FACILITATING ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART EDUCATION CLASSROOM FOR
CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

by

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Approved:

________________________________________
Dr. Tracie Costantino, Major Professor

________________________________________
Date
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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Project</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for Attention</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline of the Project</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of the Articles Reviewed</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Life Comprehension</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit to Typical Students</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Verbal Communication</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tools of Art and Imagination</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

## APPENDIX A:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Relief plaque, ca. 450 B.C., Greek, Melian, Terracotta, H. 7 3/4 in.</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>George Caleb Bingham, 1811-1879, <em>Washington Crossing the Delaware</em>, 1856-71, oil on canvas</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Norman Rockwell (American, 1894-1978), <em>The Problem We All Live With</em>, published in <em>Look</em>, January 14, 1964, oil on canvas</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Narrative discussion slide: Artists give clues for setting</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Narrative discussion slide: Artists include characters</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Narrative discussion slide: Artists show action</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## APPENDIX B:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Additional Text Resources for Art Teachers</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## APPENDIX C:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td><em>Beach House Living Room</em>, Jamie, age 7, pencil on paper</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><em>Traffic Jam</em>, Jamie, age 7, pencil on paper</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Spiral Staircase, Jamie, age 7, pencil on paper</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Art from observation, pencil on paper</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>&quot;New York City, Manhattan&quot;, 2002, Chris Murray, Mixed Medium on collaged paper</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D:

Figure 12: Hand washing steps................................................................. 63
Figure 13: Signage for classroom expectation.......................................... 64

APPENDIX E:

Narrative Lesson Plan.......................................................... 66
Autism Handout for Art Teachers...................................................... 71
Chapter One
INTRODUCTION

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) defines the qualities of a person with autism as having "qualitative impairment in social interaction, qualitative impairments in communication, and restricted, repetitive, and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests, and activities" (Code 299.00, 2000). This means most children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder are socially awkward, have little, none, or strange language, and usually have some pervasive or repetitive behavior to which you will quickly be made aware. Many people can have one of these qualities and not have autism. The diagnosis requires that all three characteristics be present, and the DSM-IV goes into greater detail about what they specifically look like and how to recognize them appropriately. These may, to some people, describe negative attributes, but I perceive an individual seeing the world in a way that I can only ever hope to grasp. It paints the picture of an individual that I have devoted the past two years to interacting with and hope to continue to do so throughout my life.

From the first time I met a child with autism spectrum disorder, I have been completely fascinated by the way their minds see and relate to the world. That first time, I was completing an internship in interior design at a residential firm and our client was an eight-year-old boy with Aspergers Syndrome, a high functioning level on the autism spectrum. He was fixated on skyscrapers, and we were somehow to redesign his bedroom to reflect that interest while also using organic fabrics, zero VOC paint, and formaldehyde free wood. Those things were a bit of an oxymoron in my mind, but it turned out to be a pleasure, and I fell in love with his passion and organization. We still email to this day.
ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM

As I continued a career in interior design, I enjoyed helping others feel more comfortable in the spaces where they lived their lives, but something was missing. I was wrestling with the idea of graduate school when out of the blue a friend contacted me about a conversation we had a few years before. She was getting a masters in autism education and needed someone to help tutor a young boy with autism a few days a week. I had shared my skyscraper bedroom experience with her at that time and she remembered my fascination with the autism brain. I decided to start graduate school and try my hand at tutoring. I was rusty in my long division and Spanish vocabulary, but it did not take long for me to remember how much I enjoyed interacting with someone whose brain functions in a way that made me want to learn more about it. That was the beginning of the journey to this project.

**Purpose of the Project**

My love of art and autism has led me to connect those two things, not in the way of art therapy, but through a study of the engagement of children with autism in the art classroom. As a trained art educator and with many logged hours of experiences focused on engaging children with autism in learning, I feel as though I can provide a unique insight into the most effective ways to facilitate engagement in the art classroom. This should be the goal of every art educator, for every student, but many times it is much easier said than done.

**Need for Attention**

An autism diagnosis can change the world of a family forever and it is happening more often today than ever before. It can mean problem behaviors and feelings of hopelessness. One place of refuge parents should have is the school their child attends. While teachers have good intentions, a lack of training on autism specifically can lead to misinformation and inappropriate reactions. This leaves parents with little support and a lot of frustration.
ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM

Since the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975 (Public Law 94-142) the "least restrictive environment" has been the law concerning children with special needs. There seems to be a discrepancy in the law and implementation in the classroom, especially with art. I believe this to be a wide spread concern based on teacher ignorance of how to effectively teach these students. Art is a subject in which inclusion has been shown to raise the developmental stage of creativity as much as 33 months for students with disabilities (Guay, 1993). Both Rudolf Arnheim (1969) and Winner and Hetland (2000) believe that visual arts inculcate basic skills in perception and cognition, which for all children, but especially those experiencing special needs, can contribute to learning outside the art class.

Real inclusion for children with special needs took the effort of many individuals and years of working toward equal education for all students. In 1973, all children were mandated to have Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) through The Rehabilitation Act. In 2004, IDEA was reauthorized, finally making the school experience for children with special needs closely aligned to the experiences their typical peers received (Biklen & Burke, 2006).

I propose, through this project, to better prepare pre-service art teachers to teach children with special needs in an art classroom of inclusion. From readings as well as conversations with many of my peers, the consensus is that pre-service art teachers are unprepared for this task. Integrating information on how to differentiate instruction for children with autism in the art class should be a topic that is addressed in all pre-service art education instructional and methods courses.

This lack of training or misunderstanding is something that I have had personal testament to and I believe it is truly because art educators do not know what to do. They are not trained in what to do specific to art. It is our job as art educators to provide the same education to all of our
students no matter what their abilities may be. While the law states that inclusion is expected, because of a lack of teacher training, inclusion is not always the reality. I hope to, throughout this project, shed some light on the ways art educator training programs can help remedy this issue.

Ji-Ryun (2011) writes about teacher preparation programs in general. It was found that new teachers who finished a program that was closely aligned with special education were more receptive and intuitive to the needs of the diverse population of students in their classrooms. This is an important thing to consider. Different kinds of learners are going to be in the art classroom and new art teachers need to be ready to appropriately address their learning needs.

At the University of Georgia, pre-service art educators are only required to take one class on instructing students with special needs. It is not specific to autism, which from my art classroom observations is a disorder that an art teacher will see throughout the school day. I felt this class to be inadequate in truly explaining how to modify art curriculum to meet the needs of students who are not typical. This is a concern for programs across the United States. Carroll (2011) found that teacher preparation programs in Maryland did not adequately equip new teachers to teach in a classroom of inclusion. It is a difficult task to fit in the required classes for certification as well as finding a particular focus on different learners. Incorporating education and experiences about special learners, specifically those with autism spectrum disorder, in the classes that are required, may be the beginning to better preparing new art teachers.

Outline of the Project

The framework for this Applied Project has three parts. First, I took a look at the literature and the research-based methods for engaging students with autism in the general education classroom. These methods were then cross-referenced with authors of art education to decide how they are relevant in the art classroom specifically in Chapter 2. Second, I provided
ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM

recommendations for future K-5 art educators on how to best provide an environment of engagement for all students, but especially those students with autism spectrum disorder. I discussed common misconceptions and appropriate behavioral interventions for these students on a daily basis. Lastly, I provided suggestions for engaging older students with explanations on how their developmental needs vary as children mature.

In Chapter Two, I will examine several research-based methods that facilitate engagement for children with autism. While most are not specific to art, I will use other authors in the field of art education and make cross-references to eventually provide the best, to my knowledge, way to make a child with autism focused and engaged in the art classroom.
Chapter Two
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Many interventions and treatments have been attempted to aid individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in living a more engaged life. While some have been studied and deemed evidence-based practices, others need more investigation to be considered such, and even some should not be practiced at all. Parents of children with ASD, and also adults with ASD even though the focus of this review is on school age children diagnosed with ASD, seem to be willing to try almost any treatment that could make living with a child with ASD more enjoyable and interactive, both for the child and themselves (Chandler-Olcott & Kluth, 2009).

Teachers fall into this same category of desperation to make something work. The purpose of this review is to consider difficult aspects of teaching a child with ASD in an inclusive classroom, one which includes typically developing peers, and how certain evidence-based strategies can be put in place to aid that child. Making students with ASD avid, engaged learners should be a priority for every teacher. This is a growing concern to general classroom educators, with limited special needs training, as the law for special education requires students to be placed in the least restrictive environment (LRE) and to be engaged in academic curricula (Dunlap, Kern, & Worcester, 2001). Until the last few decades, the prevalence of autism and the understanding that children with autism may indeed be intelligent and capable of learning was not something discussed or addressed in public education. Now research on autism is growing and children with ASD are more involved in the general classroom than ever before (Yell, Drasgow, & Lowrey, 2005).
ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM

Friedlander (2009) describes a child with ASD in a general education classroom that immediately becomes preoccupied with the many sounds, colors, patterns, and general stimuli around the room. This leads him to a complete disconnect with the happenings in the classroom instruction. As a teacher, it is imperative to have an understanding of this sensory overload that many students with ASD experience on a daily basis. Friedlander, as well as Bullard (2004), describes a few strategies for managing these sensitivities. Included are providing visual reminders, sticking to a schedule when possible, and providing students with ASD choices and advance notice when something different is going to happen.

The art education classroom presents additional challenges because of the up and about, hands-on nature of the work done there. This can present obstacles for a teacher to keep eyes on all children and ensure that everyone is safe. Off task behavior can lead to accidents and a lack of engagement. Precautions must be taken to avoid or quickly resolve these obstacles. Overwhelmingly, from personal observations, I have seen this environment to also be one that facilitates engagement in a child that is struggling or not performing elsewhere in the school day. Instead of being asked to sit still and take notes or work math problems, the art classroom is a place where children have an opportunity to explore and respond. Venable (2005) explains the importance of the identification of at-risk students in the classroom and the ability to invent appropriate teaching strategies for all students as a "fundamental hurdle for new educators" (p.48). This review of literature and the recommendations that follow intend to help overcoming this obstacle for new teachers a more manageable task.
Identification of the Articles Reviewed

The following on-line data bases were searched for sources that were peer-reviewed and related to the topic of teaching for learning and engagement in an inclusive classroom and the difficulties that can be presented in that environment: ERIC; Education Research Complete; PsyARTICLES; psycINFO; Science Direct and ISI Web of Science. The reference sections of all located sources were reviewed for additional sources that did not appear in the on-line searches. Twelve peer-reviewed journal articles published since 2004 were identified (Bullard, 2004; Chandler-Olcott & Kluth, 2009; Chiang & Lin, 2007; Colle, Baron-Cohen, & Hill, 2007; Friedlander, 2009; Flippin, Reszka, & Watson, 2010; Howlin, Gordon, Pasco, Wade, & Charman,, 2007; Kokina & Kern, 2010; Park, M., 2008; Randi, Newman, & Grigorenko, 2010; Reynhout & Carter, 2006; Travis & Geiger, 2010). In addition, eight art education specific peer-reviewed articles on classroom techniques and facilitating engagement for students experiencing disabilities were identified (Anderson, 1992; Blandy, Pancsofar, & Mockensturm, 1988; Bresler, 2007; Guay, 1993; Hecker, Lettenberger, Nedela, & Soloski, 2010; Kellman, 1998; Kellman, 2004; Musick, 1977).

From the review of the literature mentioned, I gathered that there are many techniques and methods available for art educators to use in a classroom of inclusion. Many of these work for children of all abilities and needs and can focus a teacher’s attention on reflection and innovation. The goal of this being the development of an art classroom that provides all children with the ability and desire to be engaged. This project will focus on reading comprehension, narrative learning, social interaction, and visual strategies.
Reading Comprehension

The first difficulty to be considered in this literature review is in literacy and reading comprehension for students with ASD. In agreement, all three articles on the subject (Chandler-Olcott & Kluth, 2009; Chiang & Lin, 2007; Randi, et al., 2010) cite comprehension as one of the most difficult tasks to teach a child with ASD. It is also considered an important academic skill to learn as it leads to higher levels of communication, which increases learning opportunities (Nation & Norbury, 2005) and “understanding text is an important skill for functioning independently in society” (Walhberg & Magliano, 2004, p.119). Independence in the classroom not only helps a student, but also the teacher who has other students to attend to and cannot spend the whole day focused on a child with ASD.

Why Comprehension Matters

Chandler-Olcott and Kluth (2009) and Randi, et al. (2010) discuss ways in which a child with ASD can be taught to read for understanding. Hyperlexia is “a phenomenon in which decoding skills exceed comprehension” of what is actually being read (Grigorenko, Klin, & Volkmar, 2003, p.1084). This is common in young children with an ASD diagnosis, and in fact, the sounds and formation of words is easily obtained by most children with high functioning autism. It is thought that children with ASD develop word recognition at a young age because of some preoccupation with reading words (Nation, 1999). The goal of reading comprehension interventions is to bridge the gap between sounds and understanding in the classroom and for generalized use elsewhere. Different strategies can be attempted to facilitate this reading comprehension, but neither Chandler-Olcott and Kluth (2009) or Randi, et al. (2010) found one
strategy, over others, to be the most successful. Both studies depended on prompting from an instructor to help the student look for meaning in what was read.

While reading is not the most important component of the art education classroom, it does allow for greater independence and can build the confidence of the student. Reading and writing an artist’s statement is helpful for an understanding of why art is made and why we would want to create art works. Without the skill of reading and writing for meaning, it may be difficult for a student, with or without ASD, to fully be engaged in the art education classroom. An art teacher must consider this comprehension difficulty for students with ASD so that a child can specifically be assisted in situations where comprehension matters. Knowing how to facilitate this task, if taught more effectively to general education pre-service teachers, may better prepare them for integrating students of all abilities in their classrooms. Art teachers need not the ability to teach reading comprehension specifically, but have a general knowledge of how it is taught and why it is important in the art education classroom. Comprehension is a difficult thing for a child with autism to master and teaching for comprehension across the school day will make instruction most effective (Bresler, 2007).

The Narrative Approach

Theory of mind (ToM) is the term used to describe the difficulty faced by individuals with ASD to understand how someone else is feeling and how another person’s thinking may differ from their own thoughts and feelings (Colle, Baron-Cohen, & Hill, 2007). ToM in the art classroom is a concept required to discuss why an artist would make a work of art. If a student with ASD cannot relate to artists, who many times are no longer living, it may be difficult or
impossible for them to be at all engaged in the art classroom on days when discussions are happening and there is little production going on.

The narrative and making what is read into a series of events to be further looked at and interpreted, or breaking events down, showed to be the most successful way to teach students with ASD for reading comprehension and further understanding of ToM (Losh & Capps, 2003). There are many strategies for doing this, but creating a narrative using a prompt for understanding by an instructor proved to be the strategy that had the most success. The framework in which the reinforcement of knowledge, and that of other academic and social understandings, happened in a way that is most meaningful is in a naturalistic environment with typically developing peers to provide feedback (Biklen & Burke, 2006).

The narrative in the art classroom can be told and understood in many ways. Hecker, Lettenberger, Nedela, and Soloski. (2010) describe art activities as a way for children to become so “absorbed in the activity that the focus of awareness is narrowed down to the activity itself”. Many artists also use their work to tell a story. From ancient Egypt to present day art has been a vehicle for story telling. Descriptions of three examples of narrative art works and the story they tell of history, place, and time follow. Images of the art works can be seen in Appendix A. These images were found through a Google search of “Narrative art works”. I chose the pieces specifically because of their historically relevant and emotional qualities. I found them easy to discuss with young children and all include faces and body language that help explain the emotions of the people in them.

The first narrative art piece, Figure 1, dates to 450 B.C. Greece. The piece tells the story of the return of Odysseus to Ithaca. There is a gestural movement about the figures depicted in
ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM

the piece that helps to spell out what it happening. This expression may be used to help a student with ASD understand the way body language plays a part in communication.

Figure 2 depicts George Washington crossing the Delaware River just before his surprise attack on the Hessian soldiers at Trenton, New Jersey in the American Revolutionary War. Washington is easily identified by his posture and clothing. Both set him apart from the other persons in the painting even if the viewer had never seen an image of Washington. There is a feeling of agitation in the painting that may be easier for a student with ASD to identify than if it was described to them using words. This connection to historical content and knowledge provides cross-curricular learning.

Lastly, Figure 3 shows a narrative of an important event in American history. Norman Rockwell paints a young African American girl being escorted by four U.S. Deputy Marshals as she walks to an all white public school. This was an important part of the American Civil Rights Movement, and the artist gives the viewer many context clues to help tell the story of what is happening in the painting. These context clues could be discussed with a student with ASD to reiterate that communication skill when words and body language do not make sense.

All three art work examples described give a visual representation of an event in history. Hyperlexia in some students with autism can make historical events confusing. A visual tool to help describe the event may lead to a greater understanding of history and human interactions.

Real Life Comprehension

Nation and Norbury (2005) note reading comprehension as the key to a successful and independent life for a student with ASD after graduation, but there are other comprehensions that
students must also master to be successful, both in the classroom and beyond. The social nature of our society can be overwhelming for individuals with ASD (Grandin & Scarino, 1986). While the comprehension skills taught through narratives and other useful techniques for understanding what is read can be helpful in also understanding the social situations encountered in the real world, the intervention of Social Stories™ can also be beneficial.

Social Stories™

While Social Stories™ is not considered an evidence-based practice yet, it may be a resource teachers and parents can use for helping students with ASD grasp ToM (Kokina & Kern, 2010). The premise of Social Stories™ is that a social situation is discussed “in simple words, and often include the description of views, perspectives, and feelings of other persons” (Kokina & Kern, 2010, p.813). Social Stories™ is often used in conjunction with other strategies, most often visual assisters and verbal or physical prompts (Reynhout & Carter, 2006). The potential benefit of Social Stories™ to a student with ASD is that it is a concrete script that is rehearsed and can be referred to if difficulty arises. The majority of studies on the use of Social Stories™, discussed both in Reynhout and Carter (2006) and Kokina and Kern (2010), required some kind of prompting that resulted in a tangible reinforcer for a student with ASD. Also, all of the children used in the studies had normal to above average intelligence and some verbal, or if non-verbal, some sort of communication skill. This makes the intervention applicable to teachers in the general education classroom because this is the profile of the students they will most often encounter (Chandler-Olcott & Kluth, 2009).

Both comprehension of a narrative in a book, as well as Social Stories™ training, may help a student with ASD in the general education classroom be more engaged because of the confidence that understanding enables. A student who has supports in place as well as a safe,
supportive environment is more likely to participate. While the data on Social Stories™ to teach academic skills is limited, it teaches for interaction, which is a step in the right direction (Grey & Garand, 1993).

**Benefit to Typical Students**

The inclusion of a student with ASD in a general education classroom not only provides the natural environment that is beneficial to students with ASD, but it can also be beneficial to typical children, as well as the teacher (Chandler-Olcott & Kluth, 2009). One of the most important of these benefits is that the teacher is put in the position of an inquirer, and the intent of teaching moves from one focused on abstract problems to those that are relevant and personal (Chandler-Olcott & Kluth, 2009). By being forced to consider the needs and challenges of learning of all students in the classroom, teachers must reflect on the strategies they use to meet all of those needs. This is not only beneficial for the child with ASD, but also for other children in the classroom who may learn differently (Chandler-Olcott & Kluth, 2009). This is an important observation and approach to differentiated instruction that some general education teachers may not consider without the presence of a child with autism. Marks, Shaw-Hegwer, Schrader, Longaker, Peters, Powers, et al. (2003) write that teachers in the general education classroom are being presented with more students with autism, and other disabilities, and that teaching for understanding must remain a top priority, even if it does present additional challenges with a more diverse learning population.

In the inclusive classroom, there are many ways, as described by Bullard (2004) to not only include and engage the child with ASD, but also the other children in the classroom with that child. The art class provides an almost built in system for working together and helping one
ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM

another. Art making requires set up and lots of clean up. Giving a student with ASD a job can facilitate a sense of responsibility and engagement. When many students are given helper tasks to complete, it can provide a sense of normality for the child with ASD. They are helping just like everyone else and are important to the smooth running of the art classroom. This may also help other typical students see them in an equal light. Everyone’s talents should be valued to create an environment of comradery.

Non-Verbal Communication

A deficit in comprehension can be exponentially made more difficult for a student with ASD who is also non-verbal. Communication ability and intelligence are two completely different characteristics, and this is the biggest misunderstanding when dealing with a child with autism. Often intelligent, high functioning students with an autism diagnosis are included in the general education classroom because of their cognitive abilities. This lack in verbal communication can pose a problem for a student with autism as well as typical peers and the teacher (Reynhout & Carter, 2006).

In a study by Kliewer and Biklen (2001), a girl named Rebecca, who was non-verbal in a general education classroom, interacted with her peers and the teacher by writing notes. Not only did this type of interaction benefit her and involve her in social aspects of the classroom, but it also expanded the “symbolic understanding” (p.6) of both Rebecca and her typical peers. It also required her peers to construct language in their notes to Rebecca that was clear and concise. The teacher also emphasized the use of representation as communication and the acceptance of others’ differences, an important lesson to teach in an inclusive classroom of all kinds of learners of today.
ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM

**Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)**

The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is a valuable strategy for teaching functional communication that can be used for communication with students with ASD who are non-verbal. It is a “manualized program for teaching children to use an exchange-based communication system that has been a common intervention choice for nonverbal children with ASD in clinical and school settings” (Flippin, Reszka, & Watson, 2010, p.178). PECS for an individual student with ASD was developed by a speech therapist, with the help of educators and parents (Frost & Bondy, 2002). Bondy and Frost (1994) write that while the process of teaching PECS may seem tedious and long, the effect is communication where none was previously in a generalized format that can be translated across a multitude of situations as long as everyone involved understands the system.

Art teachers are trained in visual stimulation and communication. PECS closely aligns with this visual language of art. An understanding of PECS in the art classroom allows the art educator to communicate key components of lessons and curriculum to a student that otherwise would not have an opportunity to communicate.

**Communication Outcomes**

Even if someone in the public is unsure of PECS, when a person with ASD presents them with an image card of an object they desire, most people can understand the communication intent. PECS gives individuals with autism the skill to communicate with others in a way that allows them to receive what they desire (Flippin, Reszka, & Watson, 2010). Studies of PECS have shown that it increases non-verbal communication and can, in some cases lead to spoken language, but not always (Ganz & Simpson, 2004; Kravits, Kamps, Kemmerer, & Potucek, 2002). In a study conducted in South Africa (Travis & Geiger, 2010), PECS clearly increased
ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM

verbal output and showed evidence that, in conjunction with other interventions, proved to be a success in an educational environment.

In contrast to traditional sign language, PECS was shown to be more effective in most cases (Tincani, 2004). This was likely due to the fact the person that the individual with ASD attempts to communicate with is more likely to understand a picture system than sign language and therefore the interaction has a better chance of being successful (Flippin, et al., 2010). PECS, like the narrative approach to understanding and Social Stories™, has shown a higher level of interaction within a classroom setting with typical peers. The training of PECS for non-verbal students with ASD and their general education teachers is likely to assist in the goal of making that student a more engaged learner, benefiting everyone (Travis & Geiger, 2010).

Understanding PECS as an art educator is a natural process as art teachers are trained to be visual thinkers. The visual language PECS uses to enable a non-verbal student can be easily elaborated to be relevant in the art classroom.

**The Tools of Art and Imagination**

The interventions described in this review are aimed at making the learner with ASD a more involved participant in the general education classroom. This desire of inclusion addresses an aspect of autism that is sometimes overlooked. Kellman (2004) describes the “autistic aloneness” (p.14) many individuals with ASD face that leaves them feeling isolated and anxious. This feeling of helplessness and lack of control can spiral into a tantrum out of frustration. Students with ASD are placed in a general education classroom because it has been decided that they have the ability to function there without too much disruption to their typical peers. This is not to say that they are not a distraction at times, and it is the job of the educator to minimize distracting behaviors. Including that student as much as possible is one way to attempt to do this.
Art is one therapeutic way that students with ASD, even those who are non-verbal, can express fears and struggles safely (Kellman, 2004). This can be physically making artwork, like in Kellman’s 2004 study, or through a dramatic performance of a narrative movie in a sensory occupational therapy session as described by Park (2008). Kellman (2004) describes the art of a young girl with autism as a special map of her relationship to the environment around her. For that child, she is stretching to understand her world and express the way it makes her feel. Park (2008) reenacts a scene from Disney’s Finding Nemo movie, the goal being to better understand the perspective of the character the child is playing and ToM. Both are valuable concepts for the general education classroom teacher to keep in mind. Both can be used in the classroom involving typically developing peers and can help the student with autism feel included and welcome to participate however they are able.

Art for Visual Understanding

Temple Grandin (1995b), a woman with autism, writes, “When I was a child and teenager, I thought everyone thought in pictures” (p.19-20). Her book is called Thinking in Pictures and she and others have described the concrete and realistic nature of the art of a person with autism. Often the artistic ability of a person with autism appears at a young age almost spontaneously (Kellman, 1998). It is described as the way a person with autism, and little communication ability, may develop to relate to the world around them. A few examples of art by artists with autism can be seen in Appendix C, taken from the study Kellman (1998) did on children with autism that stood out as artists. This must be carefully considered by an art teacher as to not discourage this un-child-like art but instead foster an environment where it can be appreciated for its communication intent and beauty all its own. Obviously, not every child with autism will be a magnificent artist, but teachers must continually be aware of all of their students’ strengths and
ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM

abilities in need of further development.

Conclusion

The intent of this review was to explore some of the ways teachers in general classroom and art education settings assist with learners with ASD becoming more engaged and productive. This must be done in consideration of typically developing students in the classroom as well. A successful strategy is where all children in the class are participating simultaneously with the teacher, the curriculum, and each other. By allowing a student with ASD to draw from supports that have been systematically put in place, as well as the compassion of the other students, it makes everyone better step up for success. The skills and treatments discussed can all also be translated into general life in public and at home, as well as after K-12 schooling, making them even more valuable to that student.

The inclusion of students with ASD in the general art education classroom can also be beneficial to the typical peers, as they understand that differences are a part of life and expand their communication skills, but also for the teacher who must differentiate instruction for all learners. Art teachers have a unique opportunity to provide a hands-on, move around classroom for all students and, if managed effectively, can promote creative thinking growth and engagement for all the students in their classroom.
Chapter Three

ENGAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations that follow are a culmination of my readings and experiences working with children, both typically developing and diagnosed with autism. I believe that my in-depth exploration of art classrooms of inclusion and my personal relationships with children with ASD put me in a unique situation to provide these recommendations. I have described many experiences I encountered in preparation to write this project first, as a frame of reference. I then provided recommendations for the inclusive K through 5 art classroom and secondly for older students. These recommendations are backed by literature as well as specific examples.

Setting of Observations

I was fortunate enough to spend my student teaching semester in two very different school environments. I first spent eight weeks at a Title I, federally funded elementary school, and this will be the age group focus for this project. I worked specifically in the art classroom with children of all abilities. Only two children I saw during the week came in with an aide. They had both been diagnosed with autism. Two other children, to my best knowledge, also had autism but were not receiving services because the parents would not approve them to be evaluated. I then spent eight weeks at a rural middle school art classroom where it was much more difficult to identify children with autism in my classes. I suspected that I saw one boy regularly with autism, and his art fascinated me. The quality was similar to that of the art done by children with autism that Kellman (1998) describes. I always tried to be mindful of the criticism and instruction I provided him. An example of his work can also be seen in Appendix C.

My favorite class at the middle school was actually not scheduled, and we only saw them twice a week during our lunch and planning. One to seven children with severe and profound
ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM

disabilities would come to the art classroom, dependent on how their day had gone and how the children were acting during the day. Three of the seven children were on the autism spectrum. All three were non-verbal and all were always very engaged in the hands-on, tactile art experiences we provided them. It was the highlight of my week and gave me much to reflect upon.

My other two settings were in a one-on-one interaction with two young boys on the spectrum. Their abilities and struggles vary greatly and each also enabled me to try new techniques for engagement. One boy just finished the seventh grade and the other fifth. I have created a comprehensive behavior system and visual schedule for the older boy and a modified for-the-classroom version can be seen in Appendix D.

I also watched many documentaries about persons living with autism as research for this project. One in particular was extremely relevant to this project. *Dad’s in Heaven with Nixon* (2010) is a documentary about a man with autism who sells art in New York City. Christopher, the main character, describes why he started making his art as a way to understand his world. An example of his work is included in Appendix C. It falls in line with the other two groups of art by artists with autism examples because of the flattened perspective. Art for people living with autism can be about so much more than making art. It’s about building an understanding of the visual world around them and engaging in communication with others. Art allows some persons with autism to express to others what they cannot with words.

**K-5 Engagement: Motivation, Interest, Expectation**

During my childhood years my mother and teachers utilized [many methods]. They recognized that when it came to teaching a child with autism, creativity, patience, and understanding, as well as an inexhaustible quest for ideas and
ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM

strategies that made sense to me, were the key to helping me become the independent, successful person I am today. However, my journey from childhood to adulthood was not without its obstacles, and... what a difference ideas can make in a person’s life. (Temple Grandin, from 1010 Great Ideas, 2006)

I think this quote sums up the outlook a teacher must have when working with children with autism. The three points she makes are creativity, which is the essence of an art educator, patience, which is necessary to being a good teacher, and understanding, which comes through a thirst for respect and passion for students of all abilities.

Engagement for all students in the art education classroom can seem like a daunting task for a new teacher. I personally believe that it can be done, but there are things new teachers should know before they enter the classroom on the first day to better prepare them for the task ahead. I believe that engagement starts with motivation. This is a topic that has been the core of research on autism education and behavior intervention. How do you motivate a child to do something they have no interest in doing? With autism, visual schedules, choices, and using a reward system that the child wants to strive toward can all be wonderful resources for bringing a child into the classroom successfully. Having those things, especially for K through 5, be in conjunction with what is also happening at home can make the difference in a child that is motivated and one that is not.

It may not always hold true because we are all individuals, but every child I have encountered with autism has a pervasive interest that they really enjoy talking about. They feel comfortable communicating about their interest because it is something they know well. This interest may be used to motivate a student to complete a task they do not want to complete. It could be a reward system that builds to a prize of time to talk about the interest or physically
ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM

receiving something related to the interest. Some of the interests I have come across include the Salem witch trials, rap music, fashion icons, Tech Decks (mini skateboards you ride with your fingers), planes and things that fly, and Godzilla to name a few. It is not really understood why or how these special interests come about, and many children may change interests, just like typical peers, throughout their adolescence.

One boy I have worked with is particularly interested in television. Recently, it has been specifically Jeopardy. One thing to mention about children with autism is vocal stereotypy, or the sometimes nonsensical repeating of words or phrases. This is also referred to as scripting. It falls into the diagnosis category of restrictive and repetitive behaviors (Lanovaz & Sladeczek, 2012). Essentially, when a person with autism is not sure how to communicate a feeling or react to a situation, they pull from a catalogue in their brain and out comes something that may or may not be related, such as “I know that the host is Alex Trebek, the background is pink, and the lady always wears high heels.” While I have heard these facts over and over, I understand that they are a way for me as the teacher and the student to communicate in our own autism language and build trust and respect. Those things lead to a more engaged child and a new teacher that is more in control.

One particularly prominent example I recall was with a second grade boy with autism in the elementary school. He came to our class with an aide because a lot of things could send him into a kicking and screaming frenzy. Aides have, in my experience, been a huge help when dealing with a more difficult child. This particular little boy was completely obsessed with Godzilla. He drew Godzilla and talked to anyone that would listen about Godzilla. It was always very difficult to steer him away from the subject of Godzilla so instead, my supervising teacher would let him use Godzilla, but would require him to add something new to his Godzilla or add a
friend in the drawing or something to that extent. He usually complied and then would get very excited to tell you about how this addition helped Godzilla do something. When you embraced his love of this fictional monster and worked with that pervasive interest, you could get a lot more from him.

One thing that I observed to be helpful in promoting engagement for all students in the art classroom was when art making took the form of 3-dimensional construction. This held true for every instance I can think of. We decided to sew felt finger puppets with our second graders. My supervising teacher and I were both a little worried about how they would turn out and how many children would be bleeding after poking themselves with the sharp needle. Most importantly, we were worried about the boy with the Godzilla fascination. Would we be able to hold his attention and did he have the fine motor skills to complete the puppet? This project turned out to be one of my favorites the whole semester. All the kids were so incredibly engaged. Having to do something challenging and exciting and new made us have a classroom of 7 and 8 year olds that were almost silent and working unless there was a question. At first it was a little like herding cats. We had them all plan out a template to cut their felt with and decide what colors they would need. Once we actually started sewing, everyone was engaged! It was wonderful.

The boy that loved Godzilla probably was the most engaged child. He so meticulously designed his Godzilla template and cut it out. He chose his felt colors and we had to encourage him to use something other than green, but once he started sewing, I was so impressed. The thing was sewn into a mangled mess, but it all held together, you could get a few fingers inside the functional puppet, and you could tell it was supposed to be Godzilla. I think the 3-demensional projects work for engagement success because of a few reasons. By introducing something that
ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM

is new, you catch a student’s interest. By giving students a choice within the project, in this case they could make their finger puppet whatever they want it to be. We had Godzilla, lots of dogs and cats, and a banana. Also, letting the children be independent until they really needed help gave them the confidence to create something special. Any time these three aspects can be applied to a project, I noticed students were the most engaged. Add in a project that is very hands on and 3-dimensional and you, as the art teacher, are sure to be impressed by what students are capable of producing.

Through my experiences, children in elementary school still very much want your approval of what they are making. I got lots of “Ms. Just, do you like this?” and that’s a good feeling to be so important to a child. As a new teacher in K-5, I think it’s important to reciprocate that feeling of admiration and respect. Asking children for input on projects and taking their concerns seriously allow for a classroom where everyone is having a good time while they learn. For a child with autism, art can be particularly important. It gives them a chance to work on fine motor skills (cutting, pasting, sewing) and is a place where they can have a clean up job and they have to interact with peers appropriately. The nature of the art classroom is almost like a child with autism’s own sensory and social integration session. That reiterates the importance of an art teacher having an understanding of what an autism diagnosis means and how to make sure you are pushing a child to explore and elaborate within a framework of expectation and choice.

Another important thing teachers new to autism must understand is that it is a diagnosis that implies a communication deficiency, not a lack of intelligence. Giving an instruction over and over will mean nothing to a child with autism if they cannot understand what you mean. Trying to say it differently or playing to their visual strength and actually showing a child what to do will be much more effective. Many methods were described in the review of literature of
how to accomplish this understanding. Interacting with children with autism teaches patience, if
nothing else. You have to think in different ways until something works. This is a helpful task to
master because it is not just a child with autism who thinks differently; many times it is to the
benefit of typical students as well.

Utilizing Classroom Aides

An aide coming into the classroom with a student can be a valuable resource for both the
child and the art teacher. Having a good line of communication with a student’s aide puts the
best interest of the student in the forefront and allows for a strong working relationship working
toward making the student successful in classroom endeavors. Burdick and Causton-Theoharis
(2012) write about this important relationship using four key components for effectiveness. They
are “(1) respect and value for paraprofessionals and students; (2) providing access to materials,
instruction and peers; (3) improving communication; and (4) fading paraprofessional support” (p.
33). One point made was that an art teacher cannot assume a paraprofessional has any art
knowledge. This is an issue that may seem obvious, but taking time to teach the paraprofessional
about art materials and techniques helps them feel valued and involved in the art making process
of the student or students they are working closely beside.

A deterrent to the student can occur when the paraprofessional takes on too much of the
student’s work themselves and does not allow the student to explore and create independently, to
some degree that that student is able. Fading is a technique that reduces the amount of direct
support given over a period of time. It encourages the student to ask peers for assistance first
before going to the aide or teacher. Fading gives the student that independent exploration time
and peer interaction that may not be present with the aide always at the student’s side (Burdick &
Causton-Theoharis, 2012).
ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM

Teacher and aide communication time is essential to achieving the four key components. Spending even a small amount of time discussing a student’s progress and new goals helps empower the student and create an independent artist. Keeping the line of communication open during class time and involving the student in the discussion about how they can be better served is the best practice model. (Burdick & Causton-Theoharis, 2012).

**Narrative Art Lesson**

In the elementary school, my supervising teacher and I taught a narrative art lesson that I think is applicable to teaching students with ASD about visual communication and story telling. We did the unit with kindergarteners, and I was impressed with their ability and creative outcomes. Part of this success was due to the fact that the narrative they created was broken down into steps. This is an important strategy to keep in mind when also working with children with autism. Slides from our discussions can be seen in Appendix A and a full lesson plan can be seen in Appendix E.

We first looked at the narrative art works (Figures 4, 5, and 6) and discussed what was going on in each and how they knew what was happening. The children sat on a large rug, in rows, in front of the images projected onto a screen in front of them. “Rug Time” had previously established procedures about raising hands, not talking when it is someone else’s turn, and speaking only when called upon.

There were many interesting answers and it was wonderful to watch the imaginative process unfold, the most interesting discussion being in relation to Figure 6. As we talked about the body language of the characters, children shared stories about their own experiences falling
ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM

down and riding horses and trains. There were comments about smoke monsters and how the girl falling had pretty hair. They hardly missed a detail.

After the discussion, students were given a 12” by 18” piece of paper to create their setting. We orally discussed some settings they knew such as the playground, classroom, grocery store, park, etc. The children were told that setting does not include characters and most followed this direction. After settings were completed each child was given two 6” by 9” pieces of paper with which to create characters. We encouraged students to make each character touch three sides of the paper to make the characters big enough. We again had a discussion about what constitutes a character. Many imaginative answers were given including chairs, animals, and tools.

We lastly cut out the characters for each student. This was done by the teachers to preserve the quality of the children’s drawings, and because letting kindergarteners cut out both of their characters would have taken too much time. A student with ASD may also have trouble cutting. Underdeveloped fine motor skills can cause frustration for a student. Art teachers should be aware of this deficit and assist students when necessary.

After all the pieces were cut out, we filmed each student telling and acting out the story they had thoughtfully created throughout the project. Many students held true to their original ideas and merely elaborated upon them. A student with ASD may need more assistance in creating a story line, but this visual story paired with Social Stories™ may be useful in developing an understanding for real life situations as well.

Tools for Success

When a child with autism is reacting to something, seen or unseen, in the art classroom safety must be the first concern. Lots of art materials can be dangerous if thrown or fallen onto
by accident. Having a procedure that other students follow when an autistic tantrum is happening is a must. This may be leaving the room and someone going to get help or a number of things based on the way the child with autism acts. Establishing a plan as soon as a dangerous situation is established will help keep everyone safe. This procedure needs to be specific to a student with autism’s needs and must be in the best interest of the other students in the classroom. The safety plan should be established in conjunction with the special education teacher as well as the student with autism, if possible.

Explicate expectation is another thing that makes the experience for a child with autism, their peers, and the teacher a more fluid and enjoyable one. When you can identify what a child with autism will do before they do it and provide visual supports to them about how to appropriately act and react in the classroom, everyone feels more secure. A few examples of visual support signage can be seen in Appendix D. Figure 12 shows a hand washing instruction sign that may be located beside the sink. Not only could this be helpful for a child with autism, but for all children to develop the skill of hand washing. The step-by-step design could be applied in many different situations. Classroom management is greatly helped if procedures are put in place that all students and adults follow together.

Figure 13 shows two different visual supports that may be more private for specific students. Maybe they are displayed as a small sign on the student’s desk that is having trouble with what the sign depicts. The eraser sign example was for a student that would go into a full-blown tantrum if asked to erase work they had done. The tiny reminder helped to calm and refocus the student without the direct involvement of the teacher. It gave the student confidence and independence to tackle difficult problems. This could also be applied to any similar situation.
ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM

Self regulation is an important part of development for a child with ASD and signs like these examples can make independence a reality.

Suggestions for Older Children

A new issue arises when an art educator instructs children older than the fifth grade. Something, in my observation, happens in that summer before middle school. You, as a teacher, are no longer put on a pedestal. The opinions of peers are much more highly esteemed and the “Ms. Just, do you like this?” goes away. The students are bigger, their hormones are changing, and their self-esteem and confidence are at an all time low. Inside, though, that child that wants to please you still exists. It is a little disheartening at first, but there is a solution: be a real person.

I found that, in a way, a child with autism and a middle schooler are the same force to reckon with. Put those two categories together and you as an art teacher are often presented with a real challenge. While working in the middle school, with children of all needs and abilities, I found that when I was able to admit my mistakes and get involved in conversations about what the kids were doing after school and on the weekends, after a while there seemed to be a breakthrough. That child inside of them that wanted to please and get my approval came back. When I was real with them, they felt comfortable enough to get real with me. This surely did not happen overnight. It took weeks of everyday investment, getting my feelings hurt, and getting back on the horse. When my investment finally started to pay off, it was the most rewarding feeling.

My observation of engagement with three-dimensional projects held true with middle schoolers. Behavior problems were happening less often and the students were the most on task when their hands were busy. The one boy I knew had autism was often out of his seat and off
ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM

task. Keeping him engaged was exceptionally difficult. He was a different student when he was doing something in the art classroom with his mind and his hands. The transformation was really exceptional to witness. One day we were painting and he politely raised his hand and explained to me that the brush was difficult for him to hold. He asked if he could use his hands instead and I did not see why that would be a problem. The students were assigned to mix colors on their papers and to experiment with different brushes and strokes. Why would it not be just as successful to instead use different fingers and pressures? I encouraged him to use both his hands and the brushes if he could manage. By giving him a choice and making his input valuable, he was more engaged.

There is also an important point to make about keeping activities and interactions age appropriate. Students should be involved and presented with tasks and assignments that challenge them and push them to learn more, not ones that are dumbed down because of the way a child appears or their perceived ability or cognitive development.

My supervising teacher at the middle school had a system for behavior modification that I thought was useful and helped teach students to be responsible for their own actions. She would give students that had trouble staying on task three poker chips. Each time she had to speak to them about their behavior, she took a chip away. If all three chips got taken, then there was a consequence they had decided on together before hand. It seemed to work really well as it gave the student three physical reminders. While this worked well for the students I observed, if the function of the acting out is to get the teacher’s attention, this method may be counter productive and actually cause the student to act out more often. It is always important to identify the function of any behavior before addressing it.
ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM

Another way this system could be used is in instances where all students are participating in on-task, good behavior. As a reward system, it can be implemented for all students to help the child with ASD stand out less to their peers. When the teacher notices a child doing something that is appropriate or helpful, that child receives a token. It promotes the good behaviors instead of punishing the bad ones.

These observations and recommendations are a culmination of my reading and experience. This is an important note for future art educators. Often classes and discussions are helpful in solidifying techniques and ideas about educating students, but until the information is applied in a real life observation or practice it can be difficult to grasp the real nature of what it takes to educate all students in the art classroom. I would encourage all future art educators to make connections and seek out opportunities to see the classroom knowledge put into action in many different avenues.
As I stated in Chapter One, I believe new art educators are not prepared for the task of truly teaching and engaging all students in the classroom of inclusion. There are many reasons why this is such a daunting task, especially when the inclusive classroom includes children with autism. A lack of teacher training can lead to misunderstanding and frustration for both the educator and a student with autism. This is something that must be continually thought about and reworked so that a child with autism has the most beneficial and supportive art experience they are capable of having. This lack of training is an area I believe to be widespread for new educators. The new art educator though has a unique opportunity to be something different for a child with autism. The art education classroom provides a place for expression and communication where there may be none elsewhere in the school building.

All of the observations I made in art education classrooms in which a child with autism was included led much to my frustration with this issue and also gave me a better understanding of how difficult differentiation and classroom management can really be. With often little funding for the art program, teachers have to stretch the limits of the instruction they can provide with limited supplies. I did come across some general education teachers who completely disagreed that inclusion was the best model for all students. They offered that they felt like it was an uphill battle leaving little time for actual instruction. Behavior issues and off task behavior can be exhausting if there are not expectations and consequences in place. I was fortunate enough to work directly with two teachers who had seemed to master this balance and gained the respect of the students in their own classrooms. New teachers may have a hard time reaching the same level of effectiveness.
ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM

I truly believe that inclusion is the best model for instruction in any subject area and that all students learn as much from each other as they do from the teacher. Peers can help a student with autism who is feeling different or overwhelmed have an enjoyable time in art. Learning to get along and look out for your friends is a big life lesson that many children in K-5 need to be taught. The inclusion of a child with autism may provide the vehicle for that lesson.

Further Exploration

Throughout the process of this project, I have found a huge amount of information and resources available specifically about autism. Laws are changing to allow for more cohesive support at school and elsewhere and awareness is far from widespread, but autism is better known than ever before. I will continue to learn about autism engagement and behavior modification, as it is a topic I find fascinating.

I have included in Appendix B some additional books and resources for art teachers teaching in an inclusion setting. Some are art specific with a plethora of art activities to engage children with autism and others discuss difficult behaviors and how to handle them appropriately. 1001 Great Ideas for Teaching and Raising Children with Autism or Asperger’s is an all inclusive resource that I have found helpful when I have questions about a child with autism with whom I am interacting.

Methods for addressing concerns about autism are ever changing and evolving and it is important for teachers to continue to inform themselves of the latest appropriate protocol. At the heart of teaching a child with autism are creativity, patience, and understanding. Flexibility is also an important characteristic. Engagement and interest will come from students if an art educator works every day to embody these things.
If every art educator is taught the importance of these things and strives every day to be better for their students, I certainly believe that teacher will be a great teacher. That teacher will be one that makes a difference when a child needs it the most. I hope that I am that teacher and that I can continually be a real person that students feel safe being themselves around. I hope I can foster an environment that facilitates true engagement and creative expression for children of all abilities.
REFERENCES


ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM


ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM


ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM


APPENDIX A:

NARRATIVE ART WORKS
Figure 1: Relief plaque, ca. 450 B.C., Greek, Melian, Terracotta, H. 7 3/4 in.
Figure 2: George Caleb Bingham, 1811-1879. *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, 1856-71, oil on canvas
Figure 3: Norman Rockwell (American, 1894-1978). *The Problem We All Live With*, published in *Look*, January 14, 1964, oil on canvas
Artists give clues for setting.

They show time and place.

Figure 4: Narrative discussion slide: Artists give clues for setting
Figure 5: Narrative discussion slide: Artists include characters
GPS: Remember something that happened and draw it.

Use clues to show the action!

Draw the movements!

Figure 6: Narrative discussion slide: Artists show action
APPENDIX B:

ADDITIONAL TEXT RESOURCES FOR ART TEACHERS
- 1001 Great Ideas for Teaching and Raising Children with Autism or Asperger’s, Ellen Notbohm, 2006
- Behavior Solutions for the Inclusive Classroom, Beth Aune, Beth Burt, and Peter Gennaro, 2010
- Making Art Special: A Curriculum for Special Education Art, Helen Goren Shafton, 2010
- Making Sense of Art: Sensory-Based Art Activities for Children with Autism, Asperger Syndrome and other Pervasive Developmental Disorders, 1999
- Reaching the Child with Autism through Art: Creative Activities that Improve Sensory, Social, and Language Skills!, Toni Flowers, 1992
- Reaching and Teaching Students with Special Needs through Art, Beverly Levett Gerber and Doris M. Guay, Editors, 2006
APPENDIX C:

ART BY ARTISTS WITH AUTISM
Figure 7: *Beach House Living Room*, Jamie, age 7, pencil on paper.
Figure 8: *Traffic Jam*, Jamie, age 7, pencil on paper.
Figure 9: Spiral Staircase, Jamie, age 7, pencil on paper.
Figure 10: Art from classroom observation, pencil on paper.
Figure 11: "New York City, Manhattan", 2002, Chris Murray, Mixed Medium on Collaged paper
APPENDIX D:

CLASSROOM VISUAL ASSITANCE TOOLS
WASH THOSE HANDS!

1. Wet
2. Soap
3. Wash for 20 Seconds
4. Rinse
5. Dry
6. Turn Off Water with Paper Towel

Figure 12: Hand washing steps
THE ERASER IS YOUR FRIEND! IT MEANS YOU GET TO TRY AGAIN!

IN THIS CLASSROOM WE HAVE:
1 A QUIET MOUTH
2 A STILL BODY
3 NO SCRIPTING

Figure 13: Signage for classroom expectation
APPENDIX E:

PRE-SERVICE AND NEW TEACHER RESOURCES
ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM

Narrative Story Picture Unit
(to be used with Kindergarten students)

Lesson 1 Overview:
Students will be presented with narrative works of art. A discussion of these works and the clues the artists give for comprehension will take place on the rug. Procedures for "rug time" include raising your hand, only speaking when you are called on, and not talking while it is someone else's turn to talk. This procedures have been previously established.
Students will be introduced to setting and characters. It will be explained that a setting has no characters until you add them in. Settings the children frequent will be overviewed; grocery store, school, bedroom. After the discussion, students will be asked to draw their own setting with no characters included.

Stage 1
Understandings:
- Rug time procedures
- Action words describe a scene
- Emotional words describe a character's feelings
- A setting has no characters until you as the artist add them in

Essential Questions:
- What do you see?
- How do you know that is what you see?
What other questions will focus the lesson?
- What is going on in this work of art?
- What clues does the artist give to help you understand what is going on?
- What is a setting?

What will students understand as a result of this lesson?
- Students will need to know:
  The ways artists give clues for understanding about their works of art.
  How to look for clues in a work of art.
- Students will be able to:
  Identify actions and emotions in a work of art.
  Understand why artists include these clues in their work.
  Draw their own setting and understand that there are no characters in a setting.

Stage 2
Performance Tasks. Projects:
While sitting on the rug, in rows, students will, one at a time, comment on the actions and emotions they see in the work of art presented on the SmartBoard. They will be able to explain why they know what they see and elaborate upon other students' findings.
After the discussion, each child will be given an 18"x12" sheet of white paper on which to draw their setting. This setting will not yet include characters and the children may need to be reminded of this. The teacher should go around to each child, ask what their setting is, and write a note on the back of the drawing for future reference.
ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM

Students will first draw the setting in pencil being sure to take up most of the page. After the teacher confirms that the drawing is complete and page filling, the each child will be given crayons to color their setting drawing.

Other Evidence:
- Participation and engagement of students will the evaluated throughout the discussion
- On-task work during the drawing portion of the class period.
- Understanding that a setting is character less.

By what criteria will performances of understanding be judged?
Did the student remain engaged in the conversations about the narrative works? Did they add to the conversation? Did comments and questions remain focused?
Was the student actively working to create a setting drawing? Did the setting include characters after being reminded many times to leave them out?

Stage 3
Learning Activities:
Hook: Students will have a chance to share actions they have participated in to gain a better understanding of what "action" means. They will also be asked to share feelings they have had, for the same reason.
Day 1: The students will sit on the rug in rows and follow rug time procedures. They will participate in a discussion about works of art and the actions and feelings they see in each. Other clues about time of day and year as well as the setting will be shared.
Students will be given an opportunity to share one time and then the conversations will be shared with other students until every child that wants to comment has a turn. Some students may need to be reminded that a setting has no characters.
Students that need extra help will be provided with assistance from the teacher or another student.
Day 2: Some students will use a second day to color or expand upon their setting drawing. Students that finish on Day 1 will be asked to help others, help with clean up, and may begin on the next day's tasks.

Vocabulary:
- action
- emotion
- setting
- character

Resources:
- Smart Board
- Google Presentation
- 18"x12" white paper
- pencil
- crayons

Lesson 2 Overview:
Students will again join the teacher on the floor for rug time. Actions and feelings will be reviewed using the same narrative art works. Body language will be discussed and physically demonstrated by the teacher and student volunteers. Some examples could be falling, jumping, laying, sitting.
ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM

Students will then return to their tables and be given 3 6"x9" pieces of white paper to use for their characters. It will be explained that each character drawing should touch at least 3 sides of the paper. Teacher demonstration should be provided.

Stage 1

Understandings:
- Rug time procedures
- Body language can give clues to what is happening to a character

Essential Questions:
- What is happening?
- How do you know that is what you see?

What other questions will focus the lesson?
- What is happening to the character?
- What clues does the artist give to help you understand what is happening?

What will students understand as a result of this lesson?
- Students will need to know:
  - The ways artists give clues for understanding about their works of art.
  - How to look for clues in a work of art.
  - Body language clues and how they help explain what is happening to a character.
- Students will be able to:
  - Point out body language clues.
  - Understand why artists include these clues in their work.

Stage 2

Performance Tasks. Projects:
While sitting on the rug, in rows, students will, on at a time, comment on the body language of the characters they see in the works of art presented on the SmartBoard. They will be able to explain why they know what they see and elaborate upon other students' findings.
Students will then apply this knowledge through drawings of their own characters. These can be people, animals, or other objects the student identifies. The student will first draw their characters in pencil and then be given crayons to color in their drawings.
The teacher will cut out the characters to save time.

Other Evidence:
- Participation and engagement of students will be evaluated throughout the discussion.
- On-task work during the drawing portion of the class period.
- Understanding that a character can be anything in your imagination.

By what criteria will performances of understanding be judged?
Did the student remain engaged in the conversations about the narrative works? Did they add to the conversation? Did comments and questions remain focused?
Was the student actively working to create character drawings? Did each character touch at least 3 sides of the paper?

Stage 3

Learning Activities:
Hook: Students will be asked to participate in physical demonstrations of body language.
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Day 1: The students will sit on the rug in rows and follow rug time procedures. They will participate in a discussion about works of art and the body language of the characters included. Students will be given an opportunity to share one time and then the conversation will be shared with other students until every child that wants to comment has a turn. They will then create their own characters with body language, as discussed, on paper. Students that need extra help will be provided with assistance from the teacher or another student.

Day 2: Some students will use a second day to color and expand upon their character drawings. Students that finish on Day 1 will be asked to help others, help with clean up, and may begin on the next day's tasks.

Vocabulary:
- body language
- setting
- character

Resources:
- Smart Board
- Google Presentation
- 3 6"x9" white papers
- pencil
- crayons

Lesson 3 Overview:
Students will again join the teacher on the floor for rug time. The narrative art works will be used once again to elaborate on the idea of setting, character, and telling a story through pictures. All the ideas presented to this point will be reiterated and solidified.

After a final rug time discussion, students will get back their setting and character drawings. They will be asked to spend some time developing a story with these drawings. Students will then be recorded orally telling the story they imagine and acting out the story in their setting with their characters.

Stage 1
Understandings:
- Rug time procedures
- Setting, characters, and body language tell a visual story

Essential Questions:
- What is happening in your story?

What other questions will focus the lesson?
- What is happening to your characters?
- How do your characters interact with your setting?

What will students understand as a result of this lesson?
- Students will need to know:
The ways artists give clues for understanding about their works of art.
How to look for clues in a work of art.
Body language clues and how they help explain what is happening to a character.
- Students will be able to:
Tell the story of their own characters in the setting they created visually.
ENGAGEMENT IN THE ART CLASSROOM

Stage 2

**Performance Tasks, Projects:**
While sitting on the rug, in rows, students will, one at a time, remember the aspects of the narrative art works discussed thus far. They will explain how they came to these conclusions about the artist's intention.
Students will then use this knowledge to tell their own story using the setting and characters they created.

**Other Evidence:**
- Participation and engagement of students will the evaluated throughout the discussion.
- On-task work during the drawing portion of the class period.

**By what criteria will performances of understanding be judged?**
Did the student remain engaged in the conversations about the narrative works? Did they add to the conversation? Did comments and questions remain focused?
Was the student actively working towards a cohesive story about their setting and characters?

Stage 3

**Learning Activities:**
Hook: Students will be asked to share the stories they plan to tell through their drawings.
Day 1: The students will sit on the rug in rows and follow rug time procedures. They will participate in a discussion about works of art and the body language of the characters included.
Students will be given an opportunity to share one time and then the conversation will be shared with other students until every child that wants to comment has a turn.
They will then develop their own story with the knowledge they have acquired through this unit and tell the story on camera using the visuals they created.
Students that need extra help will be provided with assistance from the teacher or another student.
Day 2: It may take more than one day to complete filming. Students that are video taped first may then read and look at books from the teacher's library. They should be directed to observe body language, action, and feelings in those books as well.

**Vocabulary:**
- body language
- action
- feelings
- setting
- character

**Resources:**
- Smart Board
- Google Presentation
- video camera
- children's drawings
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Autism Information and Practices for the Inclusive Teacher:

Autism History...

- Leo Kanner (1943): autism received modern attention
- Hans Asperger (around same time as Kanner) studied children similar to those seen by Kanner, with the exception of language delays. Asperger's work was not used until 1981 when Lorna Wing was published in the United States
- Kanner and Asperger noted social difficulties, communication problems, and repetitive and restricted behaviors and activities

Educational History...

- Educational Programs were not developed until the 1960's
- Sybil Elgar is known as the first teacher to work only with children with autism
  - She formed the Society for Autistic Children, now known as the National Autistic Society
  - She worked during a time of limited diagnosis and no specific method for teaching

Legislations and Students with ASD...

- Autism under category of serious emotional disturbance until 1981
  - 1990 became a separate disability category
  - An increase in students diagnosed with ASD was observed and thus program need increased
  - IDEA - schools provide FAPE for students eligible for services under IDEA, which mandated delivery of services and funding opportunities for states and local school districts
- With changes over the years, debate regarding instructional strategies and what constitutes appropriate education for students with ASD makes selecting interventions and treatment strategies more difficult.

So what are autism spectrum disorders?

- Neurobiological Disorders with deficits in:
  * Social
  * Communication
  * Restricted Interests & Repetitive Behaviors
- Broad range of cognitive, linguistic, and adaptive functioning across the autism spectrum

Prevalence Rates...

- The CDC reports prevalence rates of ASD have increased over subsequent years with one in 88 children receiving a diagnosis, indicating a 23% increase in children diagnosed with ASD since CDC's 2008 report.
- As prevalence rates increase, so does number of children with ASD receiving special education services in public school systems.
- During the 2009 - 2010 academic year, children with ASD represented 5.8% of special education students in the United States, an increase of 4.3% when compared to 2000 - 2001 academic year (Scull & Winkler, 2011).
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Methods for Educational Instruction:

- **The Narrative Approach**: Theory of mind (ToM) is the term used to describe the difficulty faced by individuals with ASD to understand how someone else is feeling and how another person's thinking may differ from their own thoughts and feelings (Colle, Baron-Cohen, & Hill, 2007).

- **The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)** is a valuable strategy for teaching functional communication that can be used for communication with students with ASD who are non-verbal (Flippin, Reszka, & Watson, 2010, p.178).

- **Social Stories**: The premise of Social Stories is that a social situation is discussed “in simple words, and often include the description of views, perspectives, and feelings of other persons” (Kokina & Kern, 2010, p.813).

- **Patience and an open mind** allow a teacher to assess each student and situation with care and appropriateness.

Problem or Strange Behaviors:

- **Vocal stereotypy**, or the sometimes nonsensical repeating of words or phrases (also referred to as scripting). It falls into the diagnosis category of restrictive and repetitive behaviors. Essentially, when a person with autism is not sure how to communicate a feeling or react to a situation, they pull from a catalogue in their brain and out comes something that may or may not be related.

- **Always try to determine the function of a behavior before attempting to address it**. Sometimes ignoring unwanted actions can make them disappear or happen less frequently. Just acknowledging an action can be a reward for a student with ASD. Consult the special education teacher if this is not clear for a particular student.

Relationship with the Special Education teacher and/or aides:

- **An child’s Individual Education Plan (IEP) as well as the special education teacher** can both be a monumental resource when trouble arises with a child with autism. This relationship should be forged at the beginning of each school year and an open line of communication allows many problems to be avoided all together.

- **The classroom teacher should always be the main giver of instruction**. A child’s aide should follow the lead of the classroom teacher and communication about the child should be on going. Setting expectations of an aide early on can help keep the child’s best interest in the forefront.

Additional Text Resources:

- **1001 Great Ideas for Teaching and Raising Children with Autism or Asperger’s**, Ellen Notbohm, 2006
- **Behavior Solutions for the Inclusive Classroom**, Beth Aune, Beth Burt, and Peter Gennaro, 2010
- **Making Art Special: A Curriculum for Special Education Art**, Helen Goren Shafton, 2010
- **Making Sense of Art: Sensory-Based Art Activities for Children with Autism, Asperger Syndrome and other Pervasive Developmental Disorders**, 1999
- **Reaching the Child with Autism through Art: Creative Activities that Improve Sensory, Social, and Language Skills!**, Toni Flowers, 1992
- **Reaching and Teaching Students with Special Needs through Art**, Beverly Levett Gerber and Doris M. Guay, Editors, 2006