

TEACH ME HOW TO URBAN:  
THE PREPAREDNESS OF ART TEACHERS FOR URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

by

LISA MICHEL'E WHITTINGTON

(Under the Direction of Carole Henry)

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on seven urban art teachers and their experiences in disadvantaged schools and examines three questions: How were these art teachers prepared for urban environments? What are the behaviors and attitudes of these urban art teachers? Does art teacher preparation match the behavior and attitude of these urban art teachers? The intent of this research was to focus on art teacher preparation for urban schools, but revealed a series of conditions and agency that hinder urban art teachers from providing high quality art experiences for at-risk students—conditions and agency that may drive art teachers to abandon at-risk populations.

The findings show that agencies designed to assist these urban art teachers, instead, pushed them into the margins. It was found, that each of these teachers, solely created a phenomenon of resilience and dedication while working with little to zero support. Some of these teachers were intimidated by their administrators,

and independently sought ways to provide the necessary instructional materials and supplies for their students-- often using personal resources and surrogate materials to deliver art instruction to their at-risk students.

This study relied upon Critical Theory and used art-based research to provide data for this study. All administrators would not agree to their art programs being studied, therefore, classroom observations were eliminated from this research. Consequently, this research had to primarily rely upon the narratives of seven art teachers, and narrative poetry created by the researcher. The researcher, also an urban art teacher, included an autoethnography of her experiences growing up at-risk, and working in disadvantaged environments.

The U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, and the U.S. Director of School Achievement, Monique Chism, wrote letters to school administrators and state Title I facilitators requesting their support for art teachers in disadvantaged populations all over the country. These letters demonstrate a conflict of attitudes and support for art education in at-risk environments—ironically-- while the data from a longitudinal study by the National Endowment of the Arts (2012) of more than (n=15,000) at-risk students-- validate the benefits of high quality art experiences, as well as the consequences of low art experiences of at-risk students. The urban art teacher is positioned in the center of this struggle which alters their behaviors and their attitude as this study suggests.

INDEX WORDS: Art Education, Art Teachers, Arts Based Research, Arts Gap, Arts Opportunity Gap, At-Risk, At-Risk Art, Autoethnography, Critical, Critical Theory, Education, Environment, Ethnography, Ethnographic Poetry, Marginalized, Narratives, Narrative Inquiry, Narrative Poetry, Poetry, Portraiture, Qualitative, Research Poetry, Resilient, Resiliency, Resourceful, Social Justice, Street Art, Subjugated, Teacher Voice, Teacher Preparation, Title I, Title I and the Arts, Underserved Populations, Urban, Urban Art Education, Well-Rounded Education

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## DEDICATION

For God.

Thank You for showing me the way.

*“And what might seem to be a series of unfortunate events  
might in fact be the first steps in a journey”*

(Lemony Snicket)

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Experiences in teacher education programs are not aligning with actual experiences in urban schools. There is a gap in practical research as it pertains to art teachers who work with disadvantaged populations. The purpose of this research is to focus on the behavior and attitudes of urban art teachers in highly disadvantaged environments, use social inquiry to make the world of the urban art teacher more visible, and to gain understanding of the needs of teaching art in urban schools. This study of seven art teachers who work in highly disadvantaged schools. Data is collected through their narratives, narrative poetry, an autoethnography of the researcher, and document data. This data is used to create a portrait of the art teacher who works in disadvantaged populations.

This research can impact the field by giving authentic insight into art education in urban, disadvantaged environments. This research can provide evidence for advocacy in art education and the art education experiences and conditions for at-risk students, as well as their art teachers, can improve. This work is Critical, as urban education needs teachers to confront historical trends rarely discussed in teacher education and public discourse. This work is Constructive, and leans on the theory of Paulo Freire, and Martin Haberman, who were concerned with education for the poor and challenged oppressive approaches to education for disadvantaged people. This work echoes an Urban Theoretical-- as the work and philosophy of Tupac Shakur expressed life in marginalized communities. A philosophical question posed by

Richard Siegesmund haunts this work—“Why do we teach art today?” and silently provokes art educators to stay in touch with the purpose for art education, especially in urban environments.

Urban environments are complex places. Art teachers assigned to urban classrooms should be prepared for the issues they will face so that they can deliver a high quality art education to the nation’s children regardless of socioeconomic status, race, conditions, culture or environment. Art teacher education must prepare the next generation of teachers to teach strong, overcome obstacles, and embrace the fulfillment of teaching disadvantaged students.

Unfortunately, evidence is emerging that teachers are not satisfied with the preparation they received once placed in an urban assignment. A pilot study I conducted (see Chapter Four) revealed high frustrations of arts teachers in urban environments with their prior teacher preparation experience. As an urban art teacher, I also felt highly unprepared and disconnected from my preparation when I was placed in an inner city school, even though I was from an urban environment. Studies reveal teacher education programs across the curriculum are not aligning with actual experiences in the field. Lisa Delpit (2006) collected responses from past participants of general education teacher programs. One respondent in this study of teacher education programs stated, “My teacher education was just a joke...I should have gotten the Academy Award for my performance in teacher education classes... the joke went on for four years” (p. 106). Another of Delpit’s respondents said, “I only learned how to teach white kids,” (p. 107), and another respondent stated that she had felt voiceless in her preparation program and “just gave up and decided to learn what they said to learn so I could just get out” (p. 108). Art education would greatly benefit from listening to urban art teachers and improving art education preparation systems.



This research will focus on the behavior and attitudes of urban art educators in highly disadvantaged environments and use this social inquiry to make their world more visible, gain more understanding of the needs of urban art teachers and provide a framework for meeting their needs in art teacher preparation programs. The following questions will drive the discourse: How were these art teachers prepared for urban environments? What are the behaviors and attitudes of these urban art teachers? Does art teacher preparation match the behaviors and attitudes of these urban art teachers? The focus is to identify possible disconnects with current preparation programs and seek to bridge possible gaps in art teacher preparation.

The information gained in this study can be used to inform, update, and advance the rigor of art teacher education, which will in turn improve the quality and dedication of art teachers and fortify stronger art education programs in urban schools. This research can also be used to advise professional development, reduce the number of art teachers leaving urban environments for better conditions, improve attrition (Aud, Hussar, Kena, Bianco, Frohlich, Kemp & Tahan, 2011), advance research, and guide advocacy in art education. In addition, this research can be used as a lobbying tool for art advocacy.

As the researcher, my experience in urban art education gives this study an experiential perspective and will contribute to the authenticity of the inquiry. In addition, it is anticipated that this research will encourage broader studies in art education that expand and explore the connections of art education in diverse environments, art education and social class, art teacher efficacy, and the preparation of art educators for urban schools. Suggestions for further research will be discussed as they have emerged from this study.

When schools of education neglect to adequately prepare teachers for diverse environments and populations, including environments and populations of lower and

disadvantaged socioeconomic status, they stall the potential of their pre-service teachers; they fail the children, and they fail society. Teachers in practice typically reference their preparation—however, they cannot reference knowledge or experience not gained. The product of inadequate preparation could greatly contribute to bias, feelings of superiority, desensitized values and negative attitudes for such a public servant occupation as teaching.

### **Urban in America**

The United States Census Bureau (2005) identifies urban as a built up area with a population of 50,000 or more. A city is dichotomous; it is a place of bright lights and high culture contrasted with malevolence and despondency (Pratt-Adams, Maguire, & Burns, 2010). Cities contain major museums and theaters that the urban and inner city residents cannot attend. Despite the architects and city planners that passionately talk about urban design and urban planning, the term *urban* varies from context to context (Stairs, Donnell & Dunn, 2012). The urban paradox is a contradiction, regarded as a place of opportunity and innovation while simultaneously being a place of degradation and crime. Especially in the educational context, the term urban is referred to as a set of economic conditions, marginalization, or a social construct (Soohoo, 2004). The Council of the Great City Schools (2011) classifies urban schools as schools located in cities with populations over 250,000 or student enrollment over 35,000. Educational discourse and media conversations about education in urban environments is usually dismal and referred to as something dark, dreary, and depressing. Popular culture and the news has made the term urban synonymous with “ghetto” (Soohoo, 2004, p. 10). Hollywood versions of urban schools like *Dangerous Minds*, *The Ron Clark Story*, *Freedom Writers*, *Lean on Me*, and *Won’t Back Down* are depicted as violent, overcrowded institutions with students and parents who do not care about education and white teachers positioned as saviors (Stairs et al,

2012). Martin Haberman (2005a) advises that using the term ‘urban’ as a catchall phrase or using it as a euphemism that denotes undesirable conditions make it more perplexing especially with the lack of consistency and agreement in the use of the term.

The term “inner-city” is often associated and used interchangeably with the term “urban.” Inner-city is a synonym for despair and refers to a holding space for people of color no longer of use to the larger economy (Kanpol, 2004). Inner-city is a more despondent and dismal sub-culture of urban and is regarded as the more depressed degree of urban. The poorest of the poor are usually located in the inner-city. Urban and inner-city schools have always had the greatest concentrated populations of students described as disadvantaged and at-risk. At-risk students are those students who are poor, immigrant, culturally deprived, and experience more hunger, homelessness, and violence in their everyday lives (Weiner, 1993). Because of the issues and challenges that disadvantaged students must face, their lives, their success, and their education is considered “at-risk.” At-risk refers to the status of people who live in the inner city and conveys images of poor people, people of color, and illegal immigrants (Soohoo, 2004). At-risk runs parallel with some of the ills found in urban environments. Students are at risk of dropping out, at risk of becoming pregnant, at risk of poverty, and highly at risk of being another negative statistic.

Images of the city can influence the conscious and the unconscious (Pratt-Adams, Maguire, & Burns, 2010) for the teacher as well as the student. Students who live in urban environments understand that being street smart is just as important as being book smart because small cultural mistakes can and do result in injury, death, or incarceration (Cardinal, 2004). Many urban students are very street smart. Street smarts and street culture can transfer into the classroom. Kincheloe and Steinberg (2010) were correct in stating that there is nothing simple about urban education. However, that does not mean that urban students are all difficult, that all urban students don’t want

to learn, and that all urban schools are ineffective.

Soohoo (2004) points to teacher preparation as the reason that urban schools are deficient. Another vital quality for preparing teachers for urban schools is to remember that “teacher-working conditions are student-learning conditions” (Hirsch & Emerick, 2007, p. 1). Teachers, however, can leave their conditions for something better while urban students cannot; yet someone is going to have to stay and teach those children—someone will have to show they care. Care is the underlying basis of concern in this research. If we care enough about art, and care enough about the conditions teachers work in, then we must also care about disadvantaged students—we cannot act like these conditions don’t exist because they are real. Art educators do not have to be present in the condition of urban environments to care. Art educators can care by advocating, researching, and declaring that conditions in urban art classrooms need to be improved and adequately preparing teachers for the challenges they may face by preparing art educators to be resilient, resourceful, and knowledgeable in public school systems.

When teachers are not adequately and competently prepared to teach in urban environments, they often leave, and then they are replaced by other teachers, and the revolving door in urban schools continues to spin around and around. The characteristics of urban schools are usually bureaucratic with excessive rules and regulations, inadequate funding, and overcrowded classrooms. Curricular and instructional decisions are usually made in central offices, and urban teaching faculties are often staffed with teachers who reside in middle class neighborhoods, many of whom have been socially isolated from the type of disadvantaged, poverty stricken, students they teach (Weiner, 1993). Public schools in the United States serve as great “sorting machines” through which inequality and privilege are produced (Noguera, 2008, p.53). “If you want to see segregated schools in the United States, start by looking for schools named for

Martin Luther King or Rosa Parks” (Kozol, 2005, p. 24). Schools with those names are usually found in urban and inner-city environments and in these schools, the most inequality and less privilege are likely found. If there is a crisis in the nation’s educational system, nobody would disagree that it is most severe in urban schools (Kozol, 2005). With the minimal financial resources and inadequate facilities, along with deficient materials, and bureaucracies urban art teachers must cope with, then these factors should have a direct connection to how they are prepared in teacher education programs (Kozol, 1991).

Teacher retention should be considered in teacher preparation because teacher retention contributes to the crisis in urban schools. Teacher turnover and attrition have become a national crisis in the United States. Current findings on teacher attrition are a clear indication that America’s teacher dropout problem is spiraling out of control (National Committee on Teaching and America’s Future, 2007). In urban schools, the teacher dropout rate is over 20%, and in some schools and districts, the teacher dropout rate exceeds the student dropout rate (Marvel, Lyter, Peltola, Strizek, & Morton, 2006). Haberman (2005b) cited poor working conditions, classroom management issues, overwhelming workload, discipline problems, low pay, little respect, lack of support, and paperwork as typical reasons for teachers leaving urban environments. If teachers are more adequately prepared for the realities of teaching in disadvantaged situations, the nationwide problem of teacher attrition could be alleviated. To retain teachers, Tredway (2000) appropriately identifies a plan for teacher preparation that includes rigorous courses of study with the goal of teacher programs to help urban teachers develop and maintain a stimulating, challenging, and realistic vision of their own. Pre-service teachers are typically enrolled in a traditional teacher preparation program with little or no emphasis on urban school teaching (Haberman, 1996). Focusing on effective teachers in urban

schools could provide more adequate solutions for teacher preparation, and the results could be higher retention rates and more effective teachers. Research indicates that effective teachers in urban schools persevere when they are older and more experienced. Research also indicates that African American teachers define the profile of teachers most likely to remain beyond the first three years in urban settings and that these teachers remain because they believe they are well suited for teaching in high poverty schools (McKinney, Berry, Dickerson,& Campbell-Whatley, 2007).

## **Title I**

Title I refers to funds designated to improve the achievement of disadvantaged students living at or below the poverty level. The purpose of Title I is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education. Schools eligible for Title I resources have 40% or more of their students living at or below the poverty level (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Title I schools with at least 40% of their students from low-income families can use Title I funding along with Federal, State, and local funds to operate a school wide program and upgrade instructional programs for the entire school (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.a) U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, sent a letter in 2009 to all education and political officials articulating that arts programs and professional development for art teachers can be supported locally via federal funds, such as Title I and Title II .

He stated:

Under ESEA, states and local school districts have the flexibility to support the arts. Title I, Part of ESEA funds art education to improve the achievement of disadvantaged students. Funds under Title II of ESEA can be used for professional development of arts teachers as well as for strategic partnerships with

cultural, arts, and other nonprofit organizations. In addition, the Department's Arts in Education program supports grants for model program development and dissemination and for professional development for arts educators. Moreover, local school districts can use funds under the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act for the arts along with other district expenses. (Duncan, 2009)

More information about Title I and the arts is discussed in the literature review section of this study. However, art teachers in urban environments are struggling to deliver art education with limited to zero resources and a lack of opportunities for content and contextual professional development once they professionally enter the field. This social inquiry of urban art teachers will provide an understanding of the preparation and professional development needed to develop and sustain resilient art educators. Urban art educators are a subjugated and marginalized group in America's public school system and need leaders, researchers, policy makers, and advocates to take a vigorous stand for the art classroom starting in urban schools. In addition, if art educators and researchers were to become more deeply invested in the real experiences in the art classroom, social justice, and advocating for equality in art education these issues would be reduced, conditions would improve, and in the long run-- at-risk students will receive a higher quality art education.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### **A Theoretical Guidepost to Urban Culture**

Critical pedagogy involves more than technique, textbook knowledge, and curricular knowledge. Teachers must not only understand a wide body of subject matter and the political structures of the school, but they must also acquire a wide range of education into the depth of the culture (Kincheloe, 2008). Surrogate forms of knowledge that access the depths of culture are accessible, and these truths are available in the form of the humanities and the arts. Poetry, song lyrics, visual arts, music videos, documentaries, movies, and narratives expressed by creative members of a particular culture offer an authentic look into that culture. These different forms of knowledge are valuable. Kincheloe adds that alternative bodies of knowledge that have been produced by marginalized people can be found in music and art.

One of the most powerful bridges for genuine connection with life in the inner city and is through the voice of Tupac Amaru Shakur. Tupac, a hip-hop artist, was murdered in 1996 but left poetry, musical lyrics, videos, and writings that are classic, powerful, compelling and cherished by people all around the world (Hoye & Ali, 2003). He paints the picture of life in the ghetto and what it is like to live 'at-risk.' His artistry speaks to the oppressed and the downtrodden (Flip, 2007). As an art educator, I have worked with the Shakur family and the Tupac Shakur Center for the Arts on projects that link from Japan to Africa to the inner city classrooms of America. The Tupac Center has been one of the biggest supporters of my urban art classroom and the work I do with inner city students. Tupac's sister, Set Shakur, and the Tupac



Foundation have purchased many art works produced by my middle school students that are on display around the world, made resources available to my classroom, adopted my school, and worked individually with some of the school's most troubled students. Tupac's mother, Afeni Shakur, has shown concern for many of my troubled students and provided transportation for them during the week and the weekends to participate in art activities and have a special place to express themselves. The Tupac Shakur Foundation for the arts also extended special permission for me to have special access to the academic records and background of Tupac Shakur to further investigate the depths of his connection with art education. Tupac Shakur is the perfect example of that bridge of alternative knowledge that Kincheloe (2008) speaks of that comes from marginalized communities.

The fact that Tupac Shakur had a very strong arts education background, primarily at the Baltimore School of the Arts, kept him, an at-risk student, highly engaged in his education. After his death, his mother, Afeni Shakur, established the Tupac Center for the Arts in 1997 to honor Tupac's legacy and commitment to arts education and to be a beacon of light to urban youth to find a place for expression from the complexities of urban life. His mother understood the power of a strong arts education in her troubled son's life. That strong arts education made him an intellect among his peers in the inner city. Leila Steinberg, who opened up a center in California for urban youth to have a place of expression encountered Tupac when he visited her center, and they developed a relationship that lead to her being one of the first managers of Tupac's career. She writes,

Tupac Amaru Shakur felt that through art we could incite a new revolution that incorporated the heart, mind, body, spirit, and soul...Tupac began to share his ideas on how the arts could be included in school curriculums to help youth address some of the

issues they were experiencing in their lives. By combining art with education, Tupac felt we could begin to heal society's pain and confusion.

(Words of Leila Steinberg, educator, writer, poet, and first manager of Tupac Amaru Shakur) (Shakur, 1999, p. xix)

Tupac's strong involvement in arts education helped to shape his theoretical, philosophical, political, and artistic prowess. Many scholars have rejected the stereotypical portrayal of Tupac and Hip-Hop, and critically hear Tupac's voice beyond his violent death, and past the media's painting of him as a "hoodlum" and a "criminal". Scholars have congregated at Harvard University to talk about Tupac Amaru Shakur as the guidepost to black [and urban] culture in the post-Civil Rights era and his legacy as a political figure, intellectual, and urban folk hero. University of California Berkley, Harvard University, and the University of Washington have college offered courses on Tupac Shakur (Hay 2003; Trip 2012). Cornell University has organized a Hip-Hop collection that archives the history and relevance of Hip-Hop and Tupac (Cornell University, n.d.). Atlanta University Center/Robert Woodruff Library has established a section in their library named "The Tupac Amaru Shakur Collection for Scholarly Research." The Atlanta University Center in 2012 also organized a Tupac Shakur Collection Conference in which a diverse range of scholars convened from around the world including Sweden, England, Canada, and various parts of the United States to discuss the importance and impact of Tupac and Hip-Hop in the fabric of American culture. These scholars refute the criticism that Hip Hop is not a scholarly field and refer to Tupac as a guidepost for understanding the complexities of urban environments. Scholars that congregated at Harvard tracked dozens of courses in universities and colleges around the nation dedicated to Tupac and

Hip Hop (Neal, 2003). Tupac has helped to change the thought that inner-city residents are not intelligent, don't read, and do not have contributions to philosophical thinking (Hess, 2007).

Even though statistics are evident that college graduates, or more so, even high school graduates, are least likely to come out of the inner city (Dillon, 2009), Tupac Shakur, a scholar in his own right and a sage to his people, said from an uncut prison interview (11tracymcgradyl1, 2011), "I always felt like I want to go to college, not like college in college university, but college in life." Tupac had the characteristics of a scholar. He was an avid reader who read and was influenced by scores of books including *The Art of War*, *Mastering the Art of War*, *Thoughts of a General*, *How to Win an Argument Every Time*, *Stalin*, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *1984*, *Black Like Me*, *Catcher in the Rye*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *The Souls of Black Folk*, *Serving Humanity*, and *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools* (Hess, 2007; Library Thing, 2007; mycomeup, 2010; Neal, 2003). His intellectual prowess is consistently heard throughout his works and everyday talk. He was undoubtedly stimulated by his participation in arts education; he painted images of real life with his words and used rich, thick metaphors. The arts were a part of his survival as he used the arts to teach and critically speak for disadvantaged people. He philosophized to the oppressed and marginalized communities using poetry, music, performance, and visual imagery. Tupac, a product of the inner city, is regarded as a modern folk hero to the urban community (Neal, 2003).

Hip-Hop culture is a cannon that shapes ideas, attitudes, and beliefs within the community. Still today, Tupac Shakur is a significant and compelling figure in urban and inner city environments,--years after his death. "Keeping it real," is the mantra that Tupac lived (Dyson, 2006). He kept it real in his life, and in his theoretical and philosophical artistry. His music, his poetry, his words, his thoughts are fortified classics in the urban community.

One of the effects of claiming that Tupac, thug persona and all is an important figure, a legend even, is to funnel critique of the society that made him believe that was the only way to survive. Tupac's ascent to sainthood is both a reflection of the desperation of the youth [and urban community members] who proclaim him and a society that has had too few saints that could speak to the hopelessness in our communities.

(Dyson, 2006, p. 16)

In the words of Nikki Giovanni, "Tupac stayed fresh and strong and committed to his people. White people decided what Black people should want and did as they wished with the image [of Tupac] our [ghetto] hero" (Shakur, 1999, p. xvii). Nikki Giovanni is correct in her assessment. Tupac and Hip Hop should be studied in the education realm to assist all teachers with understanding urban culture. Nikki Giovanni believed that Tupac deserves to be taken seriously (Shakur, 1999). Tupac called himself "Machiavelli" after the poet, humanist, philosopher, intellectual, and father of political science, Niccolo Machiavelli. One of Machiavelli's major lessons was to teach the common people the truth about politicians and expose their immorality towards the people (Nederman, 2009). Tupac was theoretical, philosophical, and intellectual, and many considered him a prophet of the streets. Like Paulo Friere (1970), Tupac was concerned with the oppression of his people and this concern reflected in his poetry, his lyrics, and where he spoke.

In my music, and in a lot of the music, it's only talking about the oppressed rising up against the oppressor, that's what my music is about... The only people that's scared are the oppressors. The only people that have any harm coming to them are those that oppress. (Tupac interview, Makavelli interview, 1995).

The data found on *You Tube* is immense empirical evidence guiding to the fact that many people, even after his death, fifteen years later, consider him a legend and a hero in the urban communities. At the Coachella performance, in Los Angeles, a Tupac hologram of the performer was presented on the stage, and the world went into a frenzy believing he was alive. The *Tupac Snoop Dog and Dr. Dre Perform Coachella Live* video was uploaded on April 17, 2012. By July 22, 2012, only three months later, the video already had accumulated 11,183, 520 views (Westfesttv, 2012, April). Oppressed, marginalized, and persecuted people still listen to Tupac for hope and understanding of their plight. To them, he is a saint, an angel, and a hero. In viewing the comments under his videos, one would find current daily visitors, all ages, and from around the world, presently expressing condolences, wishing he was still alive, and praising the ‘realness’ in his art for understanding disadvantaged life as they know it. I collected data from *You Tube* for Tupac’s most theoretical and philosophical songs that reveal a picture of Tupac as a theorist and urban hero. Tupac passed away in 1996. Even though the earliest of these videos were uploaded almost ten years after his death, the fact that he posthumously has received millions of visitors deems him relevant to urban communities. The following table is a synopsis of some of Tupac’s most philosophical work that expresses life for at-risk people.

**(Table 1)**

<b>Tupac Shakur's Urban Theoretical: His Most Popular Philosophical Works.</b>				
<b>Tupac Song</b>	<b>YouTube Channel</b>	<b>Number of views as of March 12, 2014</b>	<b>Date uploaded to You Tube</b>	<b>Song Synopsis</b>
Dear Mama	2PacVevo	19,014,181	July 5, 2011	Reflections on growing up in a single parent home.
Life Goes On	fhearnoiz	52,304,496	September 22, 2005	Monologue reflections of friends who have died young.
Keep Ya Head Up	bgjoker	31,339,555	February 12, 2006	Uplifting words to women who struggle to hold life together.
Ghetto Gospel	2PacVevo	22,346,445	July 5, 2011	The gospel of growing up poor.
Me Against the World	Lovi23	24,375,031	February 18, 2007	Wisdom for staying positive in a negative world.
Brenda's Got a Baby	bgjoker	11,794,806	February 12, 2006	Teenage pregnancy and the effect on the community.
Changes	2Pac Vevo	10,067,400	July 5, 2011	Addresses political and moral struggles for Black people.
So Many Tears	bgjoker	5,031,323	February 12, 2006	Personal suffering and spiritual struggles of ghetto life.
Thugz Mansion	Princemakaveli7	5,456,134	August 17, 2006	Reflections of a resting place of peace for at risk people.
Until the End of Time	Surthirteen	4,115,364	March 12, 2007	Searches for inner peace within self and relationships.

The similarities between 25-year-old Tupac and Martin Luther King at the age of 25 led Dr. Michael Eric Dyson of Georgetown University to suggest that they had more in common in spite of Dr. King being the most celebrated and Tupac being the most vilified of their generation (Neal, 2003). Dyson states: “[Tupac’s] eloquent rage embodied the hopelessness of his generation” (Dyson, 2001, cover). Tupac captures the urban and inner-city zeitgeist through his artistry and his captured conversations in many *You Tube* videos including *Makeveli Interview VERY RARE*, *Uncut Prison Interview: Full*, and MTV’s *Tupac Shakur in His Own Words by Abbie Kears* (Icemilf, 2009; Kears, 2011; 11tracymcgrady11, 2011). The visual presentations and imagery used in his music videos are real, authentic, and captivating. His words, lyrics, and prose, are compelling. In the case of Tupac Shakur, art does imitate life. Reflected in his work are the realities that urban teachers will face. There is dynamic movement between thought, language, and reality that results in notable creative capacity (Freire, 1998) as demonstrated in Tupac’s outline of urban life. Pre-service teacher education programs can benefit from the depths of Tupac’s literature, videos, interviews, and music to help teachers gain a sense of understanding urban communities. Tupac Shakur and Paulo Freire were parallel thinkers with the same goals. Freire’s philosophy was always to understand reality (Rosatto, 2008). Tupac’s mantra was “Keeping it real” (Dyson, 2001). To understand reality and keep-it-real, art teachers should continually reflect on *why* they teach and *why* they teach art.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study is framed around critical theory and is based upon critical pedagogy and constructivism. Critical pedagogy has important insight to pass along to all people (McClaren & Kincheloe, 2007). The reflections of art teachers who work in urban and inner city environments are significant to this study. Systems that devalue and minimize the work of teachers engaged in

living practice uphold the thought that those outside of the classroom are the givers of truth, when it is actually the teachers and the students who are the creators of the educational story and experiences that emanate in the living classroom (Cary, 1998). It is from those experiences that art teacher preparation can be reconstructed and reformed.

One of the biggest challenges for teacher education programs is the issue of diversity (Delpit, 2006). There is need for a deeper understanding of social spaces and environments, and an even deeper need to value the importance of these places to the people that reside in them. Not all places and environments are the same; a one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate or adequate for the preparation of art teachers who could be assigned to inner city and urban schools. Urban education needs a critical approach that values accessible knowledge within the environment. Critical pedagogy has a lot to learn from the subjugated knowledge of marginalized groups (McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007), particularly from urban environments.

Being that “space has both a material and interpretive quality” (Haymes, 1995 p. 2), there is a need in education for environmental space and communities to be more deeply understood and interpreted, physically, socially, and mentally. Because environments like urban/inner city, suburban and rural are different-- each community comes with their own set of beliefs, attitudes, values, customs, and cultures, in addition to the various economic levels, and smells, tastes, looks, colors, and quirks-- more value needs to be placed on what I am calling *environmental diversity*. Environmental diversity deserves its own place in art teacher education apart from where it is usually furrowed in with discussions about diversity in general or mentioned under the multicultural umbrella.

Social places that are economically disadvantaged, non-elite, poor, and minority are usually placed in the margins of society. Urban art teachers are pushed into these margins



because they are a part of that community. The intent of critical pedagogy is to strengthen, develop, and advance the academic experiences of oppressed and marginalized groups (Pratt-Adams et al, 2010) and allow educators to delve into their realities. A critical urban education asks teachers to confront historical trends rarely discussed in teacher education and public discourse (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2010). Critical pedagogy can empower [art] teachers to recognize and challenge unjust hierarchies in race, social class, and gender (Pratt-Adams et al, 2010). Critical scholar bell hooks refers to the urban teachers that taught her as her “pedagogical guardians” because they “taught her to read the world as well as her text” (hooks, 1994 p. 50, p. 106).

Pre-service art teacher education should prepare art teachers to read the world just as much as their textbooks. What a student is taught in class is usually based from the reference experience of the teacher or the teacher educator. If the teacher or teacher educator’s experiences are solely from the view of a suburban, elitist, or privileged environment, it underrates the experience of the public school student or possible experience of a public school teacher. A public school student’s experiences in the world are vital to his or her learning. John Dewey asserted that a student’s greatest possession and greatest asset is his own personal experience (Dewey quoted in Delpit, 2006). Most of a student’s experiences takes place in the environment in which he or she lives. Teachers must instruct beyond the depths of the textbook in urban environments because these spaces are so complex. They have to connect the student’s experiences and then branch out so the student is attached to their educational and artistic experiences and invested in their learning. Critical pedagogy is therefore crucial for the reform of urban schools (Pratt-Adams et al, 2010), and the restructuring and improvement of art education. If the art teacher is disconnected from the students, does not understand the

environment, and accepts the stereotypes portrayed by the media and society, then that art teacher is positioned for failure as an urban teacher. Critical pedagogy requires critical dialogue (Pratt-Adams et al, 2010). It is the duty of art teacher education programs to critically educate teachers about the diverse environments in which they could possibly be assigned to in their career.

Soohoo (2004) argues that if program teacher educators are responsible for creating learning experiences for teacher candidates that will prepare them for the environments in which they will be working, then it should be a mandate for teacher educators to understand and not assume collective subjectivity about urban communities and to learn as much as possible about these communities. Paulo Freire (1993) fairly condemns uncritical educational practice (Pratt-Adams et al, 2010). Uncritical educational practice allows art teachers to graduate from teacher preparation programs unprepared for urban art classrooms resulting in teachers leaving the profession or transferring to other schools because they are not fortified for the conditions of urban schools (Aud et al, 2011).

Urban art education has been mainly excluded from the conventional mainstream of art education and is not addressed in depth and breadth. The emphasis of knowledge pre-service teachers acquire, and major influences for art education are based more on privilege. Inequalities and exclusions continue to assert their influence in social terms of the city (Pratt-Adams, et.al 2010) including art education. Art teachers who work in disadvantaged urban environments are just as marginalized as the students of these environments. Exclusions and inequalities of urban art teachers show up in lack of adequate training, absence of professional development, the scarcity of hiring art education professors with substantial experience in public schools (Milbrandt & Klein, 2008), scant inclusion in professional journals and literature, deprived

representation on art education committees, and omission in art teacher preparation textbooks. The gatekeepers' lack of experience with disadvantaged environments and disconnection to the realities of urban and inner city schools results in the exclusion of urban art education and its teachers. Most insertions of urban art education are scant and usually appear as an afterthought, or a politically correct postscript instead of a thoughtful, considerate inclusion. Art is in fact, already marginalized (Siegesmund, 1998) and therefore, since urban and inner city schools are marginalized communities, then urban art teachers are a doubly marginalized group.

While many art teachers have quit their jobs or transferred from urban environments (Aud et al, 2011) out of the margins of society and into the center of society, there are other urban art teachers who stay in the periphery, forge a path, and erect a viable and functional path in urban and inner city schools. In many cases, as evidence will suggest, there are teachers who are so dedicated that they fight for and even personally fund the public school art classroom (even in spite of an economic recession) because they are given no resources or supplies. These are the teachers who are most likely to promote their student interests over their own interests and over the mainstream interest of art education's gatekeepers. "Freire's challenge of the neutrality of education is that there should be concern for the purpose of education and which social groups' interests are promoted" (Pratt-Adams et al, 2010, p. 101). Reading professional magazines and journals and observing the pictures in them, reading committee reports, and especially observing the demographic in art education conferences leaves one to reflect on who art is for, who art education is for, and which social groups' interests in art are promoted. Probably not intentional, nevertheless, innocent practices are the most damaging (Pratt-Adams, et. al, 2010). These unintentional practices, however, affect what happens in the art classroom, what happens to an art teacher's career, and what happens to art education around the country.

## **The Pedagogy of the Oppressed and the Pedagogy of Poverty**

The *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970) and *Pedagogy of Poverty Versus Good Teaching* (Haberman, 2010) seek to call serious attention to oppressive teaching approaches often used in urban schools. Paulo Freire and Martin Haberman, two critical and constructive theorists concerned with education for the poor, examined and challenged oppressive approaches to education for disadvantaged people. In her book *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, bell hooks (1994) stated:

I was tormented by the classroom reality I had known both as an undergraduate and a graduate student. The vast majority of our professors....were not actualized, and they often used the classroom to enact rituals of control that were about domination and the unjust exercise of power. In these settings, I learned a lot about the kind of teacher I did not want to become. (hooks 1994, p 5)

This pedagogy of control hooks describes is explored in the work of Freire (1970) and Haberman (2010). It is also replicated in the many public school classrooms as the product of less than adequate teacher preparation.

*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* develops educational, philosophical and political theory in which Freire (1970) delineates a premise of oppression and establishes critical awareness as the solution for deliverance from oppression and marginalization. He asserts that people who are oppressed must look outside of themselves to understand the situation and think about their immediate world. Because urban art teachers are a marginalized and subjugated group working in an oppressed environment, Freire would suggest that these art teachers must do the same--look outside of self, understand the issues, and reflect on the world they are in because liberation comes from within through reflection and discourse about reality which will then lead to action

(Freire, 1970). As researcher and urban teacher, I looked inside of myself, reflected on the environment and the subjugated realities and tried to understand the issues—in the process, I liberated myself. Through this research, I am taking action—as Freire suggested-- and I seek to liberate my peers in urban art education. Subjugated teachers need to think about reality, liberation, and reflection and openly talk about the ‘real’ in urban environments and the idea of “self” in that urban reality. These kinds of discussions in art education programs would be healthy for teacher preparation and could help teachers plan more appropriate actions, implement effective management approaches, and develop teaching styles adequate to the urban environment.

Freire (1970) identifies the traditional “banking concept” (p. 72) in education as an oppressive relationship between teacher and student where the teacher is the oppressor and the student is expected to be an unthinking and passive receiver of the knowledge bestowed by the teacher who knows everything. The teacher is the depositor of the information, and the student is the empty, unfilled vessel who is granted the gift to receive the teacher’s knowledge. Freire distinguishes “problem-posing” (p. 79) education as the alternative option to the traditional approach. Problem-posing education involves the teacher and the student working together through dialogue to address solutions to problems, and in the process, the student and teacher learn from each other. This interactive dialogue is especially appropriate in urban settings and is a successful approach with disadvantaged students. Scholar bell hooks (1994) cautioned that the banking systems and oppressive approaches often materialize and transpire in university classrooms; therefore, some teachers may never know what they are missing in their training until they are assigned to an urban school. Because art is so personal, the interactive dialogue in

problem-posing education versus the banking approach will make students feel more connected to the teacher with the feeling that the teacher understands them and cares.

Nel Noddings (2005) believes that schools should aim simultaneously to teach academics and caring to produce competent, caring, lovable people. Noddings is a Reconstructionist concerned that too much emphasis is placed on testing and not enough emphasis is placed on caring. In her book, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education*, Noddings suggests that curricula be adapted to better meet the social and emotional needs of the students. Corresponding with Nel Noddings theory, as a teacher, I am often torn between caring for the students or following policy; I am pressed to follow mandated curriculum, yet the scope and sequence is not supported with the necessary resources and supplies for implementation and does not fit the unpredictable needs of my students. As an urban teacher, I have to also work at building my students up emotionally and socially and tend to their emotional needs. A majority of urban students have extreme issues that need care. I have to emotionally and socially incorporate care and expression unique to their context into their lessons.

Recently, I had a student share with me that he was going to tell his father that he was a member of a gang and the only way he could tell his father was through an art project. He stated “My father will know what it means...” He felt that through his art he could open up and talk to his father. Another student created an artwork of herself crying out in the darkness and expressed in her artwork that no one hears her. As a teacher, I had to show I cared. Another student, who was known for being difficult throughout the school, came to my art classroom, quietly sat in the corner, and created a project that expressed a clock and jail bars. On his project, he stated how time stopped when his father went to jail to serve eight years of time for a crime he committed. Another student created an art project with sketches of alcohol bottles, and

expressed that she drank alcohol to ease her troubles. How as a teacher can I not show care in the classroom?

Subjects can be organized around thematic units of care as Noddings (2005) suggests. I believe that nowhere is the theme of care more needed than in urban school environments with high populations of at-risk students. Recently, the counselor at my school told me that a student who had attempted suicide (and failed) has returned back to school and requested to be placed in my class. Several weeks prior, another one of my students showed up to my class to tell me that he was being “kicked out” and sent to an alternative school. He was always in my classroom even when he was not supposed to be, begging me to just let him in the art room. I was surprised when he told me he was being sent to an alternative school because he never gave me a minute of trouble. But one specific day before the school day started, he pulled me aside and told me he came to my class to tell me goodbye. I was one of the only teachers he acknowledged before he left the school. Ten days later, I was speaking at his funeral; he had committed suicide. I questioned myself and my subject—what is it about the art room that makes students feel safe there? What makes them feel it is a place of healing? I provide academic structure, but I also require them to be who they are through their artistic expressions. I talk to each one individually and treat them like human beings. They know I care. As a teacher it is imperative that I incorporate care into my classroom because it is unknown what my students are dealing with on a personal level. The care shown in the classroom could possibly help them personally. Noddings’ work about caring is a complement to the work of Haberman (2010), who observed the static, rigid approaches with lack of care executed in the urban classroom.

In 1958, Haberman reiterated the actions and procedures he repeatedly observed in high poverty schools, and he properly termed what he observed as the “Pedagogy of Poverty”

(Haberman, 2010). He exposed the perpetual cycle of actions from teachers to principals that keep the unsuccessful wheel spinning and going nowhere in economically disadvantaged educational settings. Haberman is also one of the few theorists to thoughtfully study all teachers including art teachers in his observation. He argues that the dysfunctional menu of urban teacher actions characterizes all levels and all subjects, and he focused on the whole child. He was concerned for the urban child who not just learned math, reading and science, but for the urban child who was involved in the arts. He describes what he termed core functions as the ‘Pedagogy of Poverty’--the typical pedagogy style of urban teachers. They are as follows:

a.) giving information, b) asking questions, c.) giving directions d.) making assignments, e.) monitoring seatwork, f.) reviewing assignments, g.) giving tests, h.) reviewing tests, i.) assigning homework, j.) reviewing homework, k.) settling disputes, l.) punishing non-compliance, m.) marking papers n.) and giving grades.

Haberman (2010) precisely identifies a teacher’s approach to working with at-risk students as the most powerful indicator of an effective urban teacher. His close observation of urban teachers lead him to also identify the “core acts of exemplary urban teachers” (p. 85) as the alternative approach to the pedagogy of poverty’s dysfunctional teaching style. These model acts involve more of what the student is doing than the teacher:

When students are involved with issues they regard as vital concerns; When aspects of the curriculum deepen students’ basic understanding of life; When students are being helped to see major concepts, and big ideas instead of pursuing facts; When students are involved in planning what they will be doing; When students are involved in applying ideals such as fairness, equity, and justice; When students are involved in redoing,



polishing, or perfecting their work; When teachers involve students with technology;  
When students are involved in reflecting on their own lives. (Haberman, 2010, p. 85).

Martin Haberman's (2010) critical lens and constructivist stance on teacher preparation for urban environments extends over 50 years and should be applied in the education of teachers for urban environments. He intricately examined urban education from the students to the teachers to the administrators, and his work makes crucial contributions to our understanding the dynamics of teaching various subjects in disadvantaged schools and working with at-risk and disadvantaged students. He makes interesting suggestions about interviewing teachers for urban teacher positions. The extension of Haberman's involvement and interest in urban pedagogy prompted him to design an interview protocol (Haberman, 1995) in which he asks an important question that should be visited in teacher preparation: *"Is it possible to teach children you don't love? Is it possible for children to learn from teachers they don't love?"* (Gursky, n.d.; Haberman Educational Foundation, n.d; Haberman, 1995)

Through Haberman's extensive work, he has identified the functions and ideologies of urban teachers that enabled them to be effective with at-risk students and in urban school environments (Haberman, 1995). Teachers who have one approach for every situation and every environment are less effective; urban teachers need a repertoire of approaches to remain constant, adaptable, and effective. This chart highlights effective urban teaching functions as identified by Haberman:

**(Table 2.)**

<b>Effective Urban Teaching Functions</b>
Protecting children's learning. Teachers are able to capitalize on all learning opportunities.
Persistence. Teachers constantly pursue strategies and activities so all students can meet success.
Approach to at-risk students. Teachers take responsibility for students learning, regardless of the conditions they face.

Putting ideas into practice. Teachers can relate theory and practice.
Professional/personal orientation to students. Teachers expect and are able to develop rapport with students.
The bureaucracy. Teachers can adjust to and cope with the demands of the bureaucracy.
Fallibility. Teachers take responsibility for their personal errors and mistakes.
Emotional and physical stamina. Teachers are able to endure the challenges of urban, high-poverty settings.
Organizational ability. Teachers have extraordinary organizational and managerial skills.
Explanation of teacher success. Teachers believe that success is met by effort and hard work, and not by ability alone.
Explanation of children's success. Teachers are committed to student autonomy and individual differences.
Real teaching. Teachers engage in active teaching.
Making students feel needed. Teachers are able to make their students feel needed and wanted in the classroom.
The material vs. the student. Teachers find approaches that will assist students in mastering the material.
Gentle teaching in a violent society. Teacher's ideology is promising, even in light of a violent society.

(McKinney, Berry, Dickerson, & Campbell-Whatley, 2007 p.4).

Haberman (2010) reiterates his theory about the pedagogy of poverty, continually echoes that the pedagogy of poverty system of teaching is about control, and appeals to those in control who believe that at-risk students are best served by a directive-controlling pedagogy. Directive-controlling pedagogy is too closely related to the prison systems of control. Prisons are directive and controlling. Education should not focus on controlling the student, but growing the student as a human being. Teachers should act as facilitators of student growth and advancement, not act as wardens. Haberman (2010) rightfully insists that the pedagogy of poverty is a system of control and does not work. His suggestions are human and appropriate. He explains that “classroom atmosphere created by constant teacher direction creates passive resentment and overt resistance and teachers burn out because of the emotional and physical energy expended to maintain authority” (p. 84). This is obvious and evidenced from the statistics on urban teacher attrition (Aud et al, 2011).

The authoritarian and directive nature of the pedagogy of poverty, therefore is not the best practice for superior teachers and makes teachers *think* that they are in charge by those teacher acts as mentioned in the steps of the pedagogy, but it is the student who is really in charge. Haberman (2010) makes it clear that when teachers used this directive controlling form of teaching, it is actually the students who control, manage, and shape the behavior of the teacher and then reward the teacher by complying with or punish the teacher by resisting. “Teachers become more like hostages responding to students threats of noncompliance and disruption” (p. 84). These are the powerful but lasting elements that should be studied and understood in pre-service preparation for art teachers to work effectively in urban contexts. Pre-service teachers should be prepared to facilitate progress, not dominate and control. Mastering these techniques for effective urban teaching will result in student and teacher rapport and earned student respect.

Environments become extreme and challenging because it is a war of control in which the teacher eventually gets frustrated, loses and leaves. Incorporating Haberman’s theories in preparation would better prepare teachers for these challenges and help retain teachers in challenging environments. Haberman (2010) found that the few urban schools that function as models of student learning have teachers who maintain control by “establishing trust and involving students in meaningful activities” (p. 85). For effective urban teachers, discipline and control are a consequence of their teaching, not a prerequisite condition of student learning. Haberman (2010) and Freire’s (1970) theories on working with disadvantaged communities are closely related. Haberman proposes that good teaching draws out, rather than dispenses knowledge, while Freire condemns the banking-concept and encourages problem- posing education. According to Haberman, the approach of “We dispense the knowledge, you bring your own container” (p. 87) does not work well in urban settings. Both of these theorists are

perceptive in their critical lens and constructive stance on education of marginalized and oppressed people. Art educators in preparation and in practice should focus on these theories and keep an important question in the forefront of the mind when examining their approach to pedagogy in any location: *Why do we teach art today?*

### **Why do we teach art today?**

Echoes of my academic experiences as a public school student, reflections of my professional experiences as an art teacher, thoughts of my participation in local and National Art Education Conferences, and memories of myself as an art education graduate student have constantly tossed, stirred, agitated and followed me. I am compelled by pensive questions on this arts journey: What is this all for? Why are you doing this? What's the purpose? But one question in particular follows me around demanding thoughtful reflection as I forge through this research process. It is not the question that drives this research; however, it deserves a space in this study for the profound theoretical insight and connections it delivers to the substance of this investigation.

Richard Siegesmund (1998) asked a soft question with a powerful presence: *Why do we teach art today?* This question rightfully demands an answer for the reason that it stirs up relevance to the present. The question sits quietly in public school art rooms and university classrooms waiting to be acknowledged. "Why do we teach art" is a different question from "Why do we teach art *today?*" Many teachers have to develop their educational philosophy by answering why they teach art, but by Siegesmund's tagging the word 'today' at the end of the question adds fervor to the statement and pulls the answer into the present moment. Revisiting this question in the conceptual framework of a critical and constructivist lens gives more

substance and meaning to why we train others to teach art. The question is speculative and theoretical and is for not just for pre-service teachers; it serves the entire profession.

This question also provokes and aggravates the thoughts not just of *why* we teach, but *who* we teach, and *where* we teach. The word *today* indicates the desperate need for teaching art to be current in present day society. The question has a polite determination to be noticed and thoughtfully answered. It reaches for art teaching that is relevant to the attitudes, beliefs, values, communities, cultures, and the social existence in the surrounding environment in which the question lingers. The question reminds art educators to teach in the classrooms of *today*, in the *place of the now*. If it is possible to take the viewpoint of Siegesmund's (1998) essay and place it into the context of World War II, the Iraqi war, or the Civil Rights Movement, it is possible to begin to view the depths and importance of such a philosophical question. In the context of urban art education, the question becomes extremely profound. Why do some teach art today in urban environments where there are more complex challenges---and choose to stay? *No Child Left Behind* has challenged the breadth of art education and *Race to the Top* will confront its relevance from the classroom to the teacher preparation program (Duncan, 2009b; Hourigan, 2012) while Common Core is redefining what it means to teach art successfully. Art education, especially in urban environments, is experiencing a paradigm shift toward standardization, accountability, and testing when the nation stands in the face of its most troubling days. Such a question like 'Why do we teach art *today*' should linger and remain steadfast so the purpose of teaching art is not lost.

Urban environments are multifarious and so is art. Siegesmund's (1998) essay supports the idea that critical [art] theory becomes a curricular rationale and all education, including art

education, seeks to remake society. The real issue is not how art can be justified, but what can be reaped from art that would help society. *Why do we teach art today?*

Art education can be restructured to be even more of an educational asset, but not at the expense of losing the convictions of art education. Art is one of the only areas in the curriculum where free expression from the standardization of right answers and wrong answers rests (Siegesmund, 1998), yet standardization is slowly seeping into the art curriculum as a way of protecting the arts by providing justification to accountability authorities. Accountability is creeping into the art classrooms in such a way that it is making the authentic tenets of art synthetic. More profound studies and deeper research into the vast unexplored issues in art education are untouched and waiting to be explored and presented as a wake-up to administrators and policy makers who need to better understand the depths of art education than seek to have it justified solely through numerical data. Art is a refuge, a place of release from the tensions life and makes a contribution to the whole being (Siegesmund, 1998). Eisner (2002) observed that a “curriculum is a mind-altering device” (p. 148), yet minds can also be altered by what is eliminated from the curriculum. Art teachers who are skilled in the arts but who are not prepared to work in urban environments, will be assaulted with the questions “Why am I here?” and “What are my options?” when they are in their classrooms faced with issues they are not trained for. The opportunity for a teacher to transform society is lost if the teacher gives up. Nevertheless, there are art teachers who will have to go into the margins; that is a reality. There is a need for art education researchers to dig deeper and venture into the margins of society with the art teachers who are there. “Art education is a tool for historical and moral instruction capable of transforming individuals and society. Art education is explicitly placed in the service of social transformation. Schools are societal institutions” (Siegesmund, 1998, p. 201),

therefore, art classrooms are especially capable of social renewal and conversion. More relevant, substantial, and aggressive research on the importance of art education would benefit art education programs and all of society.

Art education preparation needs to be more actualized and more critical. According to hooks (1994), teachers must be committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being in order to teach in a way that empowers students. Thich Nhat Hanh, a Buddhist monk who influenced the cultural and political work of bell hooks (hooks, 2000), emphasized that the teacher, as a helping professional, should be directed to helping self-first because if the helper is unhappy, the helper cannot help many people (hooks, 1994). Siegesmund (1998) argues that sound rationale for art is grounded in curricular structure and methods of pedagogy. Art education nurtures creativity, and cultivates the artistic. The benefits of art education are not designed to be measured; all of the gains are ineffable and too great. Art has too many possible answers for one question to be right. To try to measure the breadth and value of art education would be like trying to capture the wind in cupped hands.

In urban, disadvantaged environments, where there is more violence, more disease, more poverty, more complex living situations, an abundance of at-risk students, and more of a need for expression, what art teachers do and how they approach pedagogy is of great importance. Developmental science cannot tell us much about what it means to be artistic (Siegesmund, 1998), it can only scratch the surface, like the researchers who found that students who are highly engaged in the arts performed better, had better attitudes about self and community and positively influenced the social context (Holloway & Krensky, 2001) but still, the effects of art, and teaching art to these students cannot easily be measured. Even though “teachers engaged in critical pedagogy must understand the social, psychological, and political dimensions of the

schools, districts, and systems in which they work” ( McClaren & Kincheloe, 2007, p. 16) there is no instrument that can measure the heart and spirit in the quality of their work. *Why do we teach art today?* “It seems reasonable and appropriate that educators [and pre service teachers] be aware of their own assumptions about art education, and that they are able to clarify in their own minds what it is they are choosing to teach and why” (Siegesmund 1998, p. 198). On a personal note, I teach art today because I get to help young people grow and develop a part of their mind and thinking that would not ordinarily get the quality nurturing outside of the art classroom that it could inside of an art classroom. I teach art today in an urban environment because I know I can do it, and do it well.

## **Literature Review**

The literature review is organized into five sections. Everything falls under the umbrella of “urban” because of their relation. The first section discusses the environment starting with urban education and then discusses art and urban populations. The next section focuses on At-risk students and street art. The third section moves into discussing programs that play a major role in public schools and that support and/or effect school programs. Fourthly, teacher readiness is discussed by examining overall teacher preparation, teacher efficacy, standards for art teacher preparation, and a new teacher evaluation instrument, edTPA. Lastly, two influential studies are discussed: The Flower Teachers and Dreamkeepers that were influential in moving this research forward.



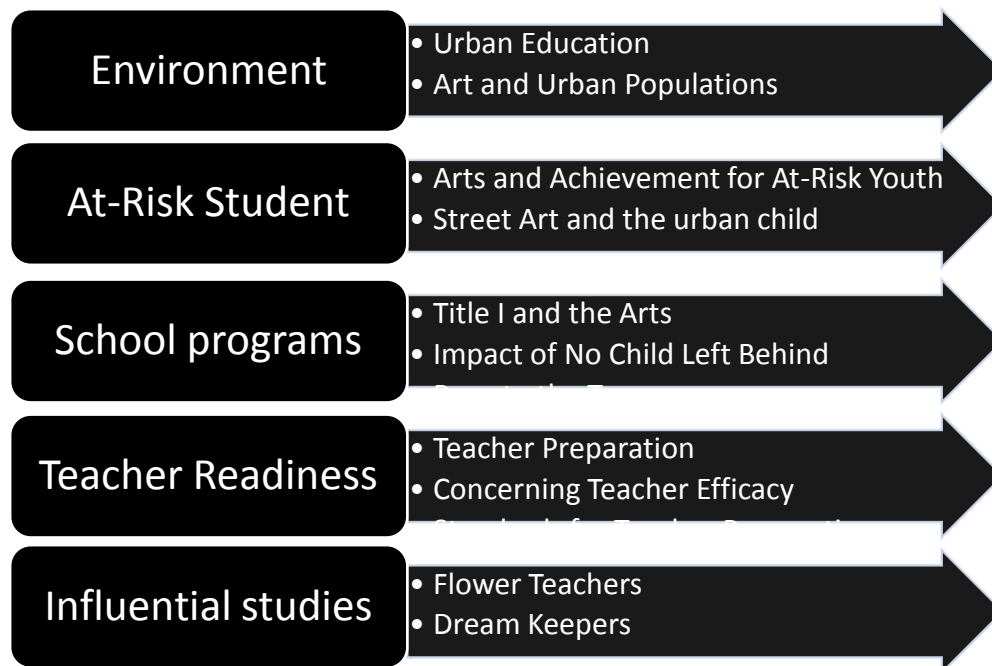


Figure 1.0 Conceptual Framework for literature review

### *Urban Education*

Lynda Tredway (2000) compares the realities of urban teaching to a juggling act that requires focus, and a repertoire of knowledge, mind skills, and heart skills. In the urban context, teachers have to deal with issues of race, economics, social class, discipline, violence, crime, safety, low expectations, constant negative discourse, lack of parental support, inadequate resources, lack of administrative support, numerous policies, and a highly bureaucratic system; this is all on top of the demands of actually teaching a classroom full of students who have basic needs that need to be met in order to focus on academics. A seasoned educator and administrator who trains instructional coaches in a major urban district in Georgia has a motto: “If you can work in an urban district, you can work anywhere.” What she means is that if you have worked successfully in urban schools-- the most complex environments to work in, you can handle any other environment with skill and ease. This statement supports Tredway’s (2000) belief that

urban teaching is like a juggling act; however, Tredway adds that urban teachers also must be advocates for social justice.

Supporting the right to equality and dignity for the students under their care is a part of urban education and social justice. Rigor in social justice curricula in education for pre-service teachers is greatly needed so teachers know more about how to handle these issues. It is necessary for every teacher to be taught to serve urban students and how to handle social justice issues because careers in teaching are unpredictable, especially in the present day crisis in education. In Tredway's (2000) essay, she goes on to emphasize *retaining* teachers. It's one thing to train teachers, but it's quite another thing to be able to keep them and make them want to stay; especially in disadvantaged schools. Urban schools are noted for their "swinging door" of teachers going in and out of these schools. Urban schools can't retain teachers because teaching programs often do not prepare teachers for sustainability in the classroom.

Tredway also contends that programs should be designed to yield strong urban teachers who can handle the demands of urban teaching. She highlights the efforts of the Urban Initiative (UI), a project of the George Washington University's Graduate School of Education and Human Development where strong emphasis is placed on contextual teaching which enables student teachers to employ their knowledge in a variety of school contexts to solve simulated or real world problems. Educators in the UI kept a focus on the "real," had their student teachers solve real world problems, and challenged them as urban teachers to be active, expressive, and imaginative teachers. Tredway (2000) found it is vital for pre-service teachers being prepared for urban environments to maintain a vision because they are bombarded daily with negative messages about the skill, knowledge, and ability deficits of urban students. Tredway accurately contends that teachers must be fortified to face the constant negative messages and discourse

about the urban environment and urban student ability and to develop a strong positive vision of their own. These teachers have to develop an eye for the beautiful in unexpected places and a sense for what is possible in urban environments. Tupac Shakur, eloquently expressed such a vision in his autobiographical poem entitled “The Rose that Grew from the Concrete.”

*Did you hear about the rose that grew from a crack*

*In the concrete*

*Proving nature’s laws wrong it learned 2 walk*

*Without having feet*

*Funny it seems but by keeping its dreams*

*It learned 2 breathe fresh air*

*Long live the rose that grew from the concrete*

*When no one else even cared!*

(Shakur, 1999, p. 3)

If urban teachers keep their vision, despite the negative images and messages about the urban school environment, they can have a vision of helping their students grow through the cracks of urban education as Tupac described. Yet like Tredway (2000) argues, current pre-service teacher preparation programs do little to alter outlooks and practices of urban education and often perpetuate the same negative vision allowing their student-teachers to just focus on the negative cracks, the low achievement and the problems while programs like UI help students see the possibilities of the “cracks in the concrete” by engaging teacher students in dialogue, letting students express their fears and uncertainties, and encouraging them to address their own assumptions. Not all good teachers are good teachers in urban contexts (Tredway, 2000) because they have not been prepared; they must be better prepared to be good teachers everywhere.

If the projections are accurate, Cochran-Smith (2004) says that children of color will constitute the statistical majority of the population of public school students by 2035, yet there is a declining enrollment of pre-service teachers of color in teacher education programs. According to Cochran-Smith, the teaching force is increasingly White European American and will remain that way for some time to come. She suggests that it is essential to take action to fill the void between the school and the life influences of the pre-service teacher in order to fix the disparities; therefore changing the way teachers are educated is necessary. Teaching careers are becoming more and more unpredictable. Prospective art teachers will have to face a variety of situations and a diverse assortment of people. Most schools hire one art teacher, and art teachers could unpredictably be shuffled in a school district; they can't really know for sure where they may end up. Michael Day (1997), former president of the National Art Education Association (NAEA), said that prospective art teachers may have to face difficult trials and that it would be unfair to send them out from the college or university unprepared to meet those challenges. For over thirty years, Martin Haberman has argued that not all teaching is the same, that urban teaching is different, and that successful urban teachers demonstrate a distinct mixture of skills and beliefs (Gursky, n.d.).

From my experience in urban environments, those distinct mixtures of skills for urban art teachers include resourcefulness, resilience, and redirection. Urban art teachers need to be resourceful in finding ways to support their classrooms. They need to be able to find and write grants, use alternative supplies, and find and link people and organizations to their classrooms that will support their work. Resourcefulness is required because urban art teachers do not always have adequate budgets and support systems to reinforce what they do in the classroom. It is important that urban art teachers learn to do a lot with a little and become ingenious and

inventive. Urban art teachers will have to be resilient because situations, issues, and events can happen in urban environments that could deflate their morale. Morale will less likely deflate if the teacher can stand steadfast and strong and the teacher reflects on strengths that were developed in teacher preparation but is also armed with strategies to deal with the bureaucracy that could become an obstacle. The urban art teacher needs fortitude and savvy, discerning ability on how to recover from whatever issue arises. Urban art teachers need to learn to redirect. The art teacher should be able to redirect assignments, attitudes, and artistic approaches and maneuver through the environment with skill regardless of what arises.

Landsman and Lewis (2006) were forward and honest with the purpose and direction of *White Teacher, Diverse Classroom* without preconceptions and judgments; they developed an earnest effort to lend support, advice, and enlighten teachers struggling with the complexities of working with diverse students in urban environments. They appropriately included a variety of authors with urban experience. One contributor, Hancock (2006), with fourteen years experience in urban schools, used the voices of four white female teachers working in urban school settings. He compiled a data list of what they believed were necessary skills and attitudes for being more effective within inner-city schools and examined the ways they could steer personal socio-cultural realities and the socio-cultural realities of the students they teach. He recorded casual conversations with them and found that their initial motives were based on what he termed the “missionary” and “savior” attitudes in which these teachers felt that they were going to go into inner city schools to “save” urban students only to find out that “they themselves needed to grow (p.98). If that was challenged in their preparation years, perhaps their stories would be different.

I've worked in inner-city schools for over twenty years where the majority of the staff is black, and I have watched many of the white teachers come and go. However, I've noticed that, the white teachers who have longevity in these urban schools don't approach the students with a "savior attitude" but instead with a "roll-your-sleeves-up- and- get- to work," non-judgmental mindset; and the students respect and adore them. They are real with the students and able to tear down walls, and the students eventually perform academically for them. Their first semesters could be difficult because the students may not trust them but eventually they will come to trust the teacher, because of the teachers' attitude toward them. The white teachers that are not able to stick it out and have difficulty with the students usually don't make it through the school year because they come into the environment with a misguided attitude and negative judgments about the students, which result in the students having a hard time accepting the teacher and the lessons they try to teach. Students can sense what a teachers thinks about them and how the teacher feels about them. Through Hancock's (2006) study, he found that urban children do not automatically respect teachers because they are adults. He pointed out that the respect of the urban child has to be earned. Urban students can identify through instinct and perception the strengths, weaknesses, and prejudices of their teachers. Urban students are already street smart, and the instinct for how to read people is basic street knowledge. Hancock states, "*Urban children are like all children deserving and wanting love and acceptance but their environment has taught them to be wary of people and breaking down some of those walls is the hardest thing to do as an urban teacher*" (p.101). When the walls are finally broken, the students will embrace their teacher regardless of what color they are. Teachers need resources to give them a chance to break down these walls and help public school children.

### *Art Education and Urban Populations*

Arguments for the value of art education differ depending on who is speaking and for whom art education is intended (Stankiewicz, Amburgy, & Bolin, 2004). Art education for special populations has received limited historical attention (Chalmers, 2004). Without dismissing urban art education under the umbrella of multicultural education, the urban community is one of those special populations. Eisner's (2002) theory that the curriculum is "a mind altering device," supports Efland's (1990) argument that the reconstruction of society has been a strand that has run through the history of public art education. Art was "a means for transforming individual life and society" (p.203) through what was taught and what was not taught.

A picture of urban art education emerges through examining some of the historical aspects of art and learning. Historically, minorities and women were considered second-class citizens, while premiere members of society esteemed status for appreciation of the arts. Considerable early rhetoric advocating art education addressed the interests of the preeminent class of elite gentlemen to develop an appreciation of art as a vehicle for upward mobility for those who were considered prime citizens (Stankiewicz et al, 2004). As time moved along, in Colonial and 19<sup>th</sup> century America, art education served the needs of practical, spiritual, moral and polite education (Stankiewicz et al, 2004). By the late 1800s, drawing was included in American public schools as an aid to improve penmanship (Szelkely & Bucknam, 2012) and the use of the hand became important and valued. "Handwork and crafts became developmentally important in that (a) the hand was the earliest tool through which thinking was organized and by extension (b) that technologies and tools, as the extension of hands, were seen to influence and

structure people and cultures” (White, 2004, p. 56). Forms of art education that emerged at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century shaped the changes that occurred in social life. Manual training was most often provided for African American children, the children of new immigrants, and working class children and was offered in a variety of settings, including summer schools, settlement houses, and public schools (Stankiewicz et al, 2004). “By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, art education had become both a reflection of cultural hierarchy and a means of reproducing that hierarchy” (p.48).

The 1880s and 1890s, pushed the belief that social environment shaped taste and character and became a rationale for placing reproductions of art in schoolrooms. (Stankiewicz et al, 2004). Urban places have always been social environments with their own characteristics but historically, art educators sought to reproduce their tastes and values within these communities. This implies that impoverished and oppressed areas had no values because they had their tastes amended through artworks placed on their walls; it also implied that minorities had to be taught the morals and values deemed desirable by the dominant culture.

The movement to decorate school walls became a popular cause in America and extended to include a study of pictures as part of the art education in public schools. “The picture study movement lasted until the 1920s, focused on the appreciation of masterpieces to develop student’s character and taste” (Stankiewicz et. al, 2004, p. 42). Moral lessons were based on the subject matter or stories represented in images by these ‘masters,’ and students were given information about the lives of artists and studied formal qualities in their artworks (Stankiewicz et al, 2004).

Even though there have been many advances in recognizing and displaying women and minority artists in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, eliminating them from the content and



subject matter was a soft form of oppression. Eisner (1979) declared through his theory on the null curriculum that “what schools do not teach is as important as what they do teach” (p. 83). A null curriculum reflects the values of the community and determines how the community will be shaped and whose values will shape them. Two major dimensions that emerge from this theory of the null curriculum are the intellectual processes that are either neglected or emphasized, and content that is absent or present (Noddings, 2012). Examining curricula for what is present and what is not, is just as important in teacher education as it is for the students in public schools systems.

What and how we choose to teach can either reinforce traditional social patterns of power and submission or bring them to question and loosen their hold. For this reason, art education needs to undergo a process of social reconstruction through which theorists and practitioners learn to analyze the political dimensions of art and learning.”

(Hicks, 1994, p. 149)

The next century, progressive American educator John Dewey, espoused creativity as a valued part of art (Szelkely & Bucknam, 2012). According to Dewey (1934), everyone is capable of being an artist. John Dewey praised the use of sensory details because they support higher understanding of learning and experiences. Because art requires inquiry of looking and finding -- that meaning is transformative and extends human connection and human thought. (Goldblatt, 2006). For Dewey, art is experience.

In the 1960s when the post-Sputnik education reform emerged, new thoughts about the nature of schooling took heed, and the focus on science and math began to prevail halting advances in art education (Walling, 2000). *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, an influential 1983 report that framed the wave of school reform, scarcely mentioned art

education. It argued that the mediocrity in American education was the result of insufficient focus on the basics and a decline of classroom standards. “Arts education was appropriate, according to the report, for high school electives, particularly for students who hope to pursue professional careers in an arts field” (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011 p. 42). In the early 1980s, Discipline Based Art Education (DBAE) was developed and was framed on the premise that art can be taught most effectively by integrating content from four basic disciplines – art making, art history, art criticism, and aesthetics (Walling, 2000). Almost twenty years after DBAE, the *No Child Left Behind Act* was announced shaking the walls and grounds of the urban art education classrooms to turmoil and instability. Almost ten years after *No Child Left Behind*, public art education faces a more rigid challenge with the introduction of *Race to the Top* and *Common Core*.

### ***The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth***

Urban schools need sustainable art education programs and resilient teachers because there is existing evidence that high-arts participation in the arts for at-risk youth is beneficial to student achievement in school and beyond. In a longitudinal study, the National Endowment for the Arts published findings (Catterall, Dumais, Hampden-Thompson, 2012) that tracked the outcome of at-risk students who received intensive arts exposure and arts learning and compared their academic and life outcomes with at-risk students who had little to no exposure with the arts to analyze the relationship between arts involvement and academic and social achievements. Data about arts involvement came from quantitative and qualitative data in order to understand the relationship between early arts involvement and positive outcomes later in life. Researchers wanted to know the effects of intensive arts involvement on at-risk youth and the outcomes of

students who engaged in little or no art in their childhood or adolescence so they tracked a large nationally representative sample of public school students (n=15,000+) over time. They focused their study on teenagers and young adults who came from lower socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds and followed these students from middle school to their mid to late 20's. They used the rationale that more affluent and higher educated families on average provided their youth with more experiences in the arts and their schools had more extensive arts programs, therefore they focused on disadvantaged children. They characterized students as high-arts who have had intensive arts involvement as elementary, middle and/or high school students. Arts related variables included attending art classes at least once a week, going to art museums, attending concerts, or performing arts events, and participating in dance, and drama club. The report focuses on at-risk students; those who had high-arts engagement and compared them with at-risk students who had low arts engagement. They used annual interviews, surveys, and transcripts to collect their data and four large national databases to analyze the relationship between arts involvement and academic and social achievement in at-risk youth. Their sample size was well over 15,000 public school students in 750 schools across the United States. This study finds that at-risk students in middle school, and high school, who have had high levels of arts engagement do better on a host of academic and civic measures and have more positive outcomes in life than at-risk students who do not have arts engagement and suggests that at-risk teenagers or young adults with high arts exposure show higher achievement levels and in some cases exceed the general populations achievement levels. This study provides evidence that deep arts involvement may help narrow the gap in achievement levels. Table 3 shows a list of the benefits of high-arts experiences for at-risk youth as well as the consequences of low-arts experiences.

(Table 3)

<b>Experiences of At-Risk Students with Art Education</b>	<b>High-Arts At-Risk Students</b>	<b>Low-Arts At Risk Students</b>
Attended college after high school	71%	48%
Earned mostly A's in college	15%	9%
Completed a high school calculus course	33%	23%
Did not graduate from high school	4%	22%
Were 8 <sup>th</sup> graders with college aspirations	74%	43%
12 <sup>th</sup> graders who planned to earn a Bachelor's degree	61%	42%
10 <sup>th</sup> graders who went on to enroll in a Bachelor's degree program	32%	19%
10 <sup>th</sup> graders who went to enroll in a highly or moderately selective four year college	41%	26%
Percentage of young adults who had earned a Bachelor's degree	17%	5%
8 <sup>th</sup> graders who went on and earned "mostly A's" in college	15%	9%
Did not participate in extracurricular activities)	24%	50%
Participated in student government	16%	4%
8 <sup>th</sup> graders who read a newspaper at least once a week.	73%	44%
Did Civic and/or community volunteering	25%	10%
Volunteered at least 1-5 times per year	26%	19%
Registered to vote	78%	67%
Voted in an election (2006)	43%	29%
Became professional majors (Accounting, finance, management)	29.7%	13.5%
Majored in the arts	2.4%	0.6%
Percentage of young adults who anticipated serving in professional careers by age 30	49.5%	21.1%

(National Endowment for the Arts, 2012)

### *Street Art*

Art educators have a unique opportunity to break walls down through creativity. Urban art educators have an excellent opportunity to use student backgrounds and environmental culture to relate and connect with students. Although this situation is beginning to change, street art, a form of art in urban environments, has often been ignored and overlooked in art courses and art teacher preparation. Society stereotypes street art and graffiti as criminal activity belonging to gangs and derelicts. Mainstream society is wrong; when street art is observed closely and appreciated, it tells a story of a person and the environment. Gang related tagging and graffiti is a very minute part of street art, yet many art teachers accept and follow negative assumptions therefore missing the opportunity to provide a meaningful learning experience to urban children. Understanding and appreciating street art and graffiti is a cultural hurdle that must be overcome and understood by teachers especially since it is a form of art that students from urban environments see every day; yet many art educators choose to teach more traditional forms of fine art often treating street art as a cultural impasse. The urban aesthetic must be acknowledged.

Whenever I incorporate street art into my lessons, it engages my students. Street artist Ronzo stated, “There will always be good art and bad art. I see boring stuff in the galleries and interesting stuff in the street and the other way round. As long as people walk through streets, somebody will put things there to catch your attention or play with your imagination” (Blackshaw & Farrelly, 2008 p. 15). Street art caught the attention of one of my students named Wesly. Wesly was not considered one of the stronger artists in the class because his artwork looked like that of an elementary student. He was a very shy student with an insecure

personality who handled his materials and his subject matter in an unsure manner. He didn't talk much and seemed uncoordinated but always seemed eager to please. Wesly carried himself in an awkward manner in comparison to the other students.

Because I had recently taken a contemporary aesthetics art class the previous summer, I had become more familiar with the artist Jean Michel Basquiat after forcing myself to investigate the depth of his art and who he was. That experience enriched my knowledge base and provided a very valuable and teachable moment for me and a worthwhile learning experience for Wesly. Armed with my new knowledge, this time when I looked at Wesly's artwork, I had more to offer him. "Your artwork reminds me of an artist named Basquiat," I told Wesly. Wesly looked surprised. I had him follow me to the computer, and I pulled up Basquiat's portfolio of work for him to view on the Internet. We pulled up Basquiat's *Self Portrait*, *Untitled Skull* and *Early Moses* and talked about what Basquiat could have been thinking and why he used the "Samo" moniker. I told Wesly how Basquiat was a graffiti artist who made it into major museums and became a famous artist. Suddenly, his face lit up. This was my second year of knowing this student, and I never heard him talk so much or seen him so confident and excited. Suddenly he said, "Ms. Whittington, I have to show you something." Wesly then took over the computer and began pulling up websites about the graffiti in the community (something I never thought to do). As a teacher, I had no idea that so much of the graffiti from the community was on the Internet. He knew all the websites, and exactly where to go. I was able to recognize the graffiti and street art that I saw every day coming into the community to work. For a moment, he became the teacher, and I became the student. I was truly amazed at what he was showing me. He even showed me a piece of graffiti in the community that had made national news. He told me the story about the street artist who painted a picture of Barack Obama on one of the walls in the

community and how someone defaced the portrait (Vanquishing Georgia, 2008). The experience humbled me. I also took the opportunity to introduce him to other graffiti artists like Keith Haring, Banksy, and Shepard Fairey. I was especially glad that I had just learned about Banksy during my experience in the contemporary art class because his work totally engaged Wesly. He went through image after image trying to decipher and decode Banksy's political messages in his street art.

From that moment in the classroom, Wesly changed--- and so did I. He became more talkative, involved, and confident even coming to school early waiting for me in the morning to bring my bags into the school building and talk about more street art. I became more open about discussing street art in my class and more adamant about using graffiti and street art as a teaching tool. Dewey (1934) articulated the importance of relating art and experience, yet contemporary art education and art teacher preparation programs don't always consider the Wesly's in the schools. Hancock (2006) suggests that teachers should navigate stereotypes, racism, fears, prejudice, and ignorance, and critically assess personal motives and beliefs. That navigation, fear and ignorance is not just toward people, but it is also reflected in the type of art that is taught in the curriculum. Posing a simple question like "Is graffiti art?" would also help art teacher educators broaden the attitudes and beliefs of the teachers they are preparing by analyzing their answers. Hancock (2006) also believes teachers should be culturally literate because most teachers come from middle class neighborhoods and lifestyles where there is little or no genuine interaction with minorities; he also argued that colleges must no longer graduate teachers who are not culturally literate.

### ***Title I and the Arts***

Findings from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) has shown that Title I is not distributed on an equitable basis from state to state or to the districts within these states (Education Commission of the United States, n.d.); it is also not distributed equitably in the classrooms. Some resilient art teachers in low-income areas have been the sole funding source for art programs in many disadvantaged schools; a role not listed on their job description. Through using their own personal funds, applying for grants, or seeking materials, supplies, equipment as well as their own professional development, some urban art teachers have demonstrated resiliency in keeping art programs in public schools alive but unfortunately, that is not a formula for sustaining a thriving art program in a community and keeping it available for at-risk youth. Because of the conditions that their teachers must work in, at-risk students are not getting the benefits of a quality education in the arts, and they are the ones that can benefit from it the most (National Endowment for the Arts, 2012). While various factors affect the distribution of Title I funds from state to state, the factor that appears to affect the distribution of Title I funds into the urban art classroom are the values and beliefs of administrators, coordinators, and leaders. Secretary Duncan clarified in 2009 that Title I funds released to districts have the flexibility to use Title I funds for arts education to improve achievement and Title II funds for professional development of art teachers (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2012, Duncan, 2009); though they have the flexibility, many administrators and leaders in urban districts fail to understand the value of the arts and are resistant in their support. It appears that the U.S. Department of Education is beginning to understand this. In the past four years, the



Department of Education has sent a letters to educational leaders and Title I coordinators to support the arts in public schools with Federal funds.

In June 2013, Dr. Monique D. Chism, Director of Student Achievement and School Accountability Programs for the United States Department of Education sent a letter to Title I State Coordinators responding to the many inquiries she received about the role of art education within the Title I, Part A [Title I} program. In her letter to the Title I Department, she noted that ESEA was amended and defines the arts as a core subject and reiterated the significant role of art in the development of children and their learning process:

In maintaining consistency with Title I requirements, an LEA (Local Educational Agency) may use Title I funds to support arts education as a strategy to assist Title I students with meeting the State's academic achievement standards. Please keep in mind that whether Title I funds may be used for a particular activity depends on how that activity fits within the context of Title I. In particular, the activity must help facilitate Title I's overall purpose of improving the achievement of students who are failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet the academic content and achievement standards developed by the state. (artsed411, 2013) (full letter available in Appendices)

Key findings in the NEA's (2012) report of at-risk students with high arts experiences, revealed that students with high arts experiences had better academic outcomes. At-risk youth and young adults who have a history of in-depth arts involvement show better academic outcomes than at-risk youth with less arts involvement. These disadvantaged youth with high arts experiences earn better grades and have higher rates of college enrollment and attainment. That is clear evidence that Title I should and could support art education.

In his 2009 letter, Duncan also stated that there would be an assessment of the condition of art education in grades K-12 to get a clear sense of how NCLB affected art education and how it affected the provision for a well-rounded education. Duncan discussed the findings of his research in a speech he delivered in 2012. He emphasized that the 2009-10 arts education report (Parsad, & Spiegelman, 2012) revealed disturbing data for disadvantaged students' access to arts education and revealed that the gap for arts opportunity was the widest for children in high-poverty schools. He stated, "This is absolutely an equity issue and a civil rights issue..." (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2012). In this same speech, he also stated "I know that many arts educators continue to report that State Departments of Education often mistakenly turn down or discourage requests to use Title I funds for arts instruction."

Many observers feel that Title I has fallen short of its mark of expanding and improving educational programs for America's neediest children (Education Commission of the United States. n.d.). Nowhere is this more evident in art classrooms. The actions of Title I administrators and leaders are a contradiction to its purpose; to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and help school districts increase opportunities for disadvantaged at-risk students. Duncan outlined seven reasons that art education was critical to a world class education stating that art; 1) boosts student achievement, 2) reduces discipline problems, 3) increases the odds that a student will go to college, 4) stimulates innovation and creativity which are critical to competing in a global economy 5) empowers aesthetic creation and appreciation, 6) fosters creativity which is a unique and powerful way to learn, and 7) give students a reason to want to come to school (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2012). He clarified the position of the U.S. Department of Education and reiterated that Title I and Title II funds can and should be used to support arts education especially to

support gaps in education for at-risk youth. Duncan gave two reasons why the gap in arts opportunity is so troubling: 1) children from disadvantaged backgrounds do not get the enrichment experiences of affluent students anywhere except at school and, 2) a considerable body of research suggests that disadvantaged students benefit from high-quality arts education.

The National Endowment for the Arts published a robust report that reveals vigorous longitudinal data from a study on "The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth" giving further evidence for the need to support the preparation of art teachers for urban environments.

### ***The Impact of No Child Left Behind***

Education is shifting again and thirteen years after its inception, *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) is in transition after devastating the core of equal education in a subtle and discriminatory fashion. NCLB has succeeded in dividing schools, communities, and populations by instituting a legalized, politically correct, standardized form of institutional racism and economic weeding. It has widened the chasm between the have and the have-nots and given United States citizens a vehicle to label, separate, marginalize and stereotype schools and environments. It has given an edge to politicians--inexperienced in the classroom, to act as educational authorities based on data. It has given them an underlying reason to redraw maps where schools have low test scores and push them to deeper into the margins. NCLB has also succeeded in agitating the heart of art education and highlighting the chasm between the haves and the have-nots that exists in the art education realm (Strauss, 2012).

Findings from a 2008 survey conducted by the Center on Educational Policy suggest that arts education has been reduced nationally since the passing of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011). The focus of *NCLB* is on accountability and testing. The pressure to score high on tests is great (Chapman, 2005). While national data is inconclusive,

findings at local and state levels suggest declines in access to arts education (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011). “Students who master testing material earn enrichment classes while others engage in remedial work. In this case, art functions as a bribe or reward and is perceived as a hands-on, minds-off activity to learning” (Chapman, 2005, p.13). The decline of art education among white children has been relatively insignificant compared to African American and Hispanic children where the decline in art education has been substantial—49% for African American and 40% for Hispanic children (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011).

In America, we do not reserve arts education for privileged students or the elite. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds, students who are English language learners, and students with disabilities often do not get the enrichment experiences of affluent students anywhere except at school. (Duncan, 2010)

“Nothing in NCLB supports teaching or teacher preparation from critically informed or artful perspectives” (Chapman, 2005, p. 14). In fact, Chapman (2005) warned that NCLB would have implications for art teacher education, arts research, and leadership in education that would dismantle systems with ripple effects in higher education. Chapman was correct.

When NCLB was first introduced in 2001 by President George Bush, changes were felt immediately in my art classroom. In the urban school in which I worked in, each and every member of the staff; including art, music, and physical education, had to document how instruction would be implemented to increase academic achievement in reading, science, and math, and we had to meet with the principal to explain our plan to assist in increasing test scores. All school day assemblies and future assemblies were cancelled and pushed to after school hours, and instructional time was to be maximized and documented to the very minute. Art classes for all grade levels were suddenly reduced to thirty minutes from forty-five minutes. I

was working in a K-5 elementary school at the time. Chapman (2005) stated “The [NCLB] law envisions schools as factories for learning with no child left behind on the assembly line” (p. 8). Art classes felt more like a herding of sheep and cows as the quality of art time did not seem to matter—get them in and get them out. For the sake of the record, students received ‘art time.’ Teachers were no longer in charge of their schedule, and everything was based on a master schedule for the sake of cooperative planning, a by-product of NCLB. Cooperative planning was instituted and special subjects like art, music, and physical education had to work together to hold classes at the same time in order for all ‘core’ teachers, grade level teachers, and tested subjects could meet together during planning time to discuss student data. People with new titles like facilitator, director, monitor, and reform model leaders came into the school to regulate control, measure accountability, report buy-in, and standardize all academic activity. Site-based management, in the blink of an eye became the thing of the past. I was concerned for the quality of education my students would receive. Any requests I had as the art specialist were denied by administrative support staff from central office who often frequented the school. They would demand I support my requests with current data and evidence in art education, which was often not available. The hands of my principal, who was a strong supporter of art education, were tied. That’s when it hit—that a big change in education had fully arrived. Resources that supported art education began to dwindle and were redistributed towards classrooms and teachers that were academically tested. Struggling students were identified through data and pulled from art class to report to classes that would provide extra assistance in pulling up their scores.

When I transferred over to middle school, even though I held my Masters in Art Education, I was not considered highly qualified by the district because I did not have certification to teach reading. I was required to teach a reading class every day from a scripted

lesson and get my certification in reading or else I would not have a job. Resources for professional development were available, however, art teachers were not granted access to professional development resources because art was not a tested subject even though art teachers were required to receive the same professional learning units (PLU's) and teach a reading class. The contradictions were frustrating. If a request for resources to attend a conference was made, the Title I department would deny any requests stating there were no funds for non-tested subjects. The district fine arts department would assist where they could from grant sources, but their resources were limited.

Art supplies for the classroom were also denied through Title I, even though NCLB had declared that art was a core subject. This did not happen before NCLB. Before NCLB, my principal would make sure my class was stocked with whatever I needed through Title I funds and other means. In 2004, President Bush's administration sent a letter to all superintendents reiterating the arts as a core subject (Paige, 2004) yet the power of art education was still ignored, especially in urban schools.

Through the years following NCLB, I found myself spending my own money, applying for more grants, looking in trash cans and going to the back of the school to dig in dumpsters for materials that I could recycle for resources the students could use. This is what art education has come to. Most of the projects my students have created in the past 10 years have been from trash and things other people don't want. One day in my frustration, I wrote a letter to the President of the United States about being a public school art teacher who has to pick through the trash to get resources for the students. The irony is that he sent me back a standardized form letter about education. I plan to rewrite him again at the conclusion of my doctoral candidacy.

In the meantime, communities were being divided, as lines were being redrawn and

labeled as “redistricting.” Kozol (2005) says that we are obliged by reality to say what things are and give them their right name. Therefore, redistricting today is nothing but institutionalized racism used to herd low performing students with other low performing students in disadvantaged areas and high performing students together in more privileged communities dividing society even more and framing a bigger picture of separation, marginalization, subjugation, bias, and institutional racism. Neighborhoods are changing through regentrification, and more charter schools are being established in communities in order to avoid sending children from more privileged and middle class families to the disadvantaged, low performing local schools still operating in the neighborhood. The erection of charter schools gives power to some constituents to pick and choose the students they wanted in the school and deny others at the taxpayers’ expense. I witnessed such a thing happening in an urban community where I worked. The school was in a regentrified neighborhood and was surrounded by a number of other schools that had been closed. Several charter schools in the neighborhood were erected. We would often get the students the Charter schools did not want—usually the ones with behavior problems or low test scores. However, much of the discourse around charter schools invokes the importance of returning public education to its community and some regentrifiers are demanding services that the inner city is not known for providing, which are good schools (Hankins, 2007). Schools were labeled “good schools” because their test scores were at a certain level despite the fact that good teachers worked diligently in the school with an abundance of at-risk students. AYP became the pawn to politically move the pieces around on the chessboard. School closing were upsetting the community. I witnessed a group of urban middle school students organize themselves, use their creative skills to make posters and banners, and tape their mouths in protest to counter what was happening to them.

This is the era of accountability, the beast created by NCLB, the beast demolishing a sense of humanity and community in urban schools and pushing people deeper into the margins. Sometimes it appears that art education walked with the beast because of the silence from the profession out of touch with the realities that some teachers worked in. “In the new era of ‘separate but equal,’ segregation has somehow come to be viewed as a type of school reform” (Kozol, 2005, p.10). Public schools in the United States serve as great sorting machine through which inequality and privilege are produced (Noguera, 2008). If there were a crisis in our classrooms, nobody would disagree that it is most severe in urban schools (Kozol, 2005, p.229).

### ***Race to the Top***

How does a state or school district show improved teacher quality? According to the Department of Education, the answer lies in the definition of a ‘highly effective teacher.’ A highly effective teacher is defined as a teacher whose students achieve high rates and mandates that teachers be evaluated using ‘student growth measurement’ and multiple observation-based assessment of teacher performance or evidence of leadership roles. (Hourigan, 2011 p. 61)

Teacher evaluation under *Race to the Top* (RTTT) will include both the standard observation evaluation and connection to student performance (test scores) (Hourigan, 2011, p. 61). Hourigan brings an important question to mind: How does one quantify the essential learning that takes place in the arts classroom? One of the promises of RTTT is a commitment to teacher quality, which will be measured through testing. The plan calls for an increase in funding for recruitment, preparation, and retention. The Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, has started the conversation in connecting student success in the classroom back to teacher preparation programs. “When we can link student outcomes to teacher quality and teachers to their colleges



of education, we can challenge these institutions to do the best possible job in preparing a new generation of outstanding educators” (Duncan, 2009b, para 6).

***Common Core and the Arts--- What does it mean for urban art classrooms and urban art teachers?***

We are at the dawn of Common Core; and Common Core Standards (CCSS) for the arts have not been fully developed. Common Core is an initiative designed to keep the full range of liberal arts and sciences in public schools. The Common Core designers have created content curriculum maps in English Language Arts and Mathematics based on Common Core State Standards and are preparing to release maps in the arts (Robelen, n.d.). The Common Core State Standards are the measures to provide students and stakeholders with the standards of success in every school (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010). Common Core designers are using seven guiding principles to develop the art education curriculum modules and accompanying materials (Coleman, n.d.). From reading their guiding principles, Common Core is very similar to Discipline Based Art Education (DBAE). A substantial amount of these ‘guiding principles’ rely on art criticism and aesthetics, which means teachers will have to use the artwork of others to teach these components to their students. A curriculum, in both its overt manifestations and covert assumptions, permits access to a world shaped by the choices of its designers (Hamblen, p. 68). According to Hamblen, some of the issues with the development of DBAE were what is studied? Who decides what is studied? Whose aesthetic values are being given validity? Like Hamblen, I also have concerns; one of my concerns is that Common Core Standards include the urban context so that urban teachers can grasp the interest of their students. Are these designers of the Common Core Art Standards going to assure that graffiti artists like Shepard Fairey, Keith Haring, Jean Michel Basquiat, urban photographers like Erskine Isaac, or

urban painters like Kehinde Wiley and Charly Palmer are added into the content so urban art educators can better engage their students with the realities and the arts of their own environment?

In addition, according to Common Core, these standards will...*promote equity by ensuring all students, no matter where they live, are well prepared with the skills and knowledge necessary to collaborate and compete with their peers in the United States and abroad...*(Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010). Common Core also criticized previous state standards stating:

Unlike previous state standards, which were unique to every state in the country, the Common Core State Standards enable collaboration between states on a range of tools and policies, including:

- The development of textbooks, digital media, and other teaching materials aligned to the standards;
- Changes needed to help support educators and schools in teaching to the new standards.

(Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010)

From that statement taken from the official online page of the Common Core State Standards, the developers are assuming that urban art teachers will have access to the materials, textbooks and technology that will be necessary to carry out these standards. However, many urban art teachers do not have technology in their classrooms, nor do they have access to the materials that will be necessary to carry out these standards. In addition, if Common Core is going to be equitable and more than just words on paper –the developers will have to contend

with Title I and school administrators to provide what teachers need to be “equitable” across the states. Until these issues for urban art educators are resolved, art education will not be equitable across the states, especially in urban environments. Art teacher preparation will have to prepare students for these challenges.

### ***Teacher Preparation***

Carl A. Grant (1994) analyzed 44 studies of courses, programs, field experiences, practicums, and workshops within teacher preparation programs with close consideration of race, gender, and class. Even though the article was written in 1994, education is still struggling with the very same issues in the new millennium. Grant’s research is still very relevant as he gave careful consideration to the effects of what is taught to student teachers, who teaches them, and how the results affect the urban school classroom. He was concerned that schools of education, although aware of the need for change in urban schools, did little to meet the challenges. Teachers cannot teach something they don’t know, and they are not aware that their teacher preparation programs don’t prepare them to integrate diversity standards through a multicultural lens (Carter, 2003).

In the education realm, the terms “diverse” and “multicultural” are used much too loosely with a little “social justice” added to the mix. Social justice has been included in numerous art education essays and publications, but the profession is still seeking more effective ways to implement social justice in real time across art education systems. As an urban art educator, I experience the feeling of being marginalized when I attend NAEA (National Art Education Association) conferences, with hundreds of workshops, panels, and talks to attend yet very little that relates to what I do in the classroom or who I am as an art teacher. I feel isolated, alone and subjugated when I walk through crowds of art teachers, and see teachers relating to each other

and excited about the next workshop comparing techniques and stories; I realize I don't fit in based on who I am and where I work. I see very few art educators who look like me, or meet very few teachers who relate to working in urban and inner city schools. There are occasional workshop directed to urban educators but oftentimes, the professional development that is offered for urban art education is tucked away in time slots that are unattractive and competing with major interests at the conference. When I open up the NAEA newsletter, or its journals, few of the faces reflect true diversity and few of the articles relate to the classroom experiences of being a teacher in urban schools. Many urban art teachers are struggling, but there does not appear to be much assistance or representation for their needs.

Leadership roles in NAEA have included Black art educators like MacArthur Goodwin, who was president of the organization. Although this is the case, NAEA is not a very diverse organization today, yet it influences the ideas, policies, and attitudes of the art education teaching force and the educators who prepare them. It does not matter if an urban art teacher is Black, White, or Latino; urban art teachers are marginalized and the most subjugated group in the profession of art education. Recent NAEA statistics state that their participants are 44% suburban, 28% rural, and 26% urban. Olivia Gude and the Spiral Workshop (Gude, n.d.) she developed is an example and a prelude to the richness of what is missing in active practice in teacher education and the art classrooms of America's public schools, yet there are more voices that need to be heard directly from the teachers in the nation's most disadvantaged art classrooms with powerful lessons to offer the field of art education.

There is a whole population of students who exist in urban and inner city environments in which traditional education has proven not to be the answer (Simpson, 1995). It is critical for art teacher preparation programs to look beyond traditional ways of preparation and prepare art

teachers to teach beyond usual, conventional and established ways of teaching. Art teachers should be prepared to go anywhere, into any environment, ready to receive a diverse range of students-- armed with vast and rich pedagogy and knowledge, yet this will require educators to abandon tradition, per se, and leave comfortable pedagogical philosophies in order to engage student teachers in effectively teaching and reaching marginalized populations (Simpson, 1995). Until change is activated within art education starting with teacher preparation programs, urban art education teachers and the students they serve will remain invisible. There is much to learn from the urban art teachers who have forged ahead, and designed, implemented, and facilitated effective programs in their marginalized school communities.

*Environmental Diversity* should be consciously considered inherently outside of the umbrella of diversity and multiculturalism. A focus on environmental diversity would allow teachers to evaluate the living attributes of various environments and design pedagogy appropriate to place; doing so would enhance and enrich the art education of the students living in that context. Place based education involves educational experiences in local environments and makes learning a relevant experience by relating real life to the lesson (Smith, 2002).

This study will explore the world of urban art teachers and the environments they work in so that a more adequate preparation approach can be designed to better ready future teachers to work in urban schools. The research design will investigate the depths of art education from the vantage point of teachers who work in disadvantaged environments and their preparation for the work they do with urban and inner-city art education. This is especially important to art education because there is a lack of relevant and practical research on urban art education. Simple discourse on multicultural, diversity, and social justice lack the authentic truths that can come directly from the classroom and the voice of urban art teachers. Simpson (1995) argued

that art education should shift beyond multicultural awareness to a way of knowing about the world. A way of knowing about the world would include close examinations of various environments and assessing how art education and art education preparation would best fit inside of those places. Pedagogy of disadvantaged, marginalized, subjugated, and oppressed people is not about control, but should focus on skill and heart to understand that art teachers need to be prepared to deal with the realities produced by their students' lives.

To be responsible to society, art teacher educators and pre-service teachers will have to look within themselves in order to be fair, to be honest, and to teach with care. Simpson (1995) poignantly reflected on her position as a teacher educator when she asked, "What are some of the things we in higher education might do to prepare our students for the urban classroom" (p. 28). She surveyed her student teachers' journals and analyzed that there was ample talk about classroom management, discipline problems, role playing and expectations of the inner city, but what genuinely stood out in her evaluation was that her students were focused on control and depositing information into their students. She recognized that she was preparing the educational "bankers" and "oppressors" that Freire (1970, p. 72) described. She recognized that her students were simply referencing what she had taught them.

This realization forced Simpson to reflect and explore her own mistakes as a teacher educator and forced her to examine her own assumptions about schools in general and urban schools in particular. She had expectations that the differences were clear between the two environments, but realized that her student teachers did not know what to do with students from urban environments because her pre-service teachers came from very different environments. Studying environmental diversity would have been helpful. Environmental diversity implemented into multicultural programs would add rigor to preparation programs and should be

a part of the dynamic in art teacher preparation. Universities and colleges should be accountable for the teachers they prepare and track the progress of their teachers for at least five years to constantly inventory and assess the relevance of the established teacher education program. Henry and Lazzari (2007) addressed the need for increased research into teacher education to comprehend the successes and to understand the need for changes in the way art teachers are prepared. Henry and Lazzari justly argue that the requests for reform and change in general education also “bear directly on the field of art education” (p. 47). That statement is strongly evident in the onset of Common Core.

Approaches and policy will need to change to meet the needs of urban students (Simpson, 1995) and the urban art teachers who prepare them. Evidencing this need for change are the statistics for teacher attrition and mobility. Luekens, Lyter, and Fox (2004) report that 53% of public school movers, educators who decide to leave one public school environment for another public school environment, chose to move to a public school in a different school district. Twenty-five percent of public school teachers wanted to move because of student behavior, which is often a big issue in urban schools. Forty-two percent of urban teachers moved for the opportunity for a better teaching assignment, while another 32% were dissatisfied with the workplace conditions. Seventy percent of arts teachers left for a better teaching assignment, and 40% of arts teachers left because they were dissatisfied with the workplace conditions. As discussed earlier, teacher working conditions are student learning conditions (Stairs & Donnell, 2010,) therefore, condition should be a vital factor in planning and implementing curricula and activities for art teacher education. Teachers should be rigorously challenged and prepared for such conditions while arts education leaders and committees challenge educational and political

leaders to address these conditions; that would be a true demonstration of the social justice so often advocated in the art education essays and journals.

Conditions in urban and inner city schools are by far the most complex. Teacher education programs must move forward with the knowledge that if an art teacher can master urban conditions, everything else will come easier. The conditions of urban schools include;(1) high population density-- therefore teachers must serve more students; (2) economic disparity and poverty,--therefore students will come to class without supplies; (3) ethnic diversity—therefore teachers will become part of a diverse environment; (4) budget restraints---therefore teachers will have little or no materials; (5) student health issues; therefore teachers will have to take on other roles; (6) higher faculty mobility—therefore the staff the teacher works with is unstable; (7) higher immigrant populations—therefore the teacher will have culture barriers; (8) linguistic diversity—therefore the teacher will have language barriers; and (9) transportation issues—therefore the teacher's students will have high rates of absenteeism (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2010) in addition to high rates of transient students, additional duties, low parental support, and lack of administrative support. Strategies need to be developed to prepare and sustain teachers to work in these conditions with skill and with heart. It should also be realized that while a teacher's working condition is a student's learning condition, the teacher has the option to leave for better conditions while the students-- who rely on an effective, caring, humble, and knowledgeable teachers; do not have that option. In contrast to these conditions, there are a number of teachers who thrive and are fulfilled working in these situations. William Foote Whyte (1993) recognized that there is a sector of people that find urban and inner-city environments structured in ways that do not fit in with middle class values and with that exceptional vision developed, they can still work successfully in disadvantaged environments.



For some, that vision will have to be developed during teacher preparation. The experiences and voices of practicing teachers are crucial to this process and critical for change.

### ***Concerning Teacher Efficacy in Teacher Preparation***

Teacher efficacy measures a teacher's perception of preparedness and can affect teacher behavior (Eckert, 2013). Personal Teacher Efficacy or PTE, and General Teacher Efficacy or GTE, as identified in Eckert's (2013) study, is a determining factor in teacher retention and attrition in urban school environments. Attitudes associated with PTE, or the "I can do it," and GTE "What I do matters for student outcomes," (p. 84) are linked to teacher preparation. Different sets of experiences in teacher preparation are responsible for developing PTE and GTE.

"Drawing on the importance of school context, research on teacher preparation has yet to fully address the critical question: *prepared for what?*" (Eckert, 2013, p. 77). Findings from urban teachers included in Eckert's study indicate that high levels of student discipline problems, poor student motivation, inadequate time, and classroom interruptions are problematic in urban schools, and teachers are not prepared to handle these factors. Fostering teacher efficacy can influence how long a teacher is willing to remain at a school. Studies show that a great number of teachers leave high poverty urban schools to transfer to other schools with better conditions (Aud et al, 2011). "Teacher retention is a necessary element in understanding how well teachers are prepared for teaching and remaining in high poverty/high minority urban schools" (Eckert, 2013, p. 78).

Eckert's findings suggest that teachers in high poverty schools generally have lower levels of PTE, but more coursework and lengthier student teaching experiences gave teachers a higher level of self-confidence in the daily tasks of teaching in an urban school. The findings

also suggested that more coursework and lengthier student teaching experiences contributed to a higher level of GTE, and teachers feeling able to contribute to student success despite the outside obstacles in urban environments. “Preparation programs can also encourage pre-service teachers to engage in student teaching in urban schools to give them the experience with urban students and urban school systems prior to entering the field” (p. 87).

Building high levels of GTE is associated with teachers finding meaning in their work through developing teaching philosophies that also fit into broader society and have meaning for the urban context. To establish higher levels of PTE, participants in Eckert’s study expressed that preparation programs that provided tangible resources –like lesson plans and management tools specific to the urban context, helped teachers feel mentally prepared and in control. Teachers that expressed low levels of GTE, reported feeling powerless to students and administrators; this factor is also cited as a reason teachers leave education altogether or change schools (Eckert, 2013).

“GTE, which is not measured by variables evaluated in NCLB does predict teacher retention” (Eckert, 2013, p. 87). This study on teacher efficacy also highly recommended that even though urban districts do not have the resources to “dig in” to the quality of teacher preparation of their applicants-- they should (p. 87). Eckert’s study finally recommends that if urban districts address leadership issues, and teacher preparation programs glean from urban teacher residencies and build strong philosophies in education, high poverty/high minority urban schools will likely have a more retainable high quality teaching force in its schools.

Henry and Lazzari (2007) had foresight into the educational future and with a vision in mind, identified the need to hear the voices of teachers for true reform to take place and advised art educators to reflect on the purpose and goals of art education in a democratic society.

Siegesmund (1998) prompts the art education field to reflect deeply on *Why do we teach art today?* Champlin (1997) questions what is it that art teachers do and asks *what do we teach* (p.120)? Henry and Lazzari (2007) point out that teachers are expected to have deep and broad content knowledge and be able to teach that content knowledge to increasingly diverse student populations. Eckert (2013) claims that research on teacher preparation has yet to address that teachers are *prepared for what?* Eckert also points to stronger teacher education programs to develop more positive teacher efficacy as a means to retain teachers in urban environments.

This study extends the depths of these ideas with the research question: *How are these art teachers prepared to work in urban environments?* Delpit (2006) synthesizes these thoughts by contending that finding a feasible solution to change rests in researchers looking to the wisdom and voices of practicing teachers. This research seeks to hear the sound of those voices and create a path to initiate necessary reform in art education using authentic dialogue. This kind of critical dialogue also reflects the key ideas and arguments of Freire (1970) in which he argues that authentic reflection considers people in their relation to the world and that those who oppress others are blinded from seeing their own domination that destruct and dehumanize.

Some teacher education programs are attempting change, yet the changes are not effective enough yet to combat high teacher turnover rates in urban schools (Singer, Catapano, & Huisman, 2010). It will take a collective effort of the art education field—teacher preparation programs, textbook companies, researchers, art teachers, and art teacher education -- along with an evaluation of the education statistics to devise a plan that would be effective for the future of art education. The majority of students that attend urban schools are students of color (Singer, et al, 2010, p. 120). In 2008-09, 19% of public schools were high poverty schools, and greater percentages of Hispanic, Black, and American Indian/Alaskan Native students attended high

poverty public schools in the United States (Aud et al, 2011). Fifty-percent of new teachers left urban districts during their first five years of teaching. America's dominating teaching force is now and increasingly predicted to be young, white, female, and middle-class, and the ones sent to teach urban students. Diversity issues are the crux and the root to the biggest challenge in teacher preparation (Delpit, 2006).

At a workshop I conducted for urban art teachers at an NAEA conference, a teacher shared a genuine contextual concern; she was a white teacher, and all of her students were black. She was deeply concerned that she was not able to make connections with them, and she believed she was failing her students. She is one of many teachers with the same concern. It is not fair to the art teacher or to the students to ignore statistics and prepare teachers to believe that they will just be teaching affluent students, white students, that students that will come to school ready to learn, or that they will be teaching in Utopia. Lack of awareness of environmental diversity creates a mishmash of cultures that collides and assigns art teachers to situations without the adequate preparation they need.

Singer et al (2010) suggest that some teacher preparation programs are reluctant to provide culturally diverse field experiences for a number of reasons. Embedded within the culture of art teacher preparation of the university is a culture that will be very difficult to change. Restructuring art teacher preparations programs is an overwhelming task (Champlin, 1997) and an overwhelming need (Hutchens, 1997). Studies report findings that some university faculty members did not feel it was their responsibility to prepare teachers for urban schools (Singer et al, 2010). This study also found that while faculty members were sympathetic to social justice and cultural issues, they had little experience themselves working in urban or public schools. Lack of experience in public school teaching is a symptom that truly affects what

goes on in the classroom and how teachers will connect with their teaching assignments and environments. Cohen-Evron (2002) studied why it was hard for good art teachers to stay in the public school system and found that an art teacher's role was determined by teaching conditions, and that art teacher preparation programs pre-described an art teacher's role.

### ***Standards for Art Teacher Preparation***

If there is to be reform, then policy and teacher educators must address educational issues in conjunction with cultural issues like poverty, racism, joblessness, and social justice that affect education (Noguera, 2008). The intentions for *Standards for Art Teacher Preparation* (NAEA, 2009) is to ensure that all art educators are capable of delivering quality art instruction to all students and that those educating art teachers can deliver the quality instruction in preparation of teachers for the classroom. The report from the *Survey of Art Teacher Educators* (Milbrant & Klein, 2008 and NAEA List Serve Survey, 2006), when compared against the standards-- highlights points in the standards that must be more highly considered for art teacher preparation; in particular: Standard III, Standard IV, and Standard VII.

#### ***Standard III: Art Education Faculty Have Expertise in Theories and Practices of Art Education;***

Art education faculty responsible for art teacher candidates should:

- Have extensive knowledge and practice in art, and art education and demonstrated competence in teaching in pre K-12 and/or other educational settings... (NAEA, 2009, p. 12).
- Have a thorough knowledge of how diverse learners acquire and develop an understanding of art (NAEA, 2009, p. 12).

#### ***Standard IV: Art Education Faculty Demonstrate Best Practices in Their Teaching:***

*Art education faculty responsible for preparing art teacher candidates should:*

Model teaching methods and approaches for learning within both the higher education classroom and the art educational settings for which their students are being prepared. They continually plan and implement instruction...as they prepare candidates to do the same in their own classrooms (NAEA, 2009, p. 12).

- Provide consistent and meaningful supervision of clinical experiences reflecting an awareness of the realities of the classroom... (NAEA, 2009, p. 13).
- Ensure that candidates have access to diverse and alternative educational settings ... (NAEA, 2009, p. 13).

**Standard VII: Art Education Faculty Actively Supports Diversity within Their Own Institutions, the Art Education Profession as a Whole, and Other Professional Communities** (NAEA, 2009, p. 14):

*Art education faculty responsible for preparing art teacher candidates should:*

- Demonstrate a commitment to cultural diversity in all matters related to teaching and learning; (NAEA, 2009, p. 14).
- Understand the influence of cultural diversity on student and adult learning and reflect this understanding in their teaching (NAEA, 2009, p. 14)
- Understand a wide range of cultures and their art forms, and develop curricula that include diversity in gender, ethnicity, social class, etc.... (NAEA, 2009, p. 14)

Haberman (1996) argues that schools of education cannot prepare enough effective teachers for America's city schools because faculty members themselves have virtually no urban

teaching experience (Gursky, n.d., para. 2). Milbrandt and Klein (2008) developed a listserv survey in response to a discussion on the NAEA Higher Education Listserv that centered on the professional qualifications of college level art educators. The discussion revealed “polarized thinking” among the membership and determined an apparent need for more demographic data (Milbrandt & Klein, 2008, p. 79). The survey was electronically distributed to 422 members and 100 responded to the survey. Milbrandt and Klein (2008) found that 33% of art education faculty had three years or less teaching experience in public school, yet 82% felt that P-12 experience was highly important. As an educator working in public schools for over twenty years, three years is hardly enough experience in the field to be able to adequately prepare art teachers. If teacher educators are coming in to teach college with three years or less experience, the attitudes, values, and beliefs of these teachers will be replicated in the teacher education classroom. In Milbrandt and Klein’s (2008) report, it is no surprise that pedagogy (48%) was listed as one of the top issues that teacher educators needed to address in art teacher education because of this lack of depth in their experience. Educators especially need to have an understanding of the nuances and politics to work successfully with diverse people and communities in public school systems. Pre-service teachers should be rigorously challenged and prepared for such conditions; and teacher educators should be competently experienced in these conditions to convey adequate information to pre-service teachers.

Respondents in the *2006 NAEA Listserv Survey* (Milbrandt & Klein, 2008) also specified that curriculum and external conflicts were their most pressing concerns. Several respondents indicated a need for teacher educators who could creatively deliver a rigorous curriculum that addressed multicultural concerns, while some respondents were reluctant concerning the inclusion of social justice as a focus of art curriculum. Multicultural education was reported as a

relatively high priority (31%) when respondents were asked to identify the most important issues that needed to be addressed in teacher education programs. In this is the era of accountability, the monitoring of standards in teacher preparation should be strengthened or else it just becomes rhetoric that makes things appear to be politically correct, when in reality it is the opposite. “Unless there are plans, procedures, monitoring, and evaluation, these [diversity] standards will become nothing more than words on paper” (Carter, 2003, p. 68).

Grant (1994) cites the failure of teacher education programs to prepare teachers for urban schools and cites teacher preparation programs as the major contributor to the national social, educational, economic, and political crises of the country. His review responds to the challenges of teacher preparation by asking two key questions:

- 1) Are there some best practices or professional perspectives that teacher educators should use to prepare teachers to work in urban schools and/or to work with students of color?*
- 2) If so, are these best practices supported by research or the professional judgment of several [urban] teacher educators who have experience and are committed to preparing students to work in urban areas or with students of color? (Grant, 1994, p.3)*

Grant (1994) also found that one of the most agreed upon best practices was to include multicultural education in pre-service training. The conflict and debate is how to include multicultural education and where to include it. To be most effective, this content should be infused throughout the program. Grant’s research indicated that time and intensity produced more desirable and lasting outcomes while basic workshops, which average a few hours in a single day, have proven not to have lasting effects in teacher preparation. The level of intensity should match the level of necessity. Grant analyzed a multicultural teacher preparation initiative



that included having student teachers live in culturally different environments during their student teaching experience and studied the effects of their having different kinds of field experiences. That study found that teachers who had experiences living in different cultural environments during their student teaching were greatly more competent in the classroom.

Grant (1994) sees the cooperating teacher's role as essential and felt that overall, there is a limited amount of literature to support the role of the cooperating teacher and supervision of student teachers. Art education needs much more in-depth research on the cooperating teacher's role in the quality of art education programs across the nation. Grant described how student teacher supervisors need to give more meaning to their work and that faculty members have to take the leadership on integrating diversity and multicultural issues in a meaningful way across the curriculum for teacher education programs to insure that their candidates are ready and able with the moral commitment and dispositions needed to successfully educate all diverse learners. Disposition and commitment should be considered as a vital part of cooperating and supervising teacher's evaluation. Students should also be required to keep journal reflections with prompts that tap into pre-service teachers' character and commitment to diversity to allow the preparation program to better assess their level of commitment and dispositions needed to work in urban environments.

Gallavan, Porter, Troutman and Jones (2002), give attention to two National Councils on Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards addressing cultural diversity. Standard II.B, centers on the composition of teacher candidates; evidence must be shown to prove that the preparation program recruits and retains a diverse student body. Standard III.B centers on the composition of the faculty; indicators require evidence to show that the program recruits, hires, and retains diverse faculty (NCATE, 2010). The authors argue that these two standards present

the most concern and remain two of the greatest challenges in education. They should present concern because, as stated earlier, the population of students of color is increasing in the public school system, yet teachers of color represent only 14% of the workforce (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Standard Four of the Georgia Professional Standards on Diversity states that the “professional education unit designs, implements, and evaluates curriculum and provides experiences for candidates to acquire and demonstrate the knowledge skills, and professional dispositions necessary to help all students learn” (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2008). This standard focuses on the relevance in preparing teachers to have a variety of approaches to educating students. It should be remembered that diverse students require diverse approaches to teaching. Teachers must be trained and prepared to teach all students including black students, white students, Latino students, Asian students, poor students, rich students, students who come ready to learn, and students who don’t, troubled students, gifted students, urban students, rural students, and suburban students. Art education is not a smorgasbord or buffet, and teachers should not be prepared to teach students a la carte. Teachers should be prepared to teach everyone. Teaching and professional standards should be in place to assure equity across the board.

National organizations holding institutions accountable for preparing quality teachers are being scrutinized because they promote the assurance of quality teacher preparation in higher education, but there is no accountability. NCATE has devoted attention to diversity since the 1970s, and the language is clear as it refers to the importance of teachers’ ability to teach ‘all children’ throughout its documents, however, institutions make little meaning of these requirements in evidence that targets are being met (Carter, 2003). “When all the blame has been exhausted, what is the responsibility of teacher education programs for guaranteeing the

best education programs for all students” (p.13)? Haberman (2005a) explains that teacher education programs are built on foundational educational courses broadly covering topics and moving into content area courses during final semesters or pre-service teacher preparation. Some faculty members resist changing programs, and may lack a realistic understanding of the urban classroom and the skills necessary to teach urban students, while other faculty believes it is not the responsibility of the university to prepare pre-service teachers for urban environments (Akmal & Miller, 2003).

### **edTPA**

edTPA (Teacher Performance Assessment) is an assessment instrument for pre-service teachers that assesses a student teacher based upon a review of their learning process and their ability to teach a variety of students. The focus of edTPA is culturally relevant teaching that assures a teacher can teach all types students. According to Lynn (2014) teacher preparation programs have been struggling because the knowledge they have received is too theoretical, too conceptual, and not practical enough. edTPA requires that all teacher candidates submit a video of their teaching and work connects their teaching portfolio to their teaching. Pre-service teachers are scored based upon how students respond to their lesson plans, instruction, assessment, and overall classroom strengths (Lynn, 2014). Aspiring teachers will have to be able to work with all types of students and pre-service teachers must be able to deliver a pedagogy that is culturally relevant. edTPA is fairly new, and was introduced in 2012 (extra fact sheet, n.d.) so there is not much data to respond to for art education at this time, but from the literature introducing edTPA , the developers of edTPA believe education programs are not doing enough to prepare teachers for urban environments. It means that teacher preparation programs are

going to have select art education instructors with relevant classroom experience in order to help their students.

### *Purpose for Qualitative Research Approaches*

Many art teachers continue to work in urban environments with tenacity, resolve, and persistence forging a way for their students to learn about and practice art without support, little to no resources, and a lack of professional development appropriate for their environment. These teachers have substance to explore, knowledge to share, and stories to tell which could advance the art education field and improve art teacher preparation. It would be beneficial to explore the world of the urban art teacher through eclectic qualitative approaches that would extract the attitudes, values, and behaviors of passionate urban art teachers and allow the profession to glean from them. One of critical theory's most promising contributions is that "there is much to learn from subjugated forms of knowledge" (Cary, 1998, p 15).

Critical pedagogy is interested in the margins of society and the experiences and needs of alienated individuals faced with oppression and marginalization (Kincheloe, 2008); therefore there is a need to explore the depths of their experience through qualitative methods. Economic inequity creates alienation and disconnects workers who have lost a sense of connection to class identity and to the experience of serving disadvantaged populations (Cary, 1998). Qualitative approaches can compel others to understand disadvantaged, underprivileged, and marginalized communities and the art teachers that serve them. Qualitative research is important because of its authentic nature and is crucial and fundamental for those who need to engage and understand the social, psychological, and political dimensions of urban systems (McClaren & Kincheloe, 2007). To better understand these dimensions, qualitative approaches are necessary to gain deeper insight. To strengthen this study, I examined two relevant qualitative studies with critical and

constructivist stances to model the design of this study with more meaningful, relevant, and insightful approaches. These studies focused on teachers working directly in diverse environments, used ethnographic approaches for gathering data, and included the voices of teachers as primary data. Additionally, both studies were conducted by former teachers who went back into the context of their previous teaching experiences to extract the voices of their fellow teachers working in them.

### ***The Study: The Flower Teachers***

Stout (2002) wrote *The Flower Teachers* in the context of her own personal experience. She selected 30 dedicated veteran art teachers from rural, urban, and suburban environments who had dedicated over 30 years of their lives to teaching the visual arts in elementary and secondary classrooms across the nation. These teachers came of age and started teaching in the late 1960s and early 70s; she called them the “Flower Teachers” (p. 1). Stout identified them as the teachers who experienced the biggest stream of educational trends, issues, and reform movements in American public education and were the first teachers who received racially mixed students from different environments. She felt there were lessons to be learned from the voices of these art teachers.

Stout focused on their social history and the pedagogical issues they had to deal with over a span of 25 years in art education in order to convey professional understanding of what it was like to teach visual arts throughout the last five decades. Stout gave these teachers a voice and extricated lessons for public education using qualitative methods to search for values, beliefs, and behaviors, similar to what I will do in this study.

Stout used written and taped interviews prodded by open-ended questions that provided in-depth, reflective descriptions of her participants’ teaching experiences over the last five

decades. Her questions were designed to summarize experiences, encapsulate philosophy and practice, and offer interpretations of significant events, trends, and issues. She also asked these seasoned teachers to give advice and offer predictions for the future.

Her sample consisted of 30 art teachers working in rural, suburban, and urban schools from 17 states in the United States. Stout chose a professional forum to locate participants because she wanted to seek participant teachers who were still actively engaged with their professional organization, and who are abreast of changes in education issues. She posted an ad in the newsletter of the National Art Education Association. Participants had to meet three qualifications: 1) started their career in the 1960s or 1970s. 2) have had a continuous career to the unfolding of the new millennium. 3) come to the project of their own accord.

Her interview protocol contained 43 items and was guided in four directions: a) inward directed questions that required reflection. b) questions about everyday art teacher actions. c) questions that looked backward about methods, theories, stakeholders, progress and transformation d) questions that looked forward about methods, theories, stakeholders, progress and transformation. The last question was an open question left to the participant to address anything not addressed in the interview protocol. Stout (2002) took the statements from the last question, formed them into another set of questions, and posed them to the participants after the initial interview inquiry.

She originally wanted to conduct interviews in person, but limited funding restricted her ability to travel so she invited participants to respond in writing or through audio tapes. Her role was to uncover stories “hiding in plain sight” (p.4). She studied their words to identify themes and patterns. Stout composed her study in the context of her own personal experience as a member of the same generation; she was also a “Flower Teacher.”

One of the strengths to this study was the number of participants that Stout selected gave her study more credence and a stronger voice. What also gives the study more credibility was how she allowed the participants to contribute to the inquiry protocol through an open ended final question. I think her study could have been strengthened by the inclusion of more of her own story and her voice, as a ‘Flower Teacher,’ this would have given more depth and insight into the study. I also think that how she selected her participants was a disadvantage. She found her participants by placing an ad in the NAEA newsletter. There are many successful art teachers who would have fit the criteria yet they don’t participate in NAEA.

### ***The Study: Dream-Keepers***

Ladson-Billing’s (2009) study profiles teachers who are successful with African American children. Her investigation frames their effective teaching practices and her research is an ethnographic study orchestrated through four components: 1) teacher selection, 2) teacher interviews, 3) classroom observations and videotaping, and 4) collective interpretations and analysis. Her study is considered “close to the classroom” (p.179) because her observations allow the understanding of classroom patterns and routines.

The context of the research took place in a primarily low-income African-American and Mexican community of 25,000 in Northern California nestled in the midst of predominantly white communities. Teachers were selected through “community nomination” (p.181). In order to find the teachers for this study, the researcher polled African American parents at local Baptist churches to find African American parents of African American students age 7-19. She asked the parents to nominate an effective teacher of their children and for the parents to clarify what they meant effective to be. She cross-checked the list the parents compiled by consulting eight school principals with five or more years of experience. Where the principal had five years or

less experience, she consulted teaching colleagues. If a teacher's name appeared on both lists, from the parents and from the professional community, that teacher would become a candidate for the study. The study consisted of eight teachers.

Selected teachers participated in an ethnographic interview with predesigned questions, however, Ladson-Billings' intention was to just have a conversation. All teachers agreed to participate in a research collaborative that would analyze and interpret the data and work together to understand their collective expertise. Each individual interview was taped, transcribed, and given back to each teacher to check for fact or intent.

The interviews were coded using the computer program, Ethnograph, to look for key words and phrases, and then hand coded to look for themes related to culture or pedagogy. The coding process created the frame for the model of culturally relevant teaching characteristics. In order not to influence teacher behavior and due to the nature of the model, Ladson-Billings (2009) did not use the term "culturally relevant" with the teachers at this given point of the study, nor did she give them the coded interviews. She did, however, give each member a set of all eight transcribed interviews to provide as a starting point for the first group research collaborative meeting. Each member agreed to allow segments of their teaching to be videotaped and shared with the collaborative group. The teachers allowed the videotaping of their lesson with the understanding that the tape would not be viewed outside of the research group. Ladson-Billings chose this method because it was assumed that expert teachers automatically operate on an intuitive level and that in the presence of other expert teachers, they would be capable of explaining and defining the exemplary practices that they observed.

Influenced by black feminist epistemology, and Afrocentricity, Ladson-Billings opted for this model with the intent to improve the practice of teaching African American children. Class



observations took place over 19 months. Scheduled visits were attempted, but the teachers agreed to unscheduled visits because of school programs and special projects that often interfered with scheduled visits. Observations usually lasted from 90 minutes to two hours. Ladson-Billings (2009) made approximately 30 visits to each teacher's classroom. Audio-taped and written field notes were taken during the visits then more fully written immediately afterward. On-site conferences followed classroom observations when possible and post observation discussions took place over the telephone on the evening of the observation.

The role of the researcher in *Dream-Keepers* speaks in the voice of an African American scholar, an African American teacher, and that of an African American woman, parent, and community member. As a university researcher, Ladson-Billings functioned as a participant observer in the classroom, and at times she functioned as a tutor, teacher's aide, or student group member. This study relied heavily on story as a means of relaying the merit of pedagogical practice of the teachers studied. Because she felt that traditional scholarly methods reject necessary bias, she chose to integrate scholarly tools with knowledge of culture and personal experiences.

Ladson-Billings strengthened this study by staying focused on the good, a contrast from the usual in contemporary society, which usually speaks of African American children and urban environments in a negative light. That positive focus makes her study remain relevant. The number of observations she made for each individual teacher strengthened the study as well as the fact that her method was a research collaborative; she also integrated personal experiences. This study found that culturally relevant teaching strategies empower African American students to achieve.

These two studies from Ladson-Billings (2006) and Stout (2002), were based on critical and constructivist theory and used qualitative approaches that have influenced the design in this research. What I will do differently is include myself in the study and compare my experience with the experiences of other urban art teachers.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Research Questions and Research Design**

Neperud (n.d) studied transitions in art education and concluded that art teachers recognize that the social influences of their students and their diverse environments do not mesh with their formal education preparation. The focus of my study extends this idea and will focus on the preparation of art teachers in urban environments by exploring the world of urban art education and comparing it with the formal preparation art teachers received.

I will triangulate the data to enhance the scope, density, and clarity of the investigation and to correct any bias that may occur (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) as a study of self in part of the research. The research design combines ethnographic approaches in an effort to create research that is compelling, authentic, insightful and innovative to investigate the attitudes and needs of urban art teachers. According to LeCompte and Preissle (1993), most pioneering research use models eclectically, combining aspects of various models to produce more valid research. I examined the models used by Stout (2002) and Ladson-Billings (2009) and was influenced by the elements in their methodology and integrated them into my research design.

Using Table 2.2 from *Ethnography and Qualitative Design* (1993), I designed a plan (Table 4) to organize a study that would gather authentic data to answer the following research questions: *How are these art teachers prepared for urban environments? What are the behaviors and attitudes of these urban teachers? Does art teacher preparation match the skills needed in being an urban art teacher?*

(Table 4)

<b>Research Design</b>				
<i>What do I need to know?</i>	<i>Why do I need to know this?</i>	<i>What kind of data will answer the questions?</i>	<i>Where can I find the data?</i>	<i>Whom do I need to contact for Access?</i>
<i>How were these art teachers prepared for urban environments?</i>	To assess the the preparedness of art teachers for urban environments.	Narrative interviews  Art teacher preparation curriculum (from the school teacher attended)  Autoethnography	In-service urban art teachers.  X University   self	Urban art teachers  X University website   self
<i>What are the behaviors and attitudes of these urban art teachers?</i>	To assess and compare the preparation of urban art teachers with the realities of the environment.	Autoethnography   Narrative interviews   Classroom Observations	Self   In-service urban art teachers.   Urban art classrooms	Self   Individual participants   School District/Principals
<i>Does art teacher preparation match the behaviors and attitudes of these urban art teachers?</i>	To contribute to the improvement of art teacher preparation.	Document Research  Autoethnography  Narrative interviews  Classroom Observations	Art teacher preparation curriculum   The researcher's urban art classroom  In-service urban art teachers. Urban art classroom.	Teacher participant & Self



## **Summary of Pilot Study**

This study was influenced by a pilot study conducted in 2011 in which I interviewed three urban art teachers and asked, “How did your pre service program prepare you to work in urban schools?” Each respondent related feelings of frustration with their preparation being overly academic with seemingly disconnected professors leaving them feeling unprepared. Overall, they did not feel that their programs prepared them for the work they do in urban schools. These teachers also felt they had to rely on themselves to learn to maneuver through urban environments as art teachers.

The pilot study was motivated by my experience in the classroom in feeling unprepared. After reflecting on my personal attitude and experiences in the urban classroom and those of the teachers I interviewed in the pilot study, I recognized a connection and a phenomenon that needed further investigation. The pilot study opened my eyes to the needs in art teacher preparation.

As I began to observe my professional environment and the issues I faced more closely, listened more carefully to the art teachers I worked with, observed the struggle of the district art coordinator, and most importantly studied the students and their need for skilled art teachers to maneuver through their cultural context, I realized that I had to tell the whole story. Quantitative data alone could not capture the essence of the world of the urban art teacher, so I chose qualitative methods with arts based approaches and a broad set of questions to get to the core of teaching art in an urban environment. It is my hope that the data I collected will be used to develop art teacher programs so that art teachers assigned to urban schools will be better prepared.

## **Rationale**

This research will consist of an exploration and analysis of urban art education by studying the behaviors and attitudes of urban art teachers and analyzing the preparation they received. By studying the behaviors and attitudes of urban art educators, pre-service art teacher preparation programs can be developed to better prepare art teachers to work in urban environments around the nation, and art educators can advocate and appeal to federal and local governments for stronger support in art education based on the evidence provided through this research. In addition, more art teachers will be adequately prepared for their mission in the public school system, more art education faculty will be connected with rather than disconnected from the truths in the urban art classrooms, and more students in urban environments will have higher quality art teachers prepared to address their unique needs. Art teachers hopefully will leave preparation programs feeling more adequately prepared for the realities that will confront them in urban environments, and the number of art teachers who leave urban environments for better conditions may be reduced.

## **Participants**

I selected seven urban art teachers in Georgia to participate in this study. I researched schools that had high Title I populations and contacted the art teacher to ask them to participate in this study. They all agreed to participate. These art teachers represent a range of experiences and backgrounds of urban art teachers and will strengthen the study. Criteria for the selection of the participants for this study: 1) they were willing to take part in the study, 2) they were certified in art education 3) they worked fulltime in in a school that is designated as at least 85% Title I school.

These art teachers in Georgia are a representative distribution of cases that will allow the attitudes, behaviors, and tasks of these urban art teachers to be applied to the relevance of the teacher preparation. (Gray, Williamson, Karp & Dauphin, 2007). Below (Table 5) is a snapshot of the urban art teachers that participated in this study.

(Table 5)

Urban Art Teacher Participant Snapshot				
Participant	Gender	Race	Experience	Observation
Participant 1: Mama Bear	Female	white	3-5 yrs	observed
Participant 2: Ms. Lion	Female	black	15-20 yrs	observed
Participant 3: Ms. Duck	Female	black	15-20 yrs	observed
Participant 4: Mr. Leopard	Male	black	15-20 yrs	unable to observe
Participant 5: Ms. Golden Retriever	Female	black	15-20 yrs	unable to observe
Participant 6: Mr. Chimera (like a Sphinx)	Male	white	20-30 yrs	observed
Participant 7: Mother Bird	Female	black	3-5 yrs	no administrator response
Participant 8: Ms. Phoenix	Female	black	20-30 yrs	n/a

## **Data collection methods**

Art teachers need to understand content, context, and circumstances of context as well as the interaction between content and context (Neperud, n.d.), therefore data collection methods used were qualitative and ethnographic with arts-based approaches (Barone & Eisner, 1997) employed giving opportunity for content and context to be explored. Data collection methods will include quantitative and mostly qualitative arts based methods including narrative interviews, poetry, auto-ethnography, observations, document research, and open-ended questions in order to be descriptive, develop an understanding, and describe the realities and everyday life of art education in urban and inner city schools. In addition, art education is an arts-based and a creative field in a critical setting. Using arts-based methods to explore an arts-based field will enable the researcher to access qualities that are sometimes inaccessible (McNiff, 1998). To explain the world of an urban art teacher who works in a complex environment, something can be missed. McNiff (1998) informs that to explain something, “The bird flies away,” (p.28) however, my hope is the bird will remain if an arts-based approach is engaged. Though engaged in education in an urban environment, the art teacher is still engaged in an art experience therefore, use of the senses cannot be ignored when researching the nature of an art experience (McNiff, 1998).

## **Research Poetry**

Using poetry for data on humanity has increased throughout the years, and poetry is an excellent means of presenting data about the human experience (Faulkner 2009, Leavy 2009); therefore, the use of poetry will be engaged in this research. Richardson (2003) developed the book *The Power of Poetry for School Leadership: Leading with Attention and Insight* to enrich the thinking of school leaders and administrators and create deeper discussion on the



complications, quagmires, and complexities in school environments. Richardson believes that poets serve society by contributing to the human spirit and paying attention to human details and place. She authored this book to enlighten and accentuate the association between people and educational institutions. She framed the book into three sections; a) context of school leaders and the influence of environment; b) the value of poetry as a form of communication and poetry's role in providing true meaning and knowledge and; c) how leaders can use poetry in their profession to make them more perceptive leaders. Leavy (2009) believes new methods are needed to bring new insight that can address issues in education. My goal as the researcher is to use modern innovations to bring new insight into art education. Poetry will be the special language used to access what other modes of representation will not capture in the work (Faulkner, 2009). Poetry is mnemonic, reminiscent, and recollective, and therefore would serve great purpose in my auto-ethnography of urban and inner city classroom experience. I was recently reassigned to an urban high school, and can authentically offer insight to beginning again in a new environment, while still being able to give reflections on my tenure in urban elementary and middle school art classrooms.

I reflected on a daily basis as opposed to direct observations of my classroom experience due to my responsibilities as a teacher and the high energy of the urban art classroom experience. My role is to become ethno-poet, using my past training in creative writing and literature to employ narrative poetry. I also enrolled in a narrative poetry workshop to develop stronger narrative poetry skills. Narrative poetry tells a story and captures tonality, patterns, and rhythm (Leavy, 2009). Ethnographic poetics rely on an ethnographers, field notes, journals, and memos. "Narrative poetry has also been labeled research poetry, interpretative poetry, investigative poetry, and ethnographic poetics" (p 66). Poetry is therefore one of the appropriate forms that

auto-ethnographies can take (Leavy, 2009). My goal is to write narrative poetry that reflects the past and present experiences of participants. Diamond and Mullen (1999) challenge the researcher to “take a journey in [the] mind... to devise connections between [the] beginnings and [the] endings” (p.79).

### **Observations**

Evidence of the social world can be generated by observing the real life and natural world of those being studied (Mason, 2002). I will engage in 75 minute observations of each of the seven art teacher participants in their school environments. Specific, rich, thick descriptions from field observations will be used; however, observations will give only part of the picture (Gray et al, 2007), therefore, to support observations, narrative interviews will be employed.

### **Narrative Inquiry**

As noted in Costantino and Greene (2003), there is increased interest in the use of narrative stories in evaluation practice and social inquiry. A narrative story, as first explained by Aristotle, is something that has a beginning, a middle, and an end (Polkinghorne, 1997). Narrative inquiry is a part of the arts-based research spectrum in qualitative methods (Barone, 2001; Barone & Eisner, 1997).

Stories and narratives offer a transparent and lucid view into social and cultural meanings (Patton, 2002), and I will use narrative interviews, conducted in-person, 60 to 90 minutes long-- to extract and piece together the stories of seven informants to elucidate the world of urban art education. Storytelling is an important part of being human, contributes to social inquiry, and can offer a unique opportunity to observe and understand the context of a program (Costantino & Greene, 2003). People are “embodiments of lived stories” (Clandin & Connelly, 2000, p. 43).

According to Leavy (2009), narratives are useful for questioning the nature of dominant stories and critical frameworks. Critical stories are a valuable resource and can serve as cultural critique (Knowles & Cole, 2008). “Hence, a narrative framework for evaluation can enable a meaningful understanding and representation of a program, as well as help forge connections amongst program stakeholders—as can all good stories” (Costantino & Greene, 2003, p. 47). Leavy (2009) says critical insights illuminate the subjective and the environment of the research and telling the story through narratives allows the researcher to evaluate and assess stories for professional sequences, key elements, and to create meaning.

Direct quotations from the respondents will be included in their narratives to maintain authenticity in the data (Patton, 2002). Respondents will be allowed to review the narratives for accuracy in the retelling of their experiences.

### **Documentary Research**

Documents are evidence of social constructs (McCulloch, 2004). I will examine the undergraduate, pre-service coursework of myself and the urban art teacher participants to determine coursework that addressed teacher preparation. Document data used will be course bulletins, course description information, and available syllabi acquired through college websites. The findings of this document analysis will be organized and categorized in a logical format to present an overview or required courses in art education and urban art education. Other informal documents that will be examined are art teacher schedules, lists of school duties, and classroom budget and supply information.

## **Data Analysis Methods**

I will use coding and create descriptive categories from interpretations of the data. After reading through the data, I will create as many categories as interpreted then work with each specific category and arrange and rearrange as necessary. I will assign each category a label and fit each piece of data into a category. This coding procedure will give a clear idea of where there is the most data (Grant, Williamson, Karp, & Dauphin, 2007) and uncover patterns that will hopefully provide new insight into urban art education, the behaviors of urban art teachers, and the connection or disconnection with pre-service preparation.

For my autoethnography, I will initiate my analysis by separating my experiences in urban at-risk environments and art-education (as a student through my experiences as an urban art teacher) and I will create a vivid reconstruction of my experiences in these cultures. I will look for emerging patterns within my autoethnography, and compare them with themes and categories that emerged from the narratives of the other seven participants. (LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 1993).

## **Validity**

No theory can be accepted or rejected without obtaining relevant information (Gray et al, 2007). Relevant information will be obtained pertaining to the behaviors, tasks, and attitudes of urban art teachers and the training they received. Concepts and evidence that fit into urban art education will be evaluated to increase validity.

### **Protection of Human Subjects (IRB)**

The participants of this study will benefit from their participation as they will gain new respect for their skills and accomplishments, and feel a sense of fulfillment toward contributing toward the improvement of the art education field. Participation is voluntary and risks are minimal. Participant identities will remain anonymous and observations, narrative interviews, and open-ended questions were not a part of their professional evaluation. Pseudonyms for person and locations were used to ensure anonymity for participants, schools, and preparation programs. Identifiable information will not be used in any way. Interviews will be audio taped, and observations will not be videotaped. Audio files will be stored on a private computer with password protection. Access to the audio and field notes will be restricted to the researcher and her doctoral committee. Audio files will be destroyed two years after the study is completed.

### **Subjectivity**

The researcher, Lisa Whittington, was born in Harlem, NY. Home life for Lisa was dysfunctional and abusive. She lived in the projects with her mother and five brothers and sisters. Her mother was single, on welfare, and engaged regularly in alcoholism and drugs. Her father was never seen and unknown.

Lisa's high school teachers placed her in the Humanities arts program at Far Rockaway High School exposing Lisa to an array of artistic experiences including performing arts, literature, music, visual art, and took her on many field trips to art museums, operas, symphonies and the like. The arts were highly integrated into her academics and kept Lisa academically engaged. By the age of 17, Lisa was homeless, and occasionally lived with friends, yet in spite of her circumstances, she graduated from high school with honors and she credits this to her

strong engagement and connection with art education in her schooling. After graduating high school, her interest in the arts continued and eventually she became an artist, poet, and an art teacher to inner city youth where she has been for over 20 years.

### **Limitations and Advantages**

A limitation of this study is that the study will mainly be conducted in metro Atlanta, which follows the local and Georgia Performance Standards for teaching art, therefore it is possible that some practices may not be applicable to other locales. The study also focuses on urban teachers, not rural or suburban art teachers, though some issues may apply to these settings as well.

The advantage of this study is that the researcher is an urban art teacher with a combination of twenty years of experience in all levels of urban art education including elementary, middle, and high school and can provide an authentic perspective to the study. This research is pragmatic and the implications are practical for art teacher supervisors, art education faculty, art education administrators, policymakers, and teachers interested in improving art education in urban environments.

## CHAPTER 4

### PARTICIPANT DATA

#### *The Art Disciples*

*Bringing art education  
into  
poor places  
to at risk kids  
of all races  
disadvantaged teachers  
isolated  
working alone  
with many  
in solitary places  
covering all the bases  
so they can see the light  
in a child's eyes  
and  
on their faces  
drawing out a child's creativity  
so at-risk students have a chance to see  
all they can be  
in the land of liberty  
The sun shines  
on an art disciple  
oppressed  
but not stifled  
in the land of survival  
forging ahead  
with art delivery  
because their eyes can see  
the possibilities  
in a child's  
Creativity.*

*by Lisa Whittington*

### **The Art Disciples: Delivering Art Education into Disadvantaged Environments**

The schools in which these participants taught are all Title I schools. Schools are labeled as a Title I school if forty percent of the student population is living in poverty (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). All of the participants worked in urban schools in Georgia with high need populations. The poverty rate of the schools in which these urban art teachers worked ranged from 86% to 98% poverty with high demographic populations of African-American and Latino students. The demographic profile information was obtained from the Georgia School Council Institute (2011), which compiles and reflects school profile data from the Governor's Office of Student Achievement and the Georgia Department of Education. The urban art teacher participants ranged in experience from three years (beginning teachers non-tenured) to twenty-eight years (near retirement, tenured).

### **Metaphorical Teacher Animal Personalities**

Behavior and attitude are a large part in understanding the thinking and behaviors of urban art teachers. To understand their behaviors and attitudes, I designed a set of questions that were based upon a small personality test that I became familiar with in college. I don't remember the name of the test, but I have never forgotten the impact of the questions when they were given to me, and I have personally kept my results as a keepsake because they were so accurate and close to who I was at the time. Those results taught me something about how I see myself, and how I believe others see me; it was extremely enlightening. I have also used this small personality battery on a casual basis to understand acquaintances. I was unable to find the exact test through my research, however, I did find a book by a scientist who studied human behavior and wrote the book *Animal in You* (Feinson, 1998) and developed *The Animal in You Personality Test* (The



Animal in You, n.d.), which has similar concepts to this quiz. Feinson defines a biological basis as to why people tend to exhibit personality traits similar to animal species. I fused what I experienced years ago and the theory of Feinson into this research because I felt it would be an effective way in learning how this group of teachers perceived themselves and how they perceived their preparation program by using personification. What the original test I took in college simply asked me to do was: 1) name my favorite animal, 1a) give five reasons why I liked this animal, 2) name my favorite color, 2a) State five reasons why I liked that color. The way the results were explained to me was that when people named their favorite animals-- they usually picked an animal they related to with like characteristics; therefore the description of the characteristics in the animal would actually reveal how a person sees himself/herself. Since color is a visual element and others can see color on or attached to that person --for instance wearing that color or driving a car that color --their belief about that color would be how they believed others perceived them so when a person looked at them they would 'see' the characteristics of that color. I adjusted these questions to gain information about the behavior and attitude of each teacher and their belief about teaching. Next, I applied these questions to my research and analysis. I found it helpful and stimulating in understanding the behavior and attitude of these urban art teachers. For further research, I would propose that these questions be applied to suburban and rural teachers and all three results compared for further analysis and insight in art education as it relates to various environments.

Throughout the presentation of this data, I will use reversed personification and refer to the participants as the animal they chose for their teaching personality (i.e. 'Ms. Lion'). This also will help the reader to be mindful of the personality and attitude of the teacher and still give the teacher human identification and anonymity. My goal was to avoid any marginalization or

subjugations or rigid data and instead highlight their voices and stories and utilize ‘living’ qualitative data while still keeping the participants anonymous. The animals and classifications of these animals are listed in Table A.

### **Organization of Data Collection**

I will first familiarize the reader with the participants. I will introduce the participants as animal appellations and continue to refer to them using their animal identity (i.e. Mama Bear, Ms. Duck, Mr. Leopard). As part of the interview protocol, I guided the urban art teachers into the ‘metaphor’ section. I asked these urban art teachers to answer several questions that referred to animal metaphors. Two of questions relate to their identity and how they see themselves as teachers. The questions I asked were “What animal were you most like as a pre-service teacher” and “What animal are you like now as a teacher?” I went a step further and also asked them to give their pre-service training an animal identity. Then I asked the participants to give me at least three characteristics of each of these animals. Instinctively, the first thing I did after gathering the interview data was to compile each of their animal metaphors. That evidence was clarifying and began to direct this research into a different place; their stories and narratives became even more significant and more profound. Furthermore, throughout the review of the data and the task of reading literature pertaining to art education, I kept seeing a portrait of these art educators in my mind. Even though these teachers don’t know each other, I began to see these teachers as a social group—contemporaries with the same passion—individuals with the same mission; to deliver art education. The commonalities and stories formed a group portrait, and I started unconsciously calling them the Art Disciples; art teachers who take art education into disadvantaged environments. I wrote narrative poetry mainly about who they were before they

were art teachers, their experiences with art as a child, and the experiences their art teachers gave them. Some current experiences that stood out in their narratives are included.

### **Participant Portraits**

*“The world is always trying to tell the poet something... The goal of the poet is to make the world more available.” (Bottoms, p.13)*

#### **Participant 1: Mama Bear**

A middle school art teacher, white female. Works in a 90% Title I School in an urban district.

Travels between 2 middle schools, both in urban highly disadvantaged environments. Certified teaching experience in the urban school environment is 3- 5 years. Identifies her animal teacher personality as a “Mama Bear.”

#### **Who Am I?**

They are  
more like each other  
than like me  
I am the one  
who is different in the room

I come  
from a different neighborhood  
and they  
know each other  
I am the stranger  
I’m new in their neighborhood  
I imagined  
more variety  
Yet I am the variety  
in a place  
more segregated than I thought  
more disparity  
than I assumed

I am the one who is different  
I am their variety  
Who am I?

### **Art Suburbia**

A public school community  
of  
mostly haves  
some have nots  
a circular building  
with 7 art teachers  
and 7 specialties  
In suburbia  
Design tech where they would build bridges  
and woodworking  
and fiber arts  
and ceramics  
and painting  
and drawing  
and sculpture  
All in different art classrooms  
Were her middle school offerings  
her high school program  
was even better  
Creativity awaited her  
to go wherever she wanted to explore  
as a child.

### **Best Teacher**

Her elementary art teacher  
Was the best in the world to her  
She was the first to ask  
What do you want to be when you are grown up like me?  
I want to be a rock star  
Ok she said  
I want to be a dentist  
Ok she said, how can I make that happen?  
I want to be president  
She said, it is possible.  
She never said they were not possible.  
One day I said  
I want to be an artist  
And she supported me in that.  
I wasn't even very good yet  
But she supported me anyway  
No one encouraged me the way she did.

### **Mr. Howell**

Not much class control  
For an old soul  
But he would direct her  
with her lens  
into a world of free  
that was a curious place to be  
Freedom was the assignment  
but something got a hold of she  
And she started to see a vision  
and the collision  
of girl, freedom, and camera  
Empowered her decision  
And shifted her perception  
Of the world.

### **Lightning**

She was an atmospheric science major  
Taking photographs  
Of lightning  
To predict  
Where lightning would strike next  
For when lightning strikes  
It sends out  
Electromagnetic waves  
Which she could triangulate  
And figure out where it would strike next  
Everyday  
Taking photographs  
Of lightning  
To predict  
Where lightning would strike next  
For when lightning strikes  
It sends out  
Electromagnetic waves  
Which she could triangulate  
And figure out where it would strike next  
She followed the images of lightning  
Until one day  
That lightning  
Struck her art soul.

### **Popsicle Sticks, Glitter, and Glue**

Educated and progressive  
She could be very effective  
Tiny little car  
Filled to the brim  
She came to them  
armed with a Master's Degree  
And aspirations for an art PhD  
To work with a faculty  
With no pedigree  
In A-R-T  
For all they knew  
Was popsicle sticks, glitter and glue  
They didn't understand  
What art teachers really do  
Because their minds were stuck in 1962  
She wanted them to like her  
And see her subject as valid  
She didn't know how to say no  
And the requests became rapid  
Babysit  
Watch my class  
Make a banner  
Paint on Glass  
Do lunch duty  
And bus duty too  
Not a real teacher  
Give her something to do  
Beautify the stage  
Decorate every event  
She don't have a budget  
They don't bring a cent  
When they ask her for supplies  
Without looking in her eyes

Because they are stuck in the past  
This teacher won't last  
For all they knew  
Was popsicle sticks, glitter and glue  
They didn't understand  
What art teachers really do  
Because their minds were stuck in 1962

## **Participant 2: Ms. Lion**

A high school art teacher, black female. Works in a 97% Title I school in an urban district.

Experience in the urban school environment is 15-20 years. Identifies her animal teacher personality as a “Lion.”

### **Art Stability**

A transient child  
In the inner city  
school  
would change  
when they  
moved once per year  
each grade level  
a new school  
brought new experiences  
like  
Shop class  
Old school drafting plans  
She learned how to draw  
And render  
To follow schematics  
One side of the classroom  
pencils and paper  
The other side  
Table saws and jig saws  
And things  
To make things  
She loved making  
And would make things with her sister  
Whatever she could find  
In her transient home  
School became useful  
Because art class was stable

### **Artist Magician**

Bob Ross  
Made magic happen for her  
Created a world for her  
Picked up his paintbrush  
every Saturday morning  
Just for her  
Painted thin trees and thick trees  
and thorny trees and thunderous trees

and tiny trees and  
titanic towering trees  
just for her  
and gave her trees friends  
of bushes  
burly bushes, and barren bushes,  
and bashful bushes, and bulky bushes  
that were sometimes bare.  
Her imagination would escape  
To a world where  
Things magically appeared  
On canvas  
Just for her  
As magically as her world appeared  
Bob Ross would disappear from her  
And she would sit and wonder  
How the artist magician  
Made magic happen for her  
She waited and watched  
For the magician  
Every Saturday morning to show up  
And show her  
How a world could be made  
Out of paint and time

### **No Wise to Why**

Miss Pumpkin  
the opposite of a role model  
because she didn't know why  
So she decided to be a teacher  
Unlike Miss Pumpkin  
Who didn't know whys from wise  
Miss Pumpkin said do this project  
no wise to why  
would say "make this"  
and give no why  
She would ask Miss Pumpkin  
why are eyes  
apart this wide?  
She looked in her teacher's eyes  
And didn't know why there was no wise to why  
In the classroom space  
She didn't see wise on her teacher's face  
Miss Pumpkin  
never replied



Or saw the curiosity in her eye  
And gave no wise  
To the little girl's why  
So  
When she grew up  
She applied  
All the wise  
To her student's why  
Doing all the things  
Miss Pumpkin never did  
And she knew just why.

**Celebrate, Acknowledge, and Respect**

C e l e b r a t e!  
Art class is the reason  
Many art students  
Wanted to come to school today  
It is the reason  
Some still come to school at all

A c k n o w l e d g e!  
Policy makers  
Should examine  
The fact that  
Bubble questions are not going to evolve  
A child into the person  
We want them to be

R e s p e c t!  
Art options  
Are so broad  
That art cannot be narrowed down  
By a test  
That is why kids like us

Celebrate  
Acknowledge  
And Respect!  
The reason kids like the arts.

### **On the Moon**

I am in the basement  
By myself  
I go back to earth  
Upstairs to the second floor  
Because I am on the moon  
I go to earth  
On the second floor  
To talk with other teachers  
Because I am on the moon  
I find out what's going on in the building  
With the stars  
Because I am on the moon.

### **Participant 3: Ms. Duck**

A high school art teacher, black female. Works in an 88% Title I school in an urban district.

Experience in the urban school environment is 15-20 years. Identifies her teacher personality as a "Duck."

### **Like a Fuchsia Teacher**

Teach!  
With enough red to be hot  
And enough blue to be cool!  
Teach!  
Bright enough to catch their eyes!  
And make them glow  
And make them smile.

### **Ratchet Student**

That student was ratchet  
A horror a beast  
Inner city child  
Came to school with the least  
And would do anything  
anything to upset the class peace  
Thoughts of throwing her out the window  
To let the crows pick her away  
But teacher did not feel like going to jail today  
So she endured ratchet student torture every single day  
Still demonstrating teacher patience and love in every way  
But poor frustrated teacher

Could not wait for the bell  
To rid her day  
Of this student from hell  
Environment disturbed  
By the student in the presence  
The classroom was not pleasant  
But one day fate  
would give teacher a present  
So one afternoon ratchet child did a painting  
A painting so good the teacher—the teacher thought of fainting  
Ratchet child who was  
Coached by the teacher so tired  
Proudly held her painting up high to be admired  
Thank God teacher had managed not to get fired  
And though she was tired  
She hung up the painting to put it in a show  
Just when things got good, what do you know?  
Someone stole her artwork (it was by the window)  
And the ratchet student who acted deranged  
Her heart was softened  
And the beast started to change  
Because the words of her teacher  
pulled a lesson from her pain  
And so it remains  
That lesson reached deep into the young child's heart  
And the beast learned something special about art and  
about herself that stuck with her real good  
Even though this troubled child was straight from the hood  
Something from this class would  
Change her for the good  
And the child she finally finally understood  
That art help her touch people's mood  
And it was all good  
So a few years later when the beast of art graduated  
She found teachers number and called her elated  
(Though not what tired teacher had anticipated)  
The call caused an elation  
That would help shape the nation  
Because after graduation  
The student went to college  
To major in  
art education!

**Paddle Hard**

Waddle Waddle  
Quack Quack  
Let stuff roll off your back  
Shake it off  
Certain things  
You ask yourself  
Take care of yourself  
Come to work  
Be true to yourself  
Teach the children to the best of your ability  
Choose your fight  
Let your feathers be waterproof  
Waddle Waddle  
Quack Quack  
Let stuff roll off your back  
Be calm but paddle hard  
Think Finding Nemo  
And just keep swimming  
Be calm above water  
But Paddle hard underneath

**Ignite the Passion**

They thought they wasn't good enough  
She shows them they can do it  
She kindles the passion  
With creative fire  
Ignites in spite  
of any trial  
to see  
their eyes light up  
With fire and rainbows  
displays their art on the wall  
And see their eyes aglow

#### **Participant 4: Mr. Leopard**

A middle school art teacher, black male. Works in a 94% Title I school in an urban district.

Experience in the urban school environment is 15-20 years. Identifies his teaching personality as a “Leopard.”

#### **The West Side**

His young world was a colored world  
of brown people  
on the West Side  
His urban school was segregated  
Separated from the East  
Long legs in khaki pants and a funny looking body  
He was a boy of about 8 or 9  
Who drew a picture of himself and won a prize.  
His young world was a colored world  
Of brown people  
On the West Side  
A mask  
On top of a cabinet  
In a classroom  
Made him feel a certain way  
A good way.  
The mask made him feel different.  
His world was a colored world  
Of brown people  
On the West Side.

#### **Mr. Walker**

Mr. Walker wore a clean shirt  
And occasionally a smock  
It was strange to see  
Mr. Walker always neat  
And odd to see Mr. Walker  
Strut into the art room  
In a white shirt and tie  
Mr. Walker guided his first success  
As a young boy  
Watercolor painting  
Of a ship at sea

An eggshell painting  
Of a parrot  
Glue eggshells down  
And paint on top of them  
Painted a ship from a picture  
It was fun making waves  
Mr. Walker made waves  
In the classroom  
And in his life  
When Mr. Walker walked into the classroom  
He walked into his life  
And never left

### **One day his teaching**

His teaching was blue  
He mixed it with yellow  
To make it green  
To renew himself  
and his class.

### **Teaching Art**

Teaching art  
Means teaching English  
Teaching art means  
Teaching creative writing  
Teaching art means teaching social studies  
And it is just really coincidental  
That he is doing it in art  
He never does a science project  
Without thinking of it artistically  
And never does an art project  
Without thinking of it scientifically  
Watercolor is aqueous media  
So colorfully  
Beautifully  
Naturally.

### **It's for the Children...**

The space is very small  
Too small  
To do it all  
To fit them all  
To have it all  
work  
For an artroom  
But he manages

500 kids a week  
big art projects  
and large middle school personalities  
squeeze into a little old science room  
with little sinks  
and tables too small  
but the irony of it all  
is that right down the hall  
a classroom conversion  
to project art  
while  
converted to  
a large office for the assistant principal  
is the official art room  
adequate and appropriate  
right down the hall  
the irony of it all

#### **Participant 5: Ms. Golden Retriever**

An elementary school art teacher, black female. Works in a 90% Title I school in an urban district. Experience in the urban school environment is 15-20 years. Identifies her teacher personality as a “Golden Retriever.”

#### **Morale**

No thank you  
Or the courtesy of please  
The principal requested the art teacher  
Display student work  
In the main office  
The art teacher  
Complied  
As best she could  
And the principal  
ripped the work down  
With her bare hands  
Student artwork destroyed  
With teacher morale.

### **Inner City Art Teacher**

Apartments and tenements  
Low socio economic  
They call it living  
Right between 2 major highways  
Going somewhere  
Out of this town  
Never stopping in this neighborhood  
Constantly busy  
Something always going on  
With the music on  
Busy busy  
Unstable  
Unaware  
Of school  
Comings and goings  
And goings and comings  
Busy busy  
Unsettled  
Unbelievable  
That the neighborhood children  
Witness  
A lot  
At home  
And in the schoolyard  
And the street  
On the weekend  
Booksense  
Commonsense  
Street sense  
Makes sense  
Survival mindset  
Triggered daily  
The children are antsy  
Rambunctious  
The school bell rings  
Monday morning  
She works to get their attention  
Entertainer  
Struggles to get their attention  
Animated teacher  
Some days she's a target  
And some days she's on top  
Of



The inner city  
Right in the heart  
On the edge  
Where values are different  
And angry students  
Who keep it in  
To let it out  
She creates  
a  
rapport  
And they settle in  
to  
create art.

### **It's Not That**

It's not that her peers use her classroom  
And leave it in a disarray  
She's upset but that does not make her bad day  
And it's not that  
She is not appreciated  
Or does not get the supplies she anticipated  
And it's not that the principal  
Tore her art off the wall  
No, it's not that at all  
But those days when little Johnnie is unengaged from bell to bell  
She knows that her day will be long like hell  
For her bad days she confesses, are her own fault  
by not following the commandment of  
thou shalt  
Plan as well, as well as you could  
So thy days as a teacher  
Will be good.

### **Participant 6: Mr. Chimera—Like a Sphinx**

An elementary school art teacher, white male. Works in a 95% Title I school in an urban district.  
Experience in the urban school environment is 25-30 years. Identifies his teacher personality as  
a “Chimera—like a Sphinx.”

### **Mr. Chimera like a Sphinx**

Grew up public  
Mr. Chimera like a Sphinx  
In the fourth grade  
Liked art  
But lacked  
Creative experiences  
And was bored the way  
his teacher gave him clay  
not much love for her  
and she did not fuss  
But recognized his interest  
And had him bussed  
To the art specialist  
once a month  
he would go  
His experience  
Sporadic  
Scattered  
Infrequent  
Inconsistent  
Frustrated and  
Irritated him  
Went to college  
Academics bored him  
Lack of creativity  
Annoyed him  
Flustered him  
But Art books excited him  
Art displays enthused him  
His friend's sister  
an art teacher  
inspired him  
And he dreamed to provide for the world's children  
Experiences  
That influence them  
Motivate them  
Inspire them  
And Wire them

### **What he imagined**

He envisioned  
students expressing themselves in all colors  
their eyes aglow

like the cavemen proved  
    humans need to explore  
    and souls need to create  
he remembered  
    his own creative needs  
    unmet  
    as a child  
He imagined this world for his students  
    he explored it  
    and he created it.

**Mr. Chimera (Like a Sphinx)... He goes**

“Don’t bring glue bottles into a staff meeting Mr. Chimera!”  
But Mr. Chimera  
keeps right on doing  
art education.  
Making creative problems  
with imaginative solutions for kids to solve  
Never giving students a problem  
that he has not worked out himself.  
Mr. Chimera  
plans a trip  
and asks  
where are the museums?  
Where can I see people making art?  
Everything he does  
and everywhere he goes  
art is at the center  
Art is the shape of things  
Art is the form of the world  
Art is the order of things  
the structure of things  
It is all things  
Mr. Chimera (like a sphinx)  
Sits quietly  
listens  
and draws  
Taking care of himself  
and his wounds  
by drawing  
Art cares for his soul  
He sits quietly in a faculty meeting  
And listens

And takes care of himself  
with art by drawing  
He takes care of himself  
at home  
by creating things  
He walks into thrift shops  
and collects things with beads  
For he is someone who makes things  
and makes sense  
and makes experiences  
He thinks about his students  
and won't give them something to do  
that he has not done himself  
planning backwards  
to work forward  
Making creative problems  
with imaginative solutions  
for kids to solve  
Mr. Chimera  
Berated out loud by a principal  
said she wanted her students to learn  
and yells at Mr. Chimera  
in a staff meeting  
“Don't bring art supplies into a staff meeting Mr. Chimera!”  
But Mr. Chimera  
keeps right on doing  
art education.  
Making creative problems  
with imaginative solutions for kids to solve  
Never giving students a problem  
that he has not worked out himself.

### **Participant 7: Mother Bird**

An elementary school art teacher, black female. Works in a 90% Title I school in an urban district. Experience in the urban school environment is 3-5 years. Identifies her teacher personality as a “Mother Bird.”

### **In Place of the Privileged**

Nothing in their design truly prepared her  
For urban school experiences  
Except the turned up noses  
of her privileged classmates  
She was the only student of color  
Some comments during class  
About America's at-risk students  
Were offensive  
Her art teacher classmates  
Desensitized  
Unsympathetic  
Compassionless  
Callous  
and snooty  
made fun of the children  
that could possibly be their students  
Sometimes  
the instructors looked embarrassed  
Because she was in the room  
She did what was asked of her  
...Graduated  
And went straight to teach  
Where those privileged  
Did not want to go.

### **Working with What They Gave Her**

Outdated supplies  
Broken crayons  
Dried up markers with missing tops  
Old paint with separated liquid  
Rusty scissors  
Cracking manila paper  
Obsolete textbooks  
Antiquated mindsets  
Little support  
And lack of understanding  
She worked with what they gave her.  
She worked with what she had.

### **And The Wheels Keep Spinning...**

There were two different stories  
Kept spinning  
Never coming to a stop  
When she asked for classroom resources  
The principal said  
There are no funds for you  
While central office said  
Art Funds were released to your school  
And the wheels kept spinning  
And turning  
Never coming to a stop  
To support her classroom  
And her students  
To achieve in the arts  
So she asked again  
for classroom resources  
and the principal replied  
There are no funds for you  
While central office said  
Art Funds were released to your school  
And the wheels kept spinning  
And turning  
Never coming to a stop  
To support the children engaged  
In her art class  
She called other art teachers  
For help  
And found  
Their stories were the same  
The principal said  
There are no funds for you  
While central office said  
Funds were released to your school  
And the wheels kept spinning...

### **Narratives and Portraiture**

Portraiture, a technique in qualitative research, creates narrative that reveals personality, history, and values (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005). Portraits of urban teachers as individuals and as a group have emerged from this research. Through narratives gained directly from the participants, triangulated through narrative poetry, and an autoethnography of the researcher (see

Chapter 5)-- the lived experience, the world of the urban art teacher, and the learning conditions of at-risk urban students will become more known. To reconstruct a better, stronger, more revitalized art education starting through teacher preparation, it is necessary to deconstruct, analyze, and review the world and environment of the urban art teacher. What we see through this collective textual portrait of the urban art teacher would not be clearly evident in any other data. As Lightfoot (2005) explains, portraiture has a goal of speaking to broader audiences beyond the academy linking discourse to social transformation. Portraiture gives interested parties a picture and a map of where to begin the change. As a researcher and an urban art educator, I believe if I do not tell the stories of urban art educators, their stories, and the experiences of at-risk students will remain hidden. What is most concerning is the future of the children for their lives are directly attached to the experiences of their teachers.

Data has not always been truthful, per se. For instance, while there is data and documentation that art is offered, and even that it is being funded, very often the truth behind the data on paper is quite the opposite; thus the purpose of qualitative research.

In this research, I stayed aligned and close to the words of the participants for an authentic portrait of the behaviors and attitudes of urban art educators. Narrative inquiry is a relevant approach for probing experience (Foster, Lather & Smithies, 199; Hankins, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Stout, 2002). This narrative inquiry also allows a look into the historical art education experiences of the participants as youth, through their decisions to major in art education up to their current status as an urban art educator. Narrative is a fundamental human strategy for coming to terms with basic elements of human experience with time, process, and change (Ohio State University Project Narrative, n.d.) Reflecting on the past of these art teacher

experiences and their current teaching situations is also a reflection on how art education has changed.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) strongly advocated narrative inquiry in educational research by stating “Experience happens narratively. Narrative inquiry is a form of experience, therefore educational experience shared should be studied narratively” (p. 19). I also used the participant’s interview transcripts to write narrative poetry. The use of resources from poetry and the visual world can help people to comprehend what cannot be revealed in formal text (Eisner, 1991). It has been said that the world is always trying to tell the poet something. “The goal of the poet is to make the world more available” (Bottoms, 2010, p.13). In these poetic narratives, I attempt to take urban art teachers out of the extreme margins and make their more visible.

When I designed this research, my first intent was to gather the participants’ information and retell their stories in one complete story narrative and write my autoethnography using poetry. However, in analyzing the transcripts, many relevant stories emerged from their responses and were illuminated through the data. I began to realize that the most powerful way to retell these illuminated stories was through narrative poetry. To improve my narration, I enrolled in a six- week poetry workshop called “The Poem as Story” at Emory University with poet, author, and editor Alexa Selph. I informed the instructor of my reason for attending, and she and the class graciously provided extensive critique of my narrative poetry writing skills. Through this workshop, I learned a variety of narrative poetry techniques and poetry beats that I applied to my research. It helped me to look deeper into the data I collected. I read through the transcripts of each participant repeatedly, and their stories and voices began to fly and jump off the page. There were times that I could not write fast enough. I would write the first draft and come back to it several times making edits as learned through my narrative poetry workshop.



Together, these elements started to show who the participants were as individual teachers, and collectively who we all are as urban art teachers. In writing the poetry, I avoided trying to be verbose or waxing poetic. I avoided flowery language and romanticized words. In some cases, I directly used the words of my participants, but rearranged the words in narrative poetic form using rhythms and beats. Some poems are individual portraits of the participants, some are group poems, and some individual poems were powerful enough to speak for the entire group. For accuracy in narration, I let each of my participants review the poems pulled from their interview data for authenticity. If there was anything they felt was not true to their story, I was prepared to eliminate it. There were very few corrections. Each respondent was pleased the way his or her stories were retold.

On Table 6 (below) I created a chart of the urban art teacher responses to their animal personality type to get an individual and a group portrait of the urban art teacher's behavior and attitude in art education settings as a pre-service teacher, and a current portrait of how they see themselves presently. I also collected a portrait of how they felt about their pre-service preparation program as well as their current overall personality of the classroom.

(Table 6)

<b><u>Urban Art Teacher Animal Personality Type</u></b>				
Art Teacher	<i><b>Question:</b> What animal were you most like as a pre-service teacher?</i>	<i><b>Question:</b> What are you most like presently as an urban teacher?</i>	<i><b>Question:</b> If your present art classroom were an animal, what animal would it be?</i>	<i><b>Question:</b> If your pre-service training were an animal, what animal would it be?</i>
Participant 1: (Mama Bear)	I was a Puppy: I was full of confidence, making all kinds of mistakes, and trying to be obedient.	I am Mama Bear: I hunt down supplies and protect my students. I defend what my students do in class and I fight for my class to be recognized as a real class.	Wolf: a little aggressive outwardly. They are protective and they function as a pack. In the hallways they are aggressive of each other, but in the art class they function as a pack and are protective of that space. They are the art kids and the other kids are not. They have a sense of cool because they belong.	A Baby Owl: Very smart, and hints at the hunt to come. Not fully revealing. It is just starting to grow talons. It is not that threatening when you see a cute owl at first. It hints at what is to come. Smart animal and wise. My pre-service was very smart and intellectual but more intellectual than practical.
Participant 2: (Ms. Lion)	I was a kangaroo. I was hopping all over the place. I was over here then I was over there.	I am a beast like a Lion: I will chop your head off. I am assertive, strong, and demanding. I will take less if I feel you gave me your best. I am in charge and this is my Kingdom. You came into my classroom now welcome to my world; I run this. I don't care if my	Caterpillar: Caterpillars are unconfident, unsure what to do next, looking for answers. A butterfly knows what's next and can look at the situation and decide what needs to be done. My butterflies can ask me a question and when I purposely	A Snail: Slow and kind of nasty because I paid for the degree and then had to go out and learn on my own about what I do for a living-- now that is nasty. They didn't teach me how to be an art teacher and I have to carry all of this around with me.

		principal walks in, I am still the lion.	ignore their question, they can come up with their own answer. I will take you as a slug and make you a butterfly.	
Participant 3: (Ms. Duck)	I was a Duck: I was calm like a duck and paddled fast. I was calm above water. Cool, calm, and collected.	I am a Duck: I am calm on the surface but I am paddling hard underneath. Ducks bite when they are mad. Don't underestimate a duck. Don't ruffle my feathers. My feathers are waterproof. I let stuff roll off my back. Shake it off. Waddle Waddle, quack quack. Like Finding Nemo, I "Just Keep Swimming."	Peacock: Beautiful, proud, calm. A peacock is calm when it walks around and shows off its feathers. That's what we do.	Rattlesnake: Be smooth like a snake but will strike hard. Fit into the environment. Strike. Do your work, go home. Don't wait.
Participant 4: (Mr. Leopard)	I was a Young Lion: just growing a mane, elegant, proud, and determined.	I am a Leopard: I am cunning, determined and effective.	Hyena: They are always jesting, they are fierce and strong.	Tiger: Big, strong, and gentle
Participant 5: (Ms. Golden Retriever)	I was a Puppy: I was unsure, easy going, trying to figure out which way I should go, and wondering can I do it.	I am a Golden Retriever; I am Protective, easy going, and intuitive.	Squirrel: Playful, very animated, funny, full of energy, sometimes angry, productive, thinking ahead (planner), foresighted (looking ahead)	Cat: Unpredictable, Wild (out of control and no control over it), quiet, and low key.

Participant 6: (Mr. Chimera: Like a Sphinx)	I was a Mouse: Hungry and curious and looking for sustainability. Mice are small. I was scampering and did not make a lot of noise.	I am a Chimera like the Sphinx. I have multi characteristics; I am like an eagle as I try to soar with what I do. I use my eagle eyes to find nourishment for my class. I'm like a large game cat, pouncing on problems so they don't become a hindrance. I'm like an elephant—compassionate, nurturing, and interested in the community.	Chimera: (an animal with different parts, like a sphinx). They have the best of different animals. They can purr like a kitten, breathe fire like a dragon, or can be enigmatic.	The smallest mammal like a shrew—it is burrowed in the ground and almost nonexistent. Hides so it can't be seen, doesn't make any noise. Very small so it can't be seen, but it does exist.
Participant 7: (Mother Bird)	I was an Octopus: I had many hands trying to multi-task in the role of a teacher, learn to be flexible and fluid through murky waters. I say murky because I got to participate in contrasting environments. An octopus is a dominating creature in their environment and as a teacher I tried to be the dominant one and master of my environment.	I am a Mother Bird: I need to be protective of my students seeing them grow and fly from the coup, I spread my wings to represent growth, I give them back the growth I received. Birds are colorful and that is part of being an art teacher is being colorful.	Giraffes: because they are adventurous, giraffes stick their necks up to see what they can see (curiosity), they like to dash out like zebras, they can be playful but at the same time they need to be protected.	It was like a Monkey: It was trying to please it was all over the place and it was entertaining to watch at times.

Researcher: (Ms. Phoenix)	A good dog. I trusted the leader and let them leash me and train me. I was supposed to do obedient.	I am a Phoenix: I will rise out of the ashes and will make something out of nothing. I push against adversity. I am proud, wise, and solitary. I am about resilience and resurrection. I will rise again.	Killer Whale: Deceived by their title, my students are social, emotional playful, loveable, but still very serious creatures. They operate in pods.	Mutt: Generations from purebred. Not as aggressive as it looks. Runs with other dogs but not the leader of the pack. Larger bark than bite.
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### Participant Narratives

I developed questions in this study that would give insight into the world of the urban art teacher. The previous poems revealed some of their history, and the animal personality types revealed behaviors and attitudes. Their voices, through narrative inquiry, will give more understanding and authenticate the world of the urban art teacher. Based upon my experience, I asked these teachers questions that are fundamental to being an art teacher, and questions that central to being prepared and being supported in an urban environment.

Below are the responses to some of the questions from the Narrative Interview Protocol (Appendix A). Because of the authentic nature of the responses of the participants, I included the entire response to each question. None of their words or the length of their responses were changed. The candid responses from these urban art teachers gives a voice to the urban art classroom and helps to develop a portrait urban art education. Two questions were edited for clarity and turned into tables (Table 5: Urban Art Teacher Personality Types and Table 6: The Color of Teaching). These tables illustrate a group portrait of the behaviors and attitudes of urban art teachers from pre-service teaching to the classroom.

**Question 1: What is the hardest part about teaching at your school?**

**Participant 1: Mama Bear:** *All the transition and not having the consistency of the same co-workers, or the same students, switching back and forth, and changing schedules a lot. It was hard for the kids and they were unsure of what they were supposed to do because of all the switching. It made it hard to finish projects. They never got a chance to finish what they started.*

**Participant 2: Ms. Lion:** *The hardest thing is the paperwork. I don't like grading it, filing it, checking it, or turning it in.*

**Participant 3: Ms. Duck:** *Limited supplies and when they throw students in your class as if it is a dumping ground. Blatant disrespect for art is difficult to work with when students blatantly write gang symbols and use art materials to make gang sculptures.*

**Participant 4: Mr. Leopard:** *The limitations on space. My room is too small.*

**Participant 5: Ms. Golden Retriever:** *The fact that most staff members take it for granted that I am necessary—they think I am here only for their break.*

**Participant 6: Mr. Chimera (like a Sphinx):** *Working with an administrator who is hard to communicate with. If there is a problem to solve in my program, talking to the administrator just makes it worse.*

**Participant 7: Mother Bird:** *The obstacles that get in the way of being able to teach: mainly a lack of support, and a lack of resources.*

**Summary:**

For these art teachers, the hardest part of teaching at their disadvantaged schools are the limitations on resources, materials, space, and lack of respect, support, and understanding from

the administrators and staff. What they did not say was that the students were the hardest part, even though one teacher mentioned being frustrated when students write gang symbols and waste materials. Inconsistency of students was also mentioned by Mama Bear and Ms. Duck. Ms. Duck mentioned students being “thrown in” class as if it were a “dumping ground,” and Mama Bear mentioned not having the consistency of the same students which indicates the frustration of these teachers if they are trying to “build” a higher quality art program/class at their disadvantaged school, the inconsistency does not support their desire to do so.

**Question 2: What is the easiest thing about teaching at your school?**

**Participant 1: Mama Bear:** *The kids are the best part. Their creativity and everything. The kids are awesome and resilient in everything and we still made the best of it through all the transitions and the short time they had with me.*

**Participant 2: Ms. Lion:** *Teaching classes as long as I come up with interesting things.*

**Participant 3: Ms. Duck:** *When students have a passion for art and they want to do it.*

**Participant 4: Mr. Leopard:** *Staying awake. The noise and the activity, the need for consciousness at all times.*

**Participant 5: Ms. Golden Retriever:** *Loving what I do.*

**Participant 6: Mr. Chimera (like a Sphinx):** *Most of the kids. They enjoy doing art and I enjoy doing it with them. There are some teachers who are very supportive.*

**Participant 7: Mother Bird:** *Loving the students and engaging the students.*

**Summary:**

The majority of these teachers expressed that the students are the easiest part of teaching at their disadvantaged school. A combination of creativity and the students seem to give these teachers a

special kind of energy which engaged the teachers just much as the students. There is an overall sense of confidence in these responses.

**Question 3: What has been the worst thing about teaching at your school?**

**Participant 1: Mama Bear:** *The worst experience I had was not the kids but learning the system, and learning the disciplinary system, and what I could and could not do if a child acted out. In private school, if a kid acted out, you sent them out of the room. You can't do that here.*

**Participant 2: Ms. Lion:** *Facilities has been my worst experience. It is not ideal for art classrooms. I love my classroom but the windows don't open. We need fresh air and ventilation. In another school my classroom used to be an auto garage and there were grates (like sewer grates) in the middle of the floor with big bugs. There were three big grates that ran in the middle of the classroom because it was an auto bay. Imagine an auto shop where the walls roll up...that was my classroom.*

**Participant 3: Ms. Duck:** *Getting a call from the principal telling me that all of my computers were stolen.*

**Participant 4: Mr. Leopard:** *That's a hard question because I don't usually operate in the idea of best and worst. That's a hard question for me, but I will say--- when I got really sick and could not go to work.*

**Participant 5: Ms. Golden Retriever:** *When I first started working at my school, they would use my room as a free for all. A real bad experience was when the principal asked me to put up artwork in the front office then the principal just tore them down off the wall. But most of my bad days are my own fault if I don't plan as well as I should. Children [will] get disrupted, get bored, get antsy, and get in trouble.*



**Participant 6: Mr. Chimera (like a Sphinx):** *When you have a kid come in and threaten to beat kids up or when the principal berates me in a staff meeting.*

**Participant 7: Mother Bird:** *A lack of support and lack of resources.*

Summary:

Bullying and intimidation are highlighted in their responses. Two out of seven of these teachers mentioned being intimidated by their administrators. One mentioned when students bully each other. Facilities was also mentioned by two out of seven of these teachers; either their classroom facilities was inadequate or used by others and disrespected. In speaking about facilities---though not in this particular response--Mr. Leopard's experience with the assistant principal taking his art classroom to use as his office and moving Mr. Leopard and his students to a smaller inadequate was classroom expressed in a narrative poem in Mr. Leopard's participant portrait at the beginning of Chapter 4.

**Question 4: What is your role as art teacher in your present environment?**

**Participant 1: Mama Bear:** *Currently I am teaching at two different middle schools. I wear a lot of hats in both of my buildings. Different faculties see me as a different role. Sometimes it is hard to say no to their requests because I want them to like me and I want them to see my subject as valid because to them art is just a connection, it is not a real subject. I get the sense that some of the faculty feel like I am just babysitting the kids instead of teaching them. It seems like if they want a planning period, they just bring them to art, even though it is not their scheduled time to have them. But my students respect me---my students know what it is that I do because they are in the class every day and---they hear me and are starting to appreciate what I do. In some ways, I feel it may be necessary for me to just do a PD (professional development workshop) for my*

*whole building to educate them and tell them exactly what it is I do and what happens in the art room because I think all they remember are popsicle sticks, glitter, and glue and don't really understand all the ways that art can support what they do as well. I am asked to do a lot of things that are outside of my teaching. I have morning duty, then I have class all day, and I serve both lunch duties and then afternoon duty to make sure the kids get on the busses. Fine arts teachers have a shorter planning period than the other teachers so it is harder in that shorter time period to get all of the banners for this and all the banners for that and all the things like that done so I find myself having to stay late after school to get everything done. Part of that is probably just me having to learn to organize myself better and get the students to help me and make use of the little bit of time in the class room. I think I can grow there so it won't take up so much of my personal time. I am sort of the Chief of the decorating committee for just about everything. I've been asked to turn my classroom into an art studio that just pumps out decorations at the end of the school year for the graduation, the prom, pep rallies, and everything else. I get new students every nine weeks so half of them had never taken art before and I was asked to start pumping out decorations for different things by different people. It was a little hard when I had not trained my students on how to clean the brushes properly or how to manage the paint in classroom. They weren't students that already knew how to do that. There are a lot of different roles that the art teacher plays but I am really glad that I don't have to do set design. No one tells you really that you are going to have to learn to say no and at least be comfortable with your co-worker afterwards. I also found out that I was a convenience store. Whenever a teacher needed something, they would come and ask if they could borrow my class set of scissors (---Well I was planning on using them for my lesson...). The problem eventually took care of itself. They kept sending students down to my room in the middle of my formative*

*assessment with my vice principal in the room and by the third or fourth child knocking on the door and asking me for something, she ran up to the teacher and told her that she was disrupting my lesson, taking my supplies, and that was not allowed, so she stood up for me and said this is ridiculous—how can you teach with someone coming to your door every two minutes? Kids also come to my room a lot. My room is a calm place. It is a safe place. It's a place where you are allowed to have feelings and you don't have to get angry with them. I have trouble getting kids to leave at the end of class. A lot of times, they show up when they are not supposed to be there or they are cutting someone else's class or they just need a minute of calm in their day, so they will just show up and want to be there and it is hard to turn them away and tell them they have to go because I know what that feels like. They just want that calmness for a minute so that is why I make it a calm place so we can have that calm all day. But they do, they show up a lot and sometimes you don't really know if a teacher sent them or if it is just an excuse to show up to the art room to come and sit for a minute.*

**Participant 2: Ms. Lion:** *Right now I am usually in charge of banner making. I used to be in charge of coronation, homecoming, prom decorations, and all the major programs, however with the new administration and their very less than friendly attitude and their rather demanding assumption that is my responsibility to be their event planner, decorator, and stage setter, I have now stepped down from all of those jobs and I only do the job that they pay me for in the system which is to instruct individual arts. None of those additional jobs have been done this year and they know better than to ask. Yeah. They happened to call me the week before prom asking me to make props for the prom. I knew they were coming and I said "No." I was not going to do anything last minute. If there is ever any reason to tell somebody no, it is when they ask you at the last minute so they will know next time. I have to show them better than I can tell them. You*

*do need me, and not just to teach the children. They are the king of last minute and my standing policy is two-weeks notice, in writing, and I don't care who you are principal, assistant principal, dean--- give me two week notice and with supplies. You provide whatever is necessary for the project. It does not come out of my supply budget, which is for instruction of students. Because no science teacher would take her lab equipment and take it to the kitchen lab to cook some food for guests—okay? My supplies are for instructional purposes and not decorative. Do I have....no! Regularly teachers come down asking and I say "NO." I don't go to their classes asking for stuff. This is not Walmart. This is not a store. Wally World does not come here to drop off boxes of supplies for me. And if they send a student, I tell them to tell their teacher, "Walmart is up the street." They think I am a store. I am not a convenience for any other teacher's emergency to be resolved. I make sure I am mean about it so they don't come back. I might let them borrow a paintbrush because it is a non-consumable-- but paint is not returnable. They will use what they use up and they are not going to replace it, therefore it is a consumable. Therefore, you may borrow these brushes but you may not have any paint. Bye-bye. I am not friendly when it comes to lending supplies.*

**Participant 3: Ms. Duck:** *I teach High School visual arts first. Then to serve on committees that need decorations like homecoming, prom, yearbook, decorations for awards day, and graduation decorations.*

**Participant 4: Mr. Leopard:** *Disciplinarian, general education specialist, art specialist, monitor, peer supporter, counselor, surrogate parent, potential friend. General education specialist means I am in the school building to teach children from a pretty general curriculum. Not always questions about the principles and elements of art but many times about the aspects of contemporary society and social studies, literature and language arts. This is a combination*

*of my choice and part of the definition of what it means to be a public school teacher. Our schools are just not where one can be so specifically defined and confined to one discipline; at least not in the middle schools that I have been in or I have seen.*

**Participant 5: Ms. Golden Retriever:** *To be a collaborator as well as a facilitator. Even though my primary objective is to teach the children about art, I have to find a way to have students make connections with other topics and other parts of life. I usually love to collaborate closely with the science teacher.*

**Participant 6: Mr. Chimera (like a Sphinx):** *Take kids so [other] teachers can have common planning. They meet with instructional coaches who do not meet with us. The art teachers' role is closed and narrow here.*

**Participant 7: Mother Bird:** *My first role is to teach but along with teaching art there are so many umbrellas attached like mentor, counselor, parent to students, colleague, and collaborator. I definitely believe in collaborative teaching. I make great effort to collaborate with my colleagues. It is also important to be an arts advocate. I find ways for my parents to be involved as well.*

#### Summary:

Mama Bear expressed the need for others to understand what she does as an art teacher. Of all the respondents, Mama Bear had the least amount of experience and reflected conflict in her role. Lack of exposure to the arts leads the community to not understand what Mama Bear or any other art teachers do. Ms. Lion made a powerful statement when she said “You do need me, and not just to teach the children.” Art teachers are hired to teach the children but wind up doing a number of other things that schools need and want—like banners, help with decorating, and set design. The art teacher is usually the only staff member with a trained eye for the art-- so yes, the

community will need the art teacher for more than just teaching. However, some art teachers can lose their focus because as Mama Bear said “I want them to like me,” and in wanting staff and administrators to like them, emphasis is lost on authentic teaching of art in exchange for acceptance. These creative tasks are usually done on a volunteer basis by the teacher for the community. Ms. Lion’s statement outlined a balanced response that is effective and necessary in the role of urban art teacher.

**Question 5: Are you a member of NAEA?**

**Participant 1: Mama Bear:** *I am a member of NAEA. When I was in graduate school during my art teacher preparation, I was the president of our student chapter, so I have been very active in the group. I think it is very important to be involved.*

**Participant 2: Ms. Lion:** *No. What’s that? (Researcher tells her what NAEA is) Oh yeah, somebody told me to sign up when I was a first year teacher. I don’t believe they really do anything.*

**Participant 3: Ms. Duck:** *My participation is sporadic. I participate to stay current on art happenings in art education. I love the conferences.*

**Participant 4: Mr. Leopard:** *Yes.*

**Participant 5: Ms. Golden Retriever:** *No not a member. It never occurred to me to join.*

**Participant 6: Mr. Chimera (like a Sphinx):** *Not presently. I have in the past. I am not a member because it was not helpful. It felt like too much politics, not enough sharing of resources. Not enough ideas. They don’t show ways to work with my kids. The people there are interested in their own career. I find when I go-- mostly what I do is complain. I did not find avenues that were constructive to what I do. I was not making connections. I met some nice*

*people though, but it did not lend to sharing. At national I felt totally isolated. It was mostly political about getting awards. I felt very isolated. State was a lot more approachable but I still could not find the connections I needed. The best time was at the museum, they had a local event day and I was able to get free paint sets for my class. The problems I have I find that the art educators in NAEA don't know how to deal with.*

**Participant 7: Mother Bird:** *Yes I am. It is important to be connected and always be in a frame of mind for learning as well as to share experiences. As a teacher I must be always be in the mindset of a student.*

**Summary:**

Three of these art teachers are members of NAEA and feel it is important to be involved and connected. Two of these art teachers are not members and not sure of the purpose of NAEA. Two of these teachers are sporadic members and one of them expressed that his belief that NAEA is not helpful and makes him feel isolated.

**Question 6: Have you ever made a request to attend a conference for professional development?**

**Participant 1: Mama Bear:** *I did. When I was at my first school last year I was asked to make a presentation at the state level art conference. I became super excited and told my administrators I was asked to present at a conference and my principal told me that I could have the day off but it would have to be a personal day. So I had to take two personal days off to attend the two- day conference to be able to present at the conference. But she let me go. I paid for everything out of my own pocket. I did not know that I could request for them to pay for it and they did not offer.*

**Participant 2: Ms. Lion:** *Yes. I actually asked 3 years in a row if I could go to a Photoshop class that cost 350.00 and I have never been allowed to go. Even though I feel that would have been current and useful for information and it would have saved the school because there would have been less drawing and painting supplies because the kids would have been able to draw online but they would tell me “There is no money.” They would tell me there is no money for me because I am not a core teacher, but there is money for other teachers because they are core teachers. Even if they don’t want to go, they get sent. Even if I am volunteering, I can’t go. There is no money for me because I am not a Title I high needs area. I get professional development through the school system, which is fairly redundant.*

**Participant 3: Ms. Duck:** *There is no money for art education. There is money for other subjects to go but not when I make a request.*

**Participant 4: Mr. Leopard:** *I don’t know-- I have never made the request because I would not expect it to be honored. I plan on attending one this summer and just planning to pay for it myself.*

**Participant 5: Ms. Golden Retriever:** *Yes, I made a request to attend a conference but it is hard to get away.*

**Participant 6: Mr. Chimera (like a Sphinx):** *Years ago I made a request and they sent me. My current principal may give me the time but will make me pay for it out of pocket.*

**Participant 7: Mother Bird:** *I was reimbursed for my airfare and meals. I have had some support there.*

**Summary:**

Six of the seven art teachers have made a request to attend an art education conference and most of these art teacher were told by their administrators that there were no funds available to send



them to a conference because they were not a 'core' teacher. Several of them decided to pay for their own expenses out of pocket. One administrator made an urban art teacher take two 'personal days' to attend an educational conference that would enhance her teaching even though the teacher was asked to be a presenter at the conference.

**Question 7: How is your class funded?**

**Participant 1: Mama Bear:** *I was never told what my budget was. They would just tell me to submit an order and then they would make changes as they saw fit. Without understanding the supplies I specifically needed, they would do things like cross off my tapes and adhesives and send me a roll of scotch tape because it was what they had in the building. My second school was excellent. My principal gave me whatever I needed. She was very supportive of trying to find extra money for whatever I needed. She was always willing to do whatever was necessary.*

**Participant 2: Ms. Lion:** *Because I have three schools, each school is supposed to be responsible for a certain amount of funding but historically, they spend the money on other things. Last year one of the schools, they took my whole art supply budget and paid for decorations for homecoming-- which I did not have to make. We are supposed to get \$2.50 per student for art supplies. I was supposed to have \$1,500-2,000. I got about \$400.00-- and that was only because the other departments did not spend their money, and I knew that if money is not spent by a certain time frame it's going to go back into the general funds and be spent by the principal anyway. I make friends with all the secretaries who control the money in the building. If you are a teacher who teaches art, you must do this too. Always make friends with the secretary-- they know how much money is in the account and they won't lie to you like the principal will. There is a general answer given when you ask the principal how much money is*

*in the account. If you do your job and make friends with the secretary, they will tell you line items exactly what is in the account. You gotta know what to ask like how much money is in Fine Arts Account? Every year I buy pencils and little hand held sharpeners. My latest shopping collection is white out pens because they use them to do highlights. On average I spend a couple of hundred every year, at least. Anytime I have to buy yarn, it will be about \$500. I have used Donors Choose in the past. I also got lots of donations from other art teachers who have extra and whose principals were good enough to get them supplies. I have also gotten supplies from organizations like 'Freecycle' where I go out and collect stuff. Sometimes people just post stuff. People have given me plaster molds and house paint. I went and picked them up.*

**Participant 3: Miss Duck:** *In the beginning we had grant money from a big donor. Now it's zero. I have been using left over supplies from the big donor grant along with copy paper. We function off of copy paper. Being an artist we figure out how to make it work. I spend my own personal money about \$1,000 per year.*

**Participant 4: Mr. Leopard:** *Funding for my classroom has pretty much stayed the same in terms of being uncertain. My class is supposed to be funded from the school budget as I understand it. I see very little of it. My class operates through my personal funds, and occasional gifts from the community. I spend \$500 out of pocket per year. I always write off the \$300 we get on our taxes but I am always over that amount. I have had four principals in the last five years and only one principal has actually had a line item budget for art materials—the only one who ever gave me what I needed to teach. She said 'order what you need.' I filled out a requisition and that one principal paid for it. When I gave the other principals an order, it just goes down in a hole somewhere. A few months ago I put in a requisition and there is always some gobbledy gook and, passing the blame, and saying I've got to call this person and this*

*person.... and so I just keep asking. It boiled down to a point where I just keep asking, then finally I tell the secretary “I’m just asking for a box of crayons...can y’all at least get me a box of crayons?” Then the secretary will say—“Oh it’s coming.” Then Staples [Office Supplies] delivers an order and they say there is nothing in the order for you. There have been times when my orders came in and they give them to the core teachers. Things like markers, colored pencils, they give them to the core teachers.*

**Participant 5: Ms. Golden Retriever:** *I’ve put in the money myself. Under the old administration, I got an order every year. These past few years under new administration, I was told not to put in an order and I was told I did not qualify for funding in my classroom.*

**Participant 6: Mr. Chimera (like a Sphinx):** *This year we got no money at all. Absolutely nothing. My past principals funded me and I am surviving off of those supplies. I requested funding. Title I turned my requests down. The principal also told us it would be denied by Title I. I spend some of my personal money. I go to thrift stores to find things I could use. I don’t have technology. I have requested but no-- I was told “there are teachers in the classroom who don’t have and you will get yours after them.” I have applied for grants in the past. I use grants to get equipment.*

**Participant 7: Mother Bird:** *Last year I did not receive any funds. I needed supplies but I was told the budget was too short to order supplies for me. I did have some outdated supplies and outdated textbooks. I worked with what I had. They took me to an old supply closet where there were some old outdated supplies, broken crayons, broken chalk, and not much paint, I did not want a lack of resources to be an excuse not to teach these children. I checked with the fine arts director in central office and he said funds were released to my school. I went back and asked my principal and she said there were no funds. After several months of asking I was still told by*

*my principal there was no funds. There were two conflicting different stories. The fine arts coordinator said there were funds allocated to my school and the principal claimed there were no funds. I started checking with other art teachers at other schools and the situation was similar. I have applied for grants and take the initiative to not let a lack of funding stop art education in my class. It was not difficult to start at my second school because I brought my own supplies that I had purchased. I was out-of-pocket a lot like a couple thousand dollars because I was so eager to do a good job. I was able to get some extra supplies from another principal in another school.*

Summary:

All of these urban art teachers—except one-- have operated with zero resources. Mama Bear had the only principal who supported her with materials. Many of the other six urban art teachers were told false reports by their administrators. Their district or central office released money to their classroom for art supplies, but the teacher did not receive the funds to support their classroom. Some of the teachers called central office who confirmed their funds, but their administrator would tell them something else. It is not known exactly where the funds designated for art education went. Ms. Lion did state that her school used part of her budget to purchase decorations for an event. Some of these teachers were told by their administrators that their classroom did not qualify for funding. In addition to lack of school support, their local Title I did not support them with funds for instruction. These urban art teachers operated with outdated books, outdated supplies, and copy paper. Through the participants, it was also found that school secretaries can be a help or a hindrance to the art classroom. The secretary was a help to Ms. Lion because she befriended her, but to several other art teachers the secretary changed

their order without understanding the supplies or distributed art materials intended for the art teacher to the core teachers.

**Question 8: How did your college experience prepare you for teaching in an urban school?**

**Participant 1: Mama Bear:** *They offered a variety of different classes. They had a concentration on studio, but they weren't studio classes geared for educators. They were studio art classes that a ceramics major might take. Because I was at the master's level, they made me take classes with the MFA's. We had a lot of classes that just went over general practice. There was a secondary methods class and a primary methods class and some other teacher prep things. There was a class about technology development in the classroom that focused on what assignments to give in Photoshop and what assignments to give in different kinds of media. We did student teaching and we did a couple of observations where we had to see classes before we were allowed to teach classes. We usually went out in pairs for our observations to see what was going on and we usually had a specific task that we had to look at. We had to assess teacher's classroom management skills. We did some lessons with the pre-school that was on campus where we went in and worked one on one or one on two with the kids to create an artwork. The student teaching was hard because we had such a short amount of time with each grade level because you had to do both primary and secondary. It's great to learn about each grade level, but you would kind of just get good at it and then you were yanked out and put in a new situation. I had different experiences with my supervising teachers than what they expected from me. There was not a lot of consistency there. Like my first teacher at the primary school expected me to spend a lot of time in front of the class teaching and interacting with the students. The second teacher had me doing a lot of photocopying and running errands around*

*the school and hanging artwork up in the hallways and running errands in general like out in the world and so I wasn't really excited about that. My teacher preparation program was really awesome about having me come back and get a new teacher that was better suited to what I wanted out of it. So for my secondary experience, I actually went to a private school for my secondary student teaching experience. But I had already taught at a private school for several years, so I felt really comfortable teaching so that other experience was hard for me when the teacher kept sending me on worldly errands to get coffee or had me in the hallway just hanging displays. Our art education classes were geared more toward the academia of teaching with lots of the Blooms taxonomy. I wish I had more practical experience before going into the classroom by myself. Even though I had private school experience. They did not ever address different populations directly. We just talked about education; we talked about having different populations. I think there was a little time spent on cultural awareness but it was as it pertains to a student that does not speak English. Whether it was urban, suburban, or rural, we did not talk about that. Our school had a contract with a local school district, but all of our placements ended up being on the north side where the suburbs were, and I wound up teaching on the south side on the urban part of town--big difference. I student taught at all north side schools, I did not have the same populations that I teach. I don't think that the idea of poverty really entered into our discussion to where it struck a note with me ever. Once I started teaching, --and I had gone a whole semester already I was in a whirlwind. I was talking to my principal about what I was experiencing and she recommended that I read a book by Ruby Payne called 'The Framework for Understanding Poverty.' When I read it and it was like 'Oh my gosh, this makes so much sense. It was a book about what poverty means in education. I saw a lot of things I was experiencing in the book. I was reading all about the hidden messages in poverty versus middle*

*class versus upper class. All the stuff I was reading about why some of my kids were behaving so badly, I found out what was culturally acceptable. I found out that being loud was just the way their environment is. No one made me culturally aware previously. Before I started reading this book, I'm telling thee kids to 'be quiet, be quiet, be quiet,' and that was contrary to what makes them feel comfortable. After I read this book, my practice in teaching shifted and I was able to make a more direct connection with the students. They were getting me and I was getting them and we were able to understand each other on a different level. I think at least a chapter in that book should be required reading in teacher prep programs. I did not know a book like that existed on that topic. Where I was from that was something that you did not talk about. I was taught that you don't bring up how much somebody has or don't have—that was taboo like a caste system. You don't even admit that there is a class system and a difference between lower and upper class. You don't talk about that where I am from. But not talking about it causes problems because we don't know how to help each other. If we don't admit there is a cultural difference then we can't move forward. I found that book helpful tremendously so I carry that book around in my everyday school bag to refer to it when I need to. Yet experience is the best teacher. You can read about it in a book but it is not going to be the same as firsthand experience. I was living it. Some of my students' actions made a lot more sense. I was able to make connections. My teacher prep did not zoom in on any one group or how to treat one group different than another group or what are the cultural norms of any groups. It's a hard thing to talk about. They just said to be sensitive to cultural diversity and cultural differences. Concrete lesson plans were helpful, but there was not mention of the common Core anywhere in teacher prep. I was in teacher prep for NCLB and this is the first year for Common Core. I wish they had told us Common Core was on the horizon.*

**Participant 2: Ms. Lion:** *It didn't. Funny you ask me that because my students ask me that too. "How did that school get you ready to be an art teacher?" It had NOTHING [reiterates 'nothing'] at all to do with what I do for a living right now. My college classes were basically a crash course in how to do a variety of art techniques in a shallow fashion-- nothing in depth. Because you just take class after class-- you basically are a rolodex of how to do lots of different projects and do them well. We did a color theory assignment; we did paper mache, a clay box, printmaking; we did copper plate printing with the acid bath. It was just a broad spectrum of projects to do. And as far as the education aspect, the actual doing of the job, those classes have nothing to do with it; completely unrelated. There was no discussion of the real world or the reality of educating children in a public school. That is completely separate from theory from hierarchy of needs and Maslow. No talk of that. No talk of the inner city youth--just theory. They didn't teach you how to organize supplies. They didn't teach you how to come up with really engaging lesson plans. They just gave you some ideas of longstanding art projects. They did not talk about what to do when nobody knows how to draw and yet you expect them to come up with something nice. They certainly did not talk about the special ed kid, the Spanish kid, the homeless kid or the kids that come in first period still half asleep and all that other stuff that you have to get past to even get any work out of them. They don't talk about body odor, and what's going on with the scalp, and the pimples oozing nasty stuff and other students 'joning' (making jokes) them and the teacher needing to take students aside to get them together. We didn't talk about that. The only thing that parallels what I do now is my practicum-- that ten-week work for free situation you have to do at the very end. That's the only thing that matches up. I worked at a local urban high school so my practicum was no surprise. I worked in an urban high school*



*and realized I could do it. And that is how it has been for the last 14 years. I had to come up with ideas in my practicum that I would have done anyway.*

**Participant 3: Ms. Duck:** *I can say that my program prepared me very well. We were able to write lesson plans, unit plans, we knew what to expect from administrators. They gave us scenarios and sent us out to observe and practice lessons in an urban school.*

**Participant 4: Mr. Leopard:** *I was very fortunate. In my student teaching I spent time in both elementary and in high school as well as in an alternative summer art camp as a part of what I was doing with my art education program. I also got to do a couple of slide presentations and lectures in reference to art history. Being an intern, I actually had students in elementary and secondary schools in an urban environment. I do feel like my preparation matches my teaching experience.*

**Participant 5: Miss Golden Retriever:** *They didn't really. It was boring. I didn't find it very intriguing. It lacked life to me. It lacked certain realness. I'm not going to say I got the best training. I think the best training I got teacher training was on the job training actually just being an art teacher. We took typical classes but until you are in the situation, it was just book learning. The classes were not all that serious. I should have felt excited about what I was learning because it should matter to me, but it did not feel that way. Working with disadvantaged urban populations was not addressed. I got my real experience working as a paraprofessional. It wasn't until I was actually involved that I started making connections and started understanding who I was in the situation and what I wanted to accomplish for my students, my world, and my environment. That is something that I don't think was really stressed in my training in getting to the core of the type of person I am and the type of teacher I could be. The best was brought out of me in the situation not prior to the situation. When I started, I*

*started on a cart. Didn't have a room. Didn't have a curriculum. And I had to sit there and figure out what am I going to teach these children as their art teacher. One of things I immediately went to was the elements and principles of art and started creating projects based upon that. Listening to the students finding out what they wanted to try and on the job training was the best training. Training prior to going to the classroom was strictly academic. The foundations of art, doing lessons plans, art history, that's what I was taught in my teacher preparation program.*

**Participant 6: Mr. Chimera (like a Sphinx):** *I went to an urban college right in the middle of the state I grew up in and the school did not prepare me at all. They did not have great insight. All the art classes were for other education majors. We had student teaching. Art classes had separate classes in the fine arts building. After I graduated, I had to do my own research. I went to the local college library and looked in their books. I looked at art education textbooks and got ideas from there. Working with the kids at the local boys club was where I got my real experience. I spent a lot of time in the library at a college who had a lot of resources. Volunteering at the local Boys club, trial and error, and doing my own research at the library was how I learned to work with disadvantaged populations. The junior high school teachers helped me a little bit, but I had limited time with the people that I felt helped me. I did not have much preparation at all. I knew I would have to go get it myself.*

**Participant 7: Mother Bird:** *Observations were required. We observed teachers who exhibited great teaching skills. They prepared me, yet I don't think there was anything in the design that truly prepared me for an urban school. It was a unique challenge when I arrived at my first student teaching assignment. I deliberately asked for teaching experiences that contrasted environments because I was curious about contrasting experiences. I wanted to practice*

*teaching in a challenging environment. I wanted to experience the reality of teaching. They obliged my request. My instructors were pleased and impressed that I wanted to do such a thing but it was not part of the design. It was satisfying to me to see the contrast of two environments. The school experiences were night and day. It was different in what was being provided on the south side versus what was being provided on the north side. I saw it with my own eyes. We had discussions in class about disadvantaged populations, but you are not actually prepared until you step into the class and experience it for yourself. It is entirely different. Disadvantaged children exhibit certain behaviors because they lack. My heart went out to the students. You have to be in the moment and in the experience to understand. I think people should get to see it and be humbled by life experiences before they teach.*

**Summary:**

Mr. Leopard and Ms. Duck were the only two of these teachers that felt prepared for working with disadvantaged students. The other five art teachers did not feel that their preparation programs prepared them for working with disadvantaged populations and their preparation programs did not give them insight for working in urban environments. They felt the focus during preparation was more on studio and art projects. Most of these urban art teachers independently found ways to educate themselves about working with at-risk students in disadvantaged populations.

**Question 9: What was the experience of your teacher preparation educators?**

**Participant 1: Mama Bear:** *They had some experience but never really shared with us specifically how much experience they had. There were three professors--one had been in an elementary school, one had been in a high school, and we had another teacher that came in and*

*taught a class who had middle school experience. She probably had the most experience and the most current experience. We also had a visiting art education professor from a local school district who had a lot of experience. But some of them had more experience than others but we never really knew.*

**Participant 2: Ms. Lion:** *My art education professors were on the eccentric side. I did not like the fact that they did not explain much. They were just like “go with it and do what you feel.” I had this one professor for intro to drawing class I found to be horrible. All he talked about was “draw what you feel;” it was very esoterical. He was very emotion driven. I wanted to learn how to draw but he just talked about drawing. There was no “how do I do this?”-- And this was a long-standing professor mind you. I was so angry and disappointed with the experience I was like “You suck. You’re not teaching anything. You’re just asking us to do this assignment but not telling us how to make it better.” The drawings he would have us bring in he would not tell you what could be better or what could be improved. There was no useful critical feedback. It was just “that’s nice.” And to this day, I am the exact opposite. You can show me something and my kids already know “Ms. Lion is going to find something,” because there is always something that can be changed, improved, or adjusted—always. If you give it twenty more minutes, you can do better than that. None of my professors really had any public school teaching experience. The only professor I had that stood out with some kind of experience was an art education scholar who is actually really well known in the art field. He shows up in the art history books but he was still more of a studio artist. He made me realize to forget the education part—just be an artist that teaches art—and that’s what he was more into. And if I could do it all over I would have spent more time with that guy—he had a lot of knowledge-- but he was still very much on the eccentric side. He was still floating four feet off the ground. He was still very bizarre and he*

*did not make you do anything. If you were doing it cool—if you weren't cool. If you were not listening to his lecture-- so what. And I am more so like "Look-- you need to know what you are talking about and if you listen to me you will be better than you were before you met me so be quiet and pay attention." I wish people had been more like that with me. I know what I am talking about. I have knowledge to give you.*

**Participant 3: Ms. Duck:** *They were artists and some of them had teaching experience.*

**Participant 4: Mr. Leopard:** *Each of them was an artist. This whole notion of teaching artists for me was a new concept. My art education professors were artists who were teaching.*

**Participant 5: Ms. Golden Retriever:** *The professors seemed disgruntled and didn't have much firsthand experience. The artist- in- residence did have some teaching experience however.*

**Participant 6: Mr. Chimera (like a Sphinx):** *I was really taught in the fine art department. The Professors---- they spent little time with me. I can remember one told me an idea of a lesson. I remember them giving me an idea about making a place setting but they were not very helpful.*

**Participant 7: Mother Bird:** *They had a little experience. I think the professors knew and realized the students would be hit with reality, but sometimes I felt the professors were imbalanced because the conversations leaned toward being offensive instead of educative. If I were not a black woman in the room, the inappropriate discussions would've kept going on. That's what I felt.*

#### Summary:

Most of these teachers talked about their art education professors being 'teaching artists' with some experience, but none of them knew for sure how much experience their art education professors had. The responses in this question compare with the responses in Question 8 in

which the participants felt that most of their preparation focused on studio and art projects instead of the realities of teaching.

**Question 10: Why do you teach art today?**

**Participant 1: Mama Bear:** *I love art and I love teaching and I can't imagine something better than teaching art. It has so much to give. Art just has so much to give if my students can open their minds to it, they will get so many benefits from it in their lives and in their future and in the future of the world. Having that creativity or having that drive or the passion or just learning something that you care about and I think art makes you care about things that you didn't know that you care about. One of my favorite examples from my own life is studying history. I was never told that good at staying awake in history class. I always would daydream or doodle and lose the stories of the history class a little bit. When I got to college, I started taking art history, and that is when all the pieces of the puzzle started to fit together. Having that emotional connection to the battle, or whatever was going on in that period of history—but seeing how the people felt through their artworks and just being able to feel their emotions and see that just connected me to the story in a way that made me care that made me feel so strongly about it that I wanted to go create a piece about the French Revolution or something like that. I didn't even live through that, but I felt like I had after I seen these pieces and they just impressed me so much. So I really teach art because it is at the heart of everything. It's the emotional drive. It's your connection to what you are learning. There are so many good things that can come out of it. There are so many things that our students need that art can give them and I want to help give that to the next generation because it gave me so many gifts. I want to give back. I think that is the part I really missed in my ten years that I took off from teaching. I think that I really miss that sense of being able to give back.*

**Participant 2: Ms. Lion:** *A reasonably comfortable living that is fun, and gives some kids who in a lot of ways don't like school a class that they enjoy. My guiding practice in picking assignments is "Would I like doing that?" "Would I think this is cool or interesting to do?" "Would I like the outcome enough to take home with me?" If I answer no, I don't do that project. I really like doing my job. The kids are fun. They are funny. There's always something different going on. And if I get bored with it, I can change what I am doing. And if I am bored, they are bored. So we try to keep it entertaining. I like seeing kids who thought they didn't have any drawing skills or talent in an area say "Oh, this is nice, Ms. Lion," and I say "Yes darling, yes it is."*

**Participant 3: Ms. Duck:** *I believe I have the best job ever. I get paid to do something I love. When I am giving my knowledge and talent, students communicate. It is totally satisfying. It's like an artistic orgasm. I always told my students that if I hit the lottery, I would still teach them. The only difference is that we would have all the supplies we needed because we would have the money.*

**Participant 4: Mr. Leopard:** *Because it is readily accessible as an opportunity. I've been trained in it more than adequately. I've experienced both sides of the lectern. My artistic sensibilities are at the core of my existence. I look at the world as an artist and because of that, I am sitting here now. I choose to teach art rather than drive a truck, even though I can drive one quite well and I can have fun driving trucks.*

**Participant 5: Ms. Golden Retriever:** *For a simple reason; I enjoy seeing the children amaze themselves in the art room. They say, "I can't draw" or "I don't know how" and you explain to*

*them and they follow directions with creative freedom, all of a sudden they can see something they can do.*

**Participant 6: Mr. Chimera (like a Sphinx):** *Because I still love it. I still like working with kids seeing their eyes light up. Art is one of the most engaging ways to communicate ideas. Lecturing and rote memory are not engaging or the best way to learn. Art allows you to take risks. Ideally, where they could they go with that? In art they open up to a new way of doing things.*

**Participant 7: Mother Bird:** *I teach art today because I have a passion for art and whatever I do has to be an investment in art. Teaching art is a vehicle I use. I can't think of any other subject I would like to teach other than art. Art is what I prefer. It helps children to be well rounded. It helps them to see the world, especially because everything is visual. As an art teacher I help them to connect to the world and make it more meaningful and I get to help them see the many possibilities and connections in their lives.*

**Summary:**

These teachers teach art today because to them, art is a language. It's more than just the love for art and teaching. It's more than just seeing their students face light up. Art is a language that these teachers are using to connect their urban their students a variety of components. Art connects their students with other subjects, with themselves, with other people, and with the world. As "Mama Bear" stated, "art has a lot to give." With art's possibilities, combined with their passion for art, for teaching, and their interest and dedication to their student's, These urban art teachers have a passion for leading their students to explore, discover, and see possibilities. Teacher and students can connect and communicate to each other without saying a word. Even though several teachers also talked about teaching art today because it helps students to



communicate and connect, it seems that communication and connecting is just as important for these teachers as well as the students. “Ms. Lion” stated that before she develops a lesson, she asks herself “Would I like doing that?” In a previous question (Question 2) “Mr. Chimera” stated that “he liked doing art and he liked doing it with them.” “Ms. Duck” being “fulfilled” watching students make discoveries.

The following chart “The Color of Teaching” allows a snapshot of an art teacher’s pedagogy individually, and collectively. It allows a view of where these teachers are, where they feel like they should be—and allows speculation for identifying the possible variables that keep their present teaching from what they believe their teaching could be.

(Table 7)

<b><u>The Color of Teaching</u></b>			
Art Teacher	<b><u>Question: What color is your teaching?</u></b>	<b><u>Question: What color should teaching be?</u></b>	<b><i>Analysis: Degree of separation</i></b>
Participant 1: Mama Bear	Lime Green: Spring color, buds trying to come out, trying to grow, beginning of career, new, learning to grow, first buds trying to burst through.	Dark Green like Ever Green: Resilient, don’t lose color through the seasons, keeps their needles, trying to last through everything.	Color is consistent on the same field but shades away from each other
Participant 2: Miss Lion	Green because my teaching is all about recycle, reduce, reuse, repurpose--waste not, want not	Rainbow: You need all colors to get where you have to go. If you could hit all the aspects that you could hit, you shouldn’t leave any color out. It’s all good.	Single to variable colors
Participant 3: Miss Duck	Fuchsia Pink: Can be hot—can be cool. Enough blue in it to be cool. Enough red in it to be hot. Bright enough to catch your eye. Provocative enough to make you smile.	Fuchsia Pink: Art teaching should be cool and a little hot like fuchsia pink. Spicy hot, yet calm and engaging and let them think about the process.	Consistent

Participant 4: Mr. Leopard	Vibrant colors like blues, yellows, greens and reds. They mix but they are often distinct. Often I have blue days I mean like indigo blue! Sometimes it is turquoise or royal blue. Other days my teaching looks as if it is yellow and then you see some rollover on the blue and then sometimes it and my teaching begins to be green.	No one color. It should be the spectrum because the spectrum represents the qualities of light based on vibrations and all those are relative to a number of other factors. I think teaching should be like that. Anything that stays the same becomes monotonous and boring. Art should lend itself intentionally to those characteristics. What makes art is that it willfully determines that it will not be those things-- monotonous, boring, unchanging, dead.... Even when we do work about death and dying, it is meant to evoke.	Variable colors
Participant 5: Ms. Golden Retriever	Green Natural, nurturing, thinking, renewing, eternal	Green Natural, nurturing, thinking, renewing, eternal	Consistent
Participant 6: Mr. Chimera (like a Sphinx)	Every color and every variation of color including iridescent. Sparkling when I can. I have to pick up and scramble for resolution to things that are not working. It changes a lot. Iridescent colors changes at different angles. Iridescent is related to the structure of molecules that are reflected back. My teaching is intense, bright, not fading.	Teaching art should be every color. You have to be different colors. You have multiple personalities, kids with different emotions, trying to juggle politics, local and national constant politics, kids who....the art program is looked at as superfluous yet individuals spend most of their money on things that are designed.	Variable colors
Participant 7: Mother Bird	Purple: Purple is rich, royal, and passionate. Purple is my favorite color and teaching is my favorite thing to do.	Bright Warm colors like orange and yellow: brings life to the classroom whether it is connection of their own life and experiences they are not aware of art is about life and students should know that. Warmth. Students need to feel they are invited into the classroom. <i>When I first walked into the class the color of the room was drab and I asked my principal if I could repaint it. Attraction; Engaging</i>	Complementary. Opposite each other on the color wheel.
Ms. Phoenix	Brown. Earthy, realistic, cultural, resourceful.	Teaching art should be a vibrant spectrum of colors giving the students an array of emotions, experiences, and expressions to explore.	Muddled mix to variable colors.

***Question 11: Design a class in art teacher preparation:***

**Participant 1: Mama Bear:** *Lots of time in the classroom observing and interacting with students; guided practice in different kinds of environments. Showing people what exactly they are getting into. A little bit of it was sugarcoated for me and making it seem like it was going to be different than what it is. It's not any worse-- it's just different. It's just not what I expected it be. Not in a bad way. It was just a different set of rules that I had to learn. It was difficult in the beginning because I didn't know them. But at the end of the year I came back with a much more positive experience. If I had this interview after my first two weeks of teaching, I would have been crying because the first couple of weeks I felt like I was struggling to figure out exactly what it is I am supposed to be doing. My other recommendation is to include a public speaking, acting class or theater class because I feel like so much of what I do is theater. So much of it is entertainment. To engage my students I have to be four cups of coffee in. I have to get them to pay attention to me and what I have to for them to do. I think a little bit of a theater class or acting class would help me to control my facial expressions better and my body posture would have more of a powerful stance when you want them immediately to first respect you. Teachers that have been teaching a long time, you see it on them. That first day when you come out of teacher prep, you are scared to death getting up in front of that many people. Having that kind of background—stage presence—even at the end of the school year, I had to stand up and present my art awards. I think having some methods from your acting class; something you could pull out from your back pocket would be helpful. I think that would help across the board with that attention getting ability of presenting yourself in a way with confidence.*

**Participant 2: Ms. Lion:** *It would definitely have classroom management, supply management, ordering, how to set up a class, how to keep up with kids work, how to keep supplies from walking, handout organization. It would be a lot more about organizing the class because you can't find what you need, even though you ordered it two months ago. I would include how to deal with behavior problems, classroom management as far as what to do with a kid that can't draw or a kid that does not want to participate. These are things that I may not have a problem with but I have seen other arts teachers struggle with. How to build up a program in a community that historically has not had a program. How to get your community involved. Maybe even how to sell student art work, how to fund raise, how to put together an art show for students.*

**Participant 3: Ms. Duck:** *Art education design should work backwards. I would list 10 outcomes that I wanted from these teachers and then work from there based upon 10 good pieces of artwork. Everything from the expectations to the behaviors to the product should be listed in the outcomes for each piece. The instructor has to guide the teacher into achieving those outcomes.*

**Participant 4: Mr. Leopard:** *If I am training teachers that means that my priority is rather generic in terms of what I would be doing with them and easily transferrable to another educational context. First thing is that they will know that they are part of a continuum-- a part of ongoing history of teaching because teaching is evolving. They need to know how we got to where we are currently. After that, then they begin to look at specifics in subject and content matter and finally get experience in the field in various environments to experience what was talked about in class and come up with strategies.*

**Participant 5: Ms. Golden Retriever:** *First and foremost art teachers need to learn a lot of patience—patience, compassion and a willingness to listen. I do a lot of listening to the students. I actually created a special group of students that I worked with that helped me develop lessons. It is an ongoing dialogue between my students and myself. It has helped tremendously in the classroom. When they feel that they have ownership in the lesson, they have a tendency to do better. I always start whatever the topic is with “who am I?” Tell me who you are. Then from there we go into--- well you know we must do this---how can we do this---how would YOU like to do this? For example, we have to study cells in science---how we going to do that in art? How can we develop an art project that is going to help you understand cells yet give you an artistic outlet that I want you to have? And we develop it from there. I throw out ideas. And they throw out ideas. It is a dialogue-- then we put it together and decide ‘we’re going to do this.’ They feel like yes--I helped make this happen. This dialogue makes for a better rapport in the classroom no matter what environment they are from; they will feel like they belong. Pre-service teachers also need awareness and they need to understand adaptability. They need to learn to adapt to new environments. Urban students do require a lot of attention and interaction and potential art teachers have to learn how to matriculate in the classroom to accommodate all of students. They need a willingness to allow the students and the community to kind of guide them. Me, myself--I found that I have to be very product driven for urban students. They won’t engage really into the deep thought process through talking but as long as they are working on something, hands on--they do better in terms of making the connections with what needs to be learned. So I keep it very much project based in work that is engaging and meaningful. Art teachers also need an entourage of strategies to deal with the different aspects they may encounter. If art teachers are trained to think that all students are the same, no matter what*

*environment, they may miss out and abandon an aspect of their class and neglect some of their students. Different environments involve different strategies and some teachers have a variety of kids from environments in one class so prepare to teach them all. I feel that we need more classroom experiences, even if it's just observations, team teaching, or assisting because it really makes a difference being in the situation versus studying the situation.*

**Participant 6: Mr. Chimera (like a Sphinx):** *I would make sure there is a lot of experience and open-ended questions. They would also do a lot of practical things. They would do a lot of evaluations and working with kids directly. Their experiences would be practical; individual; shared. I would open them up to sharing different ways of teaching art in different situations. I would have experiences that would open the minds of pre-service students.*

**Participant 7: Mother Bird:** *We need to be honest with student teachers and let them know that they need to be resourceful. There needs to be honest dialogue about that in urban education. I wished someone had let me know—it would have been appreciated. There should also be psychology and social work classes to help teacher learn to deal with urban children and the issues they face. Everybody should have to experience being in a school where there is disparity. That itself is a real education that should be a requirement. The instructor should facilitate real dialogue with the students about what they experienced. There needs to be more eye opening experiences so they will be prepared for what happens later.*

**Summary:**

There majority of the responses from these participants is that student teachers need more time in the classroom and their experiences need to be 'real.' Student teachers should have experience adapting to various environments, opportunities to reflect on open-ended questions, and discussions of strategies to use in different school environments. It is also suggested that

theater/acting classes are added to the curriculum to help teachers with body postures and give them more of a 'stage' presence as well as opportunities to learn about 'building' an art program, community involvement, and fundraising. Student teachers also need to learn to be resourceful.

***Question 12: What are your future plans as an art educator?***

**Participant 1: Mama Bear:** *Getting better at what I do. Build my repertoire. Get stronger. I toy with the idea of getting a PhD.*

**Participant 2: Ms. Lion:** *I plan on retiring from my school in another fifteen or sixteen years or so, travel as much as possible, take my kids around the world and look at many art styles. I would love to have my own gallery shows or a website that will sell my work for me. I'd really like to have a couple of students that get into art so deep that they become the next Shepard Fairey or Kara Walker.*

**Participant 3: Ms. Duck:** *Transition over to adult education and go into areas that don't offer art and propose art to broaden other careers.*

**Participant 4: Mr. Leopard:** *I am working on a book for middle school art educators. There is a probability of me going back to school but it will not be in art education. It will be in the social sciences.*

**Participant 5: Ms. Golden Retriever:** *I want to go back to school and get my master's degree.*

**Participant 6: Mr. Chimera (like a Sphinx):** *Working at least one more year. If I were in a supportive environment, I would work more. I will have 30 years in 2016.*

**Participant 7: Mother Bird:** *I want to transition into art therapy. I will stay in the classroom to be vested and move on.*

Summary:

The future plans of these art teachers include a degree in higher education, retiring as an art teacher, or doing something else with art like art therapy, or proposing art to other careers. Only one participant discussed possibly doing something outside of art.

**Question 13: Anything you want to say that you believe should be included in this study?**

**Participant 1: Mama Bear:** *How important art is to that demographic. Art is overlooked. What power an art program would have in a situation where we are concerned about children passing the CRCT. The students need the outlet and the expression. Art is going to be able to empower them to go back and learn the writing that they missed. Art will give them passion. This study is going to be so good.*

**Participant 2: Miss Lion:** *Number one thing not being addressed is despite all of the chaos with testing and core subjects, we are one of the few classes that kids look forward to--that they want to show up to. I regularly have kids say that my class is the reason they wanted to come to school today, or the reason they still come to school. That is something that is not celebrated, acknowledged, or respected. There must be something going on that makes them want to arrive to the art room --- it's not like I am the friendliest person and it's not like they are just allowed to sit and do nothing. You can't sit in my room unless you are doing anything art related. So I think as a whole, policy makers really need to look at the fact that a bubble [question] is not going to evolve a child into the person they want them to be. Students are forced to spend a lot of time bubbling stuff, but an art room is not a bubble. We do not have many bubble type questions. It can be red or purple—or you can choose to add a pattern. The options are so broad that we can't be narrowed down by a test and that's why kids like us.*



**Participant 3: Ms. Duck:** *A lot of people say they want to work in an urban environment. You don't have to go into urban environment--- you choose to. Art education is important. We have to learn how to ignite the passion and how to keep the passion in. It's like a relationship; find the passion and work hard to keep the passion.*

**Participant 4: Mr. Leopard:** *Art education is probably the most important thing that public school education could support if it is our intent on helping or saving the best qualities of our modern society.*

**Participant 5: Ms. Golden Retriever:** *Urban art teachers are in a constant struggle in either being taken for granted, overlooked, or abused. In many cases, administration and the faculty think art is just a resource for them. Teachers seem to think that I am a resource for them personally, not for the students. Until they see the projects, they seem to think I do nothing. They think I'm a babysitter. But then they see the projects and they realize--she's teaching my students. She is not only teaching my students art, but she is helping my students see the connection with things that I'm teaching in the classroom. Sometimes I don't like being in that position; but what motivates me is the students. They are what keep me going. The students are genuine and the students appreciate what I do for them.*

**Participant 6: Mr. Chimera (like a Sphinx):** *Part of dealing with urban art education is that—you don't get the real resources that are needed or directed to you. Real resources can solve problems and make conditions better. Real resources can be psychological resources as well like mentoring and support. Those things can be addressed.*

**Participant 7: Mother Bird:** *I recognize that I don't have the experience of being a suburban teacher and that their situations are totally different. I have a friend who is a suburban art teacher and we always swap experiences and I see that there are things that are way more*

*stressful working in urban schools than in suburban schools. Environments are totally different and Title I funding dictates whether schools are provided with certain services. Urban schools are very unique and more for the average art teacher to deal with. What public school students have been exposed to contrasts in different environments and that exposure is brought into the classroom. Suburban kids are exposed to different things than urban kids and urban kids are exposed to different things than suburban kids and this has to be considered because it does affect the classroom. Their behavior is different, the parents are different, the support is different, even the principals are different. As a teacher, you have to be cognizant that some students are dealing with more in a certain environment. Urban schools are more challenging because the children have more to deal with in life as a young person. You have to be mindful of that as an urban teacher. And in urban schools there is a lot of lack; lack of resources and a lack of understanding for art education.*

Summary:

These teachers believe that art is empowering but it is overlooked, ignored, and disregarded and that many of their peers and administrators in urban schools fail to see the big picture and just view art as a resource. They also feel that too much focus is placed on testing and that art needs to be celebrated, respected, and acknowledged for the fact that many students come to school because of art. They stress that situations are different in different environments and that urban schools are challenging and unique places.

**Without Love**

Without love there is no art  
Without compassion there is no accomplishment.

Love art  
Love children  
Love teaching  
Persevere.

by Lisa Whittington

## CHAPTER 5

### AUTOETHNOGRAPHY FOR EDUCATIONAL CHANGE: FROM AT-RISK STUDENT TO AT-RISK TEACHER

**The Researcher:** High school art teacher, black female. Works in a 97% Title I school in another urban district. Experience in the urban school environment is 23 years. Identifies her teacher personality as “Miss Phoenix.”

Researchers utilizing autoethnography create an opportunity to involve the idea of self in a political revelation of their context (Blatt-Gross, 2010). Engaging in this research became a political act where personal experience and professional experience and practices attempt to relieve urban art teachers and their disadvantaged at-risk students who have been wedged in the extreme margins of the public educational system. The endeavor of this auto-ethnography is to deconstruct art education in the disadvantaged social context and to reconstruct art education in a way that is equitable to all art teachers and all of their students especially in disadvantaged populations.

Though some may criticize or question auto-ethnographies as being unscientific and sentimental (Porter, 2004), it cannot be denied that the realities of urban life, the importance of art education to urban students, and the need to improve preparation and support for their teachers are illuminated through such data. I strategically placed this auto-ethnographical text behind the narrative voices of seven other urban art teachers to support the data and allow the reader to reflexively form genuine comparisons from the previous narrative text and ensure scholarly validity (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001); this positioning is also where deeper meaning

can be constructed. This data is analytic, and Leon Anderson (2006) highlights analytic auto-ethnography, as an alternative to basic auto ethnography. He emphasizes that analytic auto-ethnography is based around five key features, in which the researcher: (a) is a full and complete member in the research setting, (b) practices analytic reflexivity, (c) provides narrative visibility of the self, (d) engages in dialog with informants beyond the self, and (e) commits to theoretical analysis (Anderson, 2006). Advocates of self-study teacher education argue that auto - ethnographical research must engage with an “other” and the other should be similar peers and colleagues (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Loughran & Northfeld, 1998; Schulte, 2009). Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) note that a high-quality self-study will provide a thorough description of the researcher. They also note that auto- ethnography recognizes who the researcher is, is central to what the researcher does and should be reflected in the study (Schulte, 2009). This auto-ethnography will begin with my experiences as an at-risk student growing up in the inner city, highlight my experiences with art education as a student and as a professional, and conclude with my current encounters as a new-experienced art teacher at an urban high school. The process of writing this auto-ethnography involved my writing in journals, reflecting, looking at pictures and videos, visiting meaningful places in which I grew up, and talking with people who were familiar with any of these experiences of mine.

## *Harlem Symphony*

*by Lisa Whittington*

She never noticed the sky over the city watching her  
but she could feel it  
long black streets with brown colorful strangers  
crowded sidewalks  
a yellow school bus released her to gritty sidewalks  
and abandoned dilapidated buildings  
with boarded windows and graffiti painted flowers on the ledges  
a colorful touch  
subway musk rose from the underground  
mixed with the sound of screeching trains  
and chatter on the streets  
she strided unnoticed  
avoiding the cracks in the sidewalk  
afraid to break her mother's back  
she wore a green dress, with green tights and  
light green ribbons adorned the twisted pigtails  
of her straightened hair  
she arrived to a building with dirty marble stairs  
and no elevators  
junkies nodded to heroin dreams  
and lined the stair case creating a path  
to welcome the little girl home  
six flights up she climbed  
step by step  
tugging her book bag  
through the junkie parade  
home from school  
welcomed by tattered linoleum peeling reaching up from the floor  
and cracking paint across the walls  
she dropped her books  
and quickly escaped to the window  
the world outside  
admiring the zigzags of fire escapes  
that adorned the buildings  
her eye followed their lines that  
led back to the busy avenues and Harlem hustles  
She went to the kitchen  
hoping for something to eat  
but the window offered her a visual feast and  
a glimpse into the neighbor's apartment with dingy kitchen curtains

the lacy kind  
as a big brown roach with child  
crawled across poverty green plaster walls  
clothes lines stretched outside from window to window and  
building to building  
level to level  
with rags, patched up clothes, and sheets  
that looked white in a sea of dirty gray buildings  
wooden clothespins like soldiers  
stood at attention holding them together  
a rainbow of litter six stories down  
decorated the ground like confetti  
she could hear the music of  
loud cars , emergency vehicles,  
and the vocals of Al Green and  
her mother's loud yells ,  
the instruments of her mother jangling silver bangles  
and the shuffling of her mother's slippers against the floor  
created a symphony for her Harlem.

### *Harlem*

Fire escapes and brownstones were the hallmark of Harlem neighborhoods. I lived in tenement houses, a brownstone and buildings with no elevators on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor not far from Harlem Hospital where I was born in a single parent home with five other brothers and sisters. Harlem was very brown. The people were brown, the buildings were brown, and the stoops were brown. The times I was allowed to go outside, I would sit on the brown stoop and watch other girls on the street jump double-dutch and play hopscotch and watch other kids run and play. It was not strange to see syringes on the ground from heroin users in the community. It was a normal thing to see. At the time, I thought it was normal. In the summertime, I occasionally got to put my bathing suit on and frolic in the hydrants that flowed on the street until the fire department came and turned them off. One of the few pictures that hung on the wall at home was of Jesus and

Dr. Martin Luther King. I remember staring at his picture looking at him look back at me. I did not understand everything that was happening in the world, but I knew he was important.

We moved a lot because we either got evicted or the conditions were not suitable. It was traumatic seeing the police show up to where I lived and put handcuffs on my mother so they could evict us. I would stand between the police and my mother feeling powerful as a kid telling the police to leave my mother alone. We moved to another brownstone and the ceiling caved in and white plaster was everywhere. We had to move again. My little brother would eventually get lead poisoning from eating the paint chips that peeled off the wall. To furnish our home where we lived, sometimes, my mother would take us at night to pick mattresses or furniture out of the trash. I knew other families were different, but the way we lived and not having a father around seemed normal. I really did not think anything of it until somebody asked me at school, and I responded that "I did not have a father." I also remember someone in the school office asking me where I was born and I told them "Africa." I did not know much about my identity but in my little elementary school head-- I knew I had to be from Africa because I was dark like the pictures I saw on television and in books. Perhaps my teachers recognized that I needed to learn more about my own culture because in my very diverse classroom, I was selected to read out loud to the class about Black scientists and explorers like Matthew Henson and Charles Drew and draw pictures about them.

Educational shows like Zoom, Sesame Street, the Electric Company, and School House Rock supported what my teachers did at school. I did not even know I was



learning because these shows were colorful, fun and I could relate to them because there were people on these shows that were black like me. My little eyes would enjoy all the kids on these shows, but it was something special about seeing kids that looked like I did. There were always demonstrations on these shows about how to do something creative and how to make things. I would watch the clock and knew just when these shows would come on. All of my siblings would enjoy these shows as well, this was one of the few things that we did together, but usually, I went off by myself somewhere in the house making things that I had seen on television or read in a book.

### ***Art: First Experiences***

I started school just a year after the death of Dr. Martin Luther King and the end of the Civil Rights Movement; I would catch the school bus every day to go to an integrated school. School was always a haven; a place I could be assured of a meal and a structured environment. My classrooms were orderly, colorful, and peaceful, very different from home. I remembering my teacher calling me at-risk but I was not sure what that meant and did not know how to ask; since she called me at-risk, I just accepted whatever it meant. It did not take away from my enjoyment of school. I did the regular complaining about school like the other kids, but I really enjoyed school for whatever adventure it was. I didn't talk much in class—I was always quiet until the teacher called on me, and then I would nervously say my answer. I got to do things like read a book to the class and when it came to the pictures I would hold the pictures up and make sure all of my classmates could see the visuals. I enjoyed when the teacher took us to the library because I could check out books to take home, and those books would become my

escape; books allowed me entrance to someplace else, and I always felt like I was a part of that world. When I would get home from school there was nothing else to do but homework, look at television, look out the window, or make things. We weren't allowed to go outside. There was one television in the house and five other siblings and my mother so there were always arguments about who would control the television. I especially liked a show called "Zoom" because they always demonstrated how to make things. I would often retreat to the room, look out the window or read. Many of the library books I checked out from the library were arts and crafts books that instructed me how to make things, so I would often sit by myself somewhere and make things—anything—out of whatever I could find.

One day, my mother brought home a dog for protection, a miniature Doberman pinscher. Somehow, I was given the responsibility of walking the dog on the rooftop; there was not enough grass or trees outside to walk the dog. The black tar rooftop offered a different view of Harlem. The buildings were so close to each other that one could jump from building to building by hopping over the partition, so I would jump from building to building with the dog on a chain leash. The dog was almost bigger than me, so he would often lead our excursions on the rooftop jumping and sniffing and jumping and sniffing. One day in our explorations in another direction, he jumped over, and there was no roof-- so he dangled six flights up off the side of the building almost yanking me down with him but I held on and I had to think quickly. My heart jumped, and I could feel it pumping fast—this was probably my first experience with fear. All I could think to do was pull-- so I pulled with all my little might to save him not realizing how much

danger I was in myself. I finally managed to pull him over before he choked and we both rested on the gritty tar roof for a little while to calm down from the shock of our little adventure together. In that moment of resting is when and I looked up and noticed that there was a sky in Harlem.

We had art time in our regular class; no special visits to an art room in elementary school, the teacher would just fit it in. One day we finished our assignments and the teacher gave us art time, she would distribute manila paper and fat crayons in a box; some of them were broken. There was one kid in particular, a little white boy who sat next to me, who drew the nicest sky and made me think of what the sky over the roof in Harlem. His drawing was different from other kids; he did not draw a line at the bottom for the ground, and a line at the top for the sky and sandwich the trees in the middle like everybody else---he filled the whole page and left no blank spaces in his textured sky; I admired it from my seat next to him wishing that I could color like he did. His clouds were big and fluffy and the texture he created for the sky with the blue crayon had me mesmerized; how did he do that with the crayon? I would find myself making it my goal to imitate his texture with my crayon.

I loved how art time meant coloring and freedom to think my own things and do them my way, and it would feel good to my brain. We were always making things at school. Sometimes, there was no direction on what to create, my teacher would just pull out the paper, and we had time to create whatever we wanted; it did not matter, my little spirit was just happy to be creatively free. Sometimes there were arts and crafts projects where we would construct something, and sometimes we would just draw and color and

turn our pictures in to the teacher. For homework, we often had to illustrate stories or make a book report using words and illustrations. These kind of activities made homework exciting. I looked forward to doing my homework because of the creative challenges often attached to some of the assignments. My mother never had to tell me to do my homework because I was motivated. It's not that I drew well, or liked drawing that much--- it was stimulating to be creative so I would always do creative things whenever I had the chance. One day my teacher came up to me and said, "I hung your artwork up at City Hall. I hope your my mother takes you to see it." Those words would stay with me forever. My mother never did take me to see my artwork, but I imagined what it looked like hanging in City Hall. I remember how it felt knowing my art was on display. It almost did not matter that she did not take me to see it. In my whole career as a public school student, my mother only came to visit one teacher, my second grade teacher, Mrs. Aquart. Mrs. Aquart was a dark skinned woman who wore glasses and her hair in a bun. She was the only Black teacher I would ever have as a public school student and one of the only teachers my mother ever went to see. My mother even brought her a gift, a white china type teapot and teacups. I didn't know it at the time, but my mother was a high school dropout. She never really talked about education; she never really asked about homework, it was just expected. It never mattered to me what color my teachers were, I enjoyed school and most of my teachers had a way of making learning interesting by incorporating art and taking my classes on field trips.

Every year it would never fail-- my teachers would take us on field trips and those field trips, were always fascinating and made school exciting. We would have to hold

hands with our class partner and line up in twos in size order and the teacher would usher us through the venue whether it was the museum, the zoo, the aquarium, or even to a landfill, or the beach to explore-- I got to see things as a child outside of my regular environment that I would not have gotten to see. If it was not for these field trips, I would not have the experiences of doing cultural things because my family was not accustomed to participating in outside experiences together on the weekend except to watch cartoons-- so the addition of school trips brought delight to my little world and made me more curious and eager to express myself and the things I have seen. During third grade, we left Harlem and moved to Far Rockaway, Queens where my art education experiences would be reinforced and secure my future.

Junior High School was where I first experienced a real art teacher. My school I.S.53 Brian Piccolo exposed me to a variety of the arts, chorus, band, creative writing, storytelling and visual art. It made the days exciting and it made me enjoy listening to Mr. Yanek, my English teacher, who would tell the most compelling creative stories to the class and our mouths would hang open while he sat on a desk reeling us in to find out what happened next in the story. He had us to the point of wanting to do whatever assignment he would ask to write; the creative experiences my English class had-- prepared the ground for our literature teacher to “do his thing” with us. Even though I had bad experiences at home and had to come to school and lie about the black eye my mother gave me, nothing could keep me from school and all of its offerings--nothing. When I left middle school and went to high school, I was enrolled into the humanities arts program while some other classmates chose to go the health careers path.

That Humanities Arts Program at Far Rockaway High School saturated my world with all kinds of art; performance art, visual art, theaters, plays, shop classes, calligraphy and a multitude of field trip experiences to museums, symphonies, operas, and Broadway plays. I did not realize it until later that my teachers literally moved heaven and earth to get us into the King Tut exhibit when it first came to the United States. I remember the bus pulling up to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and seeing a huge line of people around the corner wanting to get in to see this exhibit we were going to see. We got off the school bus, and my teachers walked us up to the front of the Metropolitan Museum like we were some kind of celebrities, and we went right in to the exhibit. Years later as an adult when I traveled to Egypt and saw the King Tut exhibit once again, I could only think back and sing the praises of my Humanities Arts teachers for the experiences they made possible for me as a student wishing I could express to them the results of their efforts and hard work. They took us on field trips during the day and the evening, sometimes once or twice a week. We met celebrities, and they would talk to us on the stage of Broadway and take us behind the scenes and then we would get to see them perform. One night we got dressed up and went to Lincoln Center to see the New York Philharmonic. We also took shop classes of all kinds. I learned how to cut and stain wood. My teachers were a team of teachers that worked especially hard to expose us to as much art as possible—fine arts and crafts. I remember the gleam in their eyes and the smocks they wore—they had a mission. All of that exposure opened the door to my wanting to learn more--- so when they pulled out big Shakespeare books and classic novels-- I was eager to read and write and do the work. In Social Studies class, we would

have to focus on something in particular, and I was ready to do that too. Whatever they wanted us to do, they prepared our minds like fertile soil. I would often measure myself by keeping up with my grades on my report cards—it was like the stock market---I did whatever I could to keep my grades up. I studied at home on my own and wrote all of my notes over—there was a love for just looking at knowledge and the words on the written page—a thrill of seeing blue ink on white loose-leaf paper with lines. My teachers touched my world, triggered my imagination and gave me something to write about and think about through the experiences and the exposure that they made possible. I connected that with every subject. It was exciting to talk to my friends at school about boys, but we also talked about schoolwork because my peers were as intrigued as I was. I loved school so much I never want to go home. Home was the opposite of school so I would catch the last city bus home from school-- the one I had to get on.

One of the best classes that I ever took in high school was also a calligraphy class. My teacher, Miss LaSpina, taught the class how to letter in italics, script, uncial, and Roman letters with barrel pens that had interchangeable nibs that we dipped into ink, and we also used fountain pens that had utilized ink cartridges in them. That class helped me to express myself, and I began to open up—I was never really a talker. I loved dipping the pen into the ink and writing words---it made me think about the spelling; when I first learned I was more focused on making the letter pretty that I would forget about the spelling so this class in lettering taught me to think more closely about the words I put to paper. I would read for days looking for things to write in calligraphy.

My experiences in the arts program gave me confidence, and I decided I would run for school government and become more involved at school. I ran for school parliamentarian and won. I worked on the school yearbook, on the school newspaper, and I was placed in charge of making posters for the school because I was good at calligraphy and lettering. In addition to my political career in high school I was also a cheerleader—and I still kept up with all of my schoolwork because my classes engaged me. My experiences at home were extremely challenging, but I managed. Though it was a difficult relationship, one thing I dearly admired about my mother was her handwriting—she had the most beautiful handwriting and was fairly intelligent. She had a prettiest signature I had ever seen, and her words were so fluid and her grammar was correct; who would have thought she was a dropout? Calligraphy class was a way for me to connect with a mother that really did not connect with me; I think she actually liked my calligraphy. The difficulties at home pushed me to run away from home several times because of the drinking and the violence. To express oneself in my household meant getting beat, so I never expressed what I thought--- I just kept my mouth shut; even when she would threaten to burn the house down while we slept—I would just sleep nervously with one eye open. By my junior year, I had already witnessed the police coming to my house a number of times on domestic violence calls. Sometimes when I would finally arrive in the neighborhood from getting off the late bus, it was not unusual to be greeted by someone in the neighborhood who would brag to me that ‘he did coke with my mom today.’ Her drinking and drug use were becoming more excessive.

My experiences at school made me more confident and bold, and I started to stand



up to my mother, ask her questions and voice my opinion. My two other sisters had already left home, and I was the last female in the house responsible for caring for my younger brothers. One day, she came home obviously high from her escapades in the neighborhood-- and I was at home making dinner. She walked through the door, and I heard the regular squeak and her usual shuffle. I wanted to have a normal life, and I said something to her and asked her why she had to do those things--but she took to me like lightning and started to beat me nearly killing me. She pushed me, kicked me, and punched me and threw things at me like scissors, hammers and whatever she could get her hands on. Then she told me to give her her key and never come back to her house; I did as I was told and left with just the clothes on my back. I was homeless for a while and rode the A train from one end to the other; from Far Rockaway back to Harlem and back. I missed school for a couple of days trying to figure out what I was going to do. I had also suffered with teenage depression as I tried to maneuver my way through adolescence on my own. I often considered suicide as an escape from the world I was in. I did attempt suicide—unsuccessfully. Being homeless was one of those times that brought on depression and suicidal tendencies. Some of my friends stepped in to help me. One of my high school friends got his mother to let me stay with her while he went away to college and she obliged. When I lived with her, I just stayed locked up in the room doing homework and making art. A line from a movie held true for me; “and what might seem to be a series of unfortunate events may, in fact, be the first steps of a journey” (*Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events*, 2004). Living with her would also mean I would have to take the subway train from the city into Far Rockaway to get to school.

That experience on the subway would open my world up even more to the arts. Through all my sadness, what would brighten my eyes was seeing these unusual graffiti pictures that were showing up in the subway. They were simple figures. They were showing up every day somewhere, and it was exciting to look for them every day.

### *Graffiti*

Subways rides and graffiti had an intrigued me by supplying color to a dreary world. When I lived in Harlem, someone would spray paint graffiti flower pots on the boarded up windows of the numerous abandoned buildings that were in my environment, and I will never forget how as a child that simple act of ‘illegal’ creativity would brighten my world. Through all the litter, trash, and dilapidation, the color of graffiti was like a ray of sunshine. On the subway trains, these big bright, intricate and colorful words and names would appear on the subway walls and cars and I would look for graffiti just as much as I looked for the train to arrive. What would the graffiti artist do next? It was fascinating and it was intriguing—almost like walking into a museum. Sometimes, I would see the same graffiti name, beautifully executed in a different place, and I knew it took some daring to get to those risky places. I also imagined “the high” the graffiti artist got from the exposure of someone seeing their artwork; I imagined it as the same “high” I felt when I created posters at high school and everyone would see my artwork hanging on walls; I always imagined graffiti artists just felt like they did not fit in to the world but still had something to say and needed someone to know they existed. My eye for graffiti made me a witness to Pop Art—an art movement happening around me that I was in the midst of.

### *Eye Witness Pop Art*

Because I had to ride the subway to school, I started to notice these graffiti drawings in the subway stations on the black advertisement boards. These were the drawings of Keith Haring who would draw these lively drawings that seemed alive, bright, and exciting but very simple. They stood out from the other graffiti I was used to seeing because they were drawn in a white chalk-like material and they were very simple but expressive and when the subway train would pull off and move, these drawings of dogs, babies, hearts, and people would become more animated and move as if they recognized I was leaving the station and was trying to get me to stay. The images had a message in them and made me think. When I would walk the streets of the city, I would see those drawings show up on little postcards and in other places. I became a fan of his work and followed the messages that he would express to try to change the world through his “illegal” art activity and watch the world begin to love what I had loved long before the world. It would further my interest in exploring all kinds of art and I began to feel a niche and a place for understanding creativity and the arts.

### *Off to College*

A visit to this college in the eighth grade set my sights on C.W. Post College in Long Island. Even though I lacked support from my family, I still graduated from high school and received a full scholarship from the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) in New York City. They selected me based upon my potential. I was one of 19 students selected from a pool of 500 students. My dorm room became my permanent address for the next five years. My experiences in high school were very diverse yet I

enrolled into a college that was not very diverse. My scholarship director must have known because I would be required to read the biography of Malcolm X and attend a summer orientation for six weeks; they wanted to make sure the recipients---all minorities with at-risk backgrounds-- would be able to adapt into this environment. It was a cultural shock for me because the white people that I went to college with were not like the white people I went to high school with—they were not as friendly and the campus was more segregated; I was not used to that. This was my first direct exposure to classism and racism.

I did not have anyone to talk to in college about art and the arts department in college was different than in high school. Because of my experiences in high school with reporting for the school newspaper, I thought I wanted to be a news reporter so my first semester in college, I majored in communications. I changed my major again to marketing trying to get to something where I could be in a creative career—I got misdirected information again, got frustrated, and then changed my major once again—this time to graphic design. I graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic Design and two years later I was back in school extending my degree at another university to get certified in art education. I wanted to be like my teachers in high school; they were my role models. I wanted to be an art teacher, and I was sure of that.

### *Art Teacher Preparation*

I moved to Georgia and the State Department of Education reviewed my transcript and told me exactly what I needed to get certified to teach art. I enrolled in a university's art teacher preparation program to take the classes I needed, and they added on to the requirements from the state. I needed more studio courses and education courses. The education courses consisted of the foundations of education and special education courses. The studio courses focused on just that—studio courses in drawing, painting, ceramics and sculpture. The art education courses focused on elementary and secondary education methods. The curriculum and design of the classes included writing lesson plans and units, preparing for evaluations, bulletin boards, and executing a great number of art projects. We went out to other schools to observe art teachers in action for an hour or two and would return back to class to discuss what we had seen. There was one experience where we had to do execute a one day lesson with some first grade students, create a display of their work then come back to class to discuss the experience and the art. There were no in depth discussions of at-risk students, poverty, or the realities of teaching in certain communities. My ideas about teaching were referenced from my personal experiences in being a public school student along with my student teaching experiences. However, I was thrown off balance when I secured my first job as a teacher in a disadvantaged school. When reality hit, suddenly I became an at-risk teacher—at risk of leaving the profession and doing something else with my time.

### ***My First Years as an Art Teacher: Teaching Elementary School Art***

My first experience was in two inner-city elementary schools that went to eighth grade. The populations I dealt with were dominantly African-American and Hispanic. There were 800 students in each school. I had to alternate weeks for each school and serve all the students. When I went to the office to ask about supplies, they laughed at me. When one of the principals finally came in to my class to observe me, he realized what I was trying to do and announced to the class that he was going to get supplies for the students to work with. I was given \$150.00 for supplies to last from August to May for 800, students and the other school gave me a little more than that. I tried to think of every possible thing I could do with crayons, markers, paper, and tempera paint, and a few paintbrushes and scissors. Purchasing secondary colors was a luxury. I knew I had to stretch what I had so I purchased primary colors along with black and white paint. The students were very challenging, and I was not prepared for the discipline issues I encountered. I was following my teacher preparation program and heard myself constantly utter under my breath that ‘this was not for me’. Nothing in the environment fit the ideas of art education that were in my head. I felt like I was flowing against the waters, but I was trying, trying to teach art, and I felt that I needed to connect with the students. I thought my connection with the students was failing. One day, however, the most troubled student in the school put a note in my hand and it said “*Thank you Miss Whittington for not giving up on me.*”

I kept hearing myself utter under my own breath “*I was not prepared for this. They did not teach me about this.*” I kept complaining to myself until I got tired of it. I

had already resolved that the approaches from teacher preparation were not working; but something inside of me told me not to quit—don't give up. I had to be brutally honest in my own mind about the community, about the children. In my mind I had to tear down everything I learned and deconstruct my experiences, the children, and the community and reconstruct a program that I believed would work. The first change would begin with me--I was going to have to take ownership and lead the program—not just be a teacher in the school. I had to recognize that yes, I was in an isolated position, but I would have to turn that around and make it an advantage instead of a disadvantage. I would have to communicate with teachers in the building who was in a similar situation, like the chorus teacher and the PE teacher. I had to assess the community and its needs and interests and evaluate what they responded to. I also resolved to let everyone know that an art program was in the building, so I would have to communicate with the community by putting up displays in central areas like the lobby—and I would have to do it in a way that would be bold. I also had to assess the interests and the needs of the students and observe how they learned the best. In my own evaluation and assessment, whenever I did a lesson, I would allow myself to just stand and observe the students as they either worked, or did not work. They responded well to engagement in hands on activities. I also had to evaluate what I had to work with. The school year ended, and the principal retired. A new principal would be assigned to my base school and her leadership developed me into the art teacher I am today.

The new principal valued every subject in the school; she knew every subject had its place in the curriculum and the community. She was fair across the board, and her

attitude and mindset toward art education was progressive and contemporary. She taught me about community, and I enjoyed watching her lead. What was really unusual was that anything I needed—anything--- she found a way to get it. I did not lack for anything. I had the same number of computers in my classroom as any other teacher. Her expectation of me, and of every teacher, was that she would make sure we had the materials we needed to teach with and in return, we had to teach to the best of our ability. Our school became known as the “Northside” school that resided on the “Southside” of town. She made leaders of all of her teachers, and we felt like a private school. We were in an impoverished neighborhood and when people from the community would come into the school, they would always respond that ‘it was nothing that they expected from the outside.’’ Art displays would greet people as soon as they walked through the doors into the lobby. High quality art was displayed down each hallway, around the poles, from the ceiling, and even up the staircases and in the cafetorium (the cafeteria was also the auditorium). She did not ask for any of those displays to be placed in the school; it came automatically with the morale she developed. In this disadvantaged school, the students and teachers did not need for anything because the principal made sure that every teacher, not just some, had everything they needed for the students to be successful; she found a way or made one. Even Title I at the time supported art education. Art education was not eliminated from receiving Title I funds like it is now in the year 2014. The principal understood every aspect of education and had a healthy attitude toward a child’s academic success and she often spoke about whole brain education in our staff meetings. Inspired by my principal, I enrolled into school into a Master’s program for art education



and educational leadership. The principal nurtured my passion for art education, a career I had considered walking away from. She demonstrated the power of community and I had a healthy view of art education's fit into a school environment.

Several years later, *No Child Left Behind* would hit the headlines of the newspaper, and I remember the moment everything changed in the school and in education. Site-based management would become a thing of the past. Extra pressure was placed on the third and fifth grade teams because of testing and everyone had to document how we would help students achieve higher test scores and everything needed research behind it. The principal called a special staff meeting to explain the new changes that would take place in education across the nation and how it would affect our school. Just as she said, suddenly an excess of new people with specialized titles came into the school building to regulate every aspect of everything from schedules to lessons and demanded everything had to have research behind it. It felt like the power was snatched away from the principal along with the human aspect of education and community. It became all about data and having evidence to back everything up. I remember being frustrated because I could not find any practical research in art education that would fit the needs of art education in my school. Suddenly, the students became numbers instead of human beings, their art time was decreased to thirty minutes a week--barely enough time to do anything; I was used to having them forty-five minutes to an hour. It felt as if it was just to make sure that their art experience was documented but was not assured of a high quality experience. I would observe in despair and saw the community shift before my eyes. Instead of teaching, it felt like I was 'herding' students

in and out of the classroom for the sake of fulfilling the documented thirty minute ‘art time.’ A few years later, I would make the decision to leave for a new experience. I was transferred to a middle school.

### ***Transfer to Middle School—Teaching Art to 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> Graders***

When I first entered middle school, I was a bit uneasy because I knew middle school children were different; middle school kids could be a beast of a different nature because they were adolescents, or ‘tweens’ as some people call them; they were in-between still wanting to be a child and then wanting to be grown. From what I had heard, some of the worst behavior problems were in middle school. I also knew that teachers either loved or hated middle school. It just so happened that the middle school principal who hired me wanted to transform the school to a miniature ‘middle school of the arts’ and that is what attracted me to the challenging situation. The school had a ‘rough’ reputation, but I prepared myself for the encounter. I called up a friend who loved middle school and told her of my concerns, and she gave me the best advice; she told me to make sure they were always engaged---every minute-- because if they were not engaged and challenged--- then I would have discipline problems.

I heeded her advice at all times, and I began to realize, these kids could do simple things and more. As a teacher and as an artist, I realized I could “run” with art, and these kids could keep up with me. I gave them advanced projects, and they did them. It was a lot different from elementary school art where their skills and thinking were limited. I was able to become more of a teaching artist. I worked hard to develop the art program,

and my personal belief was “art is in the building”—which meant to always make art visible—everywhere; always in the lobby, down the hallways and around the art room. Making art visible everywhere in my belief: 1) changed the culture and the environment by changing the environment from looking so institutionalized to looking like a community of human beings—art adds life; 2) expressed to the community what was taking place in the art program; 3) communicated to students their possibilities while the displays of their work could build self-esteem; 4) and gave me a way that I could assess my own work with the students from wherever I was in the building—their work would stay on my mind where ever I was. That personal philosophy would reap rewards because I would get emails and notes from teachers thanking me for the expressive displays around the building. They appreciated the life it added to the environment. No matter how troubled the students were, they did not bother the work. I had sculptures up in the middle of the floor and art displays on the walls, and the students did not bother the artwork. They appreciated having it up.

It got to the point that people would come off of the street into the building and wanted to buy my student work. Many of my middle school students made money from the artwork they sold. I also made them give a donation back to the art class and was able to teach them a little about business. We sold many pieces, including ones to the Tupac Shakur foundation. Tupac’s sister Sett would come to the school, look at the art on the walls, and pick out the pieces she wanted. The Tupac Foundation would regularly sent over representatives to purchase work, and they also started adopting some of my students into their programs at the center.

Community organizations were noticing the art program. Emory University partnered with my class for several activities. They held a contest among my students to design a logo for their campus for water conservation. Emory University also sent a bus over to the school in the evening, and my students participated with their ceramics class to build sculptures for an outdoor garden. The Atlanta Links, a very prominent organization in Atlanta approached me about doing an art showcase of student work—a formal art show. They funded elaborate receptions and purchased supplies every year because they saw the potential and the change in the students and the school community. The art events always were packed with parents, teachers, and community leaders and draw a great audience to the school. I would even hear my principal’s boss tell him “It is your art program that makes this community what it is,” and he agreed.

In this middle school, I did have to get certified in reading and teach a reading class from a scripted reading program to be considered a “high quality teacher” even though I had a Master’s Degree in my subject. My discipline problems were few, and all the students came to me for all sorts of issues beyond art. Sometimes, they just wanted to come into the art room and sit for a minute.

A few years later, a new principal was assigned to my middle school, and then another, and another. The consistency of having a stable principal became a thing of the past. One of those transient principals used my art budget to purchase a piece of technology for one of her administrators, and I began to struggle with materials for the classroom. That’s when I literally began to dig in trashcans, and my students and I would begin to dig into dumpsters to get supplies to sustain the art class. After thinking long and

hard about the decision, I decided to go back to graduate school to achieve my doctorate in art education because I had seen and experienced enough to understand the power of art education, and I needed a platform. I searched out the best possible program and enrolled---sacrificing the long drives and extra financial burden to be able to somehow make a difference.

### ***Back to School: Destination Doctorate Degree***

At first I was a bit anxious because I was the only black student in the program and was not sure how I would be received because I worked in a disadvantaged school and I was black—but it was one of the best decisions I made. It was then that I began to realize that being a black teacher was not a regular occurrence in America. In one of my education courses, the professor brought out the statistics to the class and made a big deal because I was in the program. She wanted the class to hear the perspective of a Black teacher. I did not feel uneasy, I felt like a rarity, and she valued my experience.

In my art education courses, it was good being around other art teachers from different environments. When I listened to their stories, I could not believe they had budgets of \$10,000, and they could not believe I operated with no budget and had to dig in the trash to find materials for my classes. I began to see the differences between school environments and the behavior and attitudes of the communities each of us worked in just through the casual conversations with my art education classmates. Some of them sought ways to help my program as much as I wanted to myself.

The doctoral classes drew a lot out of me and helped me to look at my experiences and the experiences of my community more as an anthropologist. These

class experiences would also guide my decision to receive an EdD over a PhD. I felt my practical experience would better serve this degree, and I could be more useful to the profession. These class experiences and discussions with my classmates made me realize I was in a position to help art education in disadvantaged communities—I just wasn't sure how to do it at the time. Eventually my experiences in being a teacher, growing up at-risk, and my experiences in graduate school would all come together and meaning could be made of these experiences that could be used to improve art education for at-risk populations.

### ***Becoming an Experienced New Teacher: High School Experiences***

The middle school I had worked for was on the list to close. There were a lot of heated debates going on in the community, and some of them reeked of hidden racism. It became very stressful—the students were stressed, the teachers were stressed, the community was stressed. It took an emotional toll on me, and the media was everywhere. Because of all the protests, the school did not close, but a new principal was assigned to the building. I heard the upcoming principal of the school make a racist comment, so I requested a transfer. I was then transferred to a high school. The high school I was transferred to did not have a good reputation; even a police officer told me not to go there if I could help it. The school was designed to be a small learning community, so officially there were three high schools and three principals in one building and one art teacher. One interim principal was brand new, and the other two were veteran administrators. I would have to serve all three schools. Even though I heard negative things about the community, I was excited about teaching high school and thought of all the wonderful

things I could do with the students; I would get to help students go to college and define their futures. I felt like a new teacher again except I had over 20 years of experience behind me. I had the same knowledge; I was just moving to a new location with older students.

When I first walked onto the campus, I thought how beautiful the school was--especially to be in a disadvantaged environment; it had recently been remodeled. I immediately began to think about where displays of student artwork would go. When I walked into the art room, it was beautiful. The first thing I noticed was the big window. It was the first time as an art teacher that I would have windows in my classroom. The view was breathtaking. All I could see were trees and the football field in the distance. It was also the biggest classroom I ever had. The room was big enough to fit eight block studio art tables and wooden stools, and in one section of the classroom there were about twenty desks.

I took the key and went into the storage room, and it was bare. There was almost nothing there. There was some manila paper, some old markers, broken pieces of chalk in a box, a big bottle of red and black tempera paint, a few colored pencils, no paintbrushes, no scissors and that was about it. I happened to have the phone number of the previous art teacher so I called him, and he said he worked there for years with no supplies. He stated supplies would only come when they wanted him to do some kind of decoration for the school—which was why there was a big bottle of red and black paint, (the school colors). He said he just stopped asking for supplies.

When I met the students, I did not see what the police described. I saw students

who were hungry to learn and hungry for creative activity. Many of them had talent as I could see from some of their pencil sketches. They told me that the previous art teacher never had supplies and all they could do was just sit in the classroom and do whatever they wanted. I vowed to them that I would not let that happen. I developed a rapport with many of the students. We made art happen with what we had. I began once again searching through the trash for things that they could use as art materials. I also sat down with the principal assigned to me (the brand new principal) to ask about materials, and she said she would investigate. There was also a person from the State Department of Education who was in and out of the school monitoring a grant the school had received. She took notice of what was happening in the art room and she ordered 150.00 worth of supplies for me using her own money. My students made a thank you banner for her and hung it up in the hallway. Sometimes, the students would get frustrated, and some of them would “magically” find copy paper and pencils and bring these supplies to the art room. I displayed artwork up where I could---nothing like what I was used to, but I still believed supplies would come. A student—who was not my student--- found her way to the art room and she said *“I came to tell you thank you for all the artwork you are putting up. We never had anything like this before. It looks real nice.”*

The principal did get back to me, and she explained to me that she did not understand when she first came in how the budget worked and that she had spent the money directed for the art program on something else. She said nobody explained it to her. Even though I already understood how it worked from my previous experience, we still called the district art office together to find out exactly how much money was



allocated to the school. According to central office, there was an arts budget not just for one school but for all three schools I served, and the money had already been released. I sent a friendly email to all three principals stating what central office had stated and reminding them that I was happy to be there and looked forward to growing the program. The next day, I was called into the office of the other two veteran principals who sat there together with my emails printed and highlighted. I soon realized they were not interested in what the students needed; they were interested in asking why I called downtown and yelled at me about “protocol.” Obviously—for them I knew too much, and their tactic was intimidation. Obviously—they did not know my experience or my passion. They were upset because I called downtown for information and felt such information should be “in-house;” and I politely disagreed with them. We went back and forth on some emails, and I stood my ground about being able to freely discuss what was happening in my classroom with the central office. Finally, the principals of the other two schools asked me to send my art order, I did send it-- twice, and I never received anything from either of those two principals to support my work with their students in my classroom.

I withdrew from the community as a teacher because the behavior and actions of these principals lowered my morale, but I still worked just as hard with the students as much as I could with what I had. My morale was lowered but not my motivation to serve my students. I only displayed artwork by my classroom to benefit my corner of the school. I continued to search in the trash to sustain student experiences, and we mastered the art of making something out of nothing. The school secretary, who also had the power to get materials into the classroom--, ordered supplies for the other teachers but

never anything for my classroom. Some of the staff asked the secretary about the art class, and her response was that “she can wait,” so some of the staff shared their supplies with me. By the end of the year, my principal (the brand new principal) apologized to me. She said “I see what you are trying to do with these kids, and I feel bad that you had to go this year with nothing.” She also vowed to make sure I would have everything I would need for the next year school. Unfortunately, she was transferred and an interim principal was put in her place—and the struggle for a high quality arts program for disadvantaged students continued. The new interim principal offered some assistance for the program, but it was not enough to provide for all the schools and students I served. The other two principals did not put a dime into making sure their students had the materials they needed. Even though I was blindsided by what I experienced my first year at the high school, I reflected on my experiences as an urban art teacher and realized all of these experiences needed to go into my dissertation as more evidence as to why art teachers need to be prepared for urban environments. These experiences in this autoethnography also evidence why urban art teachers are at-risk and leave urban environments for better conditions.

## CHAPTER 6

### FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

#### **Revisiting Validity**

The data provided in this research reflects the field of art education in disadvantaged environments from the perspective of the participants and my perspective as well. The evidence collected came directly from those who are currently in the field with a variety of experience ranging from three years to twenty-eight years. A straightforward approach was used through direct narrative responses for authenticity. An auto-ethnography of the researcher's experiences as an at-risk student and as an urban art teacher was also provided to contribute to this social inquiry allowing for a comparison of experiences. This research did not involve the voices of at-risk students; however, through the researcher's experience and the experiences of some of the participants who also grew up at-risk, the voices, experiences, and the thinking of disadvantaged children are echoed through their reflections and the need for dedicated art teachers in urban environments can be indirectly understood. It was also necessary for the art teachers' experiences to be discussed in relation to two very important research studies; the Arts and Achievement for At-risk Youth: Four Longitudinal Studies (National Endowment for the Arts, 2013) and The Condition of Education 2011 (Aud, et.al, 2011). It is realized that together, the data collected in these studies and this dissertation together form a picture of the condition of urban art education and can inform educational leaders in ways to improve conditions for teachers and students.

## Testing Critical Theory

Critical theory provides narratives in support of social inquiry to decrease domination and increase freedom. A theory is critical to the extent that it seeks human emancipation from marginalizing circumstances (Horkheimer, 1982). Social inquiry is essential to critical theory as it is the basis for understanding agency and the organizational structure. In examining the agencies involved that help form and develop the art teacher—they would include: a) art teacher preparation b) the school/district employing the art teacher, and c) professional development through professional organizations like NAEA. Art teacher preparation supplies the foundation for the development of the art teacher into the profession. The school/district establishes the art teacher into the profession through employment, resources, and support. Professional development through organizations like NAEA supply updated content area support and direction for future content and current best practices to enrich and establish the art teacher deeper into the profession. This study, through critical theory, has found that these urban art teachers and their students have mainly been marginalized, underserved, and even oppressed by the agencies that were designed to support them as it pertains to art education.

Kraehe and Acuff (2013) argued that deeper understandings of entangled socio-cultural and political processes are needed because they *conceal* underservedness. She argues that there needs to be social inquiry to reveal cultures and subcultures that are not being served. “Underservedness draws attention to cultural articulations and material conditions that prevent certain groups from fully accessing and benefiting from the resources and opportunities for effective education including high-quality art experiences” (Kraehe & Acuff, 2013, p. 294). High-quality art experiences have been proven to increase the academic and social success

of at-risk students (National Endowment for the Arts, 2013). This research begins to scratch at the surface and peel back the layers of understanding why students are not experiencing and reaping the success that the NEA reports found attainable for at-risk students. Research has shown that a high volume of art teachers leave urban environments for better conditions (Aud, et.al, 2011). The results of this study begin to uncover what those conditions are. The narrative data in this study reveal that the majority of the teachers in this study changed their majors as students from something else to do something that they loved and believed in doing; art education. The data reveals that these teachers have a passion for art, and a passion for teaching; they are socially conscious wanting to help disadvantaged children, and they enjoy seeing the amazement in their students' eyes when the students make creative discoveries. What also emerged through the data is that all of these teachers work in urban schools that operate in the spirit of progressive education---according to their mission statements and the mission statements of their school districts-- yet the thinking of the administrators toward art education are outdated and traditional as reflected in the attitudes of the administrators and their perception of role of the urban art teacher. These traditional beliefs and lack of values concerning art education created obstacles for many of these teachers who still demonstrated resilience to overcome hindrances for which they feel they were not prepared in art teacher preparation. Further extensive qualitative research is highly recommended in studying the values and beliefs of urban administrators toward art education and to help prepare future art teachers who potentially may face leaders who don't value the work they do with disadvantaged students.

What Kraehe (2013) suggests is investigating through social inquiry to uncover the gaps in art education thwarting student success. This would require looking beyond the paperwork of standard documented data; paperwork can give the appearance of processes being

standard, adequate, provided, and fair. For example, it has been discovered that students and teachers in a Title I school in New York City, P.S. 106, received no textbooks for any of their classes, no supplies for art or music, and the environment is unclean and not up to standard. Apparently, the staff felt too intimidated to report what was happening in the school for fear of retaliation from their administration (Klein, 2014, New York CBS Local, 2014). One parent stated, “They didn’t do anything for these kids until the story came out. Now they are putting on a big show. But once the media goes away, they’ll go back to doing nothing for the kids” (Edelman, 2014, para 11). The question is; how could this have gone on so long? If social inquiry into the experiences at the school had taken place as Kraehe suggests, these kind of situations in disadvantaged schools would be reduced. Politicians, leaders, and even scholars look at reports and files which can give the façade of equity, but can conceal the underservedness in school programs that Kraehe talks about—yet it is social inquiry that will reveal the inequities that may exist and confirms the accuracy—or the inaccuracy--of documented data.

This study was approached with the belief that art teacher preparation was the major factor in the reasons why so many teachers leave urban environments for better conditions. It sought to improve art teacher preparation through social inquiry (and there are still many things that art teacher preparation can do), but this inquiry has revealed additional underlying factors in other organizational structures that also handicap and hinder high-quality art experiences for disadvantaged populations and cause art teachers to become frustrated and leave for better conditions. Evidence through this study reveal that lack of administrator support and misinterpretations Title of I, as well perceived lack of recognition from professional associations --- increase the domination, oppression and marginalization experienced in art education in disadvantaged environments. In order to improve art education and provide high quality art

experiences for at-risk students, teacher preparation must be addressed for the sake of teachers assigned to urban environments. In addition, the conditions that urban art teachers work under must also be improved because art teachers can be adequately prepared and still become discouraged by the conditions and lack of support they face. Teacher preparation programs can advocate within professional organizations such as NAEA for disadvantaged art programs. Art education researchers can also provide more extensive and practical research, especially more social inquiry, and share their findings with other art organizations to put pressure on education officials through data. According to this study, the teachers that do stay in disadvantaged environments have an internal value system and demonstrate attitudes of resourcefulness and resiliency in their marginalized places of the environment.

It is also suspected that the values, beliefs, and attitudes of administrators and leaders of disadvantaged school agencies are outdated in their understanding of art education. Perhaps they lack experiences and came from environments like the ones they teach in-- where art education was not supported-- and then transferred those values, beliefs, and attitudes towards art education into the institutions they lead. Whatever the case may be, this is an area that needs research inspired change for art education to have a more sturdy foundation in at-risk environments. Even though this study did not include a study of art education programs in suburban schools, the difference is evident, known, and unspoken-- and partially revealed through the narratives included in this inquiry. If leaders change their attitudes toward art education, administrators will change, teachers will change, then programs can change, and urban students can attain the academic and social successes that await them. There is a need for more research that compares suburban art education and urban art education, especially the values and beliefs of suburban school principals with urban school principals toward art

education.

I first developed the interview questions for this study with categories in mind using my personal experience to guide the questions and areas that needed to be explored. The categories I approached with this study were: preparation, behavior and attitudes, and professional development and support. However, other themes emerged that were not included as part of this research. I recognized and constructed these other themes by utilizing several features of significance as recommended by Love (1992). I looked for repetition within and across interviews of ideas, encounters, attitudes, behaviors, concerns, or issues that were repeated. I looked for historical explanations, descriptions, behaviors, and stories that were significant that possibly justified present behaviors and attitudes of urban art teachers.

After reading and reviewing the transcripts repeatedly, I noticed patterns of behavior and attitudes emerging from the data. I coded them and placed them into themes. Themes that emerged were Intimidation (I), Respect (RES), Passion for teaching (PAS TE), Passion for art (PAS A), Obstacles (OB), Environment/Classroom conditions (ECC), Resiliency (RESL), Resourcefulness (RESO), Administration (AD), Title I (TI), Personal spending (PS), Falsehood (FAL), Love (LV), Caring (CA), Amazement in students (AMZ), Green Teaching (GT), Perceived Roles (PR) and Convenience Store (CS). Additional categories also emerged from this data, and they include: practices, encounters, roles, and values.

After I transcribed and repeatedly reviewed the data over and over, emergent themes of interest were evident. Themes of interest arose within narratives, and then I created poetry in response to these themes. I moved to another category that emerged called Portraiture. Portraiture allowed me to see “individual portraits” and “group portraits” of the participants. Portraiture also was used for analysis. Portraiture gives great insight and helps to tell the story of



human experience and is recommended for presenting qualitative research in powerful ways (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005). This attempt to narrate and recount experiences of seven urban art teachers (eight including the researcher)-- and indirectly the students they teach—allows them to emerge from the margins of our educational system. One of my university professors in my doctoral courses once stated that people could make numerical data say whatever they want it to say; this thought also supports the argument of Kraehe (2013). Many politicians and educational leaders who rely solely on quantitative data don't see the inequities and miss the phenomenon happening right in front of them in urban schools. Portraiture analysis provides illuminated insight. I used explicit and implicit interpretations of utilizing animal personality metaphors that gave significant meaning to the behavior and attitude of the teachers interviewed. According to Dahlberg, Drew and Nystrom (2001), in life world research, analyzing data is the development of making meaning.

### **Standards for Quality of Data**

Criteria for judging the quality of qualitative research include credibility, transferability, dependability, conformability, and authenticity (Mertens, 2005). I have attempted to minimize pitfalls and bias and confirm this data by using direct narration and statements from participants and in the case where analytic poetry was written, words were aligned with the authentic and actual statements of the urban art teacher. I simply rearranged and edited the wording to narrate a story close to the original teacher's meaning, and I allowed the teachers to review and confirm all statements for accuracy and each piece of poetry for authenticity and realism. In addition, data was collected using narrative interviews, an autoethnography, and a review of the art teacher preparation programs attended by the participants. Classroom observations of the seven art teachers participants were originally a part of the research design however, observations for all

teachers were not conducted due to the unwillingness of all principals to allow observations of their art programs. Several principals would not consent as stated directly to two teacher participants, who relayed the message to me--they “did not want their art programs studied.” Four principals willingly consented and one completely ignored all emails, and phone calls. That phenomenon became data in itself. I had to make the decision to omit the school observations and rely solely on art teacher interviews for this research; however, some of the observations that were allowed are mentioned sporadically in this study. That occurrence with administrators made the voices of urban art teachers even more important to this study. In addition, when stories arise in the news like the situation at P.S. 106 (Klein, 2014, New York CBS Local, 2014), interviews, narratives, and auto-ethnographies, become valuable data. The data in this research is dependable and could be transferable to make improvements in art education as it pertains to the urban environment.

### **Behavior and Attitude: Analyzing Metaphorical Animal Personalities**

Behavior and attitude are a large part of this study in understanding the thinking and behaviors of urban art teachers. To understand their behaviors and attitudes, I designed a set of questions that were based from a small personality test. According to Feinson (1998), the way an animal fights is equivalent to the way in which a person controls his or her environment. When we examine deeply rooted patterns of animal behavior and compare them to our own behaviors, certain motifs begin to emerge. In the animal metaphors that were collected, I noticed a particular category of animal was more prevalent. I sorted through all of the animal personalities chosen by the participants and placed them into categories; wild, domestic, and mythical (Table 8). Wild animals live in nature and provide for their own needs. Wild animals are fearful, obscure and become a problem and can potentially attack when their food supply or









habitat is threatened. Domestic animals have been raised and cared for by humans; the people that take care of them provide their needs. Domestic animals rely on people for their primary sustenance and care and are quite visible in society. Mythical animals are legendary creatures that at one point were believed to be real beings, while some have their origin traced from literary myths.

(Table 8) )

<b>Animal Profiles</b>		
<i>Animals identified In this study</i>	<i>Category of Animal Types</i>	Animal Group
Puppy	Domestic	Carnivore
Duck	Wild	Birds
Lion	Wild	Carnivore
Mama Bear	Wild	Carnivore
Leopard	Wild	Carnivore
Golden Retriever	Domestic	Carnivore
Mother Bird	Wild	Birds
Chimera	Mythical	Combination
Phoenix	Mythical	Birds
Baby Owl	Wild	Birds
Shrew	Wild	Insectivores & Rodents
Octopus	Wild (ocean)	Carnivore
Mouse	Wild	Insectivores & Rodents
Killer Whale	Wild (ocean)	Carnivore
Wolf	Wild	Carnivore
Monkey	Wild	Herbivore
Giraffe	Wild	Herbivore
Caterpillar	Wild	Insectivores & Rodents
Snail	Wild	Insectivores & Rodents
Tiger	Wild	Carnivore
Hyena	Wild	Carnivore
Peacock	Wild	Birds
Rattlesnake	Wild	Reptile
Cat	Domestic	Carnivore
Squirrel	Wild	Insectivores & Rodents
Mutt/Mongrel	Domestic	Carnivore

In Table 9, for most of the participants, there is an evident change in teacher personality from pre-service to their current position as an urban art teacher. Some teachers changed animal groups from domestic to carnivore (i.e. Mama Bear) while some shifted from wild to mythical (i.e. Mr. Chimera)

(Table 9)

<b>From Pre-service to Current Urban Art teacher: Adjusting Animal Personality types</b>		
<b>As a Pre-Service Teacher</b>	<b>Presently as an Urban Art Teacher</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
Puppy 	Participant 1: Mama Bear	Not consistent. Teacher merged from domestic animal personality to wild animal. Bear is aggressive and would overpower a puppy.
Kangaroo 	Participant 2: Lion	Not consistent. Both are wild animals but one is more fiercely aggressive than the other. Kangaroo could be prey for the lion.
Duck 	Participant 3: Duck	Consistent
Young Lion 	Participant 4: Leopard	Consistent to type.
Puppy 	Participant 5: Golden Retriever	Consistent to growth
Mouse 	Participant 6: Chimera (Like a Sphinx)	Not consistent. Teacher merged from a wild timid type animal to a mythical godlike animal that could destroy the mouse.
Monkey 	Participant 7: Mother Bird	Not consistent. Teacher merged from a wild entertaining animal to a wild nurturing animal.
Dog 	Participant 8 (the Researcher): Phoenix	Teacher merged from domestic animal to mythical animal that has the power to rise from the ashes.

According to Feinson (1998) people exhibit personalities that resemble animals and subconsciously modulate those behaviors to create stable social organizations. He says carnivorous personalities are assertive and adventurous and herbivorous personalities are passive and cautious. “People adapt their personalities to help cope with the turmoil of everyday life. Therefore they may modify their animal personalities as changes occur in their lives” (p. 5). Modifications in personalities are exhibited in Table 9 and Table 10.

(Table 10)

<b>Teacher Preparation Program Animal Type to Current Teaching Personality</b>			
<b>How they view their art teacher preparation</b>	<b>How they viewed themselves as a pre-service teacher</b>	<b>How they view themselves presently as an urban art teacher</b>	<b>Analysis: In relation to their preparation to the adaptation of current teaching personality</b>
Baby Owl	Puppy	Participant 1: Mama Bear	Present personality not consistent with preparation period. Participant adapted to a more aggressive and dominating type. “Mama” is nurturing and protective.
Snail	Kangaroo	Participant 2: Lion	Relationships are awkward and don’t relate. Participant personality types are both stronger than her view of preparation.
Rattle Snake	Duck	Participant 3: Duck	Participant teaching personality consistent. Viewed preparation as more aggressive type.
Tiger	Young Lion	Participant 4: Leopard	Participant personality type and preparation type are all consistent to each other and each other’s environment.

Cat	Puppy	Participant 5: Golden Retriever	Participant personality is consistent to self. Cats and dogs are polarizing and oppose each other.
Shrew	Mouse	Participant 6: Chimera (like a Sphinx)	Participant clearly took on mousey personality type of preparation during pre-service but morphed into a strong mythical creature that oversees in his teaching environment.
Octopus	Monkey	Participant 7: Mother Bird	Octopus is in a different environment than a monkey or a bird. Participant adapted to a flying animal type that could see over all environments. “Mother” is caring and protective.
Mutt	Dog	Participant 8 (Researcher): Phoenix	Participant pre-service and preparation type are consistent but viewed preparation as a weaker version. Adapted to a mythical creature that is powerful when awakened.

Seventy-five percent of these teachers felt that they were not adequately prepared by their art teacher preparation programs to work in their present condition. Though many of them liked their professors, some of them described their professors as “eccentric” and as a “rolodex of ideas for art projects.” Most of them were uncertain and could not state for sure if their professors had experience in the public school systems or with disadvantaged populations to transfer knowledge back into the art education classroom; they did not recall their professors discussing any of their own experiences during their coursework. They did state that they believed they had ‘some’ experience. Over 50% described their art education professors as ‘teaching artists.’ A lack of confidence was expressed as “Ms. Lion” stated that felt like she

could walk on her professors and her courses lacked structure and discipline. “Mother Bird” stated that she felt that if she were not the only black person in the classroom the conversations would have been offensive and inappropriate pertaining to some of the observations the students did in public schools. “Mother Bird” also stated that she suggested to her professors to allow her to student teach in both a suburban setting and an urban setting to contrast her experiences and allow her to sense the realities of teaching. She believes this contrast of experience has helped prepare her for the conditions she currently faces with disadvantaged populations. Several of the teachers discussed being frustrated that they did their student teaching on the “North” or suburban side of their town and being placed on the “South” or urban side of town; they noted the clear contrast in the amount of resources and the value of the administrators for art education.

What emerged from this data was not only the lack of preparation regarding the urban environment but that all of these art teachers faced other major obstacles once they were hired in urban schools with few places to turn for support. Pertaining to NAEA, two of the teachers are members, two of them are sometimes members, and four are not members at all. The ‘sometimes’ members don’t always feel supported but try to stay updated on what’s going on in art education, the ‘not’ members believe that NAEA does not support their work with disadvantaged populations and feel membership is not beneficial to them. “Mr. Chimera” an urban art teacher with 28 years of experience, believes it is just about politics and giving awards. Fifty percent of these urban teachers say they have attended a conference, they all enjoyed the activities, but felt disconnected and “isolated among hundreds of people.” Several teachers expressed that they get some professional development from their district, but the professional development is ‘redundant.’ Despite all of the evidence and data, Title I, designed to support

the academic success of disadvantaged students, does not support these urban art teachers, because of the way it is often interpreted at the local level

(Table 11)

<b>Funding for Urban Art Classrooms</b>				
<b>Art Teacher</b>	<b>Funding received past 2 years from a public school</b>	<b>Rounded Number of students served per year</b>	<b>Personal Money spent to fund classroom instructional activities in a public school (appx)</b>	<b>Assistance received from Title I</b>
Participant 1: Mama Bear	\$400	200	\$100	\$0
Participant 2: Ms. Lion	\$400	200	\$500	\$0
Participant 3: Ms. Duck	\$0	200	\$1,000	\$0
Participant 4: Mr. Leopard	\$0	500	\$600	\$0
Participant 5: Ms. Golden Retriever	\$0	300	\$500	\$0
Participant 6: Mr. Chimera	\$0	300	\$400	\$0
Participant 7: Mother Bird	\$0	300	\$2,000	\$0
Participant 8 (researcher): Ms. Phoenix	\$0 (1 <sup>st</sup> year as new teacher at high school)	220	\$1,000	\$0
Totals	<b>Total 800.00</b>	<b>2200 students</b>	<b>\$6,100.00</b>	<b>\$0</b>



Table 11 is a clear picture of the value and level of support urban art teachers receive from Title I and their prospective schools. It also is a clear snapshot of how these teachers value their students and value their art class. Apparently, there seems to be a conflict with the US Department of Education and the Title I facilitators. None of these urban art teachers have received support from Title I, a Federal Program orchestrated to assistance disadvantaged students to achieve (Education Commission of the United States, n.d). Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan and the Director of School Achievement and School Accountability, Dr. Monique Chism, have sent letters ( Artsed411, 2013; Duncan, 2009) urging Title I to support the arts for at-risk students-- but as the results from this study show, and other reports as mentioned by Duncan in his speech (U.S. Department of Education, 2012)-- art teachers who need assistance from Title I are not receiving it. I greatly recommend more research to take place in urban art education as it pertains to Title I and the arts, and for scholars and researchers to help advocate this cause.

### **The Narratives of an Art Display: The Walls Do Talk**



Figure 1.1 *Low morale display*: Artwork only in the hallway by the artroom.

It is possible to recognize the level of support for a teacher from teacher preparation, to support from the school, to the level of professional development by reading the walls. A hallmark of art teaching is proudly displaying student work. Many things can be understood about the teacher and the program by ‘listening’ to the walls.

Art displays—or lack thereof—tell a story. Wall displays can reveal the experiences and condition of art education for students and teachers. For years, I have personally assessed myself through displays of student artwork. Art displays above and beyond the traditional bulletin board display, require extra work for the teacher who has to exert extra effort to create these displays. Several indicators move me to display student work: I’m proud of the work my students have done and seeing their work displayed makes the halls and the school feel alive and the school feel warm.



Figure 1.2 *Narratives of the walls and halls*: Art displays in the hallway. All art is created from donated magazines, newspaper, and items pulled from the trash.

These displays make the community aware that “art is in the building” and inform the community of what is happening in my classroom. These ongoing presentations of artwork affirm the students, gives them confidence, and they will be encouraged to exert extra effort into their work. Seeing these displays keeps their art on my mind and allows me to gauge and assess where my students are in their art learning process.

In my first year as a new although experienced teacher at the high school (as told in Chapter 5), was one of the first times I did not desire to exert extra effort. I often reflected on my withdrawn behavior because that was out of the ordinary for me. What I did do was display student work only in my classroom and near the art room for the sake of the students. My morale was low, and I had refused to go beyond my corner of the building. I was not supported by two of the three principals in the building who attempted to suppress me because I inquired about the budget that the district had released. I had been transferred to that school after the previous art teacher had retired. From what I learned from the students and the staff was that the previous teacher did not have any supplies. That was evident when I first arrived because the storage rooms were absolutely bare to the bone. I sent an email that I thought was cohesive in trying to bring the schools together to support the art program, and I was called into one of the principal’s office; she sat there with the other principal of the three schools. They shut the door and sat me down, and I listened to them berate me because I did not follow “protocol” and inquired about the budget through the district Fine Arts department. These principals felt it was “school business” and that I did not need to go downtown about any matters pertaining to the school. I out rightly disagreed with them and informed them the issues of concern was that was that we were already in the third month of school and I did not have any supplies to teach the 216 students assigned to my classroom. I felt that these principals were used to oppressing,

suppressing, and domination and exerting their tactics on me; but I was determined to deliver art education to the community. I told these principals exactly what was supposed to be in my class, and they argued that I was not the art coordinator, and that I was just a teacher. I did not see myself as just an art teacher. I saw myself as the sole educator in an organization that was responsible for visual art education and I knew that I had the future of 216 students on my shoulders; I took my position seriously, and I stood my ground.

Even though the district had released money to support the art program, I received zero dollars my first year at this new school--- but I did not let that kill my spirit. I would dig in the trash can on a daily basis and recycled whatever I could so the students would have something to work with---and I still displayed their artwork on the walls. The difference was that I kept the artwork on display only near my classroom. I refused to do anything more beyond my regular classroom instruction. My morale was low, but my spirit and love for art and the students was still very much on fire. The thought of transferring to better conditions in suburban schools did cross my mind.

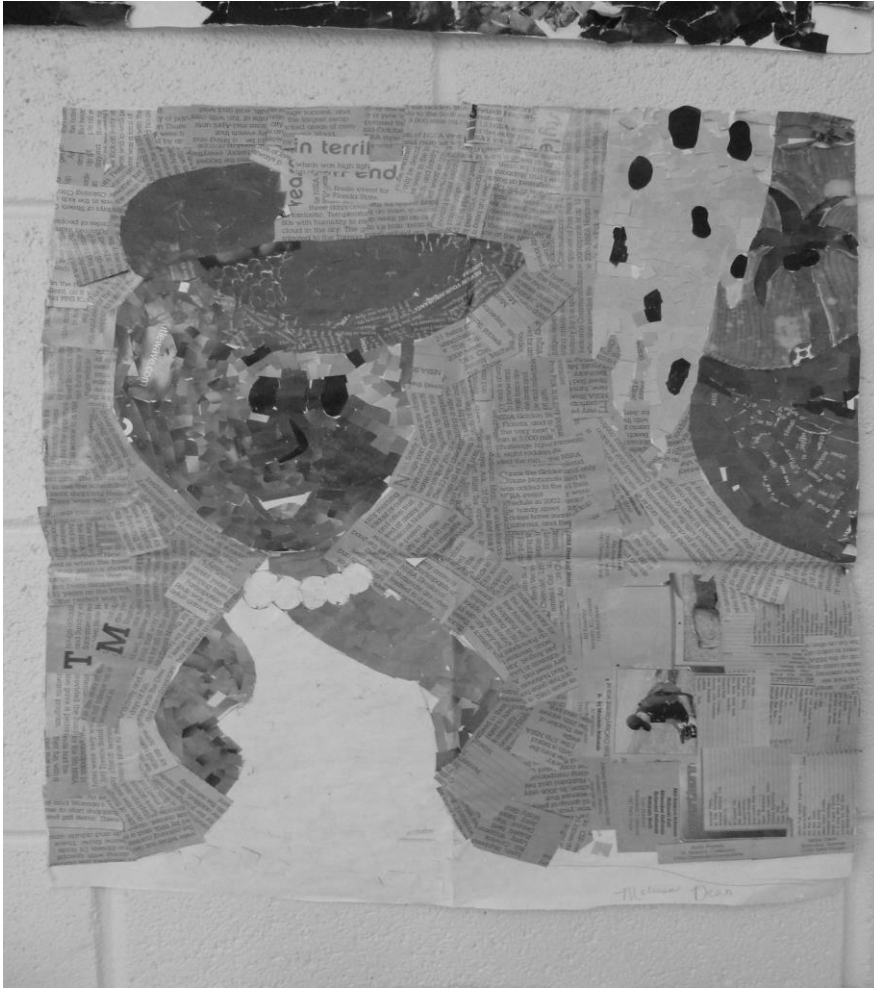


Figure 1:3 *Alternative for paint:* Artwork created from recycled magazines to give students an opportunity to “paint” a picture with color. There were no supplies to paint with in the classroom.

By the end of the year, one of my students would say “*Our class should be called Design-On-A-Dime because we created a lot of art work and had nothing to work with,*” and I looked at her and realized the students could clearly see what is happening in their environment. The walls do speak. When I would visit other schools for workshops or other school business, I would often walk around the school observing the walls and the bulletin boards “listening for conversations” about the art program. It is something I have done for years without really

knowing why; it was just always interesting to analyze, and I would come up with a theory for what I would see and did not see. If I got a chance to talk to the art teacher in a meeting, my theory would match their story.

Art displays have the power to supply empirical evidence of teacher morale and school support without ever having to ask the principal or the art teacher one question. Art is like a peacock, and peacocks like to show off their feathers. Nobody has to tell the peacock to strut. If an art teacher is proud of his/her student work, they will find a space or create space to display artwork in the class or throughout their school building. The further out an art teacher moves his/her display through the building, the higher the morale. Coughlan (1970) researched teacher morale and summed it up as this: good personal judgment; ego involvement in one's job; a predisposition to exert extra effort; a collection of job related attitudes and identification with organizational goals; a feeling of general well-being and psychological comfort relative to attitudes about one's self and work environment. Coughlan used a self-reporting questionnaire to measure teacher morale.

In art education, we can study the walls and allow them to speak by observing: Is there a display of two-dimensional and three-dimensional artwork? If not, the teacher may have lack of skills or lack of supplies. Is artwork created all on copy paper? The copy paper indicator is a big clue to teacher support.



Figure 1:4 *Copy paper art*: Teacher used the only available materials- copy paper and pencil for student project.

The best art is always executed on the best white drawing paper. If a majority of student artwork is executed on copy paper, that is a huge indicator that the teacher does not have the materials or the support they need. Is everything on display in pencil? Again, the teacher probably lacks supplies, morale, and is in need of materials that would allow the exploration of color theory and color mixing in class. Is the majority of the student artwork executed from recycled materials? Beyond the act and value in recycling, this could also be an indicator that the teacher is trying to keep the program afloat and has had to resort to using whatever he/she can find.

Are there art displays in various areas of the school? This indicates that the teacher has very high standards and is seeking to incorporate art education into the environment. Are there any displays at all beyond the display of student work on a bulletin board? Teacher morale is suspect and does not desire to exert any extra effort beyond what is required. If there are not any art displays, but there is an art teacher in the building, the teacher morale is probably very low, and the teacher may feel intimidated. Displays just in their corner of the world by the art room? Teacher probably feels isolated and expressing existence. If the morale of the art teacher is high, art will be in more than one standard place in the school other than the bulletin board and beyond the classroom. The walls do talk and this is an alternative for social inquiry and more research on “talking walls” is recommended to substantiate this observation.

### **Adding to the Statistics: Another Urban Art Teacher Resigns**

Most of the art teachers participating in this research recognized that they did not receive adequate training for their situations and expressed disappointment with their preparation. *“My program did nothing to help me.... “I had to get training on my own once I graduated... “It didn’t prepare me...”* One of the limitations of this study was that it did not include the voices of urban art teachers who either quit teaching or left for better conditions; but there is enough evidence in this research from social inquiry to gain perspective of what their stories could be. The urban art teachers in the study were resilient and remain resilient in spite of a lack of preparation and in lieu of their circumstances with the exception of one of the participants.

Unfortunately, the urban art teacher with the least amount of experience in this study Participant 1 :( Mama Bear) quit being an art teacher before the conclusion of this research—she had three years of experience; she left her position midyear. I had already interviewed her and observed her and was in the midst of analyzing my data when I learned from her principal that



she had been transferred to another school. She had been transferred to an elementary school because the middle school in which she was initially assigned at the time of this study was on the list to be closed at the end of the year, so she was reassigned and became an ‘experienced’ new teacher in a new school. I’m not sure what her experience was in that new school but she did not last in her new environment for an entire semester. This is unfortunate because she was a good teacher.

There is knowledge to be gained from her contribution to this research. This research was originally supposed to include observations of all participants in their school environments but her principal was one of the few principals that graciously welcomed research into the school’s art program. Two other principals of participants in this study directly told their art teachers that they not want their art program studied; while others ignored all my requests. I began to realize that this was also data. I observed ‘Mama Bear’ however, and I came away impressed with her ability to engage her students, especially middle school students who are often the most complex students to teach because of their age level. Her walls were decorated in such a way that even if a student was daydreaming, they would still learn something because of all the posters, ideas, artwork, and standard learning objectives posted around her class.

I stayed in her class for 75 minutes and observed she had a good rapport with her students and she truly cared about them. She was able to get students quickly back on task if the students started becoming distracted. Her students asked questions and, though they had acknowledged that I was there, they soon forgot about my presence. They were making books and assisting each other. I did not feel like I was an intruder. I was there long enough to observe the class transition, and it what I experienced with the first class was consistent with the second class. The students were especially friendly and even came up to where I was sitting to show me

what they were doing and ask my opinion of their work. Her principal greeted me and gave glowing reviews about her teaching.

Just before entering her class, there were some displays of two- dimensional student artwork and colorful art murals in different areas of the building. I observed that she had sufficient basic supplies (crayons, markers, paint, various size drawing paper, pastels, water colors, erasers, colored paper, scissors, individual Elmer's glue bottles, stick glue, colored pencils, various sized paint brushes, masking tape, and a paper cutter, and her environment was adequate—she had three large size sinks, large size tables for students to work on, counter space, storage cabinets, and two storage rooms. Some of her students worked on tables while others liberally took to sitting on the floor. It did not matter where the student decided to sit, they were engaged in the process, and the teacher was able to put on music while the students were in the process of working. I could tell from the way the students who were working alone had their own social conversations going in their head while others socialized with classmates while they worked. Each of them stayed focused and engaged.

Mama Bear did what art teachers do: she introduced the lesson, reviewed, demonstrated, facilitated and monitored the students, stopping at each student's desk to critique and have individual discussions about what the student was doing. From my interview and observations of Mama Bear, she had what it takes to fit into an urban environment and work with disadvantaged children; she was knowledgeable, had passion for teaching, and cared for students who were disadvantaged. In her aspirations, she stated that she was contemplating a PhD in art education—so she is invested in the profession. What was it about this good teacher that made her quit her position in an urban environment once she was transferred to another school? She was openly reflective with me about being a White teacher in an urban environment. Before this

study, I had had informal conversation with her in a meeting, and she impressed me with her intelligence, poise, and passion for art education. Was her experience as a new ‘experienced’ teacher like mine? It saddens me that she has quit, and fuels the necessity for this research because this was a teacher dedicated to the profession; urban schools have lost another good teacher.

This research focuses on art teacher preparation while raising other future research questions like why are we losing good art teachers in urban environments and what can be done they stay in the profession in general, and her inclusion in the study compliments this work; however, research focused on the urban environment would benefit a broader population including at-risk youth and urban art teachers. The President’s Committee on Arts and Humanities (2011) also has stated an interest in the need for more research.

## **Discussion of Research Questions**

### ***Research Question 1: How were these art teachers prepared for urban environments?***

I examined all of the programs in which these teachers were prepared to see the values of teacher preparation programs. I researched the art teacher preparation program statement and their course offerings and analyzed the text and found little information to corroborate those teachers would be prepared through their programs to work in urban environments. Two groups of my participants had attended the same college. A teaching program for one of the participants has closed, therefore in total; there were four teacher preparation programs to analyze. I placed the wording from the teacher preparation program information bulletin into a word cloud generator that automatically highlights most important words; these are the results:





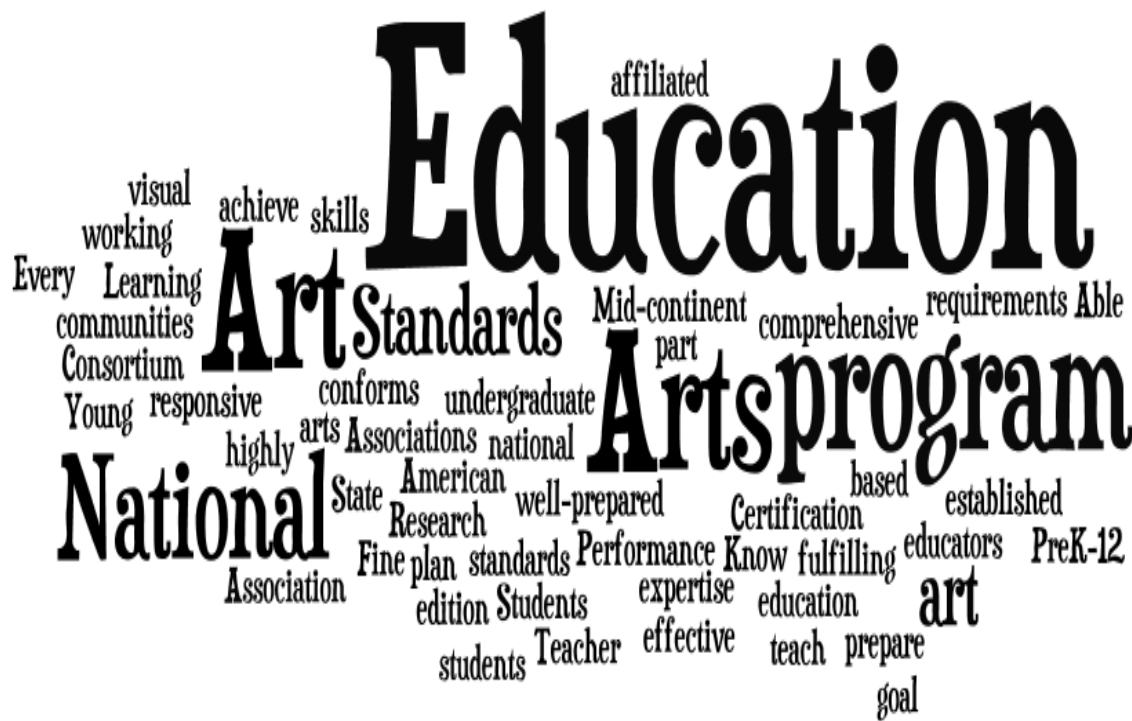


Figure 2. 3: Teacher Preparation Program C

Teacher Preparation Program C appears to be a more research and standards based program.

There is not an emphasis on studio or even a mention of studio. Unlike the other schools, this program probably incorporated all of studio into the word art and based their focus on satisfying local and national standards. It is the only word cloud that includes the word “preK-12” indicating that the public schools are an importance part of their program.



That lack of evidence constitutes their lack of preparation however, program B had the strongest focus on African American students. ‘Production,’ ‘studio,’ and portfolio are words that were generated in the word cloud as one of the most important words----which support the participants responses in interview questions 8 (How did college prepare you for teaching in urban schools?) and 9 (What was the experience of your teacher preparation educators?). Several of the art teachers discussed getting their own training. ‘Mr. Chimera’ volunteered at the Boys Club, ‘Ms. Lion’ and ‘Ms. Golden Retriever’ mentioned that they did their own research. ‘Mother Bird’ took the initiative to request two placements in her student teaching in an urban school and a suburban school so she would feel prepared. ‘Mama Bear’ read a book at the suggestion of her principal and she felt that book helped her tremendously.

Two of the participants went to the same university (Ms. Duck, and Ms. Golden Retriever,) yet both of them have differing accounts. They attended at various times, and it may be that the professor was the indicator of the difference in views. Ms. Duck says that her art education program was like a rattlesnake and taught you how to strike... while Ms. Golden Retriever said her program lacked interest. There was a four-year difference between the two of them so they matriculated at different times. Two other participants attended the same university, and both of them discussed the disappointment of student teaching on the ‘suburban’ side of town and being assigned to the ‘urban’ side of town; they both felt unprepared while one, Mother Bird, asked specifically for contrasting environments and, in addition, gained experience on her own by substitute teaching and volunteering in urban schools before she applied for a job. One other participant, Mr. Leopard, felt adequate in his preparation.



***Research Question #2: What are the behaviors and attitudes of these urban art teachers?***

This question was important to analyze necessary approaches for prospective teachers in future art education preparation programs. To get to their core behaviors and attitudes, I developed metaphorical and philosophical questions for the interview protocol designed to reveal the spirit and character of the art teacher. My interview question, “Why do you teach art today?” is a question that reveals the spirit of the teacher, particularly in an urban environment. If I had asked the question, “Why do you teach art?” the meaning would have been different. The addition of the word ‘today’ brings the answer into the context of present urban environment. Currently, these teachers receive zero support from Title I, and most of these teachers receive zero support from their local schools for resources or professional development, yet these teachers sacrifice personal funds to provide materials for their students to have creative art experiences-- that kind of support should have been provided by the local school. The behavior of these teachers is resourceful; the attitudes of these teachers are selfless. Many of these teachers have also encountered intimidation by their administrators and have shown themselves to be resilient. I believe that these teachers operate in knowing the outcome and power of creativity and creative intelligence knowing what the result could be for their students---and these urban art teachers continue to operate even when their administrators and co-workers don’t share their attitude of forward thinking. In addition, in spite of the lack of adequate preparation that most of these urban art teachers received, they independently sought knowledge and experiences on their own that would make them a better teacher in the urban art classroom. Even without the opportunity to attend conferences and refresh their skills through professional

development, these teachers continue to support their classrooms and fund their own experiences without support from their schools or Title I. When I approached this study, I did not seek teachers who were just successful or had a vast experience. These teachers ranged in experience from three years to twenty-eight years and each of these urban art teachers have displayed passion, care, resourcefulness, resilience, and selflessness; those are the behaviors of these urban art teachers.

***Research Question #3: Does art teacher preparation match the behaviors and attitudes of these urban art teachers?***

The animal metaphor questions reveal truths about each teacher's personality and character during teacher preparation and also when actually teaching in an urban environment. For instance, Participant 6--'Mr. Chimera's' pre-service animal personality was a mouse, but he describes his present teaching personality in an urban environment as a Chimera, a mythical animal with parts taken from various animals (Theoi.com, n.d). His 'chimera' is 'like a sphinx,' a combination of a human king head and a lion body (Smithsonianmag, 2010). This urban art teachers' teaching personality is quite the opposite of his 'mouse' pre-service teaching personality. The addition of the animal metaphor questions: *What animal is your classroom?* and *what animal was your teacher preparation?* offered an opportunity to gain insight as to whether the preparation matched the teaching assignment. He compared his teaching preparation program to a 'shrew' and he also described his class as a 'chimera' but he did not give a definitive combination of animal to the class 'chimera' as he did to his own teaching personality. His 'chimera' (like a sphinx) is a domineering character that oversees and is godlike. His preparation does not match or relate to his present class or his present teaching personality; however, his pre-service teaching personality 'mouse' was consistent with the animal personality he gave his

teaching program (shrew). There are several other participants whose class and present teaching personality do not match their preparation program or their pre-service teaching program. However, two respondents' personalities (Participant 3 'Ms. Duck' and Participant 4 'Mr. Leopard) classroom personalities are consistent with their present teaching personalities and their classrooms. Their ideas about the color of teaching (Table 6) are also consistent. I also asked the participants about the hardest and easiest thing about teaching in their context. Again, their responses revealed attitude and behaviors that are important for future art teachers, especially those in urban environments. The responses to those questions revealed the issue of lack of support from Title I and school administrators; something they were not prepared for during teacher preparation, but have shown resilience with.

As an art teacher, I sincerely enjoy and like my students no matter how troubled they are. When I asked these urban art teachers what was the easiest part of their jobs, they all said *the children*. Though urban children can be tough and difficult, it was a revelation to hear these urban art teachers say the children were the "easiest" part. Could it be from the expectation of knowing or having an idea of what the students would be like beforehand? Could it be that they were able to internally prepare themselves? Again, more than half of these urban art teachers discussed having to seek their own knowledge and experience therefore indicating that they had a notion of what to expect and prepared themselves for the challenge. Ms. Duck in her response to Question 13 made a key statement when she said "You don't have to go into an urban environment—you choose to....we have to learn to ignite the passion and learn how to keep the passion in." The passion of these urban art teachers were ignited before they went into the classroom. That is why they took the extra steps to learn more about the urban environment before they started teaching.

## **Conclusion**

The findings show that agencies designed to assist these urban art teachers, pushed them into the margins and it was found that these participants, solely created a phenomenon of resilience and dedication while working with little to zero support—even through intimidation-- and independently sought ways to provide the necessary instructional materials and supplies for their students-- often using personal resources and surrogate materials to deliver art instruction to their at-risk students.

This study relied upon Critical Theory and used art-based research to provide data for this study. All administrators did not agree to their art programs being studied, therefore, classroom observations were eliminated and this research relied primarily upon the narratives of the participants and the researchers autoethnography..

The U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, and the U.S. Director of School Achievement, Monique Chism, wrote letters to school administrators and state Title I facilitators requesting their support for art teachers in disadvantaged populations all over the country and these letters validate a conflict of attitudes and support for art education in at-risk environments—ironically-- while the data from a longitudinal study by the National Endowment of the Arts (2012) of more than (n=15,000) at-risk students-- validate the benefits of high quality art experiences, as well as the consequences of low art experiences of at-risk students. The urban art teacher is positioned in the center of this struggle which alters their behaviors and their attitude as this study suggests and unfortunately, the students—also caught in the midst of this

struggle -- don't receive the opportunities available to them to reap the full benefits of high-quality art experiences.

Schools are responsible for supporting their teachers and providing them with resources. The bloodline of a visual arts class is the materials—there is no way around that. For the urban art teachers involved in this research, it was found that their school districts provided some monetary resources to support their class instruction and entrusted the distribution of those resources into the art education classroom to the school administrators---yet 75% (6 out of 8) of these teachers received zero resources for their classroom, and 100% of those teachers received zero resources from Title I, an agency that was founded to financially support the academic success of disadvantaged students (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). In spite of letters sent from the federal government and substantial research that supports the evidence that high-quality art experiences for at-risk students increase academic success and social responsibility, there is little support for these urban art teachers. This is quite a dilemma and contributes to low morale with good art teachers leaving urban schools for better conditions. Where is the support for these urban art teachers and children supposed to come from? It is not the responsibility of the teacher to fund the resources needed for a public school classroom supported by tax dollars, yet many of these teachers have gone beyond the call of duty to help their students when others have turned their backs on them. There is clearly an issue here that needs to be researched, discussed, and resolved because in the end the children suffer the most when their teachers get frustrated and leave the profession. The President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities (PCAH) recommends using state and federal policies to reinforce art education in public schools, and they also advocate for federal and state educational leaders to provide guidance in the schools to employ the arts to improve low performing schools (President's Committee on the Arts and

Humanities, 2011). The PCAH also wants to widen the focus of research and evidence about art education regarding urban environments; this research validates and supports their recommendations.

Included in the interview protocol was the question of NAEA membership. That question was included to analyze another tier of support for the urban art teacher. If they felt that art teacher preparation was inadequate, they should be able to find support and professional development at a conference or in professional journals. The NAEA mission reads “The National Art Education Association (NAEA) advances visual arts education to fulfill human potential and promote global understanding.” They also state:

Founded in 1947, The National Art Education Association is the leading professional membership organization exclusively for visual arts educators. Members include elementary, middle and high school visual arts educators, college and university professors, researchers and scholars, teaching artists, administrators and supervisors, and art museum educators, as well as more than 45,000 students who are members of the National Art Honor Society or are university students preparing to be art educators. (NAEA, n.d.)

Only 25% of these urban art teachers were members and the other 75% didn’t feel that the professional organization provides support for what they do in urban environments with at-risk students. The 2010 NAEA National Conference theme was *Art Education and Social Justice*. They stated “Our nation is truly questioning itself in order to discover and redefine who we are as a nation, what we believe in, and what needs to change (“Art Education and Social Justice.” n.d., para 3). If NAEA wants to change the perception of their support, they could focus a conference on teaching in urban settings.

In conclusion, statistics show that art teachers leave urban schools for better environments (Aud et.al, 2011), and substantial research show that high quality art experiences for at-risk students lead to higher academic and social success (National Endowment for the Arts, 2012). This study of urban art teachers has revealed obstructions and barriers to the retention of urban art teachers and student success; in terms of teacher preparation, local school support, and government support through Title I. If these factors improve, it is believed that conditions and academic and social achievement for at-risk students in disadvantaged environments will get better. To achieve the successes that are inherently possible for at-risk populations, art teacher preparation must seek to empower teachers with knowledge and give them more practical and real life experiences in urban environments. This study reveals a shortage of professors in the participants' art education programs who had experience in the k-12 classroom.

A teaching artist or resident artist does not have the suitable experience for preparing art teachers for public education. They may have the skills as an artist, but they don't have the extensive knowledge and the experience of maneuvering in political education systems or working in urban environments, and therefore lack the ability to transfer that experience to their students with fidelity. I believe if the experiences of art education professors were more vast and resilient, the teachers they prepare will reference their example, and art programs will be stronger in disadvantaged schools. One of the outstanding attitudes and behaviors of the art teachers in this study is that even though many of them lacked the adequate preparation they needed, they sought it for themselves, and that made them a more resilient urban educator.

The best art education programs will likely have instructors with significant experience in public school environments who can help future teachers to maneuver successfully through the politics

and develop the character and behaviors needed for public school education, especially in urban environments.

Preparation programs will need to develop curriculums that provide contrasting experiences in various environments and challenge students to reflect seriously on those experiences. Everyone is not suited to teach art in urban environments, yet it is still important for all students to have those contrasting experiences. Future art teachers need to be prepared to teach all types of children from all environments.

It is also necessary to empower all art teachers with the political knowledge and savvy of knowing how art programs are funded, federally and locally, state policy for class size, how to work with little or nothing, how to work with recycled materials, how to write grants, how to deal with administrators that don't support or value art programs, and the value of art displays in the school building. It is also important for art education programs to challenge the mindsets and values of future teachers and give them the opportunity to reflect on how their personal beliefs and past experiences affect public school experiences. It is also recommended that the NAEA and like programs develop workshops and journal articles that support those issues that would assist urban art teachers and advocate for a policy that would impose Title I to directly support art education in disadvantaged schools. It is also recommended that school districts directly monitor the resources released to principals to support urban art teachers because this study has shown that teachers are not receiving the allocated support and that lack of support is a hindrance to teacher morale and student academic and social success and thus drives the art teacher out of the urban environment seeking better conditions.



## **Epilogue**

This study is candid and offers an authentic look into the realities of art education in disadvantaged populations, and the issues these art teachers face. The picture revealed in this study, does not corroborate with the achievements that the NEA (2012) has found that are available for at-risk children through high-art experiences. These teachers are without adequate preparation, without adequate professional development, without adequate support from their local school administrators, and without support from Title I, the agency designed to help at risk students achieve. The heart of education is the teacher; and if the teachers of at-risk students are not supported-- the future of the at-risk student is bleak. Physicist and genius Albert Einstein is noted for his service to theoretical physics, and a mastermind who admits "I am enough of an artist to draw freely upon my imagination. Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination circles the world" ('Albert Einstein Quotes', n.d.). The at-risk student deserves the opportunity to use his/her imagination to circle the world. Does he not? The art teacher takes the student's imagination on their first rides-- and shows the student how to use their imagination to circle the world and do countless things that are innovative and beneficial to society. Use of the imagination and high quality art experiences also has positive social outcomes, strong academic benefits, and students are more civically engaged as outlined in the NEA (2012) report. Yet under the conditions revealed in this study, how can the Albert Einsteins' in urban schools and disadvantaged populations circle the world or reap the benefits of high quality art experiences if their art teachers don't have the preparation or support that they need?

This research provides authentic qualitative data, designed to give the reader a sense of the actual experience of urban art teachers and their students. I wanted to empower educational leaders, art advocates, politicians and those who care, with genuine data, in hopes that those with the power to fix, change, remedy, and enhance art education in urban environments and disadvantaged populations will take the rightful steps to do so.

*...The sun shines  
on an art disciple  
oppressed  
but not stifled  
in the land of survival  
forging ahead  
with art delivery  
because they have the eyes  
that can see  
the possibilities  
in a child's  
Creativity.  
--Lisa Whittington*

## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A: Narrative Interview Protocol for Urban Art Teachers**

1. Describe your childhood school environment.
2. Describe two of your most memorable experiences with art, and art education as a child in your k-12 years.
3. What made you want to become an art teacher?
4. What did you imagine teaching art would be like? What did you imagine your students would be like? What was the community like?
5. How is your present experience compared to what you imagined? Please explain.
6. Why do you teach art today?
7. What role does art itself play in your life now? Do you (still) practice art? Why or why not? What do you do away from school with personal time?
8. What is/are your role(s) as an art teacher in your present environment?
9. What are the hardest things about teaching art at your present assignment? The easiest? What the best experience you've had here? The worst?
10. Walk me through a typical day in your profession at your place of work (from the moment you arrive to when you leave school. What do you do during your planning period?
11. How many classes do you teach a day? Per week? Students served? How many schools do you serve? Does your schedule change during the course of the school year?

- 12.** How is instruction in your classroom funded? Have you ever spent personal money to fund instruction? Do you apply for grants or receive outside sources?
- 13.** How much funding were you allotted for supplies in the past 3 – 5 years?
- a.** Describe how your requests for materials to serve the students are handled. Do you regularly have basic art supplies to teach your classes on the first day of school? How long does a request for materials take to get into your classroom? Do you have other sources for supplies? Do you design lessons/syllabi around what you have or around something else? Please describe/explain.
  - b.** Do the supplies/materials you have in your classroom match the requests from the school/district/state as it pertains to responsibilities, standards, requests, mandates etc? Please describe. How do you handle any lack of materials/supplies when requests, mandates, standards, etc. are before you?
- 14.** How do you receive professional development in art education? What happens if you make a request for resources to attend art education conferences?
- 15.** Are you a member of NAEA (National Art Education Association)? Do you participate in local and national art education conferences? Why or why not?
- 16.** How did your college experiences prepare you to become an art teacher?
- a.** What were your classes like? What kind of assignments did you have?
  - b.** What do you remember about your art education professors? What kind of teaching experience did your art education professors have?
  - c.** How did your teacher preparation program prepare you for working in urban schools? With disadvantaged populations?

- d. How did your teacher preparation program prepare you for working with disadvantaged students? Disadvantaged environments?
- e. In what ways does your preparation match your current teaching experiences? In what ways does it not?

17. Metaphors of teaching art:

- a. If your classroom were an animal(s), what animal(s) would it be? Give me three characteristics of each of those animals.
- b. If your pre-service training were an animal(s), what animal(s) would it be? Give me three characteristics of that animal(s).
- c. What animal(s) were you most like as a pre-service teacher? Give me three characteristics of that animal(s).
- d. What animal(s) are you most like now as a teacher? Give me three characteristics of that animal(s).
- e. Using the color-chart below identify: What color(s) is your teaching? What color(s) was your teaching today? Why? What color(s) should teaching art be? Give me 5 characteristics of each color you choose.



- 18. If you could design a class in art teacher preparation what would it look like?
- 19. What are your future plans as an art educator?
- 20. Is there anything at all that you would like to say that you feel should be acknowledged or addressed in this study?

## **Appendix B: Consent form for art teacher participants**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

You are being contacted because your participation would be valuable to a study about art teachers who teach in urban environments. The intention of the study is to explore the world of art teachers who work with impoverished students in urban and inner city environments. The role, the tasks, the behaviors, and the challenges facing the urban art teacher will be compared with the preparation received. This study is part of my dissertation research project.

The goal of this investigation is to determine if art teacher preparation is adequate for teachers who work in disadvantaged environments. This research will benefit art education by providing an in depth, authentic look at the world of the urban art teacher and will inform researchers, teacher preparation programs, and advocates for art education. This study is being supervised under the auspices of the University of Georgia. Dr. Carole Henry is chairperson for the committee on this research and she can be reached at 706-542-1631. The research will include a 1-hour observation of you in the classroom, a 75-minute narrative interview, and an examination of the curriculum from where you received your teacher preparation. The observation and the interview may be conducted at different times.

Questions for the narrative interview will range from your experiences as a child with art, to your training; your present working conditions, and your future plans as an art educator. Metaphors for your classroom experiences as a teacher and as a student teacher will also be collected. The last question will be left open for your input to state anything you feel may need to be addressed in this study as it pertains to being an art teacher in an urban environment.

During the classroom observation, I will observe your working conditions, your schedule, and ask about your classroom materials budget for the past 3 years, your materials inventory, your class load, and your duties and responsibilities unique to your school. Your participation and location will be kept confidential within the study, however, your principal must be informed that research is being conducted in their school's art education program.

To participate in this study, you must be a willing participant, certified in art education, and employed in urban school with at least a 90% Title I population. Interviews and observations will be conducted between February and April 2013. The data collected from you will be condensed into a narrative format and submitted to you for your review for accuracy. You are free to withdraw your participation at any time.

It is my hope that with our combined efforts, the world of the urban art teacher will unfold, the work that you do will be more understood, and preparation for art teachers will improve. If you have any questions, I am available at [lisawhit@uga.edu](mailto:lisawhit@uga.edu), or by phone \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely

Lisa Whittington

Doctoral Student, University of Georgia/Department of Art Education

*Consent to participate:*

I have read the above statement and agree to participate in the study described.

PRINTED NAME\_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE\_\_\_\_\_

DATE\_\_\_\_\_

Please sign both copies, keep one copy and return one to the researcher.

For questions or problems about your rights please call or write:

Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies

Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411

Telephone (706) 542-3199

E-Mail Address [IRB@uga.edu](mailto:IRB@uga.edu)

### **Appendix C: Follow-up recruitment phone call/email to urban art teachers.**

Hi, my name is Lisa Whittington; I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia. I am conducting a study for my dissertation on the preparation of art teachers for urban environments. Because you teach art in an urban school with a high population of disadvantaged students, your participation in this study would be very valuable. Your participation will help educators across the nation understand the role and the world of the urban art teacher who works in disadvantaged communities. Your contribution could help improve the preparation of art teachers, especially for those that will be assigned to urban schools and your participation will also help art advocates understand where more advocacy is necessary.

I sent you an email on \_\_\_\_\_ from the address [lisawhit@uga.edu](mailto:lisawhit@uga.edu). The subject line read "A request for your participation on a study of art teachers." For your convenience, today, \_\_\_\_\_2013, I have re-sent the initial email I sent you. So you will know, this research is being supervised by the University of Georgia. I would truly appreciate it if you participate in this study. If you have any questions, I can be contacted at the above email or by phone \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you.



#### **Appendix D: Follow up email with Art Teachers: Review of narratives**

Based on the data provided by you, the following narrative(s) have been developed from the information you have given. Please review for accuracy and return to [lisawhit@uga.edu](mailto:lisawhit@uga.edu) with any comments for revision you feel are necessary to accurately tell your story. The narrative is attached.

## Appendix E: Letter from Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to School and Education Community Leaders



THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION  
WASHINGTON, DC 20202

August 2009

Dear School and Education Community Leaders:

At this time when you are making critical and far-reaching budget and program decisions for the upcoming school year, I write to bring to your attention the importance of the arts as a core academic subject and part of a complete education for all students. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) defines the arts as a core subject, and the arts play a significant role in children's development and learning process.

In June, we received the 2008 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in the Arts results for music and visual arts. I was reminded of the important role that arts education plays in providing American students with a well-rounded education. The arts can help students become tenacious, team-oriented problem solvers who are confident and able to think creatively. These qualities can be especially important in improving learning among students from economically disadvantaged circumstances. However, recent NAEP results found that only 57 percent of 8<sup>th</sup> graders attended schools where music instruction was offered at least three or four times a week, and only 47 percent attended schools where visual arts were offered that often.

Under ESEA, states and local school districts have the flexibility to support the arts. Title I, Part A of ESEA funds arts education to improve the achievement of disadvantaged students. Funds under Title II of ESEA can be used for professional development of arts teachers as well as for strategic partnerships with cultural, arts, and other nonprofit organizations. In addition, the Department's Arts in Education program supports grants for model program development and dissemination and for professional development for arts educators. Moreover, local school districts can use funds under the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act for the arts along with other district expenses.

Because of the importance of the arts in a well-rounded curriculum, the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) plans to undertake a survey to assess the condition of arts education in grades K-12. This fall, elementary and secondary principals will be asked about their schools' offerings in music, dance, theater, and visual arts. Next spring, NCES will survey elementary classroom teachers as well as music and visual arts specialists at the elementary and secondary levels about their programs and resources. In early 2011, the Department expects to begin reporting findings from this comprehensive profile, the first since the 1999-2000 school year. This data will help practitioners and policymakers make more informed decisions about arts education.

*The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.*

Page 2

We encourage you to visit the Department's Web site for arts education at <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oii/programs.html> to learn more about our grant programs and find resources to meet the challenges ahead. Together, we can and should do better for America's students.

Sincerely,

/s/

Arne Duncan

## Appendix: F: Letter to Title I State Coordinators from Director of Student Achievement and School Accountability Programs, Dr. Monique Chism



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

JUN 6 2013

Dear Title I State Coordinators:

Student Achievement and School Accountability Programs (SASA), within the U.S. Department of Education, have recently received inquiries about the role of arts education within the Title I, Part A (Title I) program. In response to those inquiries, I would like to take this opportunity to address how the arts can be used to improve the educational achievement of children served under Title I. As a general observation, I note that the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA), defines the arts as a core academic subject, and, as such, the arts play a significant role in the development of children and their learning process.

As local educational agencies (LEAs) in your State work with you and your team to plan their Title I programs for the 2013–2014 school year, I believe that this is an appropriate time to note that activities that support the arts, in conjunction with other activities, can form an important part of an LEA's Title I program. In maintaining consistency with Title I requirements, an LEA may use Title I funds to support arts education as a strategy to assist Title I students with meeting the State's academic achievement standards. Please keep in mind that whether Title I funds may be used for a particular activity depends on how that activity fits within the context of Title I. In particular, the activity must help facilitate Title I's overall purpose of improving the achievement of students who are failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet the academic content and achievement standards developed by the State.

In addition to advancing the overall purpose of Title I, using funds for arts education also must be consistent with other applicable requirements. Title I funds in a schoolwide program school must address the specific educational needs of students, particularly the lowest-achieving students in the school identified by the needs assessment and articulated in the comprehensive plan. Title I funds in a targeted-assistance school must address supplemental educational needs of students who are failing, or most at risk of failing, in order to meet the State's academic achievement standards. The use of Title I funds must also be reasonable and necessary for the proper and efficient performance under the Title I program (Office of Management and Budget Circular A-87, Attachment A, C.1.a, codified at 2 C.F.R. Part 225).

To determine the eligibility of Title I funds being used in support of arts education, an LEA must analyze such use in the context of its Title I program and the needs of its students. Depending on those needs, an LEA may use Title I funds to support activities related to the arts, provided those activities are part of an instructional strategy that is designed to improve the academic achievement of at-risk students so they can meet the State's academic standards. As the use of Title I funds is tied to each school's needs, it would be expected that those funds would generally support different activities from school to school.

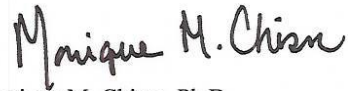
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*The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.*

Page 2 – Title I State Coordinators

Thank you for your efforts to provide a high-quality education to students, particularly the low-achieving students served by Title I. I hope that as you continue this excellent work in the 2013–2014 school year and beyond, LEAs and schools will successfully identify those activities, including activities that support arts education, that are tailored to improving the academic achievement of low-achieving students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Monique M. Chism". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "M" and "C".

Monique M. Chism, Ph.D.  
Director  
Student Achievement and  
School Accountability Programs

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