with Visual Art programs, a change in policy could be made.

This study has brought forth a host of areas of further research. Some are: the role of Educational Assistants in the classroom; presence, effect and role of Visual Art programs in the elementary school classroom; and a study of disability aesthetics in the art work of students with disabilities. Further research should be done interviewing not only the participants with disabilities but with the other stakeholders such as parents and teachers regarding the strengths and the needs of contemporary education across subject areas.

It is my hope that empowering the voices of these exceptional students in this research will create praxis (Freire, 1970) in our classrooms that is, action to create change in the *Conditions of Learning* (Cambourne, 1988) in curriculum content, methods of delivery, teachers' attitudes and relationships with the students and the classroom set up to facilitate deeper student engagement. The overall thesis findings can be directly applied to *all* subject areas. It is in this

way I bear witness to Hostetler's (2005) definition of good research as an ability to articulate some sound connection between my work and a robust and justifiable conception of human well-being.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Categories and Definitions of Exceptionalities

The following five categories of exceptionalities have been identified in the Education Act definition of *exceptional pupil*:

• behaviour

• communication

• intellectual

• physical

• multiple

These broad categories include the following definitions, as clarified in the memo to school boards of January 15, 1999:

Behaviour

A learning disorder characterized by specific behaviour problems over such a period of time, and to such a marked degree, and of such a nature, as to adversely affect educational performance, and that may be accompanied by one or more of the following:

a) an inability to build or to maintain interpersonal relationships;

b) excessive fears or anxieties;

c) a tendency to compulsive reaction;

d) an inability to learn that cannot be traced to intellectual, sensory, or other health factors, or any combination thereof.

Communication

Autism

A severe learning disorder that is characterized by:

a) disturbances in:

– rate of educational development;

– ability to relate to the environment;

– mobility;

– perception, speech, and language;

Language Impairment

A learning disorder characterized by an impairment in comprehension and/or the use of verbal

communication or the written or other symbol system of communication, which may be

associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors, and which may:

a) involve one or more of the form, content, and function of language in communication; and

b) include one or more of:

– language delay;

– dysfluency;

– voice and articulation development, which may or may not be organically

or functionally based.

Speech Impairment

A disorder in language formulation that may be associated with neurological, psychological,

physical, or sensory factors; that involves perceptual motor aspects of transmitting oral

messages; and that may be characterized by impairment in articulation, rhythm, and stress.

Learning Disability

A learning disorder evident in both academic and social situations that involves one or more of

the processes necessary for the proper use of spoken language or the symbols of communication,

and that is characterized by a condition that:

a) is not primarily the result of:

– impairment of vision;

– impairment of hearing;

– physical disability;

– developmental disability;

– primary emotional disturbance;

– cultural difference;

b) results in a significant discrepancy between academic achievement and assessed intellectual

ability, with deficits in one or more of the following:

– receptive language (listening, reading);

– language processing (thinking, conceptualizing, integrating);

– expressive language (talking, spelling, writing);

– mathematical computations; and

c) may be associated with one or more conditions diagnosed as:

– a perceptual handicap;

– a brain injury;

– minimal brain dysfunction;

– dyslexia;

– developmental aphasia.

b) lack of the representational symbolic behaviour that precedes language.

Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing

An impairment characterized by deficits in language and speech development because of a

diminished or non-existent auditory response to sound.

Intellectual Giftedness

An unusually advanced degree of general intellectual ability that requires differentiated learning

experiences of a depth and breadth beyond those normally provided in the regular school

program to satisfy the level of educational potential indicated.

Mild Intellectual Disability

A learning disorder characterized by:

a) an ability to profit educationally within a regular class with the aid of considerable curriculum

modification and supportive service;

b) an inability to profit educationally within a regular class because of slow intellectual development;

c) a potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support.

Developmental Disability

A severe learning disorder characterized by:

a) an inability to profit from a special education program for students with mild intellectual disabilities because of slow intellectual development;

b) an ability to profit from a special education program that is designed to accommodate slow intellectual development;

c) a limited potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support.

Physical Disability

A condition of such severe physical limitation or deficiency as to require special assistance in learning situations to provide the opportunity for educational achievement equivalent to that of pupils without exceptionalities who are of the same age or development level.

Blind and Low Vision

A condition of partial or total impairment of sight or vision that even with correction affects educational performance adversely.

Multiple Exceptionalities

A combination of learning or other disorders, impairments, or physical disabilities that is of such a nature as to require, for educational achievement, the services of one or more teachers holding qualifications in special education and the provision of support services appropriate for such disorders, impairments, or disabilities.[3]

[3] Ministry of Ontario Education Department. (2001). *Special Education: A Guide for Educators.* Retrieved from

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Appendix B: Description of Integrated Support Program (ISP) – Students With Physical Disabilities

Designated Programs at X Collegiate Institute

Integrated Support Program (ISP) – Students With Physical Disabilities

Students within the ISP program receive an individualized educational program designed to foster participation and independence through the development of academics and life skills. The completion of a high school diploma is created based on the individual student's physical as well as academic needs. Students are able to integrate into the regular classroom for part or all subjects; in addition, we offer small class placements based on the individual needs of students.

The Special Education Department has a highly structured team of Special Education Resource Teachers (SERT's) and Educational Assistants (EA's) dedicated to help support the academic and physical needs of students. Many students within the ISP program take course loads that will enable them to obtain their Ontario Secondary School Diploma within 5-6 years.

To qualify for a placement within the ISP program, students must be formally identified with a physical disability exceptionality through the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process.

Excerpt from Parent Information Package Special Education at X Collegiate Institute: "Empowering Students to Achieve Success" (2010)

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Open –ended questions:

After introductions say to participant:

Now that you have completed secondary school, I wonder if we might take a look back at what

that experience was like for you. I am interested in ways that we can improve the experiences of

our students, so tell me about what it was like to be a 'high school' student here.

Note: If the student was my student I can mitigate their fear of sharing their true feelings about

the classroom experiences by expressing the following paragraph.

I am a teacher who is looking to improve my teaching practice and the practice of other Visual

Art and Technology teachers in order to better the learning experience for students. You are no

longer my student and the more honest your feedback is, the more it will help highlight areas of

success and areas of need in the program. Please try to openly share your opinions:

1. Let's talk about your experiences in the Visual Art and Technology classroom. What
    was that class in particular like for you?

Follow-up Questions

2. Talk to me about the things that we did in that class that brought learning alive for
    you – or, conversely- made it even more difficult to learn.

3. What teaching strategies, instructional decisions, approaches, procedures, or routines
    helped you to achieve success in the Visual Art and Technology classroom(s)?

4. Let's talk about your experiences as an *exceptional student* in the Visual Arts
    Classroom. Did you feel that you were viewed differently than other students in the

classroom? What advice would you give to Art educators to improve engagement for

students with disabilities – or all students in the Visual Art and Technology

classroom(s)?

5. Tell me about the art work you have selected to share.

Appendix D: Letter of Information

LISTENING TO VOICES OF EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS TO

INFORM ART PEGAGOGY

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Dear Prospective Research Participant,

Introduction

My name is Ms. Christina Yarmol and I am a Master of Education student working under the supervision of Dr. Kathryn Hibbert in the Faculty of Education at Western University. I am contacting you because I am seeking research participants who were enrolled in Visual Arts, Photography, Graphic Arts or Film and Video classes while at high school. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study that reflects upon the way art education currently serves students with exceptionalities, and how we might improve our practice.

 Purpose of the study

My research study examines which pedagogical practices create engagement for exceptional students in high school Visual Arts programs. I will ask you to reflect on personal experiences throughout your education career and to communicate your personal stories about these encounters. It is my goal to learn from your experiences in ways that may inform and improve curriculum content, delivery and classroom practices.

If you agree to participate

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to discuss your experiences in education specifically Visual Art, Photography, Graphics or Film and Video course at your former high school in an interview setting at a location of your choosing (e.g., at the school, your home, a library). You can also select a sample of your art work created in high school to include in this study. The interview will be video-recorded and transcribed into written form. You will be provided with a copy of your transcript and will be able to make changes and or provide clarification for the researcher. This will take approximately 30 minutes. I anticipate that this study should not exceed 2 hours of your time.

Confidentiality

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. Personal information will not be linked to interview responses, and will be changed to protect the identity of a participant without changing the meaning of the story told. If you decide to submit a sample of your art work you should be aware that it could be recognized by someone. You may choose to be identified as the artist. For those who wish to remain anonymous, every effort will be made to ensure anonymity. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential in my password protected laptop computer and in a locked home office. All video and transcribed data collected will be destroyed 3 years after the conclusion of the study.

Risks & Benefits

There are no known risks to participating in this study.

Study Results

If you are interested in receiving a summary of the research findings from my thesis you may do so by contacting me via email.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time.

Questions

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Ethics, Western University at 519-_____or email address. If you have any questions about this study, please contact Christina Yarmol at   or Dr. Kathryn Hibbert at   ,
                     .

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Sincerely,

Christina Yarmol, Graduate Student in Education, Western University, email address

Appendix E: Participant Consent Form

LISTENING TO VOICES OF EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS TO INFORM ART PEGAGOGY

Western Education   *[Christina Yarmol, Master of Education University of Western Ontario]*

CONSENT FORM

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Please initial your choice:

_____ Yes, please identify my art work with my name.
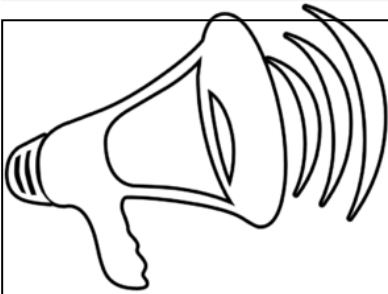
_____No, my art work may not be identified with my name.

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____Date: _____

Christina Yarmol (Researcher Obtaining Informed Consent)

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Appendix F: Poster For Snowball Sampling

Do you want to make your voice heard? Do you know anyone who might have something to say about their education?

Ms. Yarmol, Western University, is looking for participants for a research study to share their personal experiences and stories about their art education.

Criteria:

- Open to males or female
- 19 years of age or older
- Previously enrolled in the Intensive Support Program
- Have taken a Visual Art or Technological Studies course at MCI in the past (Including: Visual Art any level, Photography, Graphics, or Film and Video)

What is required?

Sharing your personal thoughts about your art/technological education experiences

How much time will it take?

About 1- 2 hours

Where will it take place?

A mutually agreed upon location

Name of Study

IMPROVING PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES IN ART CLASSES: Listening to Voices of Exceptional Students to Inform Art Pedagogy

If you are interested or know anyone who might be please contact:

Appendix G: Ethics Approval

Western Education

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS - ETHICS APPROVAL NOTICE

Review Number:	1207-6
Principal Investigator:	Kathryn Hibbert
Student Name:	Christina Yarmol
Title:	*Listening to Voices of Exceptional Students to Inform Art Pedagogy*
Expiry Date:	June 30, 2013
Type:	M.Ed. Thesis
Ethics Approval Date:	October 24, 2012
Revision #:	1
Documents Reviewed & Approved:	Revised Recruitment, Advertisement

This is to notify you that the Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board (REB), which operates under the authority of the Western University Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects, according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the date noted above. The approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the REB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

During the course of the research, no deviations from, or changes to, the study or information/consent documents may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB, except for minor administrative aspects. Participants must receive a copy of the signed information/consent documentation. Investigators must promptly report to the Chair of the Faculty Sub-REB any adverse or unexpected experiences or events that are both serious and unexpected, and any new information which may adversely affect the safety of the subjects or the conduct of the study. In the event that any changes require a change in the information/consent documentation and/or recruitment advertisement, newly revised documents must be submitted to the Sub-REB for approval.

for Dr. Alan Edmunds (Chair)

2012-2013 Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board

Dr. Alan Edmunds	Faculty of Education (Chair)
Dr. John Barnett	Faculty of Education
Dr. Farahnaz Faez	Faculty of Education
Dr. Wayne Martino	Faculty of Education
Dr. George Gadanidis	Faculty of Education
Dr. Elizabeth Nowicki	Faculty of Education
Dr. Julie Byrd Clark	Faculty of Education
Dr. Kari Veblen	Faculty of Music
Dr. Jason Brown	Faculty of Education
Dr. Susan Rodger	Faculty of Education
	Faculty of Education, Associate Dean, Research *(ex officio)*
Dr. Shelley Taylor	Faculty of Education, Western Non-Medical Research Ethics Board *(ex officio)*
Dr. Ruth Wright	Faculty of Music, Western Non-Medical Research Ethics Board *(ex officio)*
Dr. Kevin Watson	Faculty of Music, Western Non-Medical Research Ethics Board *(ex officio)*

The Faculty of Education	Research Officer
1137 Western Rd.	Faculty of Education Building
London, ON N6G 1G7	kueneman@uwo.ca
	519-661-2111, ext.88561 FAX 519-661-3095

Copy: Office of Research Ethics

Appendix H: Curriculum Vitae

June 2013

NAME: YARMOL, Christina M.

RANK: (Home) Department Head of Arts and Teacher, Toronto District
                 School Board, Martingrove Collegiate Institute

                 (Student) Master of Education at Western University Curriculum Studies, Arts

STATUS: Master's student writing thesis

FORMAL EDUCATION:

Degree	University	Department	Year
M.Ed.	Western University	Graduate Studies in Education	2010- Present
B.F.A.	York University	Fine Arts/ French	1993
B.Ed.	York University	Concurrent Education	1993
Ontario Teaching Certificate			1993
Year Abroad	Université de Bordeaux III, France	French	1991
Course	University of Western Ontario École d'été à Trois-Pistoles, Quebec	French	1989

ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATIONS COURSES

University of Toronto

Special Education, Part 1, Behaviour (basic)   April 1994

Dramatic Arts, Part 1   April 1995

Honours Specialist, Visual Arts   August 1995

Religious Education, Part 1   June 1996

Special Education, Part 2, Learning Disabilities (basic)   June 1997

Special Education, Specialist, The Slower Learner (basic)   September 1997

CONTINUING EDUCATION

- Attend yearly professional development courses offered by the Toronto District School Board including encaustic, acrylic painting, watercolour painting, mixed media, drawing, sketchbook creation, and PhotoShop
- Attend workshops and courses in artistic media such as glass fusing, jewelry design, marionette making, mosaics, pottery, felting, clay creation, stone carving, Chinese brush painting, PhotoShop, egg tempera painting and textile art

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY:

Date	Position	School
2010-present	Visual Arts Teacher and Department Head of Arts, Martingrove Collegiate Institute, Toronto District School Board (TDSB)	
2009-2010	Visual Arts Teacher and Department Head of Gifted and Advanced Placement Programme Teacher, Martingrove Collegiate Institute, TDSB	
2000-2010	Visual Arts, French Teacher, Special Education, Martingrove Collegiate Institute, TDSB	
1995-2000	Special Education Teacher, Behaviour and Learning, Disabilities, Art in Grades 7, 8, Saint Alfred School, Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board (DPCDSB)	
1993-1995	Classroom Teacher, French, Visual Arts & Photography, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Secondary School, DPCDSB	
1992-1993	Free-lance Artist, Mariposa Graphics, Toronto	
1988-1992	Dance Instructor (Ukrainian, Ballet and Character Barre) for children age 4-14 years of age, Yavir School of Dance	

Awards:

Centre for Inclusive Education Research Award, Western University - 2013 -Bursary

Mentors:

Faculty:
Dr. Kathryn Hibbert, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education Western University (Thesis Advisor)

Dr. Sharon Rich, Dean of Education, Nipissing University (Thesis Committee Member)

SCHOLARLY AND PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES:

Other

- Member of Executive Committee, Coordinator of Regional Representatives, Ontario Society of Education Through Art (OSEA) now OAEA, September 2009-present
- Member of Ontario Art Education Association (OAEA), Since 2007
- Executive member of KUMF Art Gallery, Toronto (2012-2013)
- Artist, Expressions in Art Show and Cawthra Art Show (2002- present)
- Artist, KUMF, (2009-2011)
- Artist, New Figures New Faces, KUMF Gallery (2003)

COURSES TAUGHT

Elementary:

- Grade 7 & 8 Core Curriculum Regular classroom; Visual Art, Special Education Learning Disabilities and Behaviour classroom

High school:

- Grade 9 Visual Art; Core Curriculum, French as a Second Language, Special Education; Learning Strategies
- Grade 10, Visual Art; Core Curriculum, Sculpture, French as a Second Language, Careers
- Grade 11 Visual Art; Core Curriculum, Printmaking, French as a Second Language
- Grade 12 Visual Art; Core Curriculum, OAC Visual Art
- Grade 12 Advanced Placement Two-dimensional design, Three-dimensional   design

MARTINGROVE COLLEGIATE ACTIVITIES

Gifted and AP Programs

- Acted as Curriculum Leader for Specialized Programs: Gifted and AP, November 2008 – December 2009

- Led the Professional Learning Committee to develop the process and forms for students applying to AP courses
- Organized and motivated and students to join and complete the Duke of Edinburgh Award
- Annually organize student art work for the *Etobicoke Art Smarts Art Show* at Sherway Gardens, Toronto, 2005-2012
- Collaborated with *Delise Youth Outreach exhibit* to present student works in a city-wide art show, 2010-2011
- Annually organize student art work and their participation in parent council fundraisers
- Coordinated Ontario Arts Council "Artists in the Classroom" visits
- Organized yearly shows of Grade 12 student works at the Textile Museum of Canada since 2005 and pilot group of students through the Textile Museum's online Social Fabric project before its formal release

Teacher Development

- Participate in Arts and Equity project, 2013
- Act as the Department Head of Visual Art, Photography, Graphics and Film and Video
- Lead teacher candidates through their year at Martingrove C.I, as a Host Teacher for both OISE and York University teacher candidates, 2002- present

TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD ACTIVITIES

Promotion of Art

- Led a dance team through the TDSB Dare 2 Dance competition; the team placed in the top ten teams in the board and performed at the finale
- Work with a team of Art teachers and Board Art instructional leader to organize, and hang the annual "Open" show at OCAD University (Every May since 2010)
- Worked with students to develop units and work based on artist El Antasui cloths in conjunction with displays at the ROM in fall 2010
- Organized staff and students to produce art with aboriginal/First Nations themes as part of Professional Development with the Aboriginal Arts Council; works were displayed at the Metro Toronto Police Headquarters
- Participated in Arts Leadership council with the TDSB, including projects for north-west quadrant, 2011
- Taught and organized students' projects presented at the entrance of the Bruce Mau *Massive Change* at the Art Gallery of Ontario
- Taught students to create contemporary art work for the *Media Versus Reality* 1313 Queen West Contemporary Art show, Collaborated with two other TDSB teachers to mount the show
- Collaborated with a visiting artist and a TDSB team to create *Site-on Site Project* at Martingrove C.I.
- Collaborated extensively with Textile Museum of Canada for 5 years (*Daily Fibre Intake*

2005, i-doll 2007, The Celebrity's Closet 2008, Felt it! 2009, Social Fabric on line project 2010.)
- Acted as teacher leader at Art at the Boyne River project, 2002

PRESENTATIONS AND WORKSHOPS

Presentations

- Presented thesis in 20 minute presentation at The Robert Macmillan Graduate research in Education Symposium, Western University, London, ON, April 18, 2013
- Presented the keynote address about my thesis work: *Improving Pedagogical Practices in Art Classes: Listening to Voices of Exceptional Students to Inform Art Pedagogy* at the Toronto District Special Education Forum directed by Trustee, Christopher Glover
- Delivered a presentation on two occasions at Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, with a Frida Kahlo marionette I created in honor of the Frida Kahlo and Diego Show, Sunday Family Day and the Teacher Education Evening, October 2012
- Delivered a two hour workshop of a realized unit I wrote entitled: *Barbie Girl in Our World: Barbie as a Cultural Artifact of Our Time* and delivered to approximately 30 participants at the Ontario Art Education Association (OAEA) conference (2011)
- Presented a two-hour workshop, *How to Write a Course for At Risk Students* at Fall 2009 OSEA conference
- Presented *Hands on the Body,* a two hour clay workshop at EdGO Conference (Educators for the Gifted Organization), 2008
- Presented a three-hour workshop about *Papermaking* at the OSEA conference 2009, *Green Gallery Conference 2008: Art and Design in a Changing Environment*

Workshops Delivered for Teacher Education

- Acted as a demonstration teacher for Visual Arts in the Toronto District School Board (2010-2012, new session in Feb. 2013).
- Delivered a workshop entitled, "Ocarina" about creating and clay ocarinas on February 2011 at the TDSB Professional Development Day, Rosedale Heights
- Delivered are to approximately 35 secondary school Visual Art teachers at Professional Development day called "i-doll", *Creating Dolls for a Healing Purpose*, 2008
- Delivered a Curriculum Share unit to approximately 30 Secondary Visual Art Teachers based on Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party*, 2003

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

- Currently co-project manager for Financial Literacy and the Visual Arts curriculum writing project, 2013
- Acted as lead writer for Ceramics course units for the OSEA and Ministry of Education,

November 2009 to present
- Wrote Visual Art & Literacy unit with team for EDU-GAINS Arts Resource Development Guide, Summer 2008

Curriculum Writing

- Grade 12, Advanced Placement Sculpture course, September 2009
- Grade 12, Advanced Placement Two Dimensional Design course, January 2009
- Grade 11 Locally-developed Printmaking course, January 2007
- Grade 10 Pathways/Student Success Sculpture course, January 2005
- Grade 7 to OAC Visual Art courses, 1993 forward depending on course load assigned

Signature: _____

Date: June 20, 2013_____