COLLABORATIVE ART INSTALLATION

by

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Abstract

In an attempt to answer the following question: What type of experiences can students have through collaborative art making? I designed a qualitative action research study with my fifth grade students at Winterville Elementary School. During this project, student participants worked together with their peers to design and construct a ceramic sculpture that will remain permanently displayed in the garden at Winterville Elementary. In an attempt to extend beyond the traditional teaching methods used in school art settings, this study draws on the combined principles and practices of several types of community-based research (CBR) including: community-based art education (CBAE), participatory action research (PAR), community art, and participatory public art. As a result, this study focused on the participation of all participants and the act of working together to create a final piece of art. In order to get a clear sense of student experiences, I used a combination of data including: my researcher’s reflective journal, participants’ written responses from preliminary activities, and participants’ final written reflection. I used this data to provide an account of my experiences as a teacher-researcher, to craft a story of each student’s collaborative experience told from my perspective, and to provide a discussion based my data analysis. I conclude with the implications of this research for me, as the art teacher at Winterville Elementary, as well as implications for the field of art education.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

My graduate school experiences have led me on an interesting journey. I started graduate school in the fall of 2015, the same semester that I began teaching at Winterville Elementary School. My husband and I bought our home in Winterville the year before and immediately fell in love with this quaint little community and its unique charm and culture. I was commuting to another county to teach at the time and longed for the opportunity to be able to work with students in my own city, and to feel like I was making an investment in the community that I had begun to cherish. These circumstances may seem irrelevant to my research, but in hindsight, this longing for a connection to my community became the driving force behind my entire graduate career. I took courses covering a wide range of topics including interdisciplinary art education practices, the history of art education, multicultural art education, critical geography, community-based research, and community-based art practices. Yet throughout each of these courses, I was overwhelmingly drawn to the connection between my coursework and my experiences as an art teacher and community member in Winterville. I once wrote the following excerpt in an attempt to define community:

A community is any group of people who interact in some capacity. A community can be created by proximity in a physical location, through common interests, shared beliefs, or similar goals. Ideally, members of a community would spend time getting to know each other. They would treat one another with respect, and hopefully develop a sense of trust among the group. Thriving communities require time spent working toward these goals. Members need to be invested in their community in some way, and have a sense of pride or passion toward their community. While this is my ideal definition of community, this is not true of all communities... The more I read about, analyze, and
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I began to think about this idea of investment and pride in one’s community in relation to my students at Winterville. I was not sure whether some of my students recognize our school as a community and did not know if they felt any sense of connectedness to the people and spaces that make up our school. I had engaged in community and relationship building art activities with students in the past in hopes of developing rapport amongst students dealing with deep animosity toward one another. I encouraged group work and collaboration amongst students and saw tremendous growth and development in our classroom environment. I wanted to find a way to use these experiences with the previous class of fifth grade graduates and channel this into a new cyclic experience for future classes of students. I wanted to see how collaborative art making could be used as a tool for building community amongst students, as well as providing students with positive, unique experiences.

Statement of Purpose

“Winterville Elementary is the place to BEE!” This has become the unofficial slogan of Winterville Elementary where I teach. But is it truly “the place to be” for all of our students? Are our students invested in our school? Do they feel as if this is a place that they can be proud of? Are they invested in each other and in building a stronger community within our school? Winterville Elementary is a place I am proud of; it is a place where I feel at home; a place where I am developing relationships and ties with other faculty, my students, and their families. It is a place where I feel like I make an impact and have a purpose. This sense of purpose and ability to positively impact my school community is what gives me the greatest sense of pride. While I believe that most of my students feel comfortable in our school, and may even be prideful of our
school, I doubt that there are many students who feel like they have an opportunity to make a difference within our school.

Through this project, I hope to give students the opportunity to have a lasting impact on our school and to gain a sense of pride in our school community and environment. I hope to see a change in the school climate as students realize that their school space is a place that they can be proud of and call their own. I believe that this process will strengthen our sense of community as students come together to implement and construct a collaborative art project. I also hope to promote stronger personal relationships among students in each homeroom class as they work and create art together.

**Research Question**

To better understand the potential and limitations of collaborative art in school settings, I conducted an action research study that explored the following question:

- What type of experiences can students have through collaborative art making?

I hoped that by constructing a broad research question, I would allow myself the opportunity to let the student experiences guide this research rather than limiting focus on preconceived notions of what I expected or hoped to find.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

“Together we can create what we could never create alone: This idea lies at the heart of collaborative art-making” and will be the driving force behind this research (Cooper & Sjostrom, 2006, p. 4). In this review, I present research that describes ways to approach collaborative art-making as well as possible outcomes and experiences gained through collaborative art making. I begin with an analysis of the typical school art experience and discuss methods of breaking away from restrictive, cliché projects to creating an engaging environment with a contemporary curriculum that promotes collaboration and authentic art making. I then explore approaches to collaborative art making in both community and school settings. In addition, I present research describing the sense of community, or lack thereof, felt by many students within schools as well as research supporting the importance of community building in school settings. I also explore a variety of approaches, characteristics, and outcomes of community-based art education to help inform and redefine my understanding of collaborative art making as a means of community building in a school setting. I hope to use this information to help inform my decisions in planning an art-based research project that will attempt to answer the following research question: What type of experiences can students have through collaborative art making?

Art in Schools

Traditional “school art” often stifles student creativity and expression and forces learners to create facsimile art based on restrictive rubrics and regimented procedures (Gude 2013). Gude (2013) challenged art educators to analyze the validity of their current curriculum and “be willing to let go of some of the old familiar projects (and their myriad variations) in order to make room for other sorts of projects and other kinds of art experiences” (p. 6). While she admitted that open-studio practices in a traditional school setting are not practical, she argued
that art educators must find ways to make our curriculum relevant to our students and communities. In this section of the review, I explore three methods of breaking away from the restrictive nature of traditional school art: creating a student-driven learning environment, designing opportunities for collaborative art making, and using contemporary art methods to guide instruction.

**Creating a student-driven learning environment.** How can art educators break away from traditional school art and create new experiences for their students? Adams (2013) emphasized the importance of creating a student-centered learning environment using the concept of the artist-teacher as a metaphor to explain his own idea of the artist-learner. “These artist-learners represent an important example of an emerging resistance in art education to mechanistic and assessment-led curricula” (Adams, 2013, p. 25). He described Room 13, an environment of artist-learners developed in a Scottish primary school. In this non-traditional school-art environment, students are allowed to come and go as they wish and encouraged to freely explore and create with some guidance from the artist in residence stationed in the space. A social learning community is created in the space as participants collaborate in variety of ways:

- first, by a cascade of learning, where members teach, share and disseminate ideas amongst the group; second, by entering a critical discourse, whereby ideas are visualized through responding, analyzing and reflecting upon each other's work; and third, by self-consciously welcoming ideas and concepts from the wider field of practice. (Adams, 2013, p. 27)

Artist-learners, together, shape their own learning experience and are therefore more engaged and invested. While this model provides an authentic, contemporary learning environment for
students, it is most practical in alternative environments such as community centers and would be much more difficult to implement in a traditional school setting with regimented schedules and procedures for students. However, the basic concept of the artist-learner and a student-driven environment seem to promote a community-centered, collaborative learning environment that could be used as inspiration in designing an art environment in a traditional school setting.

Collaborative Art Making in Schools. While collaborative art-making can happen in a vast number of settings, Cooper and Sjostrom (2006) claim that schools provide a natural setting for collaborative art-making because they are “the heart and soul of every community, rich or poor” (p. 8). Cooper and Sjostrom (2006) believed that educators understand the importance of helping every child to have a voice, to feel part of and responsible for community, and to be involved in making decisions for the common good… The challenge is to figure out how to create this kind of democratic community with kids. Collaborative art-making is a profound way to do this. (p. 4)

Collaborative art-making in a school setting unifies students and the community and evokes a sense of pride and ownership for students fostering feelings of accomplishment as a part of the overall group.

Cooper and Sjostrom (2006) developed five basic principles to consider when implementing a collaborative art-making project. When followed they believe that these principles will allow for collaborative art-making projects to be implemented in any situation or environment.

Principle 1: The teacher serves as master artist.

Principle 2: Use a framework to maximize the likelihood of success.

Principle 3: Work collaboratively throughout.
Principle 4: Draw on the perspectives and techniques of contemporary art.

Principle 5: Tie the artwork to the larger world. (Cooper and Sjostrom, 2006, p. 8)

**Teacher as master artist.** While Cooper and Sjostrom (2006) state that the teacher must serve as the master artist, this term seems to conflict with the premise of participatory art. They believe the teacher must lead the artistic process and is ultimately in charge of the project and decision-making, however, teacher as facilitator would more accurately describe the role of the teacher in guiding the collaborative art-making process. The teacher must “understand that everyone… is visually literate simply by virtue of being born with two eyes and living in a visually rich culture” (Cooper and Sjostrom, 2006, p. 20). The teachers and students will exchange ideas and create an open, non-judgmental environment where anything goes and students are allowed to freely and creatively express their ideas. Cooper and Sjostrom (2006) believed:

> Every voice in the collaboration has merit and every contribution will add to the visual language and power of the final piece; it’s the combination of voices that’s magical…

> When the kids’ expressions are put next to one another, they will create an intriguing visual story. (p.24)

This doesn’t mean that the teacher shouldn’t give advice or suggestions, but that their suggestions should not take away from the validity of the student’s ideas. Teachers should always allow students to approach art-making as an opportunity for discovery.

**Artist framework.** As the master artist, it is the teacher’s responsibility to determine the vision and restrictions of the project as well as to determine to what extent students will be included in the decision making process. One of these decisions involves *physical framework.*

The “physical framework, or form, of the artwork… serves as an organizing principle for a
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project” (Cooper & Sjostrom, 2006, p. 37). The physical framework can be two-dimensional, three-dimensional, or found-objects, but simplicity is usually best. Examples include a sculptural letter or number, a large-scale map or billboard, or a significant shape or symbol. The master artist must also determine the goals of the framework and overall project: (1) What are we trying to communicate through this project? and (2) How are we going to express our message?

**Collaboration and Democracy.** Collaboration helps students to develop life skills that are equally important to lessons learned in core subjects. According to Cooper and Sjostrom (2006), students will develop “skills in conversation, negotiation, problem-solving, and listening,” that will help set them up for success in their future (p. 65). It is important that all students feel like their ideas are valuable and that they are a part of a democratic decision making process. Students can vote on any or all aspects of the decision making process based on the discretion of the master artist. These decisions may include artistic framework, project theme, 3-D shape, size, imagery, color palette, display and installation, and closing ceremony. It is also essential that all students participate and have “enough substantial input so that they consider the project theirs” (Cooper & Sjostrom, 2006, p. 67).

**Contemporary art.** Art has changed over time and artistic merit is no longer based on whether an artist can draw the most realistic rendition of a subject, but rather the communication and expression of one’s ideas and feelings. Cooper and Sjostrom (2006) claim that “the very ideas and techniques that allow contemporary art to diversify and break down boundaries can allow kids to tap deep sources of creativity and create great things” (p. 83). Looking at, describing, and analyzing contemporary art can help students to begin to realize endless possibilities of art and art-making.
**Real-world connections.** Art can create opportunities for interdisciplinary connections to other subject areas as well as current events (Cooper & Sjostrom, 2006). Art enables students to explore the world outside the classroom. Art promotes critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. Publically displayed collaborative pieces, such as the Boston Frog Pond Playground installation described by Cooper and Sjostrom (2006), instill a sense of pride and honor in students as they realize that they have become public artists.

**Integration of contemporary art into art curriculum.** The study of contemporary art is important in art education because it helps create more authentic art making opportunities for our students (Gude, 2004; Gude, 2013; Marshall & Donahue, 2014). When looking at work by exemplar artists, Gude (2013) and Marshall and Donahue (2014) suggest that the goal of the teacher designed project should emulate the process and methodology of the artist. “When learners try on artists’ ways of thinking and doing, they exercise and stretch their conceptual and procedural muscles” (Marshall & Donahue, 2014, p. 163). However, Gude (2013) admits that due to the unconventional methods of contemporary artists, it is often very difficult to replicate their methods and practices of art making in a traditional school setting. This is a constant challenge for art educators attempting to create a more meaningful, relevant curriculum. Gude (2004) suggested shifting current art education practices to include postmodern principles of art, which includes, but are not limited to, the following: appropriation, juxtaposition, recontextualization, layering, interaction of text and imagery, hybridity, gazing, and representin’. Gude claimed “by structuring art projects to introduce students to relevant contemporary art and thus to postmodern principles—strategies for understanding and making art today—students will gain the skills to participate in and shape contemporary cultural conversations” (p. 13).
Contemporary art practices are often driven by transformative ways of thinking in which artists are able to “redefine the self, build community, and address civic issues” through art making (Krensky & Steffen, 2009, p. 8). Some contemporary approaches to transformative art include activist art, public art, and community art. The purpose of activist art is to promote social change by publically displaying art that addresses current political or social issues. Public art is art “created for the public” (Stephens, 2006, p.43) and while it is not always transformative in nature, it can be created in that intent (Krensky & Steffen, 2009). While an artist generally creates public art for a particular community or audience, the intended viewers can sometimes feel disconnected from the piece. In contrast, participatory public art is “art that is created with the public” and breaks away from traditional artist-viewer roles and allows the community to become active contributors while the artist acts as a facilitator (Stephens, 2006, p. 44). Similarly, community art is “a form of public art that is experimental and inclusive” (Lowe, 2001, p. 459). Due to its participatory design, community art, allows the public to have a voice in the design and creation of the piece and therefore addresses issues that meaningful to the community (Krensky & Steffen, 2009; Lowe, 2001).

**Community art.** According to Lowe (2001), “Americans have become increasingly disconnected from kin, friendship, and neighborhood groups” and are experiencing a decreased sense of community (p. 457). Community art is a form of participatory public art that addresses social issues and promotes relationship building amongst participants through collaboratively working toward common goals. Community art brings professional artists and community members together to co-create and promote social change. In order to be successful, a community art project must have a community leader that agrees to be present and must motivate their participants. The mood of the space is important for participants and must be comfortable,
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safe, non-judgmental, and fun. “The community-building process involves working together, collaborative decision making, and celebration” and is another essential aspect of community art (Lowe, 2001, p.462). Participants need to feel valuable within the group and be an active part of decision-making. The artist process allows individuals to creatively express themselves and opens up natural opportunities for communication and relationship building among participants.

The two main goals of community art projects are to develop a sense of community and to create a final piece of art (Lowe, 2001). “With community art, the work of art represents coming together to create something collectively,” making the art an important lasting symbol of the community building that took place (Lowe, 2001, p. 465). The creation of the art piece also establishes a common interest and goal among community members. Working toward a common goal can help to create connections and build relationships and trust among participants.

All of these outcomes are made possible through the direction of the artist or facilitator and the framework they establish for the project. “For community art to be effective and to result in any level of social change, the artist must make the projects meaningful by wholly involving the participants in the interaction,” and basing the project on the needs and experiences of the community (Lowe, 2001, p. 466). Community art is a natural outlet for community-building and social change because it channels a fundamental need for expression and interaction.

Community in Schools

Osterman (2000) suggested, “A community exists when its members experience a sense of belonging or personal relatedness” (p. 324). If this describes community, then do students feel a part of their school community? Do they feel as if they belong in their space? Do they feel connected to others? Manning and Saddlemire (1996) believe
people have a basic human need to belong to others and a need to feel a part of a group that works toward goals, each forsaking some measure of individuality to work toward a common goal. Communities can provide this sense of belonging. (p. 43)

However, Osterman (2000) suggested that schools typically ignore students need for connectedness causing many students to lack a sense of belonging within their schools. Osterman goes on to say that taking time to address students’ needs for belonging can help improve their overall motivation, behavior, and learning potential. Students need to feel a sense of relatedness to others as part of their natural growth and psychological development. Feeling a sense of community and belonging within their school experience can fulfill a student’s need for relatedness. However, even when community building is addressed within school settings, it is often more focused on developing the teacher-student relationship rather than developing peer relationships. This proposes a strong need for community building and relationship development among students in schools. Arnold (1994) stated that

community building is based on many old ideals of commitment and responsibility…

[and] brings a diverse group of people together in structured and semi-structured environments with a set of common goals. It requires a commitment of time and effort and does not happen automatically. It must be modeled and taught. (p. 47-48)

While outcomes of community building efforts are not always seen right away and may be difficult to measure, through this research I hope to gain understanding of students’ experiences within their school community through collaborative art making.

**Types of community-based research.** A great deal can be learned about building community by looking at the various methods and practices of *community-based research* and *community-based art education*. What is community-based research? According to Strand,
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Cutforth, Stoecker, Marullo, and Donohue (2003) community-based research (CBR) is research that is conducted in collaboration with and for the benefit of an established community group. For the purpose of CBR, the term community includes educational institutions, community-based organizations, public service agencies, groups with shared interests, or groups from a shared geographical location.

What is community-based art education? In order to understand community-based art education, Krensky and Steffen (2009) believe you must understand the premise of community art. As described earlier, community art is participatory art created jointly with artists and community members with the community’s interests in mind. Similarly, community-based art education (CBAE) is “community art used as both a creative practice and a teaching method to fulfill educational objectives ranging from creative self-expression to competency with discipline-specific standards” (Krensky & Steffen, 2009, p. 12). Typically, CBAE takes place in a community setting, but it can also be conducted in a school-based program. More importantly, “regardless of the venue, CBAE settings are places where people come together” (Krensky & Steffen, 2009, p. 14). Therefore, based on the premise of how a community is defined for the purpose of CBR, it can be inferred that CBAE practices can take place in classroom settings.

Community-based art education in schools. When conducted in a school-based setting, community-based art education can be approached in the form of a community service project, a way to connect to and learn about local art and culture, or a public art project (Ulbricht, 2005). Community service projects are projects where the primary focus is on the needs of the community, while public art projects are focused on the interaction between the community and the art and are usually exhibited in a public space. While there are many different approaches to community-based art education, enabling students to make real-world connections and become
involved outside the classroom is a common theme and motivation for engaging in this approach (Lawton, 2010; Lim, Chang, & Song, 2013; Ulbricht, 2005).

When planning a community-based art education project in a school setting, the educator should be familiar with the common characteristics of this approach. Community-based art projects should be aligned to the regular curriculum, meet a need of the community, be mutually beneficial to the students and community, involve reciprocal expertise, and extend student learning to the community (Lim, Chang, & Song, 2013; Russell & Hutzel, 2007). This approach to learning will enable students to grow and learn from other’s experiences, and will strengthen the connections between the classroom and the real world. As a result, the curriculum and concepts being taught will become more relevant to students, making their overall learning experience more meaningful (Lim, Chang, & Song, 2013). Russell and Hutzel (2007) explain that this type of stimulating learning environment will have a positive effect on student behavior as well as their social and emotional learning (SEL) by supporting development of self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, and relationship skills. A community-based approach will also help students to feel a sense of accomplishment and gain pride and confidence in their art.

According to Marché (1998), there are a variety of approaches to community-based art education in schools, which are either based on an internal or external definition of community. An internal community “may refer to a collection of individuals, including students, teachers, administrators, and support staff, who work within school settings, directly participating in the educational process” (Marché, 1998, p. 7). In contrast, an external community “may refer to the local environment that exists outside classroom walls” (Marché, 1998, p. 7). Within the external community definition, there are three main approaches to community-based art education that
are distinguished by the role and interactions between the students and the community. The three approaches include “taking from, learning about, and acting upon the local community and environment” (Marché, 1998, p. 7). The first approach, taking from, characterizes students in the hunter/gather role and exemplifies a child-centered, discovery-based approach to learning. In this approach, learners are urged to “step outside their classrooms and undertake a visual odyssey to discover and directly experience the real world” (Marché, 1998, p. 8). In this method the community and outside world is used as “an immediate source of interesting objects, stories, and experiences” (Marché, 1998, p. 8). The second approach, learning about, characterizes students as detectives and is rooted in multicultural education (Marché, 1998). The goal of this approach is for students to discover the historical, cultural, and artistic traditions of their own community. This approach provides opportunities for community members to share their knowledge and expertise with students in the classroom. The third approach, acting upon, characterizes the students as social activists. In this approach, students study the environmental sciences and are “encouraged to develop a sense of place and stewardship for that place” (Marché, 1998, p. 9).

In comparison, the inward approach to community-based art education involves community-building within schools (Marché, 1998). It is important for both teachers and students to develop a sense of community and support within schools. Students and teachers need to feel connected and develop relationships with their respective peers. Marché (1998) described this approach through a series of case studies done through Project ARTS (Art for Rural Teachers and Students). As a result, “work in Project ARTS demonstrated that collaborative creation of art provides students with inward-looking opportunities for practicing dialogue, cooperation, communication, and conflict resolution skills” (Marché, 1998, p. 13).

**Developing a Sense of Place in Schools**
“Place is how we make the world meaningful and the way we experience the world. Place, at a basic level, is space invested with meaning” (Cresswell, 2004, p. 12). Tupper et al (2008) claimed that the physical and social spaces in schools have a significant influence on the development of student identities and citizenship. They studied the physical and social construction of spaces, how students occupy and congregate in spaces, the visual landscape of the school, and surveyed the school through observation, interviews, and photo-voice. They believed that people make places through their interactions within them. Tupper et al (2008) stated, “at the end of this research, we are left wondering how schools might become more environmentally friendly, aesthetically pleasing, and socially inclusive places where students’ emerging identities and expressions of citizenship can be negotiated in positive and productive ways” (p. 1089). Lavrinec (2014) uses art as a form of place making. Although Lavrinec’s research takes place in community-based settings, their approach to using art as a form of place-making can be applied to a school setting.

**Art as a form of place-making.** In a study titled “Laimikis.It,” Lavrinec (2014) worked with an interdisciplinary group that “promote[d] participatory urban planning by developing site-specific creative communities’ initiatives in underused public spaces” in order to “examine the potential of community art projects as a form of participatory research and as a tool in neighborhood regeneration” (p.56-57). In the “Laimikis.It” study interactive art objects were placed in a public space to promote opportunities for interaction and conversations between individuals that pass through the space (Lavrinec, 2014). By creating an experience that people enjoyed, this project created connections between the participants and the space. Another example from the study involved a public installation that promoted indirect communication among participants as those that passed the installation could take and/or leave small items in the
drawers of the piece. This also created an opportunity for anyone who participated to become a contributor to the meaning and presentation of the piece. Lavrinec (2014) claims that “research tool[s], art objects and creative actions in public space actualize a micro-level of sociality and make the dynamics of everyday contacts visible” (p. 60).

Lavrinec (2014) described place-making as “turning a meaningless transitive place into a meaningful site” (p. 61). As another part of the “Laimikis.It” study, participants transformed a meaningless location in their community into the site where they would gather for meetings and discussions. They developed a street mosaic workshop in which the members decorated utility poles throughout the space. The purpose of this project was to create attractive focal points that would guide the viewer’s journey through the space, and to promote communication among community members as they interacted in the space. In addition to the interaction between the viewers and the artwork, members of the group reached out to their community to invite new participants to help in the decoration of the utility poles. This created an environment where community members could gather and create together, which opened up opportunities for storytelling and discussion.

Lavrinec (2014) claimed that “by creating points of attraction in the neighborhood this community art initiative not only brings local residents together, but also helps to reconfigure the negative image of the neighborhood” (p. 64). This was in part because the project captivated positive media attention and promoted tourism in the area. Participatory art-based research in communities provides opportunities for positive interactions among community members and participants, which can promote trust and relationship-building within the community (Lavrinec, 2014). It also promotes place-making by instilling purpose and creating connections in
otherwise meaningless places. This in turn allows community members to redefine the image of their neighborhood and place.

**Participatory Action Research in Schools**

Lavrinec (2014) describes *participatory research* as both active and reflective, and argued that it must maintain a communal approach in which local participants act as co-researchers. By engaging in a participatory research approach, the researcher is able to provide opportunities for participants to create solutions to relevant problems and promote change, which enables a sense of empowerment among participants. Generally, CBR, CBAE, and community art are based on participatory practices. Therefore, while my research is not necessarily participatory action research (PAR), I drew on the theories and methods of PAR in the planning and implementation of this project by allowing students to guide their own experience. I allowed each group to freely plan and develop their own ideas for this project. The community component of this project was based on Marché’s (1998) inward approach to community-based art education and was centered around collaborative art making and community building within our school. Just as in community art, community building and creating a final piece of art were the two main goals of this project, while studying students’ experiences through the process was the inquiry behind my research.
Chapter 3: Methodology

This action research project focused on answering the following question: What type of experiences can students have through collaborative art making? In order to best answer this question, I engaged in qualitative research because it “is designed to study school situations and events as they unfold naturally. The focus of [this type of] investigation is on the meaning of these experiences for the individuals and groups in these settings” (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 40). This study detailed the experiences of five student-participants from the 2017-2018 fifth grade class at Winterville Elementary School. Through this project, students defined what community means to them, engaged in collaborative art making with their peers, and created a ceramic sculpture that will be permanently installed in the garden area at our school. As the teacher-researcher, I was fully immersed in the project and hope to use my findings to help design and plan future collaborative projects in my classroom.

Winterville

The activities associated with my inquiry took place in Winterville, a small, quaint town with a total area of 2.7 square miles. Despite its small size, it has survived the test of time and has become a thriving community with a unique art vibe. In a recent publication that highlights the history of Winterville, Foley and Quinn (2014) suggest

It is no accident that the community of Winterville thrives today, having overcome periods of decline, decay and neglect. Churches and good schools anchored generations of families who worked and played together, welcomed newcomers and treasured their small town. Absent a river to attract industry or a major roadway to invite commerce, it is the railroad that ushered the change from farmland to a bustling community. (p. 7)
Despite the removal of the railroad, its presence is still at the heart of our community as the old train depot has been restored and is currently used as our mayoral office and as a venue for town events. The depot marks the center of town and is surrounded by other significant community venues such as the Winterville library, the front porch bookstore, doctor’s museum, police station, city hall, Pittard Park, and the community garden. The Winterville Community Center is just a short walk from the town square. The Community Center hosts seasonal art exhibitions and has incorporated a student art exhibit featuring Winterville Elementary artists into their annual rotation. It is truly a unique and dynamic small town community.

Winterville is unique in that although it is fully inside Clarke County, it has its own government, including a mayor, city council, and police department. Athens-Clarke County is a consolidated city-county, which makes Winterville the only independent city within the County. According to the 2010 census, Winterville was home to just over 1,100 residents with the following demographics: 72% White, 22% African-American, 5% Hispanic/Latino, and 1% other. This is quite different from the demographics of Winterville Elementary which, according to the records at the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, enrolled approximately 450 students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grades with approximately 50% African-American, 25% Hispanic/Latino, 21% White, 3.5% Biracial, and .2% Pacific Islander. Despite the small geographical area of the city of Winterville, the Elementary school is one of the largest geographical school zones in the district (Clarke County School District, 2018). It is the most rural area in Athens as it has one of the lowest school populations despite its large zoning area. Due to zoning, Winterville Elementary has an interesting dynamic as only a portion of its students are actual Winterville residents, the rest live in Athens, the larger city in Clarke County. There are many close ties between the school and community as the city of Winterville works to
support the school, its students, and their families, however, many of our own students are somewhat disconnected from our community. They are geographically dispersed and many students and families are unaware of the opportunities our community has to offer.

**Description of Project**

While the final outcome of this project was a permanent sculptural installation, the ultimate goal was to involve students in the collaborative art making process. Lowe (2001) states the final “work of art represents coming together to create something collectively,” making the art a lasting symbol of the community building that took place (p. 465). In order to scaffold this collaborative art making experience, I designed several preliminary lessons and activities to help guide students through the process. For example, students participated in mapping and photovoice activities. During the mapping activity, I prompted students to create a color coded map of our school in order to identify spaces that hold meaning for them. This was based on Smith-Shank’s (2005) idea of mapping as “visual telling. It is a way to visually compact a story, concept, pattern, information, and spatial site. It is a way to translate a large cumbersome conceptual space into a smaller, manageable, visual format” (p. 149-150). I encouraged students to use their maps as inspiration for the photovoice activity that followed. Kaplan (2013) described photography as a “highly flexible tool that crosses cultural and linguistic barriers and can be adapted to all abilities. Its power lies in its dual role as an art form and a means to record facts” (p.18). This statement highlights photovoice as a natural approach for this lesson as it allowed students to photograph and record their view of reality and the people and spaces that embody our school community. Students then answered a couple of questions reflecting on what they chose to capture and why these people and spaces were important to them. All of these
Collaborative Art Installation

activities were meant to help students continue to develop and share their definitions of community as well as how they fit into and feel about our school community.

Once the preliminary activities were complete, we moved on the planning stages of the process. In order to help students begin to understand the vast number of possibilities for this project, make conceptual connections, and add meaning to their work, I shared several examples of art created by contemporary artists as well as some created in community-based settings (Cooper & Sjostrom, 2006; Gude, 2004, 2013; Marshall & Donahue, 2014). Viewing this work prompted discussions on various approaches to construction, level of collaboration amongst class and groups, and opened a dialog for methods of communicating and visual storytelling in art.

Students worked collaboratively with their group members to develop a theme and plan for their final piece. I encouraged students to make sure all group members were an active part of the decision-making and construction processes in order to create an environment where all students felt valuable and developed a sense of ownership in their piece (Cooper & Sjostrom, 2006). At the conclusion of this project, students completed a written reflection of their experiences throughout this project. The final step was to install the finished sculptures and plan an exhibition honoring student artists. The public display of the completed sculptures will instill a sense of pride and honor in students as they realize they are public artists (Cooper & Sjostrom, 2006). A more detailed and comprehensive description of the methods and activities used throughout this research can be found in Chapter 4: Implementation.

Participants

This project focused on the experiences of fifth graders enrolled in my art class during the 2017-2018 school year. I started teaching at Winterville in the fall of 2015, which means I have known this group of fifth grade students for three years. In my opinion, this class of
students has always been a creative group. This class has a large number of students who seem to be very creativity inclined. Overall, this is a great group of students and I believe they were a wonderful class of students to attempt a project of this magnitude.

**Selecting participants.** I originally intended to select participants from one fifth grade class, but the students in the other classes did such an amazing job on their projects I could not resist including them in my research. In addition, Moore’s class, the class originally selected as my focus class, seemed to have a lower motivation and interest in this project than the other two classes. I describe this in my journal excerpt below:

I chose Moore’s 5th grade class to be participants in this research because their class is the last in our rotation, which gave me the most time to get permissions signed and to make sure that I had logistical issues and kinks worked out. This class is also a fairly well behaved group this year. However, after telling the students that I was conducting research and would like their class to serve as my participants, I began to second guess my choice and wondered if I should have selected one of the other fifth grade classes instead. I was honestly a little shocked by the reaction of students to the minor consent permission form. Many of them seemed confused by the form. I tried to explain that signing the form was their choice, and that they were in no way obligated to sign the form. However, this statement lead a more outspoken student to believe that he didn’t have to participate in any of the project activities which then confused other students as well. I tried to explain that the project was taking place as part of our normal art time, and that the permission form was granting me, the researcher, permission to record and write about their experiences throughout the process. Regardless of whether or not they decided to participate in the research by allowing me to take notes of their personal
experiences, they would be expected to participate in our class activities just like during any other art project. Many were still confused and thought that by signing the form they may somehow be agreeing to do extra work. I will be interested to see how the other classes react to the project without the component of the permission form. (Brownlee, personal communication, October 2017)

The other classes were much more excited when I introduced the project to them. I may never know if the way Moore’s class reacted was influenced by the way I presented the minor consent form or if it was just a difference in the dynamic of this class. Due to unforeseeable circumstances, Moore’s class also got behind schedule, which made it more convenient to go ahead and begin writing and reflecting on the experiences of the first two groups. This combined with indifference of some of Moore’s students and lack of parental permissions from others, convinced me that limiting to one class did not seem to be the most effective. Therefore, my experiences as the researcher will include reflections from all aspects of the project during all three of my fifth grade classes; however, my data will come from the experiences of the selected student participants. This led to a new struggle. How do I choose small number of student participants when over seventy, fifth grade students actually participated in this project? Their experiences as a whole group were astounding and I wish I were able to share more about each of them. However, for the purpose of this research, in order to provide a more extensive view of each student’s experience, I decided to narrow my focus to five students and their individual and unique experiences throughout this process.

I began the selection process by reviewing their responses to the day one worksheet on defining community. I started by typing student’s responses to the following questions: (1) What is a community? and (2) What communities are you a part of? I took the typed responses and
submitted to a word cloud generator. A word cloud program takes data submitted and generates a visual word cloud based on the frequency of the words used. The more a word is used, the larger it appears in the word cloud, the least often a word is used, the smaller it appears. This gave me an overall sense of student’s understandings and feelings toward community and provided me with a visual to share back with them (Figure 3.1: Moore’s community definition, Figure 3.2: Carter’s community definition, Figure 3.3: Kent’s community definition).

Figure 3.1: Moore’s community definition

Figure 3.2: Carter’s community definition

Figure 3.3: Kent’s community definition
Based on student responses, I knew I somehow wanted this data to play a role in how I selected student participants, but I was not quite sure how I would use it yet. So, I set the worksheets aside and began looking at the students’ maps of our school. During this activity, students drew a map of our school space and color-coded their maps based on their feelings toward certain spaces within our school. While their maps were both enlightening and intriguing, the variables were too numerous to analyze. I decided to pair the students’ maps with their community definition worksheets (Appendix D) so that I could see the students written responses next to their visual map before beginning the selection process. I looked specifically at their definitions of community (question 1), their feelings toward our school space (question 6), and their map in relation to their responses. I sorted through each class’s responses separately and tried to narrow down 4-5 students from each class whose responses struck me while paying particular attention to selecting students with varying responses or perspectives. For instance, I tried to select students who wrote that they do like the way our school looks as well as students who wrote that they do not like the way our school looks. I knew that this would still be far too many students to focus on in my final research, but felt that I needed to wait until students had continued further into the process before making final selections. I also had to consider that some of these students might not get parental consent and wanted to attempt to get permissions from more students than I would actually need.

Once most permission slips were returned and students had divided into their final groups, I continued to narrow my participant selection. I looked first at whose permission forms had been signed and eliminated those students that had not returned their parental permission slips. Second, I had selected a few students that ended up in the same group so I decided it would be best to only focus on one member of each group in order to provide a wider variety of
experiences. Then, I looked at my remaining participants and again tried to narrow my selection by choosing five participants that had differing experiences and views of our school and school community. I chose Jarvis, Kaeli, Tyson, Lanie, and Manny (pseudonyms) as my five participants. Aside from requesting consent, I did not tell these five students that I would be focusing on them and they were not treated any differently throughout the process.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

For this research project, I used a variety of qualitative data collection methods in an attempt to answer the following question: What type of experiences can students have through collaborative art making? Data sources included: my researcher’s reflective journal, participants’ written responses from preliminary activities, and participants’ final written reflections. I believe this triangulation of data provided me with adequate information and insight to student experiences throughout this project.

The complexity of this project required my full attention be given to students during class, which made taking traditional field notes unrealistic. Therefore, I did my best to pay close attention to student interactions and experiences during class and wrote reflections regarding my observations as well my personal experience throughout this process in a reflective researcher’s journal. I found four themes that emerged from my reflection: letting go, struggles, successes, and logistical frustrations and expand on these themes in my findings.

I analyzed participants’ written responses to the “Defining Community” worksheet as well as the “Clay Project Reflection” worksheet. I transferred their responses into two tables (*Defining Community Response Table*, Appendix A and *Clay Project Reflection Table*, Appendix B) to make analyzing data more manageable. I color coded themes and made notes based on my reactions to student responses.
I also created a table to organize my notes of participants’ responses during an informal group interview (*Group Interview Response Table*, Appendix C). Due to my time constraints as a teacher-researcher, I felt like creating a table for my notes was more practical than formally transcribing the interview. I approached the interview with some predetermined questions (Appendix C) and added questions throughout the process. The interview was conducted over several afternoons, as different students were available on different days. Not all students responded to every question and some responses may have been influenced by the group’s conversation. I took notes during the interviews and recorded the interviews for my reference and was able to fill in my notes through listening to the recordings.

In addition, I used a combination of data and personal observations to create a narrative describing each participant’s journey throughout this process. I provided a description of each participant’s project and described their experience as best as I could using the available data.

**Being a Teacher-Researcher**

**Researcher role statement.** This research project is a direct result of who I am, as a student, as a teacher, as an artist, and as a community member. Separating myself, my feelings, and my point of view from this project would be a misrepresentation of this project’s purpose and would take away from the validity of this project’s results. I remained fully immersed in this project from beginning to end, and did my best to analyze the results with an unbiased perspective and give an accurate account of the project.
Chapter 4: Implementation

The Making Process

While the collaborative ceramic installation was the final outcome of this project, getting students to engage in the collaborative making process was the ultimate goal. In order to scaffold this experience, I designed several preliminary lessons and activities to help guide students through the process. This chapter details the implementation of this research from the first day of preliminary activities, through the construction process, and concludes by detailing plans for installation and exhibition.

Day 1: Lea Anderson Circles. I wanted to introduce students to the idea of collaboration in art prior to beginning the actual research project, so we started with a collaborative circle project inspired by contemporary artist, Lea Anderson. I showed students work by Lea Anderson (Figure 4.1) and we talked about how she does an eloquent job of creating unity within her work while using a variety of lines, shapes, colors, and patterns.

Figure 4.1. Hawthbaybi, Lea Anderson, Retrieved from http://www.leaandersonart.com/new-gallery-2/uxtx7l7vi06wxv80bgqcrhedob3suh

This prompted a discussion on unity versus variety and how these seemingly contradictory principles work together within a work of art. We discussed how we as a class could use Lea
Anderson’s work as inspiration to create our own collaborative art. While students were encouraged to create variety by coming up with their own line and pattern designs, we worked to create unity by sticking to round, organic shapes and limiting our color palettes to analogous color families. Once student’s individual pieces were complete, I recruited a small group from each class to help me mount their art into one unified design (Figure 4.2. Collaborative Circles). These then went on display in the hallway.

![Collaborative Circles](image)

**Figure 4.2. Collaborative Circles**

**Day 2: What is Community?** To begin the research portion of this project, I prompted students to develop their own working definitions of community that would later be shared back with them through the creation of a word cloud or other word art program. A word cloud is a visual image created by analyzing the frequency of word usage. As students entered the classroom, I gave them a simple worksheet titled *Defining Community* (Appendix D) with the following list of questions about our school and community:

1. What is a community?
2. What communities are you a part of?
3. Do you like the community where you live (your neighborhood)? Why or why not?

4. Do you like our school community? Why or why not?

5. Do the relationships you have at school with peers or teachers affect the way you feel at school? Explain.

6. Do you like the way our school looks? How does our building make you feel?

I made sure students understood that there is no right or wrong answer, but rather that I simply wanted to know their honest ideas and opinions in relation to each question. Students spent the first ten minutes answering the questions, then were given time to share some of their responses. The responses from each class were then typed into a private document that was copied and pasted into a word cloud program so that the results could be shared back with students in a visual, easy to comprehend form (Figure 4.3: Moore’s community definition, Figure 4.4: Carter’s community definition, Figure 4.5: Kent’s community definition).

Figure 4.3: Moore’s community definition  
Figure 4.4: Carter’s community definition
Students were then given a worksheet titled *Where Do I Fit in My School Community* (Appendix E). This worksheet contained two visuals. The first was a series of people blobs on a playground engaging in various recess type activities (*Figure 4.6: Blob Football*). The second was a series of people blobs in a classroom (*Figure 4.7: Blob Classroom*).
Figure 4.7: Blob Classroom, Retrieved from https://www.blobtree.com/pages/frontpage

The blob resources were found at blobtree.com and were created as a visual resource to engage its viewers in conversations about their feelings and emotions in various settings and situations. Students were instructed to look at the two visuals and take time to identify which blob they felt most closely represents them in each situation. They were then asked to answer the following questions based on the blob they selected in each of the two visuals:

- Circle or color the blob that most represents you. Why did you choose this blob?
- Is your blob interacting with (talking to, playing with, or arguing with) the other blobs? Why or why not? Describe how your blob feels.
- How do you feel at school on the playground?
- How do you feel at school in your classroom?

Students were given the rest of the period to finish their worksheet if needed, but when complete they were instructed to continue working on the Lea Anderson collaborative circle pieces from the previous day. Students were more resistant to this activity than I expected as described in the following journal entry that I wrote after implementing this lesson with the first class:
As students entered the classroom, I handed them a pencil and worksheet and asked them to go straight to their tables and begin working. This is not a part of our normal routine in the art room as we normally go to the rug first for a mini lesson and then move to our tables to begin working. Students seemed to appreciate being able to skip our rug time, but were resistant to the idea of beginning art with a worksheet. Many of them asked if they were in trouble or if they had done something wrong… I heard a comments such as, “Ah, are we even doing art today?” and “Why do we have to write, this is art?” I felt that I was losing them, and that their lack of motivation to write might kept me from seeing what they truly thought in regards to the prompts I had given them, so I decided to add an incentive. Each student that completed the worksheet by the end of the class period would receive an extra 10 dojo points (which are part of our school wide reward system). This was met with a few sighs, but ultimately motivated most of the students to continue working until finished. (Brownlee, personal communication, October 16, 2017)

While many students chose not to fully participate in this portion of the process, I believe that this was a valuable step in this research project. First, it provided me, the researcher invaluable insight into students’ feelings and perspectives toward our school community that I might not have been able to gain otherwise. For example, Kaeli, one of my student participants, revealed that she had been bullied last year which affected how she felt within our school. Second, I believed that it helped prepare students to think critically about our school community and space. For example, the majority of students responded with positive feelings toward our school community due to their relationships with their peers and/or teachers. However, many students wrote that while they liked our school, they wished they could change the physical appearance of our school space to be more colorful and pleasant. I believe that those that actively participated
in this lesson, were better prepared to make deeper, more meaningful connections throughout the rest of this project.

**Day 3: Community Mapping.** After working to define what community means to them, I wanted students to spend the second day thinking specifically about our school community and the spaces that define our school. We quickly discussed traditional purposes of map making and I charged them with the task of creating a map that highlighted their personal daily experiences within our building. I made sure that students understood that the map did not need to be an exact rendition of our building, but rather a visual means of sharing thoughts, feelings, and ideas about our space. I provided them with the following prompts:

1. Draw a map of our school
2. Label the important areas on your map
3. Mark places that you feel happy in YELLOW
4. Mark places that you feel safe in GREEN
5. Mark places that you uncomfortable or unsafe in RED
6. Put a BLUE star in your favorite area(s)
7. Draw your path in ORANGE
8. Describe your path (your day) on back
9. Write a few sentences to explain your map and your labels

My hope was that by drawing our school space and taking time to think about their journey or path through our building each day, they may begin to think about their feelings and reactions to different spaces within our building. An example of one student’s map be seen in *Figure 4.8: Landon’s map.*
Landon marked the majority of spaces within our building as happy spaces. However, he marked the compass classrooms and dumpster area outside the lunchroom as red, unsafe spaces. The *compass classes* are behavior classes for students throughout the district that have had major behavior problems in a regular classroom setting. Therefore, these students have been placed in this smaller rehabilitative *compass class*. Due to the reputation of these students, they are sometimes viewed negatively by other students and staff. Prior to our mapping activity, there was a fox spotted at the dumpsters and teachers and students were warned to stay away from these areas. I found it interesting that these circumstances affected Landon’s map and showed that he was really thoughtful about his choices.

**Day 4: Photovoice.** The school mapping activity prompted students to think about the spaces and places throughout our building and how those spaces hold different meaning for them. So the next day, I charged students with the task of documenting their school community through a photovoice activity (Appendix F, Photovoice Activity Resources). *Photovoice* is a method in which participants are encouraged to capture their view of reality through photography (Kaplan 2013). Students selected a partner or small group to go throughout the
building and photograph their school story in reference to the previous day’s activities and their thoughts on our school and their personal school experience. They were provided with the following prompts:

1. **THINK** about our school and our school community.
2. With your group, take photos that you feel represent our school community. (These photos could be of places within the school, people, or things.)
3. Take pictures of the places in our school that are important to you. (Think about the places you included on your map both positive and negative.)

When students returned to the classroom, I asked them to look back through their photos, upload their photos to a shared google drive folder, and then answer the following questions with their group members:

1. What did you and your group choose to photograph?
2. Why are those places important to you?

I hoped that by building up to this activity, students were able to recognize places and spaces within our building that have personal meaning to them. Some of the spaces students chose to photograph included their classrooms, the hallways, our garden area, the playground, and the lunchroom (*Figure 4.9: Collage of photovoice images*).
Day 5: Storytelling and Brainstorming. I started this lesson with an image of a ceramic mosaic created by middle school students (Figure 4.10: Roosevelt Middle School’s Ceramic Mosaic).

Figure 4.10: Roosevelt Middle School’s Ceramic Mosaic (Reinken, C. (n.d.) How to Create a Collaborative Mosaic. Retrieved from https://www.theartofed.com/2012/12/27/how-to-create-a-collaborative-mosaic/)
I asked students to look at the image and tell me what they thought this image could tell us about the artists who made it. I wanted them to look for clues in the piece to help them recognize that we can use art to communicate our ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Students inferred that the name in the middle must be the school name and that the symbols and objects filling the rest of the space must represent things that are important to their school and to the student artists who created the piece. We then thought back to our mapping and photovoice lessons and discussed how we had already used both drawing and photography to communicate our feelings toward our school and school spaces. Their assignment was then to brainstorm things that are important to them personally or things that represent our school or community and find a way to visualize their ideas through a symbol or drawing. I wanted students to work on this individually, but due to time constraints, I allowed them to choose and move into groups prior to completing this step.

In retrospect, I wish I had put more focus on this step. I feel like this was an important part of the process of connecting the preliminary activities with the final project and I feel like some groups struggled to make that connection.

Before choosing groups, I told students that they could have three to five members in their group. I told them that I wanted the groups to be their choice, but that I would intervene if necessary. Students knew at this point that they would be making something out of clay, but I wanted them to focus only on the brainstorming aspect for this class period. After each individual member had come up with things that were important to them, they were to brainstorm as a group and pinpoint ideas that seemed to overlap or be significant to the group as a whole. I urged them to try to begin drawing or visualizing their ideas and symbols by the end of the class period and their ticket out the door was to share their groups’ ideas with me.
Day 6: Finalizing Plans. On the second day of planning, I began the lesson by showing students a variety of sculptural, ceramic, and installation pieces, including work created by contemporary artists as well as work created collaboratively in community based settings. A few of the pieces shown included sculptural installations by contemporary artist Yayoi Kusama (Figure 4.11: Flowers that bloom at midnight), ceramic busts by Akoča a Ufola (Figure 4.12: My town), and a community mural created by the Chicago Public Art Group (Figure 4.13).

Figure 4.11: Yayoi Kusama, Flowers that bloom at midnight, Retrieved from
https://vivienmackie.wordpress.com/tag/yayoi-kusama/
The purpose of this lesson was to open students’ minds to vast possibilities available for this project and the full slideshow for the lesson can be found in Appendix G. I truly wanted each
group to work together to identify the subject and approach they would pursue. While what they chose to create was entirely up to their group, I emphasized that it had to be created using clay, it needed be completed in 4-5 class days, and must be a group effort. Students broke back into groups to continue planning. They were to use the ideas and drawings that they had come up with during the brainstorming activity the day before and determine what their group wanted to construct as their final piece. Once each group had determined their plan, they completed a worksheet that included the following two questions:

1. What is your group planning to build?

2. How are you planning to add personal meaning?

I checked in with each group and listened to their design plans before directing them to draw a to-scale template of their idea. Design idea’s varied as some groups chose to add symbols to cylinder that would be connected with other group’s cylinders to create a larger sculpture, (Figure 4.14: Sketch for cylindrical sculpture), while other group’s chose to create unique three dimensional sculptures (Figure 4.15: Sketch for bust).
Construction Week. Each group had one week to build and paint their piece. On the first day, I gave a brief overview of our classroom clay rules and procedures. Most of these students have been in art with me for three years and were already familiar with my expectations and clean-up routines for clay. I then gave a quick demo of slab construction emphasizing its effectiveness for large-size pieces over coil construction which many students were already familiar with from previous years. I spent a lot of time looking at each group's plan and familiarizing myself with their ideas prior to class so that I could give each group a few quick tips on how to begin before handing them their first piece of clay. I made sure to check in with groups daily and assisted them during class as much as needed. A few groups needed extra help, so I allowed them to come during my lunch and planning periods so that they could get more one-on-one direction and guidance. Once the sculptures were complete, each group spent time painting their piece with colored slips and were able to draw or add details into the slips. This was the primary reasoning for choosing to use colored slips versus adding colored glaze. Colored slips must be applied prior to bisque, and therefore allow the artist to draw into the clay body creating a contrast between their painting and drawn designs. I hoped that students would take advantage of this technique in helping to add deeper personal meaning to their piece. I found that by the end of the week, most groups were so excited to be finished that they chose to paint and opted out of adding additional details. Most groups needed to schedule time outside of class to finish painting so while I encouraged them to add details, I understood their eagerness to finish and didn’t force anyone to do more than they wanted. A few groups did take the time to draw details on top of their colored slips which can be seen in Figure 4.16: Slip Detail.


**Figure 4.16: Slip Detail**

**Glazing.** The final step of the making process was glazing. *Glaze* is a final coat that goes on a ceramic piece which, once fired, fuses with the piece and results in glossy waterproof finish. For this project, all students used a clear, glossy glaze which helps to highlight and brighten their colored slip designs. I originally hoped that all the students would be able to finish glazing before leaving for our two week Christmas break, however, due to time restraints and unavoidable alterations in scheduling that were beyond my control, only one class was able to glaze before the break and the remaining two classes glazed our first week back in January. Due to the size and quantity of pieces, the firing process took several weeks to complete.

**Reflection.** Reflection is an important part of the artistic process and allows students to think back over their journey and come to realizations about their experience as artists. I wrestled with the idea of having students complete their final written reflections individually or with their group. Ultimately, I felt that individual reflections would give each child a chance to have their voice heard and would give me, the teacher-researcher, an opportunity to see differences in experiences and opinions not just between groups, but amongst members working in the same group. Each student answered the following reflection questions:
1. Describe your group’s project. What did your group make? What details did you add or draw on your piece.

2. What is your favorite part of your group’s project?

3. How do you feel about your project becoming a permanent piece of art at our school?

4. Did you enjoy working with your group? YES / NO  Why or Why not?

5. Would you rather work with a group or work by yourself?

6. Did you have any arguments or disagreements with your group? YES / NO  If so, what were they?

7. Did you enjoy working on this project? YES / NO  Why or Why not?

In my original plans, I was going to let each group work on their final written reflection during class once their glazing was complete. However, I really wanted students to complete these reflections while the project was fresh on their minds and was afraid that the two-week break might hinder some of their responses. I worked with fifth grade teachers, and sent the reflection worksheet with them to be completed in their homeroom classes. I was pleasantly surprised with their responses and feel that completing these in a traditional academic setting rather than in the art room may have prompted students to spend more time giving more honest, detailed results.

**Installation and Exhibition.** Once all pieces were fired, I contacted our district maintenance department to request assistance with installation. I received confirmation that my request is in the system and spoke with district personnel concerning my ideas and the materials needed for installation. I have been assured that installation will be complete by the end of April in order to give me time to plan an exhibition and reception for student artists. I plan to get feedback from each group regarding where they would like to see their work permanently displayed in the garden, however, final decisions may have to be made based on
logistical concerns such as not being allowed to install pieces in any area that would obstruct walkways, emergency access, or access to maintaining our facility.

Upon completion of the installation, I will have a reception honoring fifth grade student artists. Exhibition is an important part of this process and I believe that students deserve to have their accomplishments celebrated. Students will be encouraged to invite family, friends, teachers, and community members to witness a grand unveiling of their collaborative installation. I hope that students realize the magnitude of their success and status as public artists through this event. (Photos of the installation and a brief description of the event will be added as Appendix X upon completion.)
Chapter 5: Findings and Results

While the primary purpose of this research was to answer the following research question: What type of experiences can students have through collaborative art making? As I reviewed my researcher notes and reflected on this project, I found that my experience as the teacher-researcher became an important secondary finding. While I knew that my immersion in this research would influence my research, I did not expect my experience to immerse as a significant component of my findings. As a result, this chapter begins with a reflection on my experiences as the teacher-researcher. Then I shared a detailed account of each of my five student participants in the form of a narrative or story told from my perspective. In each story, I share a little about each participant’s background, their relationship with me and their peers, and their journey through the collaborative making process. Finally, I conclude the chapter with an analysis and discussion of these results.

Personal Reflection

Due to my role as the teacher-researcher and my inevitable immersion into this project, my personal reflections, feelings, and experiences are an important component of data collection for this research. I referenced my personal journal entries in relation to other components of this research; however, I felt there was a need to share excerpts that provide insight into some critical points of my experiences as a teacher-researcher. I will focus on moments of struggle, personal feelings of success, and logistical frustrations as well as the process of letting go of some of my control as a teacher.

Letting go. The truth is, teachers thrive on structure. Even us right-brained art teachers, who are known for our organized chaos—key word here being organized. Our life in the art room may seem chaotic to those looking in from the outside, but the truth is there is a LOT of
hidden structure behind every activity. There are hours of planning, organizing, prepping, and pre-taught procedures that go unseen from a quick glance in the art room. So, while the concept of participatory action research or community-based research may seem to naturally lend itself to an art environment, it may conflict with the natural tendencies of a teacher, even an art teacher. The premise behind these types of research is the participation of those involved. Similarly, the goal of community art projects are to develop a sense of community amongst participants and to collaboratively create a final piece of art (Lowe 2001). However, the structure of a traditional school setting conflicts with the principles that constitute the idea of acting as community. In order to be an active part of this project, and essentially a part of their school community, students must become active participants. However, part of our job as teachers is to maintain control of our environment and to have a solid plan for student learning—we are even evaluated on our effectiveness in these areas. So how can we give control over to our students and still appear to maintain control ourselves? I found this to be a point of contention while trying to plan this project. I wanted students to be able to control what they produced, yet I still felt like I had to justify this project with a proposed outcome or product. I wanted to relinquish control, yet I felt I had to have a solid plan. I wanted to push boundaries, yet I was bound by the uncontrollable logistics of a traditional school environment. Some of these feelings were internal and the involuntary reaction of being teacher-minded, but some were external pressures. For example, funding for a project of this magnitude doesn’t usually exist in the typical yearly budget. I was extremely fortunate to have a supportive Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO), that was willing to donate money to purchase the supplies necessary to produce large-scale ceramic sculptures, however, when money is being donated, people want to know what the outcome will be and what will be produced. I presented the collaborative cylindrical tower idea to provide
them with a visual of what could come out of this experience for our students. However, I had to give a disclaimer that the students were going to guide this experience and that there were a wide range of possible outcomes. The scariest part of this as the teacher requesting funding, is what if they don’t think it is good enough? What if the final product isn’t as glamorous and wonderful as I made it seem? What if they feel their investment wasn’t worth it? I had to do a little bit of soul searching and really examine the goals of the project. Did I need to alter the assignment for one or two groups to ensure that we get a crowd-pleaser? Could I justify sacrificing the integrity of student experiences to gain a better final product? To be honest, these questions haunted me throughout this project. While I think I ultimately made be best decision in letting the process remain student-lead and letting all students have a say in the decision-making process, I will remain nervous about the reaction of our investors and administration until the pieces are installed and our exhibition is over.

**Struggles.** Collaborate literally means to work together or to cooperate with others. While collaboration and working with others tends to be thought of in a positive sense, conflict is a part of our nature as humans. This collaborative project was no exception. While most students were elated by the idea of getting to work with their friends, the task of working with a group caused a dilemma for others. I elaborate on one instance in the following journal entry:

There are two boys, Markus and Tyson, with anger issues who have a difficult time working with others, but want to be included and accepted by their classmates. The other students have gotten tired of their disruptions and most of the students don’t want to be associated with either of them. This proved to be very difficult when it came time to split into groups and no one wanted either of these boys in their group. It was a tough situation for all involved because many of the students honestly don’t get along with
these boys and legitimately did not want them in their group because they were afraid it might affect their own ability to stay on task and out of trouble. Despite the reasoning and everyone’s recognition of this as a truth, I could see that this was frustrating and even hurtful for Tyson and Markus. I was able to encourage Markus to join a group that he originally did not want to be in and his classmates were very accepting of Markus after I approached them to request that he join their group. Tyson was a little more difficult to place. He wanted to be a part of a particular group, but they did not want him to join even after I tried to convince them. I could see Tyson becoming more and more frustrated so I talked with him about the possibility of joining a different group, but there honestly was not another group that seemed to be a good fit for him. So, I used my teacher power and told the “chair group” that Tyson was going to join their group despite their opposition. I did not want to force this upon them, and was really hoping that students would be able to divide into groups themselves but in this situation it became necessary to intervene (Brownlee, Researcher’s reflective journal, November 2017).

While Tyson was the only instance of rejection from a group, this is just one example of students who struggled with the idea of working with others. There were one or two students in each class that either did not want to work with a group or had a hard time fitting into a group. While I sympathized with those students that wanted to work alone, I simply explained to them that the nature of a large-scale project such as this meant that working alone wasn’t an option.

Logistically, we did not have the time, space, or supplies for each student to create their own largescale project. Most were understanding of this, realizing that while they preferred to work alone, they would be able to accomplish more as a group. Others were still somewhat frustrated, but complied and found a group to join. This was a point of conflict for me, because while I
Collaborative Art Installation

firmly believed that collaboration was not only the goal, but was truly necessary, I found it
disheartening to see students this frustrated or resistant before the project had even truly begun. I
stuck to what I felt needed to be done, and hoped that the resulting experience would be positive
for all students, even those that resisted it at first.

Another obstacle for me as the teacher-researcher was lack of motivation from some
students. There are always going to be students who are uninterested in a particular project or
who prefer anything other than art. As a teacher, I am always striving to break the barrier with
those students, and find what they are interested in or what motivates them. For many of these
students, I have found that working with a group, specifically a group of their choosing, is one of
the most motivating strategies that I can use. Furthermore, I have found that students, even those
less interested in art, are more motivated when they are in charge of their own learning and have
a choice of what they get to create. I felt like this project was the ultimate blend of those
motivating strategies, yet I still had students that seemed unexcited. Granted the majority of
students in all three classes were very excited about the project—these students loved the chance
to work with their friends, they were excited to come up with their own idea for what to create,
they thought that it was cool that their finished piece would be displayed permanently at our
school, and they were excited to get to work with clay. This is the reaction that all teachers hope
for. However, despite my efforts to find a way to motivate all students, fifth graders can
sometimes be apathetic to ideas that we as teachers find intriguing. I found this to be the case
with a few students in Moore’s class. They didn’t have any strong opposition to the project, they
were simply indifferent to it, as if it was no more exciting than any other project. This was a
little disheartening, not only because I truly wanted all students to enjoy this experience, but also
because I felt like throwing my hands in the air and saying, “If this doesn’t excite you, what else
is there?” Sometimes these moments can feel like failures. I just had to continually remind myself that this was only a small percent of a very large group of students, and that we can’t always see the impact we have as educators. For some students, this project really may not have been special for them, and that has to be ok. For others, this could be a significant part of their experience as a student, and that makes the process worthwhile.

**Successes.** One of the greatest feeling of success as teacher is having a break through with a student or group of students. Going into this project, I was particularly worried about the ability of Kent’s class to handle the unstructured nature of this type of project. However, after a few days into their construction week, I wrote the following journal excerpt:

I had the strongest reservations when it came to this class’s ability to stay engaged and focused throughout this project, but I was pleasantly surprised by this group. Kent’s class tends to have the most behavior issues, but so far, they have been the most engaged group. (Brownlee, Researcher’s reflective journal, November 2017)

At the beginning of the school year, Kent’s class was particularly unruly, quick tempered, and confrontational. I was genuinely concerned that I might have to alter certain aspects of the project for this class. I was concerned for the photovoice experience and allowing a few students to roam the halls without supervision. While a few students had to earn the privilege of participating in this activity, most seemed to be elated by the opportunity for freedom and time outside of the classroom and took this activity very seriously so they would not lose this privilege. Although their behavior and attitude toward the photovoice activity was mostly positive, I still had reservations about the planning and construction of the final piece. I contemplated having a predetermined assignment for this group, but ultimately decided that I wanted them to have the opportunity to choose what to create. However, I did create backup
plan for those groups that struggled. Not only was I pleasantly surprised by their behavior, but Kent’s class was truly the most engaged and excited of all of the classes. I was so glad that I stuck to my original plan and allowed each group to make their own choice for the final piece. I did have a few groups that were struggling to decide on an idea. When I presented the alternative option of creating a portion of a larger cylindrical tower, these groups quickly became excited to have a plan were able to stay on track with the rest of their class. Although I had my doubts, this class as a whole, was my greatest success from this project. Students were engaged and eager to come to art. Although, we still have moments where particular students struggle to focus or get too rowdy, this class’s behavior and attitude toward art has changed now that the project is complete. I feel like I made a breakthrough with several students in this class, and it has made a tremendous difference in our overall classroom environment.

**Logistical frustrations.** There are always going to be moments of frustration when working on a project of this magnitude, particularly when trying to implement it in a traditional school setting. Scheduling was the most difficult obstacle as it is often out of our control. I had originally hoped to begin the project in September, but was delayed due to the district approval process and waiting on parental consent forms. Once we began, I felt like our momentum was continually being halted by unavoidable disruptions. In October, the month we began this project, there were several disruptions in our regular specials schedule including a fifth grade field trip, early release days for parent-conferences, and special assemblies that stunted our progress on the project. I wanted students to have an adequate amount of time on the preliminary activities of this project in order to fully prepare them to make connections and create a final piece that was personal and meaningful. However, some of these steps seemed rushed and not all classes seemed to make the connections between activities. Unfortunately, the
Further we progressed into the semester, the more compelled I felt to keep moving even if some of the deeper connections and understandings weren’t being made. As we approached the end of November, I realized that our class time before the holidays was extremely limited and the clay construction had to begin soon in order to finish before the break. December always comes with its own set of challenges as the schedule is changed for holiday activities, end of the semester rewards, and holiday performance practices. We pushed through preliminary activities and planning stages and I began mapping out the construction schedule. As I looked ahead at my plans, I was still concerned that our current specials rotation schedule would not allow for adequate time to complete clay construction. This year’s schedule consists of one class coming to art Monday-Wednesday and a different class coming on Thursday and Friday. I knew students would need at least one consecutive week of art to complete construction. I expand on the dilemma and solution in the following journal entry describing my experience with the first class to begin construction:

Wednesday should have been their last day in art for the week, but due to their progress and concerns with not being able to keep their clay from drying out, I worked with my team to rearrange our schedule so that the students would have art on Thursday and Friday as well. Despite these extra two days, I still had four out of seven groups that were not finished with construction at the end of class on Friday. I worked with their teachers to allow these groups to come and work in two shifts during my lunch and planning periods. I was able to give each group more one-on-one attention and all four groups finished construction by the end of the day on Friday. However, only one group has started painting with colored slips and none of the groups are finished. I will continue to allow a couple of groups at a time to come and work during my lunch and
planning in hopes of getting these finished by next Friday. They need to be completed and allowed to dry out over Thanksgiving break so that they can be fired when we return (Brownlee, Researcher’s reflective journal, November 2017).

Despite all attempts to alter the schedule and give students enough time to finish, the majority of the groups in every class had to come in outside of their normal art time to finish. While part of me was excited to see this level of dedication and motivation out of so many students, it was extremely difficult and draining for me as I gave up most of my lunch and planning periods for about three weeks. I also felt like I was falling behind on other aspects of my job as most of my energy and attention was going toward this project. I knew that I could not sustain this level of devotion to one project for an extended period of time, but it was definitely worth it to see each group complete their vision for their piece.

**Student Stories**

What type of experiences can students have through collaborative art making? In an attempt to answer this question, I will share the collaborative art making experiences of five students: Jarvis, Kaeli, Tyson, Lanie, and Manny. Their stories are not meant to generalize the experiences of the entire group, but to give a detailed account of five unique and personal journeys throughout this project. While I hope to capture the experience of each of these students, the following narratives are told from my perspective as the teacher-researcher. They are based on my reflections and observations as well a combination of results from preliminary activities and data collected. While I do my best to provide a true and accurate account of interactions and experiences that I witnessed, these stories are based on my impressions and may not truly articulate feelings of the student participants.
Jarvis: A Story of Perseverance. Jarvis’s experience is a story of perseverance. He and his group members really struggled to concentrate and get started. However, once they made the decision to focus and commit to completing this project despite their initial frustrations, they ended up creating a very successful piece.

Jarvis’s Background. On this first day of this research project, Jarvis wrote the following response on his defining community worksheet, “A community is a group of people that is a part of something like a football team… I am part of a school community” (personal communication, October 2017). Jarvis seems to have a pretty clear idea of what a community is and “like[s] [his] neighborhood because [he] has a big house and [his] best friends live there and [they] have nice neighbors” (personal communication, October 2017). When prompted to draw what a community looks like to him, he drew a group of figures together as show in Figure 5.1: Jarvis’s community drawing.

Figure 5.1: Jarvis’s community drawing.

Although he did not answer any of the questions regarding his feelings towards our school community, he did complete one portion of his blob worksheet assignment. In the blob classroom, he circled one blob that is laying under a desk and colored in a blob that is raising its hand. Jarvis claims he chose these blobs to represent himself because he feels he is a hard
worker, but knows he also likes to have fun. He also stated that his blob “feels happy” (Personal communication, October 2017).

Based on my interaction with Jarvis over the past three years, I would agree with his self-assessment. He is generally a happy student and likes to have a good time. Jarvis has a lot of potential and is a talented artist. He is generally a hard worker and gets his assignments done, but is easily distracted by others and the lure of a fun. Unfortunately, this year, I have seen more mischief and less working, but this is a typical shift seen in many fifth grade students. I find it interesting that Jarvis still defines himself as a hard worker and hope that he will continue to strive to keep that quality throughout his school career. Despite momentary shortcomings, or youthful phases, I believe that students’ belief in themselves is one of the most important factors in their success. I hope that Jarvis’s positive view of himself will carry him on a successful career as a student. I am proud that Jarvis feels good about himself for being a part of this project and believes that he will think about this project after he leaves Winterville. I believe that Jarvis’s experience alone made this project worth doing.

**Jarvis’s collaborative art making experience.** Jarvis’s group consisted of four boys. The boys in this group are often disengaged, highly disrespectful, and resistant to follow directions. One of the group member was transitioning from a self-contained behavior class back into the regular classroom. Despite this situation, he was the most engaged throughout the week. I struggled to get the other boys focused and even had to tell one of them that he would be removed from the project if his disrespectful behavior continued. They originally discussed the idea of creating a mosaic piece on bullying, but ultimately decided on creating a sculptural football instead. I instructed them to begin with a football shaped base and showed them how to use slab construction to build up the sides. There was a lot of arguing amongst the group from
the beginning and anytime something went wrong or they were not happy with the way their
piece looked, they would shut down or abandon the group to instigate issues with other students.
On Wednesday, they wanted to start over. In retrospect, maybe I should have let them in order
to boost their morale. However, in the moment, I encouraged them to keep working and told
them that I would help them if they stayed focused and continued to make progress. By
Thursday, I could not get them to work at all; the piece looked the same at the end of the 50-
minute class period as it had when I gave it to them. This was the day I gave the final warning to
the student that he would be removed on Friday if he did not change his attitude and behavior.

On Friday, the final day of construction, I had a serious talk with the group, and told them
I needed them to focus and finish that day. I helped them develop a plan for how to finish. I
instructed them to make a slab big enough to cover the top of their structure and told them that I
would help them attach the top and shape the football if they could show me that they were
serious and focused. When I went over to help them attach the top, there were still a few groans
and mumbles about overall appearance of the piece. I showed them how to attach and assured
them that I would help if they continued to focus. I directed them to finish attaching the top and
showed them how to patch the rest of the holes and to let me know when they had completed
these steps. I could still see the frustration on their faces, but they were most certainly more
focused on completing these tasks. I am not sure if this newfound focus was from fear of being
taken out of their group, or if they actually believed I would be able to help them fix their piece.
Once they were finished with these steps, I began to help them reshape their piece. I showed
them how to take their hollow form and rotate and pat it into a football shape. I could see the
expressions on their faces change as they watched me transform their “lumpy dome” into an egg
and then slowly into a football. They began to get excited and wanted to continue patching
lumps and smoothing their piece. They began making plans for adding laces and symbols on the side. We were down to the last 10 minutes of class and I told them they would have to clean up, but that they could come back IF they were willing to be on their best behavior and continue to take this seriously. They were hesitant because my planning time is during their recess, but when Jarvis and another boy confirmed that they were willing to give up their recess to work on the project, the other two boys agreed that they wanted to come back to finish. The boys came back to my room during recess that day and finished the construction by continuing to mold the shape and smooth their piece. They even added laces and a Georgia super G on the side before completing their colored slip application. I could see the excitement on their faces as they realized that they had successfully created a 3-D football (*Figure 5.2: Football, pre-firing*). 

*Figure 5.2: Football, pre-firing*

While this group was certainly one of the most challenging groups to keep focused, I feel like they had one of the greatest success stories. Despite their struggle, they truly created a successful finished product. They could not believe how great it looked! They agreed that focusing and putting in the work on Friday allowed them to be successful and even admitted that they had wasted a lot of time earlier in the week.
After seeing the shift in the project's potential, Jarvis became the most dedicated to their piece. He began stopping by my room to check in on whether their project had been fired and taken out of the kiln. He was the most focused during glazing and even made a special request to use some red glaze to fix an area where he was unhappy with the results of the colored slip. He even wrote that his “favorite part of the clay project [was] painting it and shaping it to look like a football” (Jarvis, personal communication, December 2017). Jarvis also expressed that despite their arguments and challenges that he enjoyed working with his group, and, in the end, really enjoyed working on this project. In his final reflection Jarvis wrote, “I feel good about myself for doing this project because I can always look back and say I helped build that football after I leave 5th grade” (personal communication, December 2017).

**Kaeli: A Story of Possibility.** Kaeli and her group created a fairly village which, in essence, is an imaginary community. Kaeli seems to have a pretty clear idea of what she feels like constitutes a community as well as what she feels like is wrong with our community. She seems to have subconsciously created what she feels are the most important assets in her ideal community: a church because of the importance of her faith and a cat, her favorite pet.

**Kaeli’s view of community.** Kaeli wrote the following statement in an attempt to define community on our first day of this project:

> A community is a bunch of people in a specific place that want to get along and live in harmony. I do not live in a neighborhood, but I am a part of [the] Winterville [community]. I like [my community] because it is peaceful—when my brothers aren’t there! (Personal communication, December 2017)

Kaeli appeared to have a good concept of what community means and how she fits into a community. When asked if she likes our school community, Kaeli responded, “I guess so, but I
don’t like hearing bad words. Period.” (Personal communication, December 2017)

Unfortunately, hearing inappropriate language is a reality for our students. Despite teacher efforts to stop this from occurring, it is low on the spectrum of offensives. Sadly, it is obviously making some students feel uncomfortable and is an issue that needs to be addressed further particularly with our fourth and fifth grade students. Kaeli also disclosed that she was bullied last year, which affected her feelings toward our school. She said that things are better this year and she feels safer and more protected by her current teacher. When asked if she likes the way our school looks, Kaeli responded, “I would like it if it was a little bit more colorful like Fowler Drive. Their building makes me feel warm and content” (Personal communication, December 2017). Kaeli is one of our student leaders and attended Fowler Drive, another elementary school in our county, for a student leader workshop earlier this year. Personally, I completely agree with Kaeli’s comment and feel like our building is rather bland and depressing in comparison to some of the more newly renovated elementary schools in our district. On her blob worksheet, Kaeli identified herself as the blob raising its hand in the classroom. She describes her blob as happy and smart and states that she feels “well enough” in her classroom. Kaeli is a bright student, a very hard worker, and always has a good attitude. It was rather enlightening for me to find out that such a successful, well-liked student is struggling with feeling comfortable in our school community. Kaeli is an excellent reminder that all students can struggle with feeling as if they do not belong, not just those that teachers are aware of.

*Kaeli’s collaborative art making experience.* Kaeli’s group consists of four girls. These girls chose to sit together for most of the school year and generally get along well without issues. There is one student in their group that will occasionally do things to annoy or bother the others, but for the most part this group one of my most focused, hardest working groups. Before the
class even split into groups or discussed project criteria, these girls were asking details about this project. They wanted to know if they would be able to work together and if there were any restrictions to what they were going to be able to make. I later realized their heightened interest stemmed from the fact that they already knew what they wanted to make. Throughout the semester, I referred to our clay sculpture project that would be installed in the garden. At some point during the course of the semester, these girls discussed the idea of making a fairy village for their project and there was no convincing them of anything else. They were ecstatic over their idea and could not wait to get started. In fact, they begged me to let them skip our planning day and begin construction early. Logistically, this would not have worked, but I also explained that it was important for them to draw out a design even though they had already done the brainstorming and planning (Figure 5.3: Village sketch). Kaeli created a fairy church (Figure 5.4: Kaeli’s fairy church), two girls created fairy houses, and the other member helped make accessories such as a table and chairs and birdbath.

Figure 5.3: Village sketch

Figure 5.4: Kaeli’s fairy church

This group really took their time, adding lots of details, textures, and designs. Kaeli wrote the following description on her final reflection:
We made a fairy village. There were two houses, a birdbath, and a church. One house had a flowered balcony, the second house had llamas. [My favorite part was] the church. I added a statue of a cat, a rooftop service, and a cross (Personal communication, December 2017).

Kaeli went on to say that she enjoyed working with her group and thought that group work helped them to “get things done quicker” (personal communication, December 2017). Kaeli and her group have been anxious to install their work in the garden and are excited for other people to get to see and enjoy their project. In response to the question, “How do you feel about your project becoming a permanent piece of art at our school?” Kaeli wrote, “I feel happy. It may be broken over the years, but a legacy is still left behind” (personal communication, December 2017).

**Tyson: A Story of Acceptance.** Tyson struggled to find a group that would accept him, yet his reflection was one of the most positive of the five participants. He claimed that once his group began working together, there were few disagreements and they were able to settle those disagreements quickly. He was able to find a way to work well with his group and seems to have become more accepted by his peers as a result.

**Tyson’s background.** Tyson moved to Winterville in the middle of his fourth grade year, so I have not known him quite as long as the other students. For many students, it is often very difficult to transition to a new school with new peers, new teachers, and new expectations. That tension can be heightened in an area like art where student-teacher relationships take longer to develop. This is because students are generally only seen for 45-50 min, once or twice a week. That being said, he and I had a tough relationship during his fourth grade year. He was resistant to following directions or complying with simple requests, and was very defensive, assuming
that others intended the worse for him. He was generally quick tempered with both me and with his peers. He struggled to make friends and would admit that he did not get along with many of his classmates, yet I could tell he deeply wanted to fit in. Unfortunately, most of the peers that he wanted to be accepted by did not want to be around him. This was usually because they did not want to get in trouble themselves, or because Tyson had done something to make them angry or not like him.

At the beginning of this year, Tyson seemed to be spiraling down the same path. He had several days that he got angry with me or with his peers and walked out of the art room. He struggled to find a place in the room to sit, either feeling rejected by the classmates he wanted to sit with or limited by that fact he did not get along with others. Yet at some point throughout this project, Tyson hit a turning point. I am most certainly not claiming that this project alone is the reason that Tyson seems to be more successful in the art room lately, but I believe it was most definitely a factor in this transition. I have been working diligently this year to convince Tyson that I am on his side and have his best interests in mind. Yet, while doing this, I still have to hold him accountable for his actions and decisions. I believe that by advocating for him to be a part of a group during this project, I was able to strengthen our relationship. The fact that group ended up being a positive experience for him assisted that even further.

This is not to say that Tyson did not have his struggles throughout this project. He wrote a total of ten words on his “Defining Community” worksheet, did not write anything on his blob worksheet, and did not initially complete his mapping activity. On the day of the mapping assignment, I told him, along with a few other students, they would not be allowed to participate in the photovoice activity the next day unless they stopped distracting others and got to work on their assignment. Tyson ended the class with a blank sheet of paper and was furious the next day.
when I told him that he could not join a photography group until he had drawn a map and at least marked his happy, favorite, and unsafe places. He finally complied and drew a map of the fifth grade hallway shown in Figure 5.5: Tyson’s map.

![Image of Tyson's map]

Figure 5.5: Tyson’s map

He marked all of the spaces on his map as happy spaces. He marked the gym along with several of the fifth grade homeroom classrooms as his favorite spaces. He told me that there were not any places that make him feel unsafe or uncomfortable. Despite his initial resistance, I was proud of him for making an effort to complete his map and even gave his group a little extra time to photograph in order to allow Tyson the opportunity to participate in the activity.

Once Tyson began working on the construction portion of the project, his attitude seemed to change. He was more engaged, focused and genuinely seemed to enjoy coming to art. He was excited to be working with his group and seemed proud of what they were accomplishing. His attitude toward me has also improved. He is more willing to comply with directions and requests and is easier to calm down when frustrated. I know that there are other factors that have influenced his progress including behavior sheet, mentor check-ins, and time to adjust. However, I believe that his progress in art has been affected by his experience throughout this project.
Tyson’s collaborative art making experience. The chair group originally consisted of two girls and a boy and Tyson became their fourth group member. The group was extremely resistant to Tyson joining their group. Their class split into groups on the brainstorming day and when I told the group that Tyson would be joining them, Dee turned around in her chair and refused to look at Tyson or participate with the group. I had a chat with all of them about accepting Tyson and giving him a chance to show them that he could focus and stay on task. The other two group members made an effort to work with him, but Dee continued to sit facing away from the group for the remainder of the period. Kendrell was the most accepting of Tyson and eventually all groups members accepted the fact that he would be working with them whether they liked it or not. Even Dee participated in helping plan and create their group’s template the next day. We completed our planning on a Friday and began working with clay on Monday after Thanksgiving break so I believe the week away from school helped this group come back with a good attitude and fresh perspective. I told the group that I expected all members to work together, respect each other’s opinions, and stay on task. I assured them that if Tyson, or anyone else in the group, could not do this, that person would not be allowed to participate in the clay portion of the project.

The group quickly decided on the idea of creating a chair with drawings of things that were important to them (Figure 5.6: In-progress chair, side-view). Tyson was not sure exactly why they decided on creating a chair, but knew that they wanted to think of an idea that no one else would be doing (personal communication). They wanted their project to be unique. Despite their initial resistance to working with Tyson, this group seemed to work together and come to a consensus with minimal conflict or arguments. Once they moved past their initial resistance to Tyson, they actually seemed to work well together and three out of four group members reported
that they did not have any arguments or disagreements. After the chair was complete, the group began painting their colored slip designs. Originally, the group had planned to draw objects and symbols of things that were important to them or represented our school. I am not sure how the group arrived at the idea of the tree with the word nature across the top (Figure 5.7: In-progress chair), but it seemed to be a unanimous decision that all members were happy with. A few of the group members are a part of our green team student leader program so this could have influenced their choice.

![Figure 5.6: In-progress chair, side-view](image1)

![Figure 5.7: In-progress chair](image2)

**Lanie: A Story of Determination.** Lanie and her group created one of the largest sculptures for this project. They never gave up and were determined to create a successful piece to display in the garden. They seemed to be motivated by the idea that their piece would add something colorful for other people to look at and enjoy in our garden. They encountered a few challenges during construction, but remained positive and focused. Their dedication resulted in a successful final piece.

**Lanie’s definition of community.** Lanie describes community as “a place where people can live and play,” and says she is a “part of a healthy environment community” (Personal
Collaborative Art Installation

A drawing of Lanie’s idea of what a community looks like can be seen in Figure 5.8: Lanie’s community drawing.

Figure 5.8: Lanie’s community drawing

I believe the healthy environment community Lanie is referring to is the green team. The green team members are a part of our student leader program and help promote a green school by collecting our schools recycling. Lanie’s idea of community seems to be relationship centered. She explains that she likes her neighborhood and our school because of her friends. She also views her neighbors and teachers as “nice” (Personal communication, October 2017). On her blob worksheet, Lanie chose the blob surrounded by people with a small heart over its head. She chose this blob to represent herself because she is “loveable” (Personal communication, October 2018). Despite her relationship-centered view of school and community, on the blob playground image, Lanie circled the blob that is laying on the ground alone with a paintbrush and paint bucket. She writes, “I love to paint and draw. My blob is painting quietly” not interacting with any of the other blobs. This suggests that although Lanie feels accepted and even loved by her friends and peer, she is comfortable spending time alone doing activities she enjoys.

When asked if she likes the way our school looks, Lanie responded, “Yes, my school is a really comfortable place to be in, but it needs to be more colorful!” (Personal communication,
October 2018). When documenting our school community using photovoice, Lanie and her partner focused on photographing places they feel safe, like their classroom. Some of these places can also be seen on Lanie’s map (Figure 5.9: Lanie’s map).

![Figure 5.9: Lanie’s map](image)

She marked places she feels happy in yellow, places she feels safe in green, and places she feels uncomfortable in red. For Lanie to have a mostly positive description of our school and school community thus far, I found it interesting that she marked the music room and kindergarten hallway as uncomfortable spaces.

**Lanie’s collaborative art making experience.** This group consisted of four girls, three that worked on the project full time, and one student with physical challenges that only allow her to be at school a few days a week. This group started with the idea of creating a ceramic flower garden, and even wrote about this on their worksheet. However, as they started drawing on the back, their flower turned into a birdbath with smaller flowers placed around the larger birdbath sculpture. I was personally intrigued by their plan because I created my own flower birdbath sculpture over the summer to use as an example for students, but did not tell or show students my work prior to their planning or construction. They started by constructing a base first and then
creating a separate flower bowl top. They did well with the bottom of the structure (Figure 5.10: In-progress birdbath,) but struggled with the bowl of the birdbath (Figure 5.11: Birdbath bowl).

Figure 5.10: In-progress birdbath

Figure 5.11: Birdbath bowl

They tried creating the bowl on their own and became frustrated when their petals began falling off so I helped them outside of art class to get their bowl stable and show them how to flip it over and add the petals to the bottom. Due to the top and base of their sculpture being separate, it was difficult for this group to paint and decorate their piece for fear of breaking it. Despite the challenges faced, this group was positive and determined and was able to create an incredible piece. Lanie agreed and wrote, “I think me and my group did good so we can put our project on display” (Personal communication, December 2017).

**Manny: A Story of Conflict and Growth.** Manny and his group struggled to compromise and agree throughout this project. As a result, Manny felt like his ideas were not heard and he was very frustrated and dissatisfied with his group’s piece. Manny had to overcome a lot of conflict throughout his project, and despite his negative feelings toward the outcome, I feel like he was able to grow as a student as a result. He had an opportunity deal with
conflict and adversity and had to work through a frustrating situation which will hopefully better prepare him to handle conflict in his future.

**Manny’s community.** Manny has a difficult background. He is dealing with a difficult personal life, he also struggles to calm down in the morning and stay focused at school. He has a great personality and is a very likeable student, but he has to deal with many uncontrollable circumstances that do not make life easy on him. Despite his situation, he seems to enjoy being at school. On the first day of the project, Manny wrote,

> A community is a group of people that work together. I am a part of Winterville’s communities. I do like [our school community] because it is helpful to me. I have lots of people that will protect me like my teachers. I love this school (Personal communication, October 2017).

It is nice to know that school can provide a positive, safe environment for students like Manny.

On the day of the photovoice activity, Manny and his partner chose to photograph many of the faculty and staff around our building. When filling out his reflection, he listed all the people he photographed by name and explained that he took pictures of people “because Winterville is like a family to me” (Personal communication, October 2017).

Despite his mostly positive relationship with adults in our building, Manny carries around a lot of anger and has a hard time dealing with conflict with his peers. On his blob worksheet, Manny identified himself as the blob kicking the soccer ball into the net “because I am athletic [and] I like to kick people in the face with balls” (Personal communication, October 2017). He writes that he believes the blob feels angry and says he also feels angry on the playground at school. He says the same thing about his blob in the classroom image. He chose a blob that is
shoving another student because “I like to fight,” and feel angry in the classroom (Personal communication, October 2017).

While the hope for a project like this is obviously to promote positive experiences for all students, Manny’s experience seemed to be overwhelmingly negative. While I still hope that Manny is able to take away something positive this process, the reality is that he may not feel like any part of his experience was positive. I do not think that this makes the project unsuccessful, but definitely shows that group work and collaboration is not ideal for all students. Despite his feelings toward working with a group, there is still value in learning to deal with and overcome conflict. I think this project provided Manny with an opportunity to grow and develop as a student. I do hope that Manny is able to see the successfulness of his group’s piece once it is finished and displayed in the garden. I realize that for him, it may never be what he wanted, but maybe seeing it displayed will allow him to see that just because it is not what he envisioned does not mean it is unsuccessful.

*Manny’s collaborative art making experience.* Manny’s group consisted of five boys. They really struggled to get started and had a hard time coming to a consensus of what to make with so many opinions. I decided in advance that I would suggest making a collaborative cylindrical sculpture to any group that could not think of an idea or agree on an idea. This group was very scattered and at odds. One member wanted to create animals, one wanted to draw video games, another wanted to make a basketball and football. I talked with the boys about making the collaborative cylinder structure, which would allow all of them to include the things they like and that are important to them. They decided this was agreeable. They worked collaboratively to create the cylinder structure and each created and designed objects or symbols
that represented them or things they liked. When they were finished with construction and painting, they each signed their name on the piece (Figure 5.12: Manny’s signature).

Figure 5.12: Manny’s signature

Manny said this was his favorite part of their project. Overall, I feel like the group had a successful finish product despite the conflict. However, Manny states, “I feel like we did good, but we could have done better” (Personal communication, December 2017). Manny did not like working with a group because he did not agree with the plan for their project. He said that he would much rather work by himself and the conflict with his group caused him to not enjoy working on this project. On our glazing day, Manny had an outburst because of this built up frustration. Several groups in Manny’s class had pieces that fell off their sculpture from not being slipped and scored well. *Slipping and scoring* is the ceramic technique used to attach two pieces of clay. I explained what happened to the groups and told them not to be upset because this was fixable. However, when Manny got the news that his group was one of the groups that had pieces fall off, he got up and threw a chair across the classroom and had to be removed from the classroom. Once he calmed down, he told me that he was upset because he was already unhappy with his group’s piece and he felt like his group would not listen to any of his ideas. He wanted to work alone from the beginning and resented being a part of a group that he felt was unable to create a piece that met his standard (personal communication, January 2018). Finding
out that pieces fell off their sculpture seemed to be the final straw. Once he calmed down and spent a few days away from the project, he admitted that he was ok with the final piece.

**Discussion of Results**

What type of experiences can students have through collaborative art making? Thus far, in order to answer this question, I have analyzed and shared reflections from my researcher’s journal, and used my observations as well as student responses and reflections to create a narrative of student’s experiences. The final discussion of results is based my reflections as well as the analysis of student responses to the defining community activity (Appendix A), student responses to the project reflection questions (Appendix B), and my notes from the group interview (Appendix C).

According to the *Defining Community Response Table* (Appendix A) and the *Defining Community Word Cloud* (Figure 5.13) students identified *people* and *place* as the two main ideas that define community.

*Figure 5.13: Defining community word cloud*
Other key phrases included: group, together, Winterville, neighborhood, school, and team.

Manny wrote, “A community is a group of people that work together” (Defining Community Response Table, Appendix A). If students identify community as people living or working together, connected by a common space or purpose, then working collaboratively as a team should be a natural form of community building in our school. Working collaboratively is challenging. It requires communication, patience, negotiation and compromise, and problem-solving which are all invaluable skills that will help students to be successful in their future as students and adults (Cooper and Sjostrom, 2006). Based on my findings through data analysis (Clay Project Reflection Response, Appendix B) and personal reflection, two main themes emerged as the most relevant aspects of students’ experiences: working with a group and pride in their accomplishments.

As previously described in the student stories section and evident in the Clay Project Reflection Response Table (Appendix B) students experienced an array of both positive and negative emotions while working with their groups. Most admitted moments of disagreement and described how they were able to overcome moments of conflict through compromise and negotiation (Group Interview Response Table, Appendix C). Despite the differences in opinions, most students shared that they not only enjoyed working with a group, but preferred working with a group. They realized they were able to accomplish more together than they could have on their own (Clay Project Reflection Response Table, Appendix B; Cooper & Sjostrom, 2006).

The second emerging theme was the sense of pride students expressed toward their finished work (Clay Project Reflection Response Table, Appendix B; Group Interview Response Table, Appendix C). The majority of students’ responses toward the project were positive. Participants’ made statements such as:
I feel good about myself for doing this project because I can always look back and say I helped build that football after I leave 5th grade (Jarvis, Clay Project Refection, December 2017).

I feel happy. It may be broken over the years, but a legacy is still left behind (Kaeli, Clay Project Refection, December 2017).

I feel good about it because others can see my groups work (Tyson, Clay Project Refection, December 2017).

I think me and my group did good so we can put our project on display (Lanie, Clay Project Refection, December 2017).

I feel that we did good, but we could have done better (Manny, Clay Project Refection, December 2017).

Even Manny, who had one of the most negative experiences with his group, expressed that he was actually happy with the way his project turned out (Group Interview Response Table, Appendix C). Students also seemed to be proud of the fact that their work would be publically displayed for others to see. Cooper and Sjostrom (2006) claim that this feeling of pride is derived from students’ realization that they are public artist. When asked what their favorite part of the project was, all five participants referred to an aspect of the project that they had a specific part in working on or designing. This confirms the theory that students need to have significant input in the piece in order to feel like the project is “theirs” (Cooper & Sjostrom, 2006, p.67).

While most participants described one group member as being more dominant in decision-making, they all felt like they contributed something of value or significance to the piece that they were proud of (Group Interview Response Table, Appendix C). Overall, students felt that they had a positive experience and that their group created a successful piece. I am extremely
impressed by the results and products created and am excited to see the pieces permanently displayed.
Chapter 6: Implications and Conclusions

Implications at Winterville Elementary.

Based on the positive results of this project, I will continue to incorporate collaborative art making into my art curriculum at Winterville Elementary. I believe collaboration and teamwork are important skills for students to develop. While interactions amongst group members will not always be positive, I believe it is equally important for students to develop skills in dealing with conflict resolution. While results from community-building efforts are often difficult to see, I hope that, over time, students will gain a stronger sense of community and belonging at Winterville, and will begin to develop deeper relationships with their peers. This will take a continual effort of incorporating opportunities for students to work together and share ideas. Practically speaking, I would not be able to maintain regular implementation of collaborative art making of this project’s magnitude. However, opportunities for collaboration can be incorporated into smaller scale projects on a regular basis.

The permanence and public nature of this installation seemed to be important to participants, therefore, I hope to provide future classes of fifth grade students with an opportunity to work collaboratively to create more permanent art within our school. However, based on conversations and feedback received from students, I will approach future large-scale collaborations differently. I would like to begin conversations with students earlier on to pinpoint areas of the school that they feel like need improving. Once students have given their input on areas of need, I could generate an approved list of options that students could vote on as the collaborative project for that year. This would help students to feel like they have more of a voice in determining the type of project they create. I felt like the lack of student input on the type of project limited this research in some ways. Lanie shared that during our photovoice
activity, she and her group took pictures on the third and fourth grade hall and discussed that area of our school would be “a good place to paint on the walls to make that part of our building prettier” (personal communication). She also expressed that she would have rather created a mural than the clay sculpture, partially because she likes to paint, but also because she believes we need more murals inside our school. While I am happy with the results of our sculpture project and feel like they will improve the appearance of our school space, I wish that students had been given a chance to share their ideas.

While the goal of the research was to discover the types of experiences that my students could have through collaborative art-making, this project ended up being about my experiences as well. Now that I have gone through the process of leading a large-scale collaborative project, I feel much more capable and prepared to make the necessary changes to this process in the future. I feel more inclined to let go of some of my control as the teacher and welcome students into the decision-making and planning process. I feel like this will create an opportunity for even richer, more successful collaborative art making projects in the future.

Additional Thoughts. While a large portion of this project was spent on preliminary activities that were meant to scaffold students’ experiences throughout this process, I am not sure if I was truly able to see their effect on the final products. This has made me question, which, if any, of these activities were actually necessary, or essential to this process. I still believe that each of these activities provided a valuable experience for students and do not regret taking them through any of these processes. However, in planning this research, I believe I may have underestimated the impact and merit that collaboratively making art together could have on its own. Students seemed thrilled by the openness of the project and most of them appreciated the opportunity to be in control of the theme and design. The only restrictions they were given was
that it had to be created collaboratively, in clay, and must be finished within a week. The results were truly amazing and I believe this was a result of me relinquishing control and allowing each group to guide their own experience.

Another noteworthy realization for me as an educator was Kaeli’s experience. Kaeli is one of my brightest and most well behaved students. So often, students like Kaeli are seen as needing less attention than other students because they seem to be alright on their own. I was struck by Kaeli’s openness in sharing her struggles with fitting in and had no idea that she had dealt with bullying. I was also surprised by her description of her group members and their dynamic working as a team. Kaeli is a reminder for me, and all educators, that all students deserve our attention, even those that seem to have it all together. Students are often dealing with things that teachers can be completely unaware of. Taking time out of traditional routines to allow students to share personal feelings and struggles is always valuable.

Implications in the Field of Art Education

While this project may not necessarily fit neatly under one classification, I believe it shows that the theories and practices used in participatory public art, community art, and community-based art education (CBAE) are useful and applicable when implementing a collaborative art project in a school setting. Lowe (2001) stated that during community art projects “the work of art represents coming together to create something collectively” which makes the art a lasting symbol of the collaboration and community building that took place. I believe this project accomplished that goal. It also shows that art educators and students have the power to promote change within their school through art. Through this project, my students and I were able to create a lasting piece of public art within our school that will remain in place for years to come. It shows that art in a classroom setting does not have to be restricted to
typical school-art, which is based on individual performance with rubrics and regimented procedures (Gude 2013). While I believe that there is a time and place for learning procedures and teaching the basic elements and principles of design, Gude is proposing the need for educators to stretch beyond procedural art and allow students to begin to become active participants in their learning. I believe this project begins to achieve this, and has most certainly encouraged me to continue to pursue the integration of a more participatory learning environment. While projects of this magnitude could never practically replace the regular curriculum of a K-12 art educator, I hope that this project will encourage other art educators to integrate collaborative art-making into their regular curriculum. If another educator attempts to create a permanent piece of collaborate art within their school, I hope that they consider my advice to seek student opinions early-on because it is “the combination of voices that’s magical” in a collaboration (Cooper & Sjostrom, 2006, p. 24).
References


Appendix A

Defining Community Response Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1: What is community?</th>
<th>Q2: What communities are you a part of?</th>
<th>Q3: Do you like the community where you live (your neighborhood)? Why or why not?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jarvis</strong></td>
<td>A community is a group of people that is part of something like a football team</td>
<td>I am part of a school community. I like my neighborhood because I have a big house and my best friends live there and we have nice neighbors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kaeli</strong></td>
<td>A community is a bunch of people in a specific place that they want to get along and live in harmony</td>
<td>I do not live in a neighborhood, but I am a part of Winterville. I like it because it is peaceful. (When my brothers aren’t there!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tyson</strong></td>
<td>A community is a bunnies</td>
<td>I’m a part of the Winterville community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lanie</strong></td>
<td>A community is a place where people can live and play at</td>
<td>I am part of a healthy environment community. Yes, I do because I have friends at my community school and my neighbors are nice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manny</strong></td>
<td>A community is a group of people that work together.</td>
<td>I am a part of Winterville’s communities. I don’t __ my community. I love it because it is cool.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Researcher notes**
There are connections between how students defined community and communities they identified with and their choices for their final piece. Jarvis stated “a community is a group of people that are a part of something like a football team” and his group created a football. Several other students mentioned being a part of the “green team” community. This affiliation seemed to influence some of their outcomes. Students identified people and place as the two main ideas used to define community. This can also be seen in the word cloud created from their compiled definitions.

**Color coded themes**
- Group of people
- Place
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q4: Do you like our school community? Why or why not?</th>
<th>Q5: Do the relationships you have at school with peers or teachers affect the way you feel at school? Explain.</th>
<th>Q6: Do you like the way our school looks? How does our building make you feel?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jarvis -</td>
<td>Yes, my teacher and my student teacher are Christians, so I feel a little more protected. This is better than last year, because I was bullied last year.</td>
<td>I would like it if it was a little bit more colorful like Fowler Drive. Though the building makes me feel warm and content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaeli I guess so, but I don’t like hearing bad words. Period.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyson -</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanie Yes, because of my friends</td>
<td>Yes, my teachers are nice</td>
<td>Yes, my school is a really comfortable place to be in but it needs to be a little more colorful!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manny I do like it because it is helpful to me</td>
<td>I have lots of people that will protect me like my teachers</td>
<td>I love this school because they are broke</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Researcher notes**
The majority of students responded with positive feelings toward our school community. Most of the reasons given for their positive outlook was due to their relationships with their peers and/or teachers. Many students wrote that they liked our school, but they wish it were more colorful. The appearance of our school space affects how students and teachers feel toward our space each day.

**Color coded themes**
- Group of people / relationships
- Place
- Common interests / activities
- Positive feelings
- Negative feelings
### Q1: Describe your group’s project. What did your group make? What details did you add or draw on your piece?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Favorite Part</th>
<th>Feelings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jarvis</td>
<td>When we did the clay project our group made a football. On the football we added a G for Georgia. The football is grey and white but the Georgia sign is red.</td>
<td>Painting and shaping it to look like a football.</td>
<td>I feel good about myself for doing this project because I can always look back and say I helped build that football after I leave 5th grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaeli</td>
<td>We made a fairy village. There were two houses, a bird bath, and a church. One house had a flowered balcony, the second house had llamas.</td>
<td>The church, I added a statue of a cat, a rooftop service, and a cross.</td>
<td>I feel happy. It may be broken over the years, but a legacy is still left behind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyson</td>
<td>We made a chair for our clay project. When we finished, we put W.E.S. which stands for Winterville Elementary School.</td>
<td>When we put the designs on the chair and painted.</td>
<td>I feel good about it because others can see my groups work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanie</td>
<td>My group made a bird bath and we need to glaze it and we will be done.</td>
<td>The stem or pole of our bird bath.</td>
<td>I think me and my group did good so we can put our project on display.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manny</td>
<td>Our group had our names and all the things we liked to do.</td>
<td>When we put our names on it.</td>
<td>I feel that we did good, but we could have done better.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Researcher notes

Several students describe their favorite part as being a specific part of the project that they worked on. It appears that they are particularly proud of aspects that they contributed to or that are most meaningful to them.

### Color coded themes

- **Pride, positive feelings**
- **Negative feelings**
- **Permanence of art**
- **Public art – displayed for others to view**
- **Teamwork**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Q4: Did you enjoy working with your group? YES/NO</th>
<th>Q5: Would you rather work with a group or by yourself?</th>
<th>Q6: Did you have any arguments or disagreements with your group? YES/NO</th>
<th>Q7: Did you enjoy working on this project? YES/NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jarvis</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaeli</td>
<td>Yes, because we make a great team. A and D made the houses, Al made the bird bath, and I made the church.</td>
<td>Probably with a group. You can get things done quicker.</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Yes, because Ms. Brownlee is the best art-teacher ever, and I love working with clay!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyson</td>
<td>Yes, because they were my friends and we made a good project.</td>
<td>I would work with a group on projects like that.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, because it was a fun project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanie</td>
<td>Yes, I did because we are friends and friends work together.</td>
<td>Work with a group so I can get more ideas</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manny</td>
<td>No, because me and D wanted something else, but the rest of the group did not.</td>
<td>By myself</td>
<td>Yes, because I did want to do something else but they did not</td>
<td>No, because we had lots of disagreements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Researcher notes</strong></td>
<td>It seems like most students had a positive experience working with a group and learned that teamwork and collaboration allow for outcomes that cannot always be achieved alone. Such as, a group can help you accomplish more in a quicker amount of time and more people are able to generate more ideas.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Color coded themes</strong></td>
<td>Pride, positive feelings</td>
<td>Negative feelings</td>
<td>Permanence of art</td>
<td>Public art – displayed for others to view</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix C

### Group Interview Response Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Tell me about your experience.</strong></th>
<th><strong>What about this experience was different than our normal projects?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Jarvis** | Fun because I got to play with clay. I made a football, it is white and grey. At first it was boring because it was hard and I didn’t know what to do, and then it got fun because I started getting the hang of it and doing it better. Once they got the hang of it, it went “perfect, not perfect, but good” | Usually just paint or draw or glue  
Made my hands feel weird |
| **Kaeli** | Ours was pretty hard to make, but we got along and finally got done with it and it worked out and it was pretty fun. There were a few disagreements along the way about who should do what, somebody should do this, somebody should do that. That was a little frustrating, but it turned out pretty good in the end. | K agreed it was different |
| **Tyson** | In my opinion, my group did good on the clay project. We made the nature chair. It was fun to make. Even though it took a lot of time and was kind of hard, we persevered and didn’t get mad at each other so it went good. | Trying to get the chair to stand up high enough and not let it break. (more difficult) |
| **Lanie** | Making the birdbath was kind of hard because they had to figure out how to make the bowl sit correctly on the stem. We got in a few arguments about who would do what but then we figured it out. And it went great. Pretty happy with the way it turned out. | This was much bigger. They’ve made clay cups in the past, but this was different. It was fun, getting our hands messy. Liked doing something different |
| **Manny** | There were lots of disagreements because all they wanted to do was put game controllers on it and put CDs of games on it. We had a lot of disagreements because they wanted to paint it one color and I wanted to paint it a different color so we just painted it half of each color. | |

**Notes**

**Color coded themes**

- **Positive feelings**
- **Arguments/Disagreements**
- **Compromise**
- **Pride**
- **Difficulty**
- **Personal meaning**
- **Importance of place**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Do you feel like you had an equal say in group decisions?</th>
<th>How did your group come up with your idea for the project?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jarvis</td>
<td>Yes. T made more decisions and did more work. He wanted to do it and get it done.</td>
<td>J was not sure why, but when they were talking about making an object they thought about football and all agreed on making a football. They were going to make a basketball, but then didn’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaeli</td>
<td>“Sorta of, kinda” had an equal say in making decisions. A is usually the one who takes over all the time and all our art projects, you do this and you do that. So she was pretty much the boss of that. I came up with the idea of the village and they liked it so we started doing that. A did a house, D did a house, Al did the birdbath, and I did the church which was really really hard. It worked out and we got along, sort of.</td>
<td>A said we should probably do some type of monument or a house or something. Al said she wanted to do something connected to fairies, and D wanted to do something similar to A. So I said why don’t we do a fairy village and they said yay! (they discussed ideas prior to brainstorming day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyson</td>
<td>We were going to paint nature colors (blue, brown, green, yellow), but K wanted to paint it all yellow. They used nature colors and yellow. (compromise)</td>
<td>They wanted to come up with something different that no one else was doing so they came up with the idea of the chair. They used a nature theme because they knew that it would be installed outside. They added W.E.S. for Winterville Elementary School because we had been talking about our school and things that are important to us. T is glad that they got to choose their own project and theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanie</td>
<td>Yes, I did because we all had one part. Someone would do the designs and someone would straighten out the clay and the other person would make it smooth. We all had a busy part to do so it wasn’t really a problem. (divided the tasks/responsibilities) In response to color choice, K didn’t make all the decisions, but she made the decision of the bowl and what color it should be and she also decided to put the petals on there. I thought the petals on there looked kind of tacky. Now, I think they do look kind of good.</td>
<td>Yeah, I remember a little bit. So C came to our table and said we should do something big. So since me, A, and K were in the group we decided we wanted to do something big and simple. K drew a birdbath because it was raining or something outside. I was like a birdbath would be nice in the garden area and will look more sufficient. (Fact that it would be installed in the garden was important and influenced the idea for the piece)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manny</td>
<td>Yes. J made the most decisions. M didn’t know why Julius made all the decisions, but he made the decisions despite M and D disagreeing. M and D were not happy with J’s decisions.</td>
<td>Theme was games, but M can’t remember how they decided on this idea</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Collaborative Art Installation

### Notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color coded themes</th>
<th>Positive feelings</th>
<th>Arguments/Disagreements</th>
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<th>Personal meaning</th>
<th>Importance of place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What specific things did you add that were important to you?</th>
<th>Would you change anything about your project if you could?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jarvis: Adding the G on the front</td>
<td>J would make the football a different color. He would paint it red or brown. He likes it the way it turned out, but would change it if he could. Wish he could add his initials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaeli: &quot;Since I’m a Christian I decided to do a church and crosses and stuff like that… I did add a cat because I’m a cat lady”</td>
<td>The way the roof looks because it droops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyson: They worked on it and added stuff all together</td>
<td>Would fix how nature is written at the top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanie: So, the braid that we put on the bottom has three parts since it’s a braid. That stood for me, A, and K so we put that on the bottom for decoration and to mean something. L said they wrote their name in their piece, but it got covered with paint, but she is ok with that because when she looks at it she will know she made it.</td>
<td>I would change the bowls color, the yellow. For some reason, I didn’t think the yellow matched the whole piece. K wanted yellow, but I wanted a mint blue, and A wanted orange. We all disagreed on the yellow, but we did the yellow anyway. Also would change the petals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manny: &quot;I thought of things in my mind and just put them on there” We added something for Christmas because it was in December when we made it. We put a snowman and other things. He painted and made one game controller. It was someone else’s idea, but all three members tried to make one and see which was the best, but they attached all of them on there</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color coded themes</td>
<td>Where there any benefits to doing this project? for you? for our school? Do you think it will make our school look better? Any benefits to working with a group?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Positive feelings | Jarvis: Not really. But it will give us more decorations and we'll have more stuff to look at in the garden | Hollywood handprints at the front of the school  
A mural somewhere at front. |
| Arguments/Disagreements | Kaeli: “if people like it then maybe”  
“it gave us more confidence by getting to make it”  
“My dad always says working with a group is good because you can accomplish more with a group than by yourself” | Yes. K thinks we should make a giant sphinx out of clay. Each group could make a different part of the body and then everyone could draw and paint on it. |
| Compromise | Tyson: T doesn’t think he personally benefited, but he thinks it should benefit our school because other people will get to see it.  
T felt that working with a group was good because they got along well and were able to get more done. | Suggested papier-mâché volcanos but then thought that might not be good.  
Magnets |
| Pride | Lanie: “I think our project was good and had loads of colors and details on it so I’m quite happy about it. I thought it would turn out bad, but it didn’t, surprisingly.”  
“I think it will make the garden look better, but for our school, I think we should do a mural” | Yes it would make our school better.  
Architecture or some type of structure  
Hollywood handprints in pathway- to show everyone who went to school here  
A mural on the wall outside the gym because it’s a big blank wall that a lot of people see.  
Banners on the outside wall in the courtyard. |
| Difficulty | | |
| Personal meaning | | |
| Importance of place | | |

Notes: I told L that I planned to do a mural with one of the future 5th grade groups and she said, “but we won’t be here next year.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color coded themes</th>
<th>Did the activities leading up to the project influence your ideas?</th>
<th>Any ideas on where you would like your project to be installed in the garden? or anything else you’d like to do for the installation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jarvis</td>
<td>Either on the art room wall or on the glass windows wall so people can see it.</td>
<td>Under the tree or in the flower bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaeli</td>
<td>Not really, if it had, they would have done something that concerned the school instead of the chair that only somewhat represents the school. He is glad they got to think of their own theme.</td>
<td>Good with it going anywhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyson</td>
<td>Took a picture of the glass hallway and took a picture of the garden. Took a picture of the 3rd grade hall and they thought that would be “a good place to paint on the walls to make that part of our building prettier.”</td>
<td>It’s a birdbath so under the plum tree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manny</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes**

I wish students had been able to vote on the type of project they’d like to do to improve our school. Lanie would have voted for a mural and wish they could have gone back and done that instead. Jarvis said he still would have voted for clay.
Appendix D

Defining Community Worksheet

Name________________________________ Class Code __________________

Defining Community

1. What is a community? ____________________________________________

2. What communities are you a part of? _______________________________

3. Do you like the community where you live (your neighborhood)? Why or why not? ______________

4. Do you like our school community? Why or why not? __________________

5. Do the relationships you have at school with peers or teachers affect the way you feel at school? Explain. ____________________________

6. Do you like the way our school looks? How does our building make you feel? ____________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________
Appendix E

Where do I fit in my school community? Worksheet

1. Circle or color the blob that most represents you. Why did you choose this blob?

2. Is your blob interacting with (talking to, playing with, or arguing with) the other blobs? Why or why not?

3. Describe how your blob feels.

4. How do you feel at school on the playground?

Blob Football

1. Circle or color the blob that most represents you. Why did you choose this blob?

2. Is your blob interacting with (talking to, playing with, or arguing with) the other blobs? Why or why not?

3. Describe how your blob feels.

4. How do you feel at school in your classroom?

Where do I fit in my school community? Worksheet

Directions: Look at the images on the left to answer each set of questions.

Name:

Class Code:

https://www.blobtree.com/pages/frontpage
Appendix F

Photovoice Activity Resources

Photovoice prompt

**MY SCHOOL STORY**

- THINK about our school and our school community.
- With your group, take photos that you feel represent our school community. (These photos could be of places within the school, people, or things.)
- Take pictures of the places in our school that are important to you. (Think about the places you included on your map.)

Photovoice editing and sharing directions

**Photo Editing / Sharing**

1. Look at the photos you and your group took.
2. Delete any photos you do not want to keep.
3. Upload your group’s photos to our class google drive folder. (Ask Mrs. Brownlee if you need help.)
4. Complete the back of this worksheet.

Photovoice Reflection worksheet

Group Names: __________________________iPad #: ______

**Reflection**

What did you and your group choose to photograph?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Why are those places important to you?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
Appendix G

Slideshow: Days 5-6

EQ: How can we communicate through art? What story is being told through this mosaic?

https://www.theartofed.com/2012/12/27/how-to-create-a-collaborative-mosaic/

What story do you think the artist is telling in this piece?

Akoča a Ufola

Irresistible  My Town  Summer Memories

https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100006415665883
Yayoi Kusama

"Yayoi Kusama (嘉量 鎌生
Kusama Yayoi, born March 22, 1929) is a Japanese contemporary artist who works primarily in sculpture and installation, but is also active in painting, performance, film, fashion, poetry, fiction, and other arts. Her work is based in conceptual art and shows some attributes of feminism, minimalism, surrealism, Art Brut, pop art, and abstract expressionism, and is infused with autobiographical... content. She has been acknowledged as one of the most important living artists to come out of Japan."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yayoi_Kusama

"Flowers That Bloom At Midnight" (2009), by Yayoi Kusama (1929–)
Fiberglass sculptures in the Tuileries Gardens, Paris

https://vivianemackie.wordpress.com/tag/yayoi-kusama/

Around 8,000 poppies a day are made by the team at Johnson Tiles for the Cummins’ Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red installation

http://lightingsandinteriorsonline.com/johnson-tiles-helps-poppies-bloom-at-tower-of-london/
Collaborative Art Installation

Chicago Public Art Group
Chicago, IL

**Image Source**

Founded in 1971, the Chicago Public Art Group, formally known as the Chicago Muralist Group helps to organize and promote community public art in Chicago. An elected group of “core artists” lead community projects like murals and playground structures, and have created hundreds of works of art over the last 40 years. Community residents, schools, and public areas have all benefited from the group’s work, and projects often incorporate significant local themes and community history.


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Claire Brill, *Conversation with a Stone Wall*, 2014


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Heidelberg Project
Detroit, MI

**Image Source**

In 1986 Tyree Guyton and his Grandpa Sam sought to create an outdoor art environment that would benefit Detroit’s deteriorating McDougall-Hunt neighborhood. Like many of Detroit’s neighborhoods, Guyton’s childhood neighborhood was greatly affected by the late 1960s riots, and he wanted to revitalize and improve his home through art. Creating the Heidelberg Foundation, Guyton and his grandfather began painting a number of dilapidated and abandoned buildings with brightly colored polka dots. They affixed large found objects, mosaics, and painted boards to many of the structures and quickly determined that the area, where many people were once afraid to walk, offered residents a sense of pride in their community. The organization uses art to promote discussion and offers young adults with free workshops to inspire creativity and self confidence.

Collaborative Art Installation

Yarn bomb installation by Carol Hummel in Morgantown, W. Va., 2013.  

**Tile Techniques**: Additive vs. Subtractive

**Sculptural Techniques**: Slab Construction