ART EDUCATION POLICY: INTERPRETATION AND THE NEGOTIATION OF PRAXIS

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This collective case study explores the confluence of educational policy and professional praxis by examining the ways art teachers in one public school district make decisions about creating and implementing curricula. Through various interpretations of one district's formal and informal expectations of art teachers, some of the complexities of standards, instruction, and assessment policies in public schools are described. The research shares how art teachers are influenced by local policy expectations by examining how five K-12 art teacher participants negotiate their ideological beliefs and practical knowledge within the professional context of their local setting, and presents an art teacher decision-making framework to conceptualize the influences for praxis and to organize analysis. Case study data include in-depth interview sessions, teaching observations, and district policy artifacts. Themes emerge in the findings through coding processes and constructivist grounded theory analysis methods. The research describes how participants interpret and negotiate expectations, finding curricular freedom and participation in public exhibition as central policy factors. Contributing the perspectives of art teachers to the literature of policy implementation and fine arts education, the study finds that balancing autonomy and mandates are primary sites for negotiating praxis and that informal expectations for student exhibition contribute to a culture of competition and teacher performance evaluations. The study presents implications for policy makers, administrators, and art educators while sharing possibilities for future research about policy expectations.

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CHAPTER 1

POLICY AND ART EDUCATION

In my tenure as a public school art educator, I often perceived mixed signals about the expectations of my profession. There were confusing gaps between what the district emphasized as important, what I thought administrators wanted to hear, what parents and student believed should occur, and what I envisioned as my job. I struggled with presumptions of others' expectations of my curriculum compared to what I felt was important to address. I sought conversations with my peers and learned about their tensions regarding expectations, policy, and practice. My experience of interpreting policies and negotiating praxis was not isolated.

Over the last thirty years, educational policy has increasingly emphasized specific and measurable learning standards for students. In response to this, art policy efforts frequently "try simply to keep the arts alive in schools" (Stankiewicz, 1997, p. 8) by mirroring the reform of other disciplines. Since the first generation of national art standards—developed in 1994—states have individually designed their own unique standards. These state standards policies, in turn, serve as predictors of local district policy (Hatfield, 1999). State and local policies often reflect conceptual frameworks based on the Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) model (Sabol, 2013). DBAE is a curricular approach in which art production, art history, aesthetics, and criticism constitute the fours disciplines of art that ought to be addressed to provide a comprehensive arts education.

Student learning standards are intended to establish a set of expectations for instruction and learning, which in turn imply a measurable outcome. I have seen district

policies expecting the utilization of standards as the pinnacle of student assessment. This can be troublesome because some of the teachers I met in those districts believed standards were not an adequate basis for measuring student success. Furthermore, although most art teachers believe assessments are important (Dorn, Madeja, & Sabol, 2004), the qualitative nature of the arts makes assessment particularly difficult. Some teachers believe there is learning that occurs in art that cannot be objectively assessed or measured (Sabol, 2004). The contextual difficulties of assessing the richness of artwork reflect the complex qualities and evocative experiences that make art interesting and stimulating (Beattie, 2006; Soep, 2004). Assessment must go beyond standards-based outcomes if it is to be meaningful (Sabol, 2006a), yet most art teachers lack the time needed to develop alternative instruments. Nonetheless, art teachers are held accountable for meeting standards.

This study examines teachers' practice-based decision-making processes with regard to interactions with school district policies. The goal of the research is to understand, and subsequently represent, how local public school art teachers interpret and negotiate expectations about their classroom practice. In this chapter, I describe my experiences as an art educator as they relate to the study, state my research questions and the problems they include, clarify terms, and identify the significance and limitations of my study.

Background to Study

As an art educator who received teacher training and worked in public schools during the audit culture shift of educational policy (Taubman, 2009), I was particularly

interested in how other teachers interpreted expectations. Given my personal connections to and curiosity about the study content, it is important to recognize and state how my experiences inform the research (Annells, 1996; Charmaz, 2014; Gillham, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 2002; Sartre & Barnes, 1966). The following section introduces my background to the study.

I was anxious about developing curricula as a novice teacher, not entirely sure *what* I was supposed to be teaching. Without formal policies for district or state standards-based student learning outcomes for visual arts, I designed my lessons around the National Art Education Association's (NAEA) 1994 voluntary standards. The NAEA standards, along with a state visual and performing arts framework document, helped me feel like I included the correct content in my course curricula. I tried to balance my ideology about art education with best practices for the academic discipline to create a practical implementation of school subject matter programming. Still, it was hard for me to know if I was doing a good job. I sought feedback from other teachers in the district. In discussions with them, I learned about the unwritten expectations for student outcomes and pressures resulting from standardized test scores. Because art was not considered a core subject—like math, language arts, and science—I found that the outcomes of my curricula did not seem to matter to others because students would not be tested on the content.

I learned the language of standardization and conformity for the American audit culture. Formal policy expectations underscored generalizable data collection, reporting, and comparisons. My administrators wanted documentation of measurable student learning outcomes with tabulations, charts, and graphs to compare a group of

students' achievements throughout a course. Therefore, I created rubrics for assessing student work correlated to the learning standards. Influenced by my previous experiences as an art student, I designed curricula that stressed media techniques and formal qualities of art. Instruments designed to assess the technical processes of creating artworks trumped strategies that emphasized the ambiguous paths of idea generation and concept execution.

As a K-12 public school art educator, I was required to submit monthly lesson plans specifying student-learning standards that I created to address content in each course taught, instructional methods, and assessment strategies. With the voluntary national standards and state suggested visual arts frameworks as my guide, I found that the local district allowed many freedoms in curricular development and the ways my lessons obliged standards-based assessments. It was difficult for me to make claims about content every student mastered, and I was aware of the differences in individual growth and the strengths present in each student's work.

After acculturating to district expectations, I felt I could produce curricula that looked good on paper and were praised by peers and administrators for the "creative" work my students produced. The lesson plans—designed to assess outcomes—and my efforts to satisfy interpretations of national standards helped me measure and calculate students' skills in media. Although influenced by my own experiences as a student, these curricula seemed an unnatural approach for art instruction. They were primarily concerned with *how* to make art instead of *why* to make art.

No state agency tested my students. No one measured or compared their art knowledge. Their performance in my class was not externally scrutinized. As long as I

produced monthly lesson plans for school administrators that appeared to comply with standards-based performance benchmarks, I was free to shift the scope of my class to address issues that were more student-driven than about technical production. Compliance with expectations for lesson planning quickly became a façade for the realities of the ebb and flow of everyday life. This was because I thought adjusting instructional activities to address the immediate needs and interests of my student better fit my curricula than the formulaic lesson plans developed for my principal.

Feeling little accountability to the educational system, through my *implicit curriculum* (Eisner, 1979)—the less obvious, unrecognized, or hidden aims of my teaching—I became attuned to particular student interests and life outside of the classroom. I realized the classroom became a space for living in-between and around standards and policies (Aoki, 1986/2005). I performed teacher tasks that validated my practice for administrators and looked measured in tidy rubrics, while the messiness of a living classroom remained in the sub-text of my implicit curriculum. Attempting to calculate standards-based outcomes, I encountered trouble implementing assessments in my classroom that seemed relevant to the students' lives and ideas while also making claims about content that *every* student mastered. As the teacher, I was attuned to the differences in individual growth and the strengths present in each student's work, but I had trouble articulating comparisons and measurements about the students as a group.

Teaching in a university setting, I observe preservice art educators also struggling to address standards in their lesson planning and assessments. Now operating in a state with specific standards-based learning outcomes for students, I am cognizant of the variety of expectations placed on teachers to address policies. These

experiences suggest there is a need to understand better the ways educators interpret and interact with district policy and the ways assessment microsystems influence their pedagogy.

Background of the Problem

The standards-based audit culture *du jour* of American schools is apparent in local, state, and federal education policies and public debates. More ambiguous to me as the researcher, are the ways standards-based policies impact professional expectations for art educators. Proliferating measurements and comparisons of students' performance, from individual to international, feed a "circular reasoning theory of school reform" (Chapman, 2012, p. 1) where assessment outcomes justify their means. In this section, I introduce the background to the problem for understanding standards-based educational policies and assessments in K-12 art education.

Starting in 1964 with the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a federal testing agency originally funded by the Carnegie Corporation to assess and compare students' performance throughout the nation, student academic performance has increasingly become a subject of major conversation for politicians, lobbyists, businesses, administrators, and parents in the U.S. The National Commission on Excellence in Education's (NCEE) report, *A Nation at Risk* (1983) exacerbated public attention to educational performance. This report analyzed and compared student performance in NAEP tests to that of other students on a global scale. The report concluded that "declines in educational performance are in large part the result of disturbing inadequacies in the way the educational process itself is often conducted"

(NCEE, 1983, p. 18). The report's authors highlighted reform in the areas of content, expectations, time, and teaching (NCEE, 1983). These published findings alarmed the cold-war era public concerned with sustaining future economic prosperity and military might.

Since the alarm bell rung with *A Nation at Risk* (NCEE, 1983), the public and politicians have voiced concern about American student test performance and evaluation systems. Voluntary biennial tests in mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) conducted by the NAEP attempt to function as a common yardstick in describing how students across the nation perform. Furthermore, the NAEP tests are coordinated with three international assessments: the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). The PISA ranks 64 nations based on student test performance. Expounding the data analysis, the PISA reports allow reformists, journalists, and education stakeholders to compare data globally, contributing to public education's prominence as a hot button political topic. The comparisons feed anxiety about American exceptionalism and drive fervor for educational reform. In turn, recent policy reforms in public education have piqued the critical attention of scholars (Chapman, 2007; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006; Corcoran, 2010; Cuban, 1990; 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2004; McGuinn, 2012; Smith, 2005) who argue that testing is just one system of accountability and not the only means to an end (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

In the time since the NAEP began, educational policies focused on measurable standards-based assessments have dominated the American educational system

(Cuban, 1990). Drafted under President George H. W. Bush and signed by President Bill Clinton in 1994, the Goals 2000: Educate America Act marked the first national education reform emphasizing standards-based policies and assessments. The guidelines embraced the codification of measurable student learning objectives. Throughout the 1990's, content area national organizations such as the National Art Educators Association and National Council of Teachers of Mathematics developed standards. States and local school districts also developed standards in order to be in compliance with the Goals 2000 Act.

President George W. Bush reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). In its next iteration as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 (2002), the law required states to evaluate students yearly—with tests aligned to state standards—and report results publically by school. Student and school performance in the evaluations were made public like never before. As part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, President Barack Obama's administration developed the $4 billion Race to the Top Fund (RTT). Building on the foundations of standards-based policies laid down by Goals 2000 and the accountability measures established by NCLB, RTT was a three-phase educational funding program that incentivized competition between states through an application process. States applications received tabulated scores based on evidence of efforts to improve low-performing schools, compliance with adopting and adapting the standards-based learning objective policy initiatives emerging as the Common Core State Standards, and developing common assessments for student performance, among other criteria.

In my opinion, the RTT program encouraged states and districts to create and

implement more standards-based student learning outcomes, with higher-stakes assessments of student performance and increased pressures on educators and schools. In 2015, President Barack Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act which claims to shift policy-making powers back to state leaders and encourages "fewer, better assessments" (Presidential Executive Report, December 2015).

From grade point averages and class ranks to college entrance exams and national standardized tests, students are continually evaluated, compared, and categorized. Contemporary federal education policies increasingly emphasize the need for specific and measurable learning standards for students who should be learning more information at a faster rate and performing well in assessments. These policies ask schools to define what they want students to know, following the rhetoric that it can then be assessed, compressed into numbers and charts, and then compared cleanly regardless of local context. Furthermore, the results of the evaluations should be public, so students, schools, and states may be compared to one another and the public can know who is doing the best. This trend, commensurate with federal funding for schools, directly ties student performance to a few quantifiable statistics while demanding accountability—for states, specific school buildings, and even individual teachers—through aligned instruction. If schools are not improving performance scores, then they are failing—as reiterated in measurements like the Adequate Yearly Progress index. As districts and administrators struggle to produce statistics worthy of receiving/maintaining funding, classroom teachers feel pressure to comply with the developing audit culture (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006). Such pressure to perform according to prescribed standards suggests the need to better understand the efficacy

of standards for students (Beattie, 1997; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Sandholtz et al., 2004) and the ways these standards-based policies actually impact educators' lesson planning and decision making (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006; Dorgan, 2004; Ingram et al., 2004; Olsen & Sexton, 2009).

Consequently, the prevalence of standards-based policies and the concurrent interest in assessments, comparisons, and incentives in both student achievement and school performance seem to influence performance expectations for students, teachers, and school districts. I believe art education stakeholders need more examples of the repercussions of standards-based policies. In this study, I describe the interpreted formal and informal school district policy expectations of five art teachers and discuss implications for the field of visual arts education.

Primary Research Question and Sub-Questions

This study explores the relationship between educational policy and praxis within the context of K-12 art education by showing how teachers' curricular and pedagogic decision-making was influenced by a school district's formal and informal policy expectations. Examining various interpretations of one school district's art teacher professional expectations, this research describes the complexities of standards, instruction, and assessment policies in public schools. Through interpretation and analysis of interviews, observations, and artifact data, I created vignettes describing what I understood about the participants' decision-making processes and themes emerging during the study. As the researcher, I designed, documented, described, dissected, and displayed the stories, juxtaposing multiple interpretations—including my

own—to represent a collection of experiences about professional expectations within art education.

The overarching research question was: How are art teachers' curricular and pedagogic decisions influenced by their interpretations of standards-based school district policy expectations? Furthermore, the following sub-questions informed the depth of understanding concerning the topic:

- How do participants interpret school district policy expectations?
- How do participants negotiate standards-based assessments in their curricula and pedagogy?

Clarifying Key Terms

I frequently use the terms *praxis, expectations (formal and informal policy)*, *standards*, *standardization*, *assessment*, and *curriculum* that should be clarified. My definitions of the terms evolved as I came to understand them in new ways through the analysis of data. In this section, I define and clarify the key terms and explain how I use them throughout the study.

Praxis

The term praxis refers to a teacher's practical application of their ideological beliefs and experiential skills. It implies a decision-making process where abstract pedagogical concepts are realized in evolving contextual situations. Praxis is where theory and practice meet in field-based settings.

Expectations (Formal and Informal Policy)

State policies become manifested in the language of local education agencies—

school districts—as they attempt to address the state standards (Spillane, 1999). In this study, I describe how art teachers interpret their district's policies while developing an understanding of how policy expectations influence decisions in their praxis. For this research, I concentrate on expectations as expressed in both formal and informal policy. Analyzed within the context of one district, policies along with their perceived expectations should inform readers' understandings of contemporary educational issues with a particular focus, in this case, on how art teachers negotiate their curriculum.

I define formal policies as documented expectations for teachers and students. Formal policies can be externally mandated, such as the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills. Additionally, formal policy artifacts may be developed at the district level and made available in teacher handbooks, on public websites, in private district databases, through professional development and in-service training sessions, teacher meetings, or other unanticipated sources. In my experience, formal policies might include expectations for subject content and student outcomes, classroom management, lesson planning formats, and school or district initiatives—such as a focus on improving students' reading comprehension or abilities to write conclusions.

While I believe all formal policies play a role in how teachers negotiate expectations, for the sake of this study, I am specifically interested in standards-based student learning objectives and assessments in art education. Examples of subject specific formal policies for content and assessment include state and district student learning standards; externally or district developed curricular scope and sequence; art rubrics and portfolio requirements created at the school level or by external programs such as Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate; vocabulary lists;

and how courses are aligned—by media, student proficiency (art I, II, etc.), and a combination of the two. In short, formal policies tend to be official in tone and evidenced in handbooks and publically available documents.

In my experiences however, informal policies may be only *implied* within a district. These expectations could be talked about in meetings and emails but not explicitly stated and documented in policy artifacts. Examples of informal policies include participating in annual art competitions, using specific lessons to address curriculum content, displaying only high quality student work, and implementing assessment techniques to "weed-out" students for upper-level art courses. Participants' interpreted expectations addressed informal policies and were a rich source of data in this study. Informal policies may also be self-imposed by individual participants; however, for this study I focused on the informal expectations of the district.

Standards and Standardization

Oxford Dictionary (2016) defines a standard as, “an idea or thing used as a measure, norm, or model in comparative evaluations.” As measurements and norms, standards reflect the values of a particular group. Terms such as criteria, expectations, and benchmarks can frequently be found in the language of policy documents and are usually coupled with essential knowledge and skills. For example, the Common Core State Standards Initiative (2010) website states, “standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers.” The Common Core definition is similar to common informal interpretation of academic standards as “what students should know

and be able to do."

Standards-Based Reform policies are designed to emphasize measurable student learning outcomes. These definitions coalesce to imply that standards are the anchor of the educational process. They provide exemplars of expectations, and give students goals to which they may aspire. With this in mind, policy is constantly being reinterpreted because standards are created and negotiated at all levels of policy: nationally, through states and districts, and as understood and implemented by each teacher.

Standardization, on the other hand, implies conformity and generalization of experience and expectation. When I envision standardization in a classroom, I see unhappy and overstressed students hunched over their desks and a clichéd taskmaster pacing through rows of children methodically counting-down minutes until the bubble-sheeted assessment is over. This scene is full of assumptions about objective "correct answers" and a pass/fail dichotomy that cannot compute the concept of students' drawing from unique experiences and understandings. As a novice teacher, I interpreted expectations about standards as district requirements for standardization. Only after a few years of frustration did I realize a standard does not need to be standardized.

Beattie (1997) states, "standards are social constructions rather than objective realities" (p. 288). Wiggins (1991) and Darling-Hammond (1997) beg educators to conceive standards that do not become standardized, as individuals should not get lost in the process. Regardless, standards have become the cornerstone of accountability and assessment for schools, teachers, and students (Darling-Hammond, 2004) and

policy makers, administrators, and educators should be attentive to their implementation. Student learning standards may create a common benchmark for pupil performance. However, when teaching approaches and student outcomes are standardized, educators lose professional autonomy and students become decontextualized data sets.

Assessments

Assessing student learning is a central job function for educators and "has arguably become *the* focus of teaching" (Sabol, 2013, p.36). There are two basic types of assessments: formative and summative. Formative assessments take place throughout the course of a lesson or project and can be conceptualized as incremental and in-progress evaluations. Conversely, summative assessments occur at the end of a lesson or project and are intended to evaluate the learning process as a whole. There are a number of criteria or indicators that educators can use when conducting evaluations; however, this study was focused on the ways standards-based assessments are interpreted and negotiated in art teacher praxis.

Federal mandates, state interpretations, and localization through districts all come to a head when teachers work with students and are tasked with implementing policies. Decisions about instruction beget methods of learning outcome assessments, and educators should realize that the negotiation of policy occurs uniquely in each classroom every day. The responsibility of implementing standards-based assessments falls on the teacher, and pressures for high student performance have led educators to teach to the test (Popham, 2001).

Expectations for student performance might be more ambiguous in visual arts education than in other subjects because of its qualitative and subjective nature, making assessments in the arts “fraught with challenges that other disciplines need not address” (Sabol, 2013, p. 36). At this time in art education, there are no widely used standardized tests, although the NAEP conducted national arts assessments with eighth-grade students in 1975, 1997, and 2008, with plans for another assessment in 2016 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Outside of the infrequent NAEP art content assessments, some public schools including the Dallas Independent School District have developed their own standardized art tests.

Troubling implications of Standards-Based Reforms and their inherent assessments become most evident when comparing data sets without contextual considerations. The acts of quantitative measurement—contrasting results, measuring successes (or failures), evaluating performances—developed and implemented in policy seem to undermine its intent without qualitative attention. It seems raw quantitative data alone cannot comprehensively describe student learning.

Historically, art education has operated on the margins of standards-based assessments. Art teachers use a variety of assessment methods (Dorn et al., 2004), since standardized testing may capture only a portion of the learning in art education (Sabol & Zimmerman, 1997). Furthermore, training in development and implementation of authentic arts assessments is an area of need in the art field (Dorn et al., 2004; Sabol, 2006b). Currently, 17 states have statutes or codes requiring public school arts assessments, most of which are framed for district compliance with local and/or state content and performance standards (Arts Education Partnership, 2016).

Curriculum

One way to begin conceptualizing curriculum is through art terminology: what it is about (content), how it is organized (form), and its purpose (function). This definition of curriculum includes decisions teachers make with consideration for the scope, sequence, and intended outcome of a course or program; instructional activities, assignments, and the ways they are claimed to be evaluated; course design, unit themes, lesson topics, and artifact/artist examples; and standards-based student learning outcomes. The way curricula are performed and enacted by the educator and the methods, processes, and techniques of teaching, then, define pedagogy. Throughout this document, I frequently use the term *curricula*, which indicates more than one curriculum. As there are often a variety of kinds of curriculum being utilized by teachers, the term curricula can refer to different course (for example, Art I curriculum and Advanced Drawing curriculum) that together comprise an art curricula. Additional nuances for conceptualizing curriculum and curricula are explored in greater depth in Chapter 2.

Significance of Study

Currently, literature in the field of art education does not address policy expectations. Educational policies impact every student in public schools and should be investigated attentively. Studying how educators create and implement curricula based on interpreting and negotiating standards-based policy expectations illuminates an important aspect of teaching in schools today. Furthermore, by connecting with the

findings, individual educators may gain insight into their practice and the claims they make about student learning outcomes. As teachers in all disciplines are affected by federal policies and their repercussions at state and local levels, through this study, I intend that stakeholders in education develop a new understanding of standards-based policies as a resource for teachers and of the ways policies are interpreted and negotiated in practice.

During the course of this research project, the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS) developed and released a voluntary set of next generation student learning standards for the five fine arts disciplines of dance, media arts, music, theater, and visual arts. The new National Core Arts Standards provide a conceptual framework and specific performance standards for students from Pre-Kindergarten through high school and are designed to be accessible to stakeholders, educators, and students (NCCAS, 2014). National, state, and local agencies are engaging the initiatives created by the NCCAS teams and reconsidering their own current fine arts policies. This study may inform stakeholders about the ways standards-based policies and expectations are understood, negotiated, and implemented by art educators in their classrooms and can provide art teachers an avenue to self-empowerment in their curriculum.

The findings of this research shed light on the ways district and school leaders implement standards with their visual arts educators. This information reveals differences in the ways art teachers interpret policies and make claims about standards to administrators compared to their practical applications with students. Juxtaposing these reports, my study examines the process of planning for standards, how that process implies standardization, and its real world application. Through the expected

disparities, this research creates a conversation about the efficacy of standards-based policy, specifically in an art context.

Many teachers, despite their personal beliefs about the effectiveness of the process, are required to participate in strict compliance with standards-based policies. Therefore, these mandates may generate a rift between information reported to administrators concerning the application of learning standards and the ways in which practical assessments occur in the classroom. Considering how educators perceive expectations from their districts concerning student learning outcomes, this research informs policy implementation at local, state, and national levels.

This research included a community of learners that promoted personal and professional growth. The practitioner participants reflexively examined their experiences with policy and described the complexities of their praxis. Teachers' sharing their approaches to policy interpretation with the field of art education helps other educators contextualize their experiences and creates opportunities for learning. With the recent release of the next-generation national visual arts standards, this study provides insight to the status of the field. This study specifically examines a field at the forefront of standards-based policy and informs conversations for future reform. My research contributes the stories of educators as they attempt to describe the interpretation and negotiation of their role in the standards-based policy movement.

Limitations of Study

Although this research was thoughtfully designed, there are limitations to the study. Utilizing established qualitative research methods for the research design, I

made specific choices about how to elicit, collect, record, and analyze data (see Chapter 3). Characteristics of qualitative research include naturalistic inquiry, descriptive data, concerns with process, inductive analysis, and attention to meaning (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The findings of this study are qualitatively rich, yet the inherent process of collecting soft data had limitations.

By design, this study was limited in scope and setting. The research was conducted in only one school district with a small number of participants. District gatekeepers restricted access to the participant pool; as a consequence, participants self-enrolled in the study. However, by examining one district's expectations with eager participants, I was able to explore in-depth the culture of the district through a variety of participant interpretations. The findings remain specific to the district in the study, yet are presented to allow the readers flexibility to construct their own meanings in the data.

The descriptive research shares interpretations of only a few art teachers, from one place, at a particular point in time. Therefore, the findings are unique to the specific context of the research site. The study relies upon truthful responses from participants. That being the case, teachers' responses and their ability to communicate interpretations could hinder the quality of data collected.

Furthermore, since I partnered with K-12 visual art educators, the results are limited in application outside the field of art education. Consequently, the results may not be easily transferable to a broader audience. However, there is currently little research about standards-based policy expectations in fine arts fields and I believe the findings of this research have the potential to greatly expand the scholarly literature, particularly for visual arts education.

CHAPTER 2

MAKING SENSE OF EXPECTATIONS

In this chapter, I focus on contextualizing factors that influence contemporary art educators. To adequately convey the complexities that affect teachers' decisions, I first describe modern policy reforms. Then I discuss key theories concerning curricular approaches and offer a framework that I developed to organize and conceptualize the influences for art teacher decisions. The chapter ends with consideration of how assessment-based movements are currently understood in the field of art education.

Contextualizing Educational Policy Reforms

Every presidential election brings with it political debate about the American education system. Over the last 50 years, as power shifts among political parties in the White House and Congress, politicians have found in education policy a site to manifest their ideological beliefs (Cuban, 1990). The emphasis shifts between local control and centralized authority, challenging schools to adopt the national requisites of the day if they choose to receive federal funding. What follows are brief descriptions of major reform efforts that have influenced our modern day education system and policy discussions along with short descriptions concerning policy in art education and the state context for the study's site.

Academic Disciplines

In the wake of World War II and the increased attention to global scientific and military advancements, national policy makers examined the efficacy of the American

educational system. Post war concerns about global competitiveness spawned programs aimed to quantify and improve learning in science and technology education. Cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner described transitions in thinking about the focus of educational policies from the mid-1950s into the early 1960s by stating:

> Those were the years in which the Russians launched Sputnik, the first manned space vehicle. America, self-assured as usual about its own technical superiority, was taken abruptly aback. Washington forthwith proclaimed the existence of a 'Missile Gap,' one that must have come inadvertently into being because the Soviets. . . .were better at science *education* than 'we' were. Soon our National Science Foundation was investing heavily in science curriculum projects to close the Missile Gap. (Bruner, 2006, pp. 1-2)

During this time, the National Defense Education Act of 1958 provided opportunities for local education agencies to receive federal funds to promote innovation in science, technology, and postsecondary education. Some of the resulting curriculum projects encouraged Bruner and other behaviorists to consider the science of learning and the logistics of teaching the government funded exemplary curricula (Bruner, 2006).

In *The Process of Education,* Bruner (1960) posits that an academic discipline should be supported by scholarship within the field, while the "structure of the discipline" ought to be guided by concepts and principles applicable to the learning of students of all ages. Complex concepts could be taught to all students through a series of sequential steps from basic intuitive "bodies of knowledge" to logical and formalized understandings. Bruner was not explicitly interested in measurement, however education reformist and policy makers utilized his research to shift the focus of policy at the national level to champion the *discipline*, meaning that which is quantifiable and universal over the *subject*—which could be considered unorganized and unscientific content.

Numerous psychological behaviorists supported the emerging ideas about

disciplines in education (Bloom, Hastings, & Madaus, 1971; Skinner, 1965) and policy reforms began reflecting that objective, measurable, and observable student outcomes aided assessment and provided proof of understanding. The assumption was that, with proper instruction, all student populations would achieve under these auspices. Before this shift, many schools' curricula focused on vocational training skills and teacher-centric instruction (Cuban, 1990). As a result, curriculum reformers clamored to meet the new best practice specifications, and the discipline movement in American education was born. Out of this milieu, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) emerged, and in 1964, through funding from the Carnegie Corporation, the NAEP became the primary instrument for examining student learning on a national scale.

Outcomes and Standards

The National Commission on Excellence in Education, with its landmark document *A Nation at Risk* (1983), spurred the next wave of educational policy reformation. The commission concluded American schools' declining educational performance were "in large part the result of disturbing inadequacies in the way the educational process itself is often conducted" (p. 18). In light of emerging economic globalization, corporate models provided guidance to new reform efforts with accountability, competition, and quality of education becoming paramount (Apple, 1993; Taubman, 2009). Under President Ronald Regan and special interest groups, policy reform was emphasized at the state level with the goals of reinvigorating local and state economies and supporting traditional curricula (Cuban, 1990). Structuring curricula

around objectives compliments the development of standards of learning—that which a student should be able to know and be able to do. This movement helped create the groundwork for a measurement matrix allowing districts and states to compare results and quantify success emphasizing the learning outcomes.

The proliferation of standardized testing, particularly by the NAEP, gave educators and the public a snapshot of student performance and enabled comparison between states and between the U.S. and other nations. Results of the tests marked a decline in the overall quality of student performance throughout the country and in the nation as a whole when compared to previous assessments. Dreading the loss of an economic advantage, desperate business lobbyists encouraged reformers to again focus on vocational skill sets and job-ready graduates (Cuban, 2007). In 1989, the White House and the National Governors Association proposed education policy goals for the year 2000, including literate adults, rigorous graduation requirements, and top world rankings in mathematics and science (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

In 1994, President Bill Clinton signed the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. This act encouraged the nationalization of standards-based reform and testing heralded by states and corporations in the 1980s. With public attention on performance and quality of education, political debates arose about the public school system and private school vouchers, as increasing numbers of middle class families sought escape from low-performing schools (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Like current debates about the federal governments' role in public education, differing political viewpoints about issues of equitable access, local control, and academic quality drove policy reform.

The Current Climate: Accountability and Incentives

The Goals 2000: Educate America Act provided the groundwork for today's standards-based policies in both form and function. Broadly, the Act (Goals 2000, 1994) stated four central purposes to support the establishment of its "National Education Goals:" (a) to provide a national framework for reform that improves teaching and learning; (b) to ensure opportunities for achievement to all students; (c) to reauthorize federal education programs; and (d) to "promote the development and adoption of a voluntary national system of skill standards and certifications." In practice, the Act tied billions of dollars in Title I funds—available to schools with a child poverty rate of at least 40%—to the development of a standards-based accountability framework in each state. As a result of the political climate, concerns about federal and state legislative balance, and issues with the implementation of statutes at the state level, the Goals 2000 Act lost political force and was not reauthorized by Congress in 1999 (Superfine, 2005). However, the contemporary quagmire of American educational policies was defined, nevertheless, by the marriage of large sums of federal education monies to the implementation of standards-based accountability systems.

No Child Left Behind. In the political stalemate created by implementation issues with the Goals 2000 Act, the bipartisan No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 met great fanfare when it was signed into law in 2002 as a reauthorization of the ESEA by President George W. Bush. The largest federal reform in American educational history (Chapman, 2007; Hursh, 2007; Smith, 2005), the NCLB Act aimed to improve student achievement through measurable goals set by high standards, which also tied federal

funding to student performance for all Title I schools in the country. Where the Goals 2000 Act provided a framework for federal funding and standards implementation, NCLB developed the accountability measures and incentive structures necessary for states and districts to assess compliance and distribute funds.

As part of NCLB, each state was required to assess students at specific grade levels based upon the states' established standards. Without creating a national curriculum, NCLB effectively standardized expectations for state-defined student-learning outcomes through its passage into law. Directly attaching federal funding to student achievement created a culture of *high-stakes testing* in which schools that did not show continual improvement in key content areas would suffer devastating budget reductions. Consequently, the Act received considerable scrutiny for pressures placed upon schools to attain Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for each student over a twelve-year span and to achieve or exceed the states' standardized proficiency levels. Through the disaggregation of test score data for defined sub-groups as part of the AYP index, additional scrutiny was placed on the performance of different student populations. The Act aimed to close achievement gaps among traditionally marginalized student populations. However, initial implementation of the Act created larger inequalities in public schools by rewarding high achieving populations and penalizing low performing schools (Hursh, 2007).

Race to the Top. In the presidential election of 2008, the second wave of political repercussions from standards-based policies became a keystone of candidates' platforms. The education section of then Presidential Candidate Barack Obama's

Blueprint for Change (2008) campaign platform booklet states,

> Obama believes that the goal of [NCLB] was the right one, but that it was written and implemented poorly and it has demoralized our educators and broken its promise to our children. Obama will fund [NCLB] and improve its assessments and accountability systems. (Obama for America, 2008, p.31)

Similar to the political critiques of the Goals 2000 Act, policy implementation was seen as the problem, while the purposes of the legislation were perceived as valid but not pushing accountability measures hard enough. The *Blueprint for Change* (2008) further explicated candidate Obama's stance on the problem in American educational policy by stating, "No Child Left Behind left the money behind" (Obama for America, 2008, p. 32). The document proposed that an Obama presidency would reform NCLB by improving "assessments used to track student progress to measure readiness for college and the workplace" because "teachers should not be forced to spend the academic year preparing students to fill in bubbles on standardized tests" (Obama for America, 2008, p. 33).

The first educational policy initiative developed by President Barack Obama's administration was a reauthorization of NCLB entitled Race to the Top (RTT). It was intended to help states create administrative infrastructure to meet NCLB goals while providing "political cover for state education reformers" (McGuinn, 2012, p. 136). Earmarked within the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, RTT established over $4 billion dollars for competitive state grant funding. The points-based scoring system incentivized states to adopt common standards and assessments by requiring them as part of the scoring criteria. While states had been required to have "challenging standards" since the Goals 2000 Act, the federal point-tallying attached to the RTT funding encouraged states to clarify compliance. Influenced by previous

federal policy reform expectations, many states initially created a low minimum student learning standard—or modified their existing standards for compliance—because they did not want to miss the opportunity to receive federal funding (Sanchez, 2014).

Common Core State Standards. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were released in 2010 by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGACBP) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Motivation for developing the CCSS was, "state school chiefs and governors recognized the value of consistent, real-world learning goals and launched the [Core Standards] effort to ensure all students, regardless of where they live, are graduating high school prepared for college, career, and life" (paragraph 1) (NGACBP& CCSSO, 2016). The CCSS represents a set of student learning standards in the subject areas of ELA/literacy and mathematics that align vertically from kindergarten through 12th grade. In a 2008 report authored by the National Governors Association, CCSSO, and Achieve, Inc.—a non-profit organization that aims to raise academic standards and improve assessments—the top priority action for state leaders was to "upgrade state standards by adopting a common core of internationally benchmarked standards in math and language arts for grades K-12 to ensure that students are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to be globally competitive" (NGA, 2008, p. 6). While not as dramatic in tone as *A Nation at Risk* report, the *Benchmarking for Success* report—and action item number one in particular—is cited as the guiding force for the Common Core initiative (NGACBP & CCSSO, 2016).

One common argument in support of standards-based policies and assessments

is that in order to compare the U.S. to other nations and ultimately to perform well, states need to be on the same page about what is important to know and when students need to know it. A common set of student learning standards would help achieve this goal. Benchmarks provide students, educators, and parents specific information about performance in relationship to the objective. Analyzing the degree to which standards are met provides the capacity to further compare data. However, not all states agree on the specific objectives that should be evaluated. Consequently, advocates argue that creating a single set of standards for all states would help alleviate discrepancies so all students around the country could anticipate meeting comparable educational expectations, which could close gaps in achievement. Proponents of the CCSS said it would help low performing states, schools, and students by encouraging them to achieve while continuing to raise expectations. Furthermore, this standardization could make it easier to compare results and help American schools work their way back atop the global standings.

As the CCSS initiative began, RTT funding was coming to fruition. CCSS was developed—at least in name—at the state level, with state policy makers choosing how to engage the voluntary national standards. Each state used a unique process to adopt, interpret, redraft, or abandon the Common Core standards; however, state adoption of the standards by 2015 was required to receive Title I funding (Sloan, 2010). Standards-based education polices had been in various stages of implementation in states for over 20 years. Some states that had worked extensively to produce the high-quality standards that they already had in place (Gass & Chieppo, 2013, May 27) argued the CCSS lowered expectations for their students. States like Massachusetts, South

Carolina, and Missouri represent this group, while Georgia, Oklahoma, and Tennessee expected comparatively little from their students (Peterson & Hess, 2012). Wide discrepancies in the implementation of standards-based policies and in benchmarks for proficiency both supported the mission the common core initiative and constituted a major challenge. Again, federal policies and funding appeared to shift power from individual states in favor of uniformity.

Consequently, through RTT's incentive-based funding, as of August 2015, 42 states had adopted the CCSS in English Language Arts (ELA)/literacy and math (NGACBP & CCSSO, 2016). This essentially created a national set of K-12 educational standards in those subject areas. Beattie (1997) cautions that adoption of national standards without review is detrimental to local interests, as each location has unique needs and interests. Sanchez (2014) argues that teachers need extensive training and professional development to understand new policy requirements. Since teacher performance effectiveness was a primary component of the RTT scoring criteria, Sanchez (2014) notes that teacher policy requirement training was necessary for any chance of an effective implementation.

Other critics of the CCSS believe the program should have been piloted longitudinally and developed on a broader, more transparent, scale before being tied to federal funding. During the development of the CCSS, there was much public criticism of the initiative's ties to testing corporations including the College Board, the American College Testing, and Pearson, along with millions of dollars in funding from the non-profit Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Singer, 2015). Taubman (2009) describes the proliferation of neoliberal assessment influences in the global education-industrial

complex including tests, policy language, business partnerships, and audit culture, questioning who the beneficiaries are in the corporatization of public education. In America, federal initiatives and corporate partnerships supported the CCSS development, funding, and implementation process.

Every Student Succeeds Act. In December of 2015, President Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) as another bipartisan reauthorization of the ESEA. In condensed form, ESSA is nearly 400 pages in length and still being read in term of implications for practice. The ESSA authorizes appropriations for Local Education Agencies grants at $15-16 billion dollars per year through fiscal year 2020 with transition plans beginning in academic year 2016-17 and full implementation in 2017-2018 (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). This means that states should have a few years to adjust to new accountability measures. The *Every Student Succeeds Act: A Progress Report of Elementary and Secondary Education* (2015) executive office summary report includes six areas of emphasis that the legislation specifically addresses:

> (1) ensure states set high standards;
> (2) maintain accountability;
> (3) empower state and local decision-makers;
> (4) preserve annual assessments and reduce the often onerous burden of unnecessary and ineffective testing;
> (5) provide more children access to high-quality preschool; and
> (6) establish new resources. (Presidential Executive Report, December 2015, pp. 1-2)

On the surface, ESSA appears to shift many of the accountability measures—and therefore performance compliance responsibilities—back to state control. A major argument against the NCLB and RTT polices was lack of control at the local level in

developing and conducting school performance accountability measures. The empowerment of local decision-makers was important for bipartisan support of the ESSA. However, scholars and journalists are unsure of how these changes to federal policy will work in local implementation. Alia Wong, associate editor at *The Atlantic*, writes, “for all the breathless hype, the legislation seems unlikely to produce many changes that are actually visible on the ground” (Wong, 2015). If history is any indicator, one may expect political debates about the failed implementation of more education policies in the years to come. The next section describes how the implementation of standards-based policies are visible in state policies and local public schools.

Policies in Practice

With all of the shifts in education policies at the federal level, it is also important to consider how policy is implemented by state and local education agencies. State guidelines are intended to shape local district policy (Hatfield, 1999), but this is not always an easy or straightforward task. As policy “trickles down” from national bodies through state policy makers to local school districts, complex concepts become harder to contextualize locally. It seems that implementing polices can become problematic in classrooms because there may be only a few individuals to provide resources at the district level who were involved in the policy-making process, leaving great latitude in how the policies are interpreted by, for example, small teams in state education departments or superintendents and school board members at the local level. As policies get interpreted and implemented by different stakeholders, the policies'

meanings and significance may be contextualized, making buy-in difficult for practitioners (Spillane, 1999).

The Texas context. Considering all of the history about national policy reforms, it is important to describe the current policy climate in Texas. At the state level, as emphasized to local districts, there are adamant efforts to retain local control. The 2013 State Legislature went so far as to pass House Bill 462, banning the State Board of Education from adopting the CCSS, restricting districts from using the CCSS to comply with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), and prohibiting districts and open-enrollment charters from requiring any aspect of the CCSS in their curricula (State of Texas House Bill 462, 2013).

In Texas, the foremost expectation for districts is compliance with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) regulations and for public school educators to address the TEKS in their curricula. These standards-based expectations are specific to each subject area and grade level or course (see http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter117/index.html for specific information) and explain, “what students should know and be able to do” (Texas Education Agency, 2014a). Required by law and administered by the TEA, public school districts “must provide instruction in the [TEKS]” at grade level in “foundation and enrichment curriculum” (Texas Administrative Code, 2014). In 2013, revised visual arts TEKS were adopted and set for implementation beginning in the 2015-16 academic year (Texas Education Agency, 2014b). The revised TEKS demonstrated slight changes from the original 1998 state standards and still resembled the 1994 National Visual Arts

Standards in their organization and language.

The TEKS documents are formatted into two sections. The introduction section—which remains consistent across all grades—provides a philosophical justification for the study of visual arts by describing how the arts develop various cognitive, social, aesthetic, and career readiness skills. Divided into four strands, the revised TEKS (Texas Education Agency, 2013) emphasize observation and perception, creative expression, historical and cultural relevance, and critical evaluation and response as the overarching concepts addressed in the visual arts. The second section specifies grade-level knowledge and skills, also known as the standards performance indicators. Depending on grade-level, each strand includes two to six specific performance objectives.

Policy making at the district level. Wilson (2000) claims district teams led by effective administrators offer the best opportunity for drafting useful policy. Spillane (1996) states that districts should become more involved in reform to balance power across systems, send messages of alliance to practitioners, and share their voices at the state level. Beattie (1997) proposes that creating student learning standards at the local level is a favorable model when it includes state and national considerations. However, Spillane (1999) recognizes local will and resistance to change pose pitfalls in standard alignment.

Districts employ a variety of resources, including professional development, for teachers as new policies are implemented and interpreted in the classroom. However, the resources that constitute or supplement curricula are underutilized assets for

reflective teaching practice (Ball & Cohen, 1996). For example, in interviews with first and second year teachers, Kauffman, Moore Johnson, Kardos, Liu, and Peske (2002) found that when given detailed standards and assessments, teachers struggled with curriculum development unless they had extra guidance. Sabol and Zimmerman (1997) states that for instruction to be equitable, the needs of entire communities should be considered to hone the unique needs of programming for their populations. Engaging the difficulties of teaching in the era of accountability, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2006) suggest that educators are key to making policy implementation successful in the local context. They argue that teachers should participate in reflective understanding of practice, realize that their job is greater than what occurs in front of students, and do research on their own work to become cognizant of their role as creators of curriculum. Regardless of how curricula are developed, the intersection of standards, assessment, and instruction marks a key component of the contemporary lives of educators.

Reforming Policies in Art Education

When the ideals of Jerome Bruner's discipline-based approach began permeating educational policy, the field of art education took notice. Manuel Barkan (1963), in his lecture and subsequent article *Is there a discipline of art education?* urged scholars in the field to "develop a *distinctive structure*" (p. 4), by identifying that which is common among all disciplines, then defining the *conceptual* and *syntactical* structures for art education. Three federally funded conferences from 1964-66 impacted curriculum development and allowed the field of art education to solidify its mission aided by leadership in national art organizations (Wygant, 1993). Organized around

student learning objectives and systematized in the behaviorist models of accountability, art curricula were developed in large-scale efforts (Efland, 1988). Advocating for the relevance of art education as a unique educational subject, stakeholders in the field utilized the changing policy reforms to describe and legitimize their programs.

Throughout its history, art education has had a tenuous role in American education. Erickson (1979) identified a need in the field to connect research and practice, suggesting art educators broaden their concepts of role models and take ownership of the multiplicities and complexities the profession entails. Art educators needed to hold onto what makes them unique whilst proving their worth to a school culture that honors quantitative results. Policy efforts within the field of art education frequently “try simply to keep the arts alive in schools” (Stankiewicz, 1997, p. 8) while paralleling the reform of other disciplines, evident in policy reform of the 1980s.

One way to advocate for the validity of the arts in public education is to mirror policy and reform trends of "core" subjects like English and math. With the new national arts standards, the discipline of art education was viewed as able to keep pace with similar standards revisions occurring in other content subjects. When the first version of the National Standards for Visual Arts Education were developed in 1994, fine arts organizations were among the first to publish the voluntary standards. Similarly, when Next Generation Visual Arts Standards—rebranded the National Core Arts Standards before publication—writing teams began revising the standards in 2011, the arts were positioned as leading a new cycle of student learning standards. The professional organizations for the fine art disciplines of music, theater, dance, and visual and media arts worked together to create an arts vocabulary threading through the standards in

each discipline (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2014). Working together, they presented a unified front for the importance of all fine arts education.

The National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS) selected writing teams specific to each discipline and consisting of teachers and stakeholders from a variety of grade levels, experiences, and locations. The writing process involved conceptualizing a framework and drafting standards that were submitted for review and revision before being officially adopted by each discipline's national governing body. Development of the next generation voluntary national visual art standards occurred in conjunction with the other arts disciplines around a central framework. Like the CCSS, the NCCAS initiative offered opportunities for uniformity between schools, districts, and states (NCCAS, 2014). Past-President of National Art Education Association (NAEA) and NCCAS writing team member F.R. Sabol shared with me that he thought the potential benefits of standards and assessment-based education in visual arts included increasing the quality of art instruction by helping teachers articulate objectives, building on the artistic literacies that were the foundation of Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE), and promoting students' sophistication.

The NCCAS (2014) *Conceptual Framework for Arts Learning* identified philosophical foundations and lifelong goals, encouraging curricularists to think about more than objectives and outcomes when working with students. A major change in the next generation arts standards was a shift in emphasis from what students are supposed to *do*, to an understanding of *why* it is important. This approach to curriculum is important since the recent "emphasis on instrumental reasoning, whereby teachers are expected to identify the means by which to bring about pre-determined ends, is

evident in the pervasiveness of government mandated, outcomes-based curricula and standardized testing across North America" (Phelan, 2009, p. 94).

The non-linear nature of art education makes assessment particularly difficult, and some teachers believe there is learning that occurs in art that cannot be assessed (Sabol, 2004). Further complicating the matter, Goodwin (2015) found that art teachers had diverse understandings of what qualifies assessment and grading in their student evaluation processes. Based on findings from a study on “assessing expressive learning,” Dorn, Madeja, and Sabol (2004) conclude in-depth assessment training and professional development for preservice and practicing teachers is needed in art education. In the art education field, practitioners and scholars alike analyze standards for what they assume, along with what they exclude (Beattie, 1997; Boughton, 1997; Grey 2010).

Given the personal expressive nature of many art assignments, teachers may perceive standards-based assessments as inaccurate and inappropriate reports of student learning. Standardized testing in art education provides only a partial assessment, lacking the open-ended thinking championed in art classes (Sabol & Zimmerman, 1997). In my experience, art education does utilize student learning objectives and assessments in many K-12 schools. Curriculum as product approaches are most prevalent in high school settings—as graduation and post-secondary entrance requirements loom large—but I see a trend toward standards-based education models becoming utilized in elementary schools, as well. This trend reinforces the concept of student performance as a commodity that now begins in preschool.

Quality assessments in the arts may seem ambiguous. Dorn et al. (2004)

explored ways of assessing expressive learning by situating art making as a key component of art education. Assessments constructed around performance-based tasks provide the options for art educators to capture a variety of student experiences. One focus of the next generation visual arts standards currently being developed is providing benchmarked assessments—formative in-progress evaluations. Other authentic measures of assessment deemed relevant by the NAEA are “portfolios, exhibitions, place-specific presentations, and use of technology” (Inhulsen, 2013, p. 2).

Art education also faces challenges with implementation of assessment-based educational models. The ideas of standard objectives and anticipated outcomes are problematic. As with other academic subjects, expecting equal instruction for diverse school populations and among states is unrealistic. Considering the increasing interest of comparing performances in American culture, standards and assessments for students quickly beget evaluations of teacher quality and the idea that if something is not being tested than it is not important (Taubman, 2009).

Art educators may struggle with standards implementation. L.H. Chapman shared with me that she thought art teacher could have issues "voicing the rhetoric of standards" and F.R. Sabol identified that adequately meeting the aims of the standards due to limited resources, budgets, or technologies could be obstacles. Sabol additionally shared that like all subject areas, new standards in the fine arts require extensive professional development and resources, in states and districts, to help teachers understand and implement them in their practice. Furthermore, some teachers may be philosophically opposed to standards-based performance objectives and assessment in art education. However, the next generation of fine arts standards

provide an opportunity to craft student learning objectives and assessments in a new way, encouraging states, districts, and individual teachers to interpret the voluntary standards uniquely and to promote discussion amongst stakeholders.

Summary of Policy Reforms

In this section, I explained the recent history of standards-based policies in American education and their implications for art education. This provided a broad overview of the current context of schooling in the United States. This context influences many of the performance expectations perceived by students, teachers, and principals alike. In the following sections, I describe more specific factors found in literature that contribute to the ways art teachers negotiate praxis.

Contextualizing Art Teacher Decisions

There are several factors to consider when contextualizing art teacher decisions. Therefore, this section is organized into five segments. The first provides several different definitions of curriculum as it relates to teacher decision-making. The second describes how educational ideologies can guide pedagogical decisions. The third outlines the ways previous experiences and practical knowledge may influence curricular choices. The fourth considers how professional contexts influence negotiations in art teachers' praxis. The literature for ideologies, practical knowledge, and professional contexts present a foundation for interpreting influences in art teachers' decision-making. In the last segment, I provide an original framework to represent a summary of how I conceptualized influences for art teacher decision-making

(see Appendix A).

Teacher decision-making, from yearlong curricular design to by-the-second instructional choices, constitutes "*the* basic teaching skill" (Shavelson, 1973, p. 144). Among the influences guiding teacher decisions are institutional curriculum orientations (Eisner, 1979), personal philosophies about education (Aoki, 1978/2005; Chapman, 1985; Eisner, 1984), goal setting (Callison, 1970; Jackson, 1968/1990), and previous educational experiences (Garth, 2011; Grauer, 1998; Jones, 1997; La Porte, 2001; La Porte, Speirs, & Young, 2008). Novice primary grade generalist teachers' decision-making is influenced by professional identity, conceptions of teaching, and the difficulties of working in standards-based educational climates (Bauml, 2010). Pasch, Sparks-Langer, Gardner, Starko, and Moody (1991) claim factors that influence teacher decisions are teacher characteristics and beliefs, subject matter/content, student needs and characteristics, the teacher's knowledge of principles and techniques, and teaching and learning conditions.

Klein (1991) described academic, societal, formal, institutional, instructional, operational, and experiential perspectives that guide curricular decisions, although the framework developed by Klein merely describes possible patterns that could occur; "it does not identify what *should* occur; only a particular value or belief about curriculum decision making can do that" (p. 25). Furthermore, Araujo (2011) stated decisions are informed by personal experiences, professional experiences, curricular mandates, political climate and affiliations, student needs, and professional development. Decision-making in education is a diverse and complex task. A central component in the education profession—and a topic that includes many decisions—is curriculum.

The next section provides examples of how some educational scholars conceptualize curriculum to frame the breadth of what may be perceived as by the term curriculum.

Defining Curriculum

In American educational discourse, the term curriculum carries definitions ranging from national ideals for public education to the myriad of decisions teachers make on a daily basis. Not only do explicit curricular factors influence educational programming, but also factors from the implicit and null curricula—those that are absent or not taught (Eisner, 1979). In this section, I outline what the term curriculum may mean in education, and more importantly for use within this study.

Conceptions of curricula can be abstract and theoretical yet still imply practical application between teachers and students. For example, common elements of curriculum include scope and sequence, syllabus, content outline, standards, textbooks, course of study, and planned experiences (Posner, 2004). Therefore, curricula may be considered both over-arching teaching plans but also all of the resources, activities, and mechanisms necessary for and involved in implementation.

Utilizing this inclusive definition of curriculum, qualifies all of its elements as relevant and may be overwhelming. Klein (1991) described curricular elements as (a) goals, objectives, and purposes, (b) content, (c) materials, (d) resources, (e) activities, (f) teaching strategies, (g) evaluation, (h) grouping, (i) time, and (j) space. Posner (2004) identified five concurrent curricula: the official, operational, hidden, null, and extra, which is defined as planned meaning-making experiences in addition to the formal curriculum. Kelly (2004) described this interplay as including the educational

curriculum, the total curriculum, the hidden curriculum, the planned and received curriculum, and formal and informal curriculum. Eisner (1979) explained curriculum as having "a commonsense meaning as broad as 'what schools teach' to as narrow as 'a specific educational activity planned for a particular student at a particular point in time'" (p. 34). Therefore, theorizing curriculum can be a difficult task.

However, when constructing a definition of curriculum, it is also important to consider how teachers implement curricula. General instructional orientations are often delineated as teacher-centered, child-centered, discipline-centered, or socially-centered. Chapman (1985) defined orientations for a teacher's philosophical rationale as essentialist (discipline-centered), developmentalist (child-centered), and reconstructionist (socially-centered). Describing ways of inquiring into curriculum motivations, Aoki (1978/2005) proposed using a broader frame to explore "the deeper meaning of what it is for persons (teachers and students) to be human, to become more human, and to act humanly in educational situations" (p. 95) through conceptualizing relationships of "man [*sic*] and world," "man-in-his-world [*sic*]," and "man-in-his-world, with his [*sic*] world" (p. 101).

Aoki (1978/2005) justified his ideas about orientations to curriculum inquiry by theorizing how "Man [*sic*] experiences three root activities: Work, Communication, and Reflection" (p. 100), which in turn yield technical, situational interpretive, and critical types of knowledge. Cognitive theorist Jürgen Habermas (1972) also described technical, practical, and critically oriented interests, which enable constructivist experiential knowledge. Grundy (1987) identified three human interests in relation to curriculum theory as product, practice, and praxis. Pasch et al. (1991) claimed teachers

can be curriculum consumers or become empowered through thinking as curriculum designers. Making curriculum decisions includes diverse interpretations and attention to previous contexts. Through reflexive decision-making, educators can craft curricula to align with their world-views.

To understand art teachers' curricular and pedagogic decision-making, I developed a framework to organize how I envision the influences each educator experiences when making professional decisions based on his or her ideologies, previous experiences, and professional contexts. The framework is fluid and not necessarily hierarchal, although most research about teacher decision-making already contributed to the field involved ideologies and experiences. Therefore, through this study and decision-making framework, I hope to add scholarship to art education literature that helps describe the influences and professional contexts concerning policy expectations.

Ideologies

As presented in this emerging framework, ideologies must help to situate within the big picture the *why* aspects of teachers' pedagogical choices and the *how* aspects of their curricular organization. Pedagogy is "the method and practice of teaching, especially as an academic subject or theoretical concept" (Oxford Dictionary, 2016). Outside of a teacher's practical knowledge and contextual environments, ideologies describe the underling beliefs about the purposes and roles of art education, and I believe that—at least to some ambiguous degree—they inform all the decisions made by teachers in their professional lives. While considering ideological influences in

teachers' decision-making, it is important to note that the combination of belief systems with evolving practical knowledges and the contextual situations of educators all interplay in the holistic process, and the following sections describe three approaches to conceiving the purpose of public education; However, ideologies constitute only one aspect of the interdependent frame. The other aspects, practical knowledge and professional contexts, are discussed in the following sections.

Theoretical Philosophies. Given this wide-ranging overview of what may be considered curriculum, the next three sections describe how theoretical philosophies affect the ways curricula can be conceived and implemented. The theoretical philosophies provide perspectives on how stakeholders in education might situate their beliefs about the mission of public schooling. In this context, curriculum should be viewed the as the purposes and goals of an educator's pedagogy. Therefore, ideological influences emerge from exploration of pedagogical choices.

Curriculum-as-product. This perspective situates curriculum in empirical terms based on measurable goals and outcomes. Learning is defined through objectives and evaluations, and curricula are often organized sequentially to maximize student performance on assessments. Current educational policies reflect much of this line of thought through the standards-based educational reforms of the last 30 years (Cuban, 1990).

From the technical viewpoint, curriculum design consists of four components: objectives, content, methods, and evaluation (Tyler, 1949). Kelly (2004) described "Tyler's rationale" by stating:

> the claim is that we must distinguish in our curriculum planning what we are hoping to achieve, the ground we are planning to cover in order to achieve it, the kinds of activity and methods that we consider likely to be most effective in helping us towards our goals and the devices we will use to evaluate what we have done. (p.14)

In the seminal text *Basic principles of curriculum and instruction,* Tyler (1949) proposed four fundamental questions for curriculum development and instructional planning that constitute *Tyler's Rationale*:

> (1) What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
> (2) What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
> (3) How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
> (4) How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained? (p. 1)

Tyler's early curriculum theorizing is decidedly situated for the teacher, and his later writing places greater attention on what the learner should do (Stanley, 2009). Stanley (2009) identifies *Tyler's Rationale* as one of the most influential documents in curriculum development.

To conceptualize curriculum-as-product, consider applying a formulaic and scientific approach to learning and instruction. For context, curriculum-as-product thinking gained traction with educational reformers of the 1950s and 1960s. In the post-war space-race era, national interests became attuned to a global perspective. This was not lost on the field of education. Policy makers considered ways to minimize variations in teacher quality through curricular structures. Jerome Bruner (1960) advocated for educational disciplines as the basis for curriculum design, where subject specific content would be organized sequentially with objective goals and performance evaluations.

With Tyler's (1949) attention to developing curriculum that has an organized structure with clear evaluation processes and Bruner's (1960) incremental cognitive

development theories gaining favor among education reformers, evidence for the National Commission on Excellence in Education's (1983) "troubling" findings about the climate of American education seems to encourage the development of curriculum-as-product structures. This philosophy of curriculum represents the operational means-ends orientation Eisner (1979) described, which ideally creates easy-to–assess, measurable performances from which to quantify and compare results. This theory is aligned with the audit culture policies of today.

Curriculum-as-practice. A second perspective about curriculum places efficacy on the meaning making that occurs in the process of learning. In this view, learning occurs through all of our experiences and is qualitative in nature. Curricula may still have goals, methods, and assessments, but theoretical dispositions allow for more fluidity in structure and open wider the range of acceptable evaluations of learning. In his writing, influential American educational reformist, John Dewey (1938) aspired to an educational practice that embraced all experiences, allowing both the learner and teacher to make meaning in the process.

In this curriculum-as-practice view, many factors influence educational experience, both inside and outside of the school walls. Aoki (1986/2005) suggested educators strive for a life of "indwelling between two curriculum worlds" (p. 159), where productive tensions arise between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived-experience. This perspective suggests some factors are outside educators' control but should still be considered valuable in the meaning-making process.

Curricularists who embrace practical knowledge place value in the active-role of

experience in the classroom. Learning and meaning evolve over time and through reflection, teachers can utilize unique knowledge in their curricula (Clandinin, 1986; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Schön, 1983). Polanyi (1958) contended that people know more than they can express, and personal tacit knowledge is vital to our understandings in life. Therefore, searching for meaning in practitioners' process is a valid endeavor.

Curriculum-as-praxis. Building on knowledge accrued through experience, reflection, and meaning making, a praxis-oriented curricularist may work to actively engage aspects of social change in students' lives and communities. It is important to note that in the context of this section of the chapter, praxis assumes a slightly different meaning than the ways it is used throughout the rest of the document. In this section, the term curriculum-as-praxis means encouraging action through reflection, wherein personal philosophies and ideals are juxtaposed with critical analysis of professional practice to create a curriculum that focuses on transforming the conditions in which it participates. Curriculum-as-praxis can be used to research and improve one's practice (Clandinin, 1986; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; May, 1993a; 1993b; Schön, 1983) and may take a broader social emancipatory aim (Freire, 1972; Greene, 1988; Grundy, 1987; Pinar, 1975). This theory aligns well with postmodern, visual culture, and socially relevant curricular orientations.

Action research provides a framework through which practitioners may analyze their work and make adjustments based on critical reflection (Schön, 1983), although not always as a means for problem solving (May 1993a). This curricular perspective goes beyond curriculum-as-practice because it is a systematic approach in which

change is a goal. Both experiences-in-action and experiences-on-action become sites for reflection and can help make meaning throughout the lives of teachers (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988).

In a more socio-politically aimed perspective, curriculum-as-praxis can serve critical emancipatory goals (Grundy, 1987) wherein reflective practitioners intentionally identify and enact curricula that transform a social issue. This requires greater attention from the curricularist to his or her position within the social world and ability to engage an agenda. Identifying and resisting oppressions through social and self-awareness (Freire, 1972; Greene, 1988) are crucial to this outlook. Knowing about tensions in curricula and the educational system are vital to improving teachers both personally and professionally as well as to advancing the status of the field (Pinar, 2004). Re-conceptualizing curriculum into currere—a method of ongoing analysis about one's educational experience—we may understand ourselves in society more intently (Pinar, 1975).

The theoretical philosophies of educators are presented as general beliefs about the purposes of schooling. The teacher may envision his or her identity as the essentialist, developmentalist, or reconstructionist (Chapman, 1985). These theories influence all curricular decisions because they directly relate to the teachers' perspectives about the role of education, interactions between teachers and students, and the possibilities of their roles as professionals. Woods (1996) claims teachers base decisions "on knowledge and beliefs about the current state of the world (such as students' knowledge and abilities, the contents of the curriculum, and what is happening in the classroom), and about what is good and bad about the current state" (p. 118).

Theoretical philosophies comprise one aspect of curricular ideologies. Teachers' theoretical philosophies frame their broadest beliefs about the purposes of public education. However, the ways art teachers orient their curricula also inform decisions that translate ideologies into practice. In the next segment, I describe different visions and versions of art curriculum orientations.

Curricular Orientations. I describe curricular orientation as a teacher's over-arching way of conceptualizing and organizing what is important in his or her program. Curricular orientations are closely tied to theoretical philosophies because they seem frequently to work in tandem; however, a delineation should be made. For example, if a teacher's philosophy describes why he or she focuses on artistic processes over final products, then the curriculum orientation of "teaching for artistic behavior" might explain how content is organized in the teacher's planning. Together, the philosophy and the orientation of the teacher's curricular decision-making constitute pedagogical influences (see Appendix A). In this section, I identify trends in curricular organization and briefly describe a few of the popular conceptual versions for designing visual arts curricula.

A major focus of designing curricula includes structuring content. In an early study of instruction in art education, Beittel et al. (1961) identify "breadth" and "depth" methods of content organization, which were compared by utilizing student preferences and performance and finding "breadth" as the overwhelmingly popular method but with "depth" producing the most gain in student progress. Analyzing the student learning standards the teachers used as resources, Chapman (2005) noted that the content emphasized design elements and principles, and breadth over depth, particularly at the

elementary level. With the amount of content that could be included in visual arts curricula and an abundance of approaches to structuring that content, balancing breadth and depth remains a challenge today.

Scholars in art education have identified diverse curricular orientations. In a study by La Porte, Speirs, and Young (2008), the researchers found five art curriculum themes among their study participants: (a) multicultural, (b) identity and issues, (c) art disciplines, (d) modern and postmodern, and (e) graphics and visual culture. In a study of 40 selected Ohio middle schools, Anglin (1993) found that visual arts educators emphasized media/production activities in their curricula because participants claimed it was a satisfying and successful method for including art in their students' lives, noting that both the planned and the implemented curricula shared this orientation.

In a national survey about the analysis of art standards, Chapman (2005) found that elementary art specialists described their primary student learning goal as having an emphasis on media/process and design elements/principles. The second tier of emphasis concerned the inclusion of a variety of art forms and history/culture, and conceptual themes and expressive possibilities ranking third (Chapman, 2005). In an observational cross-site study in three different states, Hafeli, Stokrocki, and Zimmerman (2005) found art curricula that included similar content: personal meaning through art production; design elements, principles, and technical skills; and problem based designs.

In concert with theoretical philosophies, curricular orientations help situate art content organization and foci. Eisner (1984) identified five aims and rationales for art curriculum: creative development; social and cultural awareness; art history, criticism,

and studio; art studio; and design and craft. MacGregor (2010) identified four philosophies in art education curricula—art for art's sake, interdisciplinary art, arts integration, and multiple intelligences—while Feldman (1996) conceived five dimensions that the *Philosophy of Art Education* fulfills: social, economic, political, psychological, and cognitive/moral. Chapman (1985) identified creating art, looking at art, and living with art as program aims.

MacGregor (2010) posited creating art, responding to art, knowledge of art materials, and understanding cultural factors as the basic standards influencing content decisions. In Anglin's (1993) study of middle school art teachers, content was organized by media/production, design elements, design principles, and art appreciation. Rouse and Hubbard (1970) explained the art skills of perception, language, artists and their work habits, criticism, and techniques/materials as providing structure to art curriculum and ordering decisions for art instruction.

With accumulating experiences, art teachers' understandings of their practice can evolve. Bain, Newton, Kuster, and Milbrandt (2010) conducted interviews with novice teachers in a cross-site case study questioning how they "define and implement meaningful curriculum" and finding they could most easily "articulate what was *not* meaningful curriculum" (p. 237). However, conducting a study longitudinally, Kuster, Bain and Young (2015) found that five years later, the participants could articulate meanings and implement beliefs more easily.

Novice teachers in their initial study favored a comprehensive art curriculum connecting art work, artists, and contextual information to students' lives, and secondarily reiterating the importance of studio projects. They struggled to include

meaningful content because of the requirements of the existing curricula (Bain et al. 2010). In their follow-up study, Kuster, et al (2015) reiterated that meaningful curriculum was themed by connections: to students' lives beyond the classroom, to their respect and pride, and to expansions in their knowledge of "art media, cultures, current events, and social issues" (p. 374).

Art content and curricula can be organized via several dominant thematic structures. In the following, I briefly describe several popular curriculum orientations, connecting them when appropriate to the eight conceptual "visions and versions" of arts education identified by Eisner (2002). These frames of curricular orientation may help us understand how art teachers assign values to the purposes of art education and thus provide insight into their ideologies.

Discipline-Based Art Education. The first version of curriculum orientation Eisner (2002) explains is DBAE. Arguably the most influential curricular movement in art education over the last 50 years, the landmark document, "Discipline-Based Art Education: Becoming Students of Art," Clark, Day, and Greer (1987) formally introduced DBAE to the field. Developed primarily through funding from the J. Paul Getty Trust beginning in 1982, DBAE was a model for curriculum reform that aimed to provide meaningful art experiences throughout the life of the child. The document was differentiated from the discipline-centered reform of the '60's and activity based creative self-expression curricula. To move past the "school art style" described by Efland (1976), the DBAE approach became the framework for focusing instruction and organizing classroom content around the four concepts of art production, art criticism,

art history, and aesthetics.

With the creation of the 1994 National Arts Standards and the broader educational policy reforms of the 1990s, the DBAE model flourished in curriculum development projects and as states and districts produced student learning standards. Framing the conceptual tenants for the field, the DBAE movement was criticized for being too formalized, trying to do too many things, relying on Euro-centric ideals and exemplars, narrowly defining processes, and ignoring the learner and social context (Delacruz & Dunn, 1996; Stankiewicz, 2000). Despite criticism, utilizing the DBAE conceptual approach to curriculum offered art educators an academic structure and was adopted and hybridized in school art programs throughout the nation. Subsequent debates about the concepts and curriculum implementation in schools changed the way art educators viewed the DBAE model and invited greater variety of interpretations, pushing the evolution of its mission.

Visual culture and the postmodern approach. A second curricular orientation Eisner identified was visual culture, a broad and multifaceted term. Duncum (2001) described the "provisional and contestable" problems of creating definitions due to their complex fluid and subjective structures; however, he summarized the term "visual culture" to include coded artifacts—with sensory meanings beyond just the visual—that could be situated amongst the conditions of their contextual richness, that "includ[ed] their production, distribution, and use….as part of an ongoing social discourse that involve[s] their influence in social life" (p. 107). Keifer-Boyd and Maitland-Gholson (2007) describe visual culture as "the place where visual objects meet their cultural

contexts" (p. xviii), with significance in art education because of the "processes or practices used to investigate how images are situated in social contexts of power and privilege" (p. xix). These inclusive views marked a postmodern and multimodal broadening of art education curriculum for the 21st century (Freedman & Stuhr, 2004).

This approach is what I perceive as the broader postmodern movement in visual arts education curricula. From this perspective, art educators contrast traditional and singular examples from the modernist and Western art historical canon with an emphasis on contemporary, polyvocal, and global artists. Efland, Freedman, and Stuhr (1996) identify postmodern curriculum principles and implications as utilizing the little narrative; the power-knowledge link; deconstruction; and double-coding (p. 112). Neperud (1995) notes the ever-evolving and potential directions of postmodern transitions in and between art education curricula as utilizing feminist theoretical approaches that should be centered on functional knowledge where "*content is intimately linked to context*" (p. 10).

Problem solving and design thinking. The third vision and version of art education is creative problem solving, a design oriented curriculum approach exemplary of the Bauhaus model of art education (Eisner, 2002). Creative problem solving asks students to address practical challenges efficiently while considering aesthetic issues. This curricular orientation is manifest in secondary school programs where "tasks are intended to help students become aware of a wide variety of considerations—economic, structural, ergonomic, and aesthetic—in the design process" (Eisner, 2002, p. 31). In the larger sphere of educational orientations, connections to this approach are

frequently referred to as problem-based learning or challenge-based learning, which are central to science, technology, engineering, and math curricula. In art education, design thinking has seen increased attention as a curricular emphasis, manifest in the recent art education professional organization annual convention theme "the art of design: form, function, and the future of visual arts education" (NAEA, 2015) and an issue theme of *Art Education: The Journal of the National Art Education Association* titled "form, function, design, and the future" (Sweeny, 2014).

Creative self-expression and artistic behaviors. A fourth curricular orientation is creative self-expression, where the arts serve as a "process that emancipated the spirit and provided an outlet for the creative impulse" (Eisner, 2002, p. 32), while the role of the arts teacher is consigned to that of an uninhibiting facilitator. Primarily credited to influential art education scholar, Viktor Lowenfeld, creative self-expression emerged as an orientation in and dominated popular curricula during the 1950s and into the 60s (Wygant, 1993). A cognitive psychologist by training, Lowenfeld encouraged an approach to art education that provided holistic development for the child where the teacher functioned "as an observer and diagnostician who should intervene sensitively and flexibly to encourage each child to develop intellectually, emotionally, physically, perceptually, aesthetically, socially and creatively through art making" (Stankiewicz, 2001, p. 38).

Contemporary manifestations of the creative self-expression orientation can be considered art-based or choice-based art education. One moniker for the choice-based orientation is Teaching for Artistic Behavior (TAB), the established group organized in

2001 and emerging from “a grassroots educational movement entirely developed and maintained by art teachers” (Teaching for Artistic Behavior, 2015). A TAB curriculum is based on learner-directed intrinsic motivation and creative autonomy (Jaquith, 2011) for an authentic and meaningful visual arts education for students (Douglas & Jaquith, 2009; Hathaway, 2013). In this orientation, teachers create and support a studio environment with equipment, resources, and materials organized in centers that “provides a flexible construct to meet the varied needs of schools, teachers, and learners” (Hathaway & Jaquith, 2014, p. 27).

By enabling student-driven choices in idea generation and artistic production, TAB teachers aim to connect creativity and artistic behaviors. Zimmerman (2009) argues that due to difficulties in design, implementation, and assessments with orientations that emphasize developing students’ creativity, our notions of creativity must move beyond previous modernist conceptions of creative self-expression. Educators in contemporary school should think of “creativity as multidimensional with considerations of how cognitive complexity, affective intensity, technical skills and interest and motivation all play major roles” (Zimmerman, 2009, p.394).

Workforce skills. The fifth orientation concerns the preparation of students for their place in the world of work. In this version, students develop technical skills, imagination, and creative thinking that will enable them to contribute to the workforce upon graduation. Early in American art education history, this orientation was reflected in Walter Smith’s industrial drawing approach, where students developed marketable practical drawing methods that supported industrial manufacturing skills (Stankiewicz,

2001; Wygant, 1993). In contemporary times, the practical skill-based approach has become more abstract. Some of the skills that fine arts education can contribute to the 21st century economy is what Pink (2006) calls *A Whole New Mind*, where right-brained creators and empathizers rule "the Conceptual Age" (p. 49).

Arts integration. A sixth vision for arts education is the integration of arts curriculum into non-arts curricula via four structures: to further understand a historical period or culture, to identify similarities and differences in the arts, to recognize major themes from diverse fields, and as a problem solving practice (Eisner, 2002). Chapman (2005) found elementary art specialists claimed alignment with the national art standards and local curriculum guides as influences for their decisions, with aims of emphasizing arts integration and making connections among the arts as primary goals of their curricula. Arts integration curriculum resources and literature are frequently targeted toward elementary generalist educators to develop student language skills (for example Althouse, Johnson, & Mitchell, 2003; Cornett, 2011) and organized by project-based examples such as *Bridging the curriculum through art: Interdisciplinary connections* (Stephens & Walkup, 2008). However, recent textbooks emphasize arts integration approaches that examine issues of social justice (see Donahue & Stuart, 2010) and the fruitful challenges presented by utilizing contemporary art for high school curricula (see Marshal & Donahue, 2014). Efland (2002) argues that arts integration supports various learning environment designs and engages multimodal cognitive development, connecting to the last two of Eisner's versions and visions for arts education.

Arts as a catalyst for cognitive development. For Eisner's (2002) seventh and eighth visions of arts education, I have combined two interrelated themes: the arts as cognitive development and using the arts to promote academic performance. These two versions seem less likely to be used in by art educators as curricular orientations, but rather as points of advocacy to promote arts programming. One rationale for how arts education promotes academic performance hinges on data collected through large-scale surveys that show high school students enrolled in art courses performed more favorably on standardized tests. However, Eisner (2002) identifies concerns about the validity of this vision by questioning what might happen to programs should data from those studies be disproven. Similarly, the rationale for how the arts develop cognitive skills becomes tenuous when the value of arts relies on external validation.

The arts as catalyst for cognitive development vision posits "tasks that the arts put forward—such as noticing subtleties among qualitative relationships, conceiving of imaginative possibilities, interpreting the metaphorical meanings the work displays, exploiting unanticipated opportunities in the course of one's work—require complex cognitive modes of thought" (Eisner, 2002, p.35). This vision emphasizes that learning in the arts supports a more well-rounded person. The ways arts education develop cognitive skills have been famously championed by psychologist Howard Gardner (1994). Additionally, the cognitive development approach has been utilized as advocacy position for arts programming; for example, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development publication *Arts with the Brain in Mind* (Jensen, 2001).

Social justice art education. An additional common vision for visual arts education makes social justice its aim. This orientation corresponds directly with the curriculum-as-praxis theoretical philosophy because it encourages social change through the medium of art education. Teachers sharing this curricular orientation might encourage creativity, through art education, to inspire social change (Quinn, Ploof, & Hochtritt, 2012).

These critical pedagogies disrupt common socially constructed concepts to encourage multiple viewpoints and complex understandings of power disparities to encourage social activism through critical literacies (Wallowitz, 2008). For Quinn (2006), social justice art education emphasizes depth in critical examinations for social reconstruction that the breadth of visual culture contexts leaves wanting. Engaging socially relevant topics in art education may be messy and tragic, emancipatory and binding, utopian and pragmatic. However, curriculum designed to explore social relevance will seek real world solutions to address contextual and cultural change.

Summary of Ideological Components. Briefly explained in the previous section are eight different—if occasionally overlapping—orientations for art curricula. Curricular orientations are present in teachers' decisions because "there is always a context: a network of socially acknowledged rules and codes; a more or less coherent structure of moral beliefs" (Green, 1973, p. 214). Understanding these rules, or syntax for art education, help us frame the contexts for teachers' decision-making. In the next section, practical knowledge situates teachers' previous experiences and preferences to reveal the second component of the decision-making framework.

Practical Knowledge

As a constructivist, I believe that people utilize their previous experiences to greatly influence how they interpret actions within their lives and the meanings they make. As a practitioner, educators employ their previous experiences, content knowledge, and pedagogical best practices as an evolving database for decision-making. This section outlines scholarship about how art teachers value pervious experiences in curriculum choices and a few seminal examples of the ways practical knowledge is conceived in education.

As the primary investigator for this study about visual arts educators, I placed relevance in participants' previous experiences. Previous experiences influence perceptions and are a predictor of teaching behavior, regardless of content (Jones, 1997; La Porte, 2001). For this project, I attempted to elicit responses about past experiences important to participants' development as art educators, including: K-12 art education as a student; experiences in undergraduate art studio/art history, education, and art methods courses; graduate coursework; museum and community art experiences; and professional teaching experiences and continued development while in-service. In studies about art education curricular influences, scholars found that decisions about art content was primarily affected by teacher preference and previous experiences (Garth, 2011; La Porte, Speirs, & Young, 2008), verifying what La Porte (2001) and Jones (1997) concluded about the impact of teachers' prior experiences as students on their art curricula as professionals.

Preservice teachers are influenced primarily by past experiences in school art

settings (Grauer, 1998), further emphasizing the need to understand in-service teachers' decision-making processes. When surveyed about experiences influencing their current success as art teachers, participants identified professional experience as most influential, followed by undergraduate studio classes, graduate classes—if applicable, student teaching experiences and even their high school art experiences as at least moderately influential (Garth, 2011). Teachers' undergraduate art educations play a major role in what they are comfortable teaching, but personal preference has the highest influence according to Garth (2011) and La Porte, Speirs, and Young (2008), even more than theoretical models (Anglin, 1993). Teachers often utilize their specialized content knowledge, but little research has been focused on "the normative nature of the translation of subject-matter expertise into pedagogical decisions" (Phelan, 2009, p. 94).

Curricularists and educational theorists have documented the concept of practical knowledge thoroughly during the past 40 years. Recognizing the expertise of a teaching professional, practical knowledge shifts ownership of knowledge from the abstract models of experts to the lived and contextual experiences of teachers (Clandinin 1986; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Elbaz, 1983; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007; Schön, 1983; Schwab, 1970/2013; Shulman, 1986, 1987, 2004). Schwab (1970/2013) described the "practical" language of curriculum where the outcomes of educators' decisions were realized through both their knowledge and experiences; teachers must constantly evaluate the structures and systems of the institution to choose the best decision for the situation.

In a study of teacher thinking, Elbaz (1983) identified five categories of practical

knowledge, knowledge of self, the teaching milieu, subject matter, curriculum, and instruction, wherein the teacher's values and experiences are acknowledged. By proposing a new concept, Pedagogical Content Knowledge, Shulman (1986) adds to Schwab's notions of substantive structures, the basic principles and concepts of the discipline, by positing that the syntactic structures—the rules determining what is considered appropriate for the system—underlie teachers' decision-making. Beyond the substantive and syntactic structures of teaching, Shulman (1986) introduces "subject matter knowledge *for teaching*" (p. 9), in which teachers make pedagogical choices about how to efficiently convey content for students. Clandinin (1986) considers the extremely complex task of "understanding a teacher's practices within a holistic context" (p. 162) to conceptualize the fluidity of actions in curricular implementation processes.

The concept of practical knowledge in education recognizes that teachers draw on a variety of experiences when weighing pedagogical decisions. This knowledge is constructed over the lifetime of the teacher and includes his or her own educational experiences and mentor styles, artistic development and interests, subject matter knowledges and preferences, and—importantly—past professional experiences. Framed by ideologies and supported by pedagogical content knowledge, the discussion of the decision-making framework now turns to the professional contexts of the art teacher.

Professional Contexts

Many factors contribute to the professional contexts of educators. These

contexts include the relationships teachers share with administrators, peers, students, and other teachers; the logistical aspects of working with a specific student population in a neighborhood school building with a unique budget; being housed in a district with institutional contexts and a historical set of performance exceptions that are also governed by state policies. In this section, I briefly describe some of the ways unique contextual factors influence decision-making and then outline institutional expectations that were a focus for the study.

In my own experiences as a visual arts teacher and interacting with preservice and in-service educators, modifying curricula to meet the needs of students was viewed as an important—and often stimulating—task. Kuster et al. (2015), found participants' attention to their students' ability levels and maturity increased in their curriculum planning as novice teachers became more experienced, stating "now, after 5 years, the participants think about the needs of the students as they develop curriculum" (p. 375). In addition, the study recognized that autonomy in curriculum design was important to art teachers; participants were relieved their districts did not use standardized curricula, claiming the state guidelines provided sufficient frameworks (Kuster, Bain, &Young, 2015). Similarly, Nebraska art teachers— who at the time did not have any state standards—liked their ability to design programs as they wished and had concerns about what state requirements beyond a broad framework might impose on their curricula (Garth, 2011).

As a primary goal for this study, I wanted to gain a better understanding of how the context of institutional policies and expectations affects teacher decision-making. Curriculum for art educators can be developed in three contexts (Eisner, 1984),

externally by professional curriculum writers or district specialists, internally by individual teachers or localized groups of art teachers, or some mixed mode combining both external and internal development sources. Anglin (1993), found teachers "were often the authors of the written curriculum documents and found the implemented curriculum closely paralleled their written curriculum documents" (p. 61). District or school policies and expectations helped define the "degree of prescriptiveness" (Eisner, 1984, p. 264) from rule-governed to open-ended. I believe that the field needs a better understanding through scholarship of the continuum describing the balance between a teacher's decisions as related to curricular autonomy and as defined by institutional rules.

To understand, design, and evaluate curricula, one should grasp potential purposes of an educational system. In *The Educational Imagination*, Eisner (1979) purposed five curricular orientations for schools: (a) developing cognitive processes, academic rationalism, (b) personal relevance, (c) social service, and (d) technological or an operational means-ends model. Eisner (1979) states "it is unlikely that any school will have only one orientation; one may dominate, but it is far more likely the schools will be somewhat eclectic in what they do" (p. 72). School orientations help situate the motivations of local building or district programs and are different from the art teacher ideological curricular orientations described in the previous section. In turn, by understanding one's own situation within the educational system or instructional hierarchy, a teacher is empowered to take ownership of his or her curricula.

However, even when shared decision-making about policies is implemented in schools, the institutional histories of traditional school culture limit the capacities teacher have—or are willing to take—outside of their own classrooms (Reid, 2000). Therefore,

teachers should make decisions based on their job's content when not pre-prescribed (Elliot, 1956), but the accountability in standards-based educational policies narrows teacher's decision-making (Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Hatch, 2002). As part of the aim of this study, I hope generative discussion about policy expectations leads to insight about art teachers' decision-making processes with respect to accountability measures.

Summary of Decision Making Framework

Teachers make many decisions in the course of their work. As described in this section, the three concepts of ideology, practical knowledge, and professional contexts constitute what I contend is an interdependent framework for art teacher decision-making (see Appendix A). Ideologies describe motivation for decisions, giving purpose to the curricular orientations of art education in public schools and to the role of teachers' theoretical philosophies. According to Anderson (2003), teachers' decisions are framed in the context of what *should* occur based on what they have always done or on practical restraints (p. 3).

Decisions are founded on individual or group focus during an immediate or long-term timeframe and based on classroom behavior, effort, or achievement (Anderson, 2003). This perspective about the influence of previous experiences on decision-making, summarizes how practical knowledge may contribute to the framework. The third component, professional contexts, accounts for the situational variables that impact the unique expectations of a specific site. I hope my contribution of the decision-making framework to art education literature encourages further discussion about the influences of policy expectations in professional teaching contexts.

Summary

While teachers' decision-making is a popular topic among educational researchers and curricular theorists, there is still much to learn. The interactions and choices made in classrooms are diverse, as many variables and complexities contribute to understanding practice from policy. Shulman (1983/2004) identifies (a) inconsistencies among mandates, (b) limits of resources, time, or energy, (c) limits of teacher expertise, and (d) the self-defeating mandate as potential roadblocks to policy implementation (pp. 141-144).

More study is needed, particularly with art educators. As assessment-based policies continue to dominate the educational landscape, it is important to understand the repercussions of policies on art teacher decisions framed by their interpretations. Ultimately, whatever policies teachers encounter, they will need to negotiate these policies in their practice. What they need to realize is that negotiating the curriculum begets owning the curriculum (Boomer, Lesster, Onore, & Cook, 1992).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This collective case study explored the confluence of educational policy and art praxis by examining the ways art teachers created and implemented curricula, with specific attention to decisions regarding their district's expectations about student learning standards, curricular content, and assessment. Standards-based reforms impact assessment methods for expressive learning in art education (Dorn et al., 2004), and this study addressed important perspectives about art teachers' negotiations of their curricula in response to policy expectations. The study was designed to bring an important perspective to the standards debate by engaging art teachers and administrators in an analysis of their own interactions with policy expectations.

This study was intended to illuminate the decision-making processes art teachers utilize to negotiate their pedagogies as they pertained to the districts' expectations. I employed qualitative research methods because they allow each teacher individually to voice perceptions of expectations and how policies inform curricular decision-making (Anderson, 2000; Gratch, 2000; Jessop & Penny, 1998; Kirk, 2001; Ordonez-Jasis, Flores & Jasis, 2010; Overton, 2009). With a constructivist-interpretivist methodological perspective, I was able to focus on each individual's experiences in relation to environmental factors. Therefore, I collected data contextually specific to each teacher's situation, compared cases within a specific site, and filtered the findings through my own interpretive lens.

Cases in Context: Collective Case Study

The research design utilized for this study is what Stake (1995; 2008) calls a collective case study. Also referred to as "multiple case study," this methodology used several cases to investigate a larger phenomenon. Multiple cases provided greater context to the emergent themes. Each of the five teachers in my study constituted a case, and I examined their interpretations of district expectations through interviews about curricular and pedagogic decision-making. The *collection* of cases, each selected to add breadth to the research topic, contributed to validity by increasing the representation of the sample (Stake, 1995). Since qualitative research does not privilege a "single methodological practice over another" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 8), the collective case study was an appropriate constructivist framework to apply multiple research methods.

Methodologies are "inevitably interwoven with and emerge from the nature of particular disciplines" (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011, p. 97), meaning methodology is chosen specifically for the purpose of each study. Stake (2008) states, "case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied" (p. 119). The methodology utilized in case study research should be emergent, inductive, and allow meanings to evolve out of the research process (Gillham, 2000). Therefore, I approached these case studies from a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm, built on the premise that knowledge is created from experiences in the world and engaging them subjectively (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Laverty, 2008; Rasmussen, 2010; Sartre & Barnes, 1966); being the constructor of knowledge, each individual knows the world differently.

Life Worlds in Context: The Phenomenon of Interpretation

Martin Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology postulates that knowledge is contextualized through the histories of our lived experience, inseparable from the phenomena studied, wherein it is impossible to achieve a universal truth (Groenewald, 2004; Heidegger & Stambaugh, 1996; Koch, 1996; Laverty, 2008). As understandings of our relationship to the world change and become more complex, we are occasionally challenged by conflicting knowledge about the ways systems operate and must renegotiate/reinterpret our positions. Importantly, our understandings of the world are situated contextually in social time and space (Abbott, 1997; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Through thick description (Geertz, 1973/2003), interpretive analyses of events in our lives provide a context for us to deepen our conceptions of culture and identify phenomena.

Phenomenology, as a philosophical perspective, consists of two variations of knowledge construction—delineated by Husserl and Heidegger (Laverty, 2008; Rasmussen, 1998). As conceived by Edmund Husserl, the father of phenomenology (Koch, 1996; Laverty, 2008), persons respond to their perceptions of external stimuli meanings (Laverty, 2008). Building on Husserl's conception of phenomenology, the hermeneutic perspective interlocks the ability to understand a phenomenon to the social *life-world* (Schütz, 1967) of the researcher and the researcher's ability to interpret it as text (Annells, 1996). Phenomenology posits humans consciously define the world through objects and experiences, subjective perceptions of, and interactions within the world and construct various meanings through each individual's contexts (Heidegger & Stambaugh, 1996; Husserl, 1927; Merleau-Ponty, 2002; Rassmussen, 1998; Schütz,

1967). Individuals, self-aware of their participation in meaning making, consequently realize their uniqueness and being (Sartre & Barnes, 1966).

Drawing from phenomenology, each case used mixed qualitative methods, including the ethnographic strategies of observation and interviewing, to construct the phenomena of how interpretations influenced curricular and pedagogic decisions. This method was appropriate for my study because districts approach policy differently (Spillane, 1996), and all teachers must situate themselves around the specific expectations of their teaching contexts (Dinkelman, Margolis, & Sikkenga, 2006). Therefore, the ways teachers interpret, negotiate, and implement policy expectations within their unique situations constituted the phenomena studied.

In my anecdotal experiences working with teachers from a variety of school districts, I became aware of issues concerning interpretation and implementation of student learning standards, instruction, and assessment; instructors struggled with defining policy expectations in their classrooms. As a result, the ways teachers interpreted and implemented policy expectations within their unique situations were realized as phenomena. District policy expectations became part of the participant's life-worlds; therefore, teachers placed their practice in a local context.

Collecting Cases: Research Methods and Data Sources

The collective case study focused on collecting data from one local school district; the context of the district informed data analysis. Each school and teacher within the district was designed to be studied as a unique case. Data sources included district artifacts, interviews, field observations, and participant artifacts. Each case used

mixed methods to construct the phenomena of how interpretations influenced curricular and pedagogic decisions, including the qualitative ethnographic strategies of interviewing and observation, along with the rigorous, emergent, and reflexive research process described by constructivist grounded theory (Birks & Mills, 2015; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2014).

Identifying the Site and Participants

The study was limited to K-12 public school art educators in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex because of my familiarity with state level educational policy and proximity. Located in a large metropolitan area, I recruited visual arts educators from multiple sites within one suburban school district. Employed by a singular district, all participants were accountable to the same set of local policy. Initial artifacts about district policies and personnel were gathered from district webpages. I utilized internet searches for publicly accessible policy artifacts—including state standards, district mission and goals, district/school art curricula—to provide data about educator expectations.

For information at the state level, I parsed through multiple hyperlinks and legislative verbiage. From this, I was able to locate substantial and relevant documents about policy expectations for districts and educators. However, information about district specific policies was limited through internet and district webpage searches. Consequently, I conducted ‘open records requests’ through the district’s Office of Public Information to gain access to copies of employee handbooks and personnel evaluation methods to gain further insight to the administrative structure and hierarchy.

The Independent School District (ISD) that served as the site for this collective case study was a large suburban school district in a metropolitan area in the state of Texas. In terms of geographic size, the district was split into three zones that cover over 100 square miles in total. Of the 50,000 K-12 student population, 32 percent qualified for the free and reduced lunch program and included diverse race/ethnicity groups of approximately 46 percent White, 28 percent Latino, 12 percent Asian, ten percent Black, and three percent multiracial. The district had five high school, 15 middle school, and 40 elementary school campuses. Of the roughly 3,700 teachers employed by the district, over 75 were full-time visual arts educators. The fine arts department administration included both a director and a coordinator. In the analysis of other districts in the metropolitan area of my research region, I found that almost all area ISD fine arts administrators had professional experiences in instrumental or choral music education. Similarly, a director with an instrumental music background led the district of my study.

Participant recruitment occurred in four phases (see Appendix B). Criteria used to select participants were (a) years of visual art educator experience within the district, (b) current teaching assignment, (c) self-identified knowledge of district policy requirements, and (d) willingness to participate in the study. Teachers interested in participating self-enrolled in the study. Participants who chose to be part of the study were over the age of 21 and—as limited by the study design—had at least three years of experience in the district. Recruitment and selection of participants concerning gender and racial/ethnic populations was limited by the composition of district employees. The participants demonstrated a variety of experiences and knowledge

about expectations regarding district policies and were selected to represent elementary, middle, and high school divisions across the three different geographic areas of the school district community.

The five art teachers participating in the study were distributed across student age group settings and included two elementary teachers, two middle school teachers, and one high school teacher. The study included two males and three female participants with at least one participant representing each of the three geographic zones. All of the artist educators in the study volunteered to participate and had at least three years of experience teaching in the study ISD. The educators had an average of 15 years of experience as art teachers, ranging from 10-23 years in the field. Furthermore, they had an average of nine years of experience working in the case study district. All five of the participants had worked in different school districts before being employed by the district, and three of the teachers had previous professional experience in different states. Additionally, four of the participants had full-time experiences teaching art to a different age group—for example elementary, middle, or high school—from their current assignment.

The participants had varying educational degrees; three of the participants had Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees; one, a Bachelor of Science degree; and one, a Bachelor of Arts degree. Pertaining to graduate study, one of the participants had a Master of Fine Arts degree and another had completed “substantial” work toward a Master’s but did not finish. Several participants stated that they had taken online courses from professional development providers such as *The Art of Ed* but had not participated in formal university graduate coursework. All participants self-enrolled in the study. As

compensation for their time, each participant received a gift of $50. To respect the participants' anonymity, all faculty names and district identifying names have been changed.

Data from Interviews

Interviews with teacher participants provided data concerning the interpretations of expectations through the perspective of the classroom teacher. Each interview was conducted face-to-face at the school site at a time agreed upon by the participants and researcher. Each of the three interview sessions with individual participants was conducted sequentially; I conducted only one of the major interview sessions per site visit. When possible, I tried to conduct all three interviews with one participant before beginning sessions with another participant; however, some overlap between participants did occur. With several participants, we scheduled and completed all three interviews within the time-frame of a few weeks; on the other hand, one participant took eight weeks to complete all of the sessions.

Each interview focused on gathering descriptions of their lives and experiences (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007). This information guided me towards an understanding of how they interpreted policy expectations and the kinds of instructional decisions they make to negotiate their pedagogy. All interviews were recoded via a Sony stereo digital voice recorder (model ICD-AX412), which were professionally transcribed verbatim to aid coding and analysis. During interview sessions, I used printed copies of the questions to guide discussion, and I took field notes about significant responses, topics to probe for more information, and document my thoughts and impressions on these sheets.

Participants provided interview data in three semi-structured sessions of approximately 60 minutes, although some lasted over 90 minutes. The structure was based on a method Seidman (2006), calls "in-depth, phenomenologically based interviewing. . .combin[ing] life-history interviewing and focused, in-depth interviewing informed by assumptions drawn from phenomenology" (p. 15). Three separate interviews placed people's behavior in meaningful contexts, providing insight on how participants understood experience and how they situated themselves in relation to others around them (Seidman, 2006). This structure allowed the participants to establish the context of experience in the first interview, reconstruct details within the context of experiences in the second, and engage in reflective meaning-making from experiences in the final interview (Seidman, 2006). Patton (2002) places the essence of one's reality—in a phenomenological context—within his or her ability to make meaning from contextualized subjective experience.

Learning the Culture. The focus of the first interview was to build rapport with the participants and begin to build an understanding of their professional beliefs (see Appendix C, Interview One). Designed as a "focused life history" (Seidman, 2006, p. 17), interview one asked the participants to describe their previous experiences in art education and as new teachers within the district to inform the context of their current perspectives. These interviews explored *how* the participants came to understand expectations within their professional lives. The scenario placed the participants back in their first experiences with the district, contrasting preconceived notions of the job's duties with their interpretations of the realities of district expectations. Together,

participant and researcher explored how the participants came to understand what was expected of them in their professional contexts.

Planning for Expectations. The second interview (see Appendix C, Interview Two) contributed tangible details of daily experiences (Seidman, 2006). Participants were asked to describe available district curriculum planning materials and their individual processes for developing lessons as well as the district expectations for instruction and assessment. In addition, they explained the lesson planning evidence their administrators required and processes for reporting that information. In this interview, I attempted to understand how they made decisions about the everyday practice of interacting with policies and expectations while gathering information about their planning processes and curricular goals.

Adaptations for Personal Praxis. The final interview (see Appendix C, Interview Three) asked participants to make sense of their current practice through reflecting on their previous experiences. We explored participant values about their current practices and how they negotiated personal beliefs within the district. Seidman (2006) states, "when we ask participants to tell stories of their experience, they are selecting events from their past and in doing so imparting meaning to them" (p. 19). This interview provided a secondary context for participants' understanding of policy expectations by exploring what they would emphasize as an unrestricted policy-maker. This process encouraged an articulation of their curricular decision-making with comparisons to the realities of district expectations and practicalities of classroom implementation.

Data from Observations

Throughout the data collection period, I conducted a minimum of three site visits—one for each interview. During the first site visit, I observed the physical environment of the classroom, noting furniture layout, bulletin boards, and other instructional artifacts to create an ethnographic map—a visual representation of the site. In doing so, I gained an understanding of the ways teachers and students interacted in and with the space, which also helped describe the social relations of the classroom (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). Supplemental materials found in the classroom became a topic of discussion during the second interview when relevant to the conversation topics.

Following the second interview visit, I observed the participant during an instructional period. Conducting an observation of the teachers in practice provided data about their curricula in action. I tracked events and sequences, both instructional and interpersonal, to make sense of the session (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999), while creating field notes concerning their instructional and assessment methods for descriptive and interpretative purposes (Gillham, 2000). At the earliest convenience for the participants following the class observations, I conducted an open-ended discussion about the session, allowing the participant to describe his or her interpretation of the events (see Appendix C, Observation Debrief). This observation provided data about the realities of implementing course curriculum, with particular attention to policy expectations for both planned implementation and unplanned activities (Patton, 2002).

Data from Teacher Artifacts

Artifacts afford researchers a third source of data in case studies (Merriam, 1988). Participants were asked to share copies of their instructional materials as a source of data for researcher interpretation and comparison to policy documents. These artifacts provided information about (a) program and course curriculum, (b) lesson planning, instructional methods, and assessment strategies, and (c) supplemental resources for students, e.g., handouts, PowerPoint presentations, readings, and examples. In most cases, the artifacts participants shared were readily available in the classroom and could easily be added to conversation topics. Analyzing these artifacts with participants offered evidence of the ways they made professional decisions and interpretations of expectations. Assessment tools, such as rubrics, were of particular interest because they informed the ways participants engaged the measurement of art outcomes. I anticipated that the artifacts would provide insight into how participants understood and implemented their curricula, as well as the language they used to describe policy.

Methods and Sources Summary

Using multiple data collection methods added validity to my study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Morgan & Smirich, 1980) because it allowed me to check for consistencies. Creating a story of *coming to know* their district's policies through narrative, participants described their understanding of policy concerning the implementation of student learning standards, instructional practice, acceptable

assessment procedures, and accountability to said system. Observations and artifacts demonstrated how participants' understandings were enacted in the classroom, giving me the opportunity to gain perspectives on the ways teachers interpreted and understood their roles within district policy (Ordonez-Jasis, et al., 2010). The triangulation of data—using multiple methods of validation—was completed through my interpreting teacher interaction with policy and comparing participant interview responses about pedagogy to their instructional practices.

Theory in Context: A Constructivist's Approach to Framing Findings

Building on the phenomenological conceptions of the *life world*, this study was designed to construct meanings about a unique educational context, in the hopes that it might inform the understandings of various stakeholders about the implementation and implications of policy expectations in art education. Both the researcher and participants interpreted and represented contexts situating district policy. Themes emerged within data collection methods, interview sessions, and *grounded* data analysis processes. This section provides an explanation of the methodological approaches that guided analysis, followed by a description of analytic methods and processes used to frame my findings.

Introduction to Analysis

This study originated in my own journeys of interpreting expectations as a public school art educator. From my own experiences, I understood one path—that which I had traveled—of negotiating praxis. As an incipient scholar interested in how others

made decisions about their curricula, I first looked reflexively at my own choices of praxis and then scoured empirical and theoretical literature to construct a frame for how I perceive art teachers' decision-making processes (see Appendix A). From a gap in the literature relevant to my own professional development, this study was designed to begin constructing an understanding of the ways situational policy expectations affect pedagogical decisions.

Cross-case synthesis (Yin, 2003) allowed me to search for patterns in the data (Patton, 2002; Stake, 2006). However, I needed to be aware of my participation in how the construction of knowledge was described. The researcher's personal perspective played an important role in data analysis because, as developing interpretations of data and relationships with participants evolved, so did the constructions of the context (Birks & Mills, 2015; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2014). Naturalistic inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) was paramount in this case study methodology where attention to context, emergent design, and inductive theorizing (Gillham, 2000) framed the research. Hence, as I participated in the study as a researcher, my evolving knowledge base influenced the ways I collected, interpreted, and analyzed data. Dialogue with participants as well as my own dialogue with the data became an ongoing and reflexive analysis process (Birks & Mills, 2015; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2014).

Methods of data analysis appropriate for qualitative phenomenological research (Dey 1993; Gibbs, 2007; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008) included coding emerging themes, artifact analysis, and content analysis (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2014; Mauthner & Doucet, 2003; Saldaña, 2013). A coding hierarchy (Gibbs, 2007) of the relationships between coded themes assisted comparative analysis (Saldaña,

2013). Together, the analyses enabled me to construct an interpretive account of how art teachers understood and negotiated policy expectations in their practice. My theoretical perspective limited results to the extent of my current understanding of the situation, as my voice was an interpretation of the stories of the participants and therefore a unique construction of their experiences and opinions. These interpretations constituted a description of the experiences I encountered throughout the research process, chronicling the journey I experienced of *coming to know*, and thus aligning myself to the social realities of the participants. In essence, the data analysis reflected my understanding of the phenomena at that specific point in time, which continued to evolve. Together, the interpretations by participants and researcher built a unique representation of the ever-changing world. Therefore, the data collected and constructed "are all inventions of the human mind and hence subject to human error" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108).

Analyzing Sources

I began my data analysis by examining the digitally available state and district policy artifacts, examining the language used in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards, locating district documents, and scouring the fine arts and visual arts departmental webpages. The TEKS and Texas Education Agency policy documents were readily available online, however presented in legal statute language and formatting. The district information provided a point of departure about the tone and emphasis of local expectations through mission statements, goals, and available curriculum resources. Using the artifacts from the two different sources, I established

an understanding of the available macro-level expectations to provide a baseline comparison to the language and vocabulary used by participants in the interview sessions.

District artifact analysis informed my ability to code data and describe the collective case's unique policy structure and intent, perspectives on student learning outcomes, and expectations for teacher practice. Researcher observations, artifact analysis, and content analysis helped capture my interpretations of the confluence between district policy and teacher praxis. Through constant comparative methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)—where the researcher remains attuned to "incidents" within the data throughout analysis—codes are generated from and within the data (Birks & Mills, 2015; Charmaz, 2014; Dey, 1999). These data processing methods created for me an understanding of the ways teachers situate and negotiate their role in policy and described how they interpret the formal and informal expectations they encountered. Comparing data across the sites assisted my analysis and ability to describe the phenomena of expectation, interpretation, and negotiation (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2003) on a broader conceptual level.

Since the emphasis of the study was how the participants interpreted expectations, the primary efforts of data collection and analysis centered on exploring the emergent themes and patterns discussed in interview sessions and my understandings of the context. Therefore, my data analysis focused on coding themes emerging from teacher interviews regarding the expectations they interpreted from policies, their individual negotiations about policy implementation, and claims of adherence or resistance to policy. Participant interviews provided crucial insights to

their processes of negotiating and implementing policy.

In the design of the study, I anticipated constructing meaning with participants throughout the research process. Paraphrasing the scholarly work of Clarke on situational analysis, Charmaz (2014) identifies that "research reality arises within a situation and includes what researchers and participants bring to it and do within it" (p. 13). Clarke (2005) describes three mapping approaches for qualitative analysis where "the *situation per se becomes the ultimate unit of analysis*, and understanding its elements and their relations is the primary goal" (p. xxii). Utilizing Clarke's (2005) cartographic approach to the "social worlds/arenas maps," my intermediary-level interpretations of the research situation aimed to include the micro-level focus of individual participants and the broader discourse of macro-level policy implications. Therefore, "the situation" analyzed in this study is the implementation, interpretation, and negotiation of art education policies in the local district site.

As a part of conceptualizing the meanings constructed during the research process, I utilized an analytic method of memo-writing throughout the study. Charmaz (2014) emphasizes the importance of creating memos in qualitative research stating, "memos catch your thoughts, capture the comparisons and connections you make, and crystalize questions and directions for you to pursue" (p. 162). Used throughout data collection and analysis, memos are "both a methodological practice and a simultaneous exploration of processes in the social worlds of the research site" (Lempert, 2007, p. 245). The memo writing process and subsequent coding reinforced the constant comparative method and kept me close to the data.

To analyze the qualitative data constructed in the study, I employed a process for

manually coding emerging themes and patterns. Saldaña (2013) defines codes constructed in qualitative inquiry as, “most often a word of short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3). To constructive grounded theorist, Charmaz (2014), the processes of coding entails linking collected data and emergent theories to explain data; stating, “through coding, you *define* what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means” (p. 113).

Data analyses of codes occurs in what can be understood as three interdependent stages. Methodologists vary in the language they use to describe the different steps in coding processes; however, the goals remain similar in their essence. Birks and Mills (2015), note that the coding processes relate to researcher’s “level of conceptual abstraction” (p. 91) starting with initial coding, moving to intermediate coding, and finishing with advanced coding, which is “at the heart of theoretical integration” (p. 112) for grounded theorists. In *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, Saldaña (2013) identifies a “reverberative nature” in coding that suggests the “qualitative analytic process is cyclical rather than linear” (p. 58). I believe the inclusive and multimodal analytic approaches presented by Saldaña most closely align with my epistemological, ontological, and methodological perspective as a researcher; therefore, I utilized a variety of coding methods to interpret, analyze, and present my understandings of the *social world* identified and situated in this study.

Creating Codes

To qualify the analytic processes used in this study, this section describes what

Saldaña (2013) calls “first cycle coding methods.” While some of the codes generated from these methods were not realized or recoded until my second or third cycle through the analyses, the data produced employing these methods contribute to the larger conceptual and theoretical implications of the study. In all, eight of Saldaña’s first cycle coding methods were utilized in my data analysis processes. The codes constructed through the analysis processes created the foundation for the findings and helped frame the discussion themes.

Organizational Coding Methods. Three organizational coding methods were utilized in the analysis process. As part of the study design, I built questions and probes into the first interview sessions to gather attribute codes (Saldaña, 2013). These codes generated information to describe participants’ experiences and their demographic data. As examples, I coded participant’s gender, educational attainment, years of art teaching experience, years in the district, current teaching assignment, years in current teaching assignments, other teaching assignments, geographic zone in the district, and pervious other districts or states of employment as art educators.

The second organizational coding method utilized in analysis was *subcoding* (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These codes were created in first, second, and third cycle analyses and represented second-order tags to primary codes (Saldaña, 2013). Gibbs (2007) uses a “parent/child” analogy for subcoding that involves hierarchical organization. A prevalent example of subcodes used in the analysis was about ideological beliefs, where my interpretation of specific participant statements correlated to theoretical philosophies and/or curricular orientations identified in the decision-

making framework.

The third organizational strategy utilized in analysis was *structural* coding (Saldaña, 2013). Structural coding was used to unite participant responses to primary research and interview questions as a means to analyze data across cases. For example, the code "student assessment techniques" directly corresponds to the interview prompt "describe your process for assessing students," which addresses the research sub-questions of "how do participants negotiate standards-based assessments in their curricula and pedagogy?"

Primary Coding Methods. As a novice researcher learning to code data, I printed hard copies of the interview transcripts and coded by hand and line-by-line all of the participant interview data. Resisting the desire to begin crafting the larger thematic meanings, during the first cycle coding phase, I placed my initial focus on a "full understanding of individual cases before those unique cases are combined or aggregated thematically" (Patton, 2002, p. 57). With a goal of memo writing and coding one participant interview per day, in just over two weeks all of the interview data went through a first cycle analysis. The primary coding strategies—which were utilized in tandem during this analysis—Saldaña (2013) classifies as elemental methods.

The *descriptive* coding method calls for summarizing the basic topic of a data passage, creating the foundation for qualitative inquiry (Saldaña, 2013). These descriptive codes identify what the passage is about, not just a summary of the content. For example, the code "autonomy" was used frequently during the analysis process to identify passages where participants discussed expectations about curriculum

development and resources. Furthermore, descriptive coding was utilized in the analysis of ethnographic field notes taken during interview sessions, and particularly, during the teaching observations.

In Vivo coding retains the language used by participants to serve as "symbolic markers of participants' speech and meaning" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 134) within the code. These codes represent broader analytic themes through the participant's language (Birks & Mills, 2015; Charmaz, 2014; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Saldaña, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In Vivo coding was particularly useful in this study because it helped retain the practitioner language representative of the social world and setting (Charmaz, 2014) of the interpreted district expectations.

According to Birks and Mills (2015), the analytic process of *initial* coding is synonymous with the processes of "open coding" by Glaser (1978) and Strauss and Corbin (1998), as well as sharing the name of "initial coding" used by Charmaz (2014). In the primary stages of data analysis, coding with gerunds—or *process* codes (Saldaña, 2013)—in the initial line-by-line analytic processes "is a *heuristic* device to bring the researcher into the data, interact with them, and study each fragment of them" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 121). It is important to note that the reflexive role of the researcher is intertwined within initial coding analyses, as I "reflect deeply on the contents and nuances" of the data (Saldaña, 2013, p. 100).

Affective Coding Methods. Affective analytic coding methods directly investigate and name subjective experiences emerging from the data (Saldaña, 2013). These processes encouraged me to explore the more ambiguous aspects of the data,

revealing what I believe helps best address the research questions. The importance of values and evaluation coding methods (Saldaña, 2013) within the data analysis was evidenced by the ways participants interpreted and negotiated their praxis and described programmatic and administrative efficacy.

As described by Saldaña (2013), values coding "reflect[s] a participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives or world-view. Though each construct has a different meaning, Values Coding, as a term, subsumes all three" (p. 110). The value codes placed on data represent my attempts to situate participants' ideological perspectives within the art teacher decision-making framework and were primarily utilized in the subcoding analysis. As such, my positionality as the researcher is imposed on this reading of the data and is therefore an obviously biased construction in the analysis.

Evaluation coding applies judgements of programs and policies to research data. As utilized in this study, the codes emerged from the qualitative comments of the participants about their evaluations of district policy expectations. As part of the second cycle analytic methods, I compared participants' comments about policies across cases to develop evaluative themes shared in the findings (Merriam, 1988; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995, 2006; Yin, 2003). As the researcher, I attempted to withhold my programmatic evaluations—as much as possible—from within the descriptive and interpretive presentation of findings chapter, and instead discussed my perspectives in Chapter 5. Describing evaluative coding, Saldaña (2013) notes, "it is not possible to be an 'objective' evaluator," however by "rely[ing] primarily on what the participants themselves – the primary stakeholders – say and do" evaluative research can be a

"context-specific enterprise" when attentive to "how (and whose) values and standards are employed" (p. 122).

Situating Codes

The previous section explains the data analysis processes utilized in this study that Charmaz's (2014) constructivist grounded theory calls "initial coding" and Saldaña (2013) describes as "first cycle coding methods." The ebbs and flows of my meaning-making as the researcher became more complex in the applications of these methods as the data moved from practical descriptions of the participants to the interpretive analytic findings of a scholar. This section elucidates the move from line-by-line, micro-level, individual case code creation into broader, cross-case, meso-level data analysis processes. It is here, at the meso-level, that I believe the findings and resulting discussion of this study can be the most illuminating, both figuratively—in that, it enables description of what a collection of teachers *does* with expectations—and metaphorically—because the study highlights the abstruse space between policy-making and policy implementation. Clarke (2005) defines the meso-level of social worlds/arenas mapping as,

> the level of social action—not an aggregate level of individuals, but where individuals become social beings again and again through their actions of commitment to social worlds and their participation in those worlds' activities, simultaneously creating and being constituted. (p. 110)

As unique case study sites, each participant individually revealed his or her interpretation and negotiation of praxis. However, when analyzed together, as a collection of cases, in a specific place and time, and through my interpretations and experiences as a researcher, "the specification, re-representation, and subsequent

examination of the most salient elements in that situation and their relations" (Clarke, 2005, p. 29) emerge in the findings.

To derive meanings from the collection of qualitative cases, my analytic methods shifted to an eclectic (Saldaña, 2013) coding process; however, depending on which methodological or theoretical text you prefer, the process could also have qualified as intermediate (Birks & Mills, 2015), selective (Glaser, 1978), axial (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), or focused (Charmaz, 2014) analyses. Regardless of the semantical orientation, the processes I employed at this stage of analysis organize the bricolage of first cycle codes and memos into "strategic 'second-draft' recoding decisions based on the learnings of the experience" with purposeful analytic choices that "synthesize[d] the variety and number of codes into a more unified scheme" for second cycle processes (Saldaña, 2013, p. 188). This stage of analysis provided an opportunity to start connecting coded themes within the data and being able to make sense of the social worlds/arena situation in which the phenomena of policy interpretation and praxis negotiation occur.

Utilizing the "most important human and nonhuman" (Clarke, 2005, p. 86) data elements collected from the various state, district, participant, and researcher generated artifacts, I created social world/arena maps to conceptualize the collective case of the study situation. Furthermore, the code mapping analysis served as an auditing process to "document how a list of codes gets categorized, recategorized, and conceptualized throughout the analytic journey" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 198). Through the methods of eclectic coding and situational code mapping analysis, data evolved from emerging coded themes into significant constructivist grounded concepts ready for advanced

analysis.

(Re)Cycled Codes

My interpretations of the data and understandings of the context truly began to coalesce after spending months with the data, parsing through policy documents, re-listening to audio recordings, laboriously combing through interview transcripts, puzzling together code maps, and reflexively documenting my processes as the researcher. Employing what Saldaña (2013) calls “second cycle coding methods,” the data coding processes reached the advanced (Birks & Mills, 2015), selective (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), or theoretical (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser, 1978) analytical stage; however, I could claim that I progressed through at least three or four “cycles” in my analysis.

The primary coding process employed in this stage was pattern coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldaña, 2013). Pattern codes develop as “meta-codes” (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldaña, 2013), signifying connections or assemblages amongst themes that “pull together a lot of material into a more meaningful and parsimonious unit of analysis” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 69, cited in Saldaña, 2013). At this point in the data analysis process, searching for the multitude of ways it could converge, diverge, describe, and explain my understanding of participants’ processes of interpreting policy expectations and negotiating praxis, three prominent themes emerged. After coding and recoding data, the discoveries of the study seemed to mesh, and I was ready to present my interpretive findings (see Chapter 4).

In a primarily descriptive and interpretive qualitative study, evaluating the quality of the research is an important albeit ambiguous task. Pinpointing validity in qualitative

research can be more difficult than in quantitative studies (Maxwell, 2002), as the type of data collected is complicated to replicate. Trustworthiness in case studies requires attention to the collection and analysis of data, while presenting findings transparently (Gillham, 2000). The ways qualitative research findings are presented is important (Lincoln & Guba, 2002). Charmaz (2014) argues the important evaluative criteria for constructivist's interpretations of data are credibility, originality, resonance, and the usefulness of the researcher's contributions to the field. In this study, I strove to collect accurate data, transparently describe my analysis process, and represent my interpretations of salient themes for the reader in an interesting way.

Addressing Trustworthiness Concerns

As a final note about my methodologies, methods, and data analysis processes in this study, I should delineate—if it is not already apparent—that the findings presented and discussed represent my understandings of the constructed data. This entire document is partial to my experiences and interpretations. When discussing the *findings* of this study, I have reservations about using the term "theory" to qualify the *results* as they are a construction of the context from my perspective. Therefore, what this study contributes to the field is not a theory about how teachers interpret and negotiate policies, rather it provides one researcher's understandings of how five teachers in one district describe the ways they are affected by professional expectations. I believe that one study alone, particularly a project so narrowly descriptive of one local context, should not be generalized and applied into a theory. Instead, I am optimistic that the findings of this study can enable discussion about the

ways policy expectations are perceived and that stakeholders will examine their own local policy contexts.

I try to honor the essence of the participants and the realities of the situated social world of their phenomena; however, I present the data as it makes sense to me. It is my hope that other readers of this study can also make sense of—and glean a new perspective on—the contexts and implications of policy expectations in visual arts education. Through further research in additional sites, I hope the field can explore additional ways policies affect praxis. I believe artist educators, policy makers, and administrators should first examine how they understand policies then find ways to share their unique understandings with others.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter includes two parts to describe my interpretations of the data collected in the study. Part I describes three of the emergent themes about district policy interpretation and negotiation found in the data during this study, while Part II attempts to situate the participants in the art teacher decision-making framework. In the interview sessions, participants shared perceiving formal and informal expectations of their professional practices from various sources. In Part II of this chapter, I discuss my interpretation of expectations in district artifacts and how participants seem to be oriented within the decision-making framework. During the cyclical data analysis process, I constructed meanings of participant descriptions of policy expectations by comparing the cases from across the district to identify both common and unique interpretations of expectations and the subsequent negotiations of praxis.

The findings of this study are filtered through my own interpretations as the researcher and a former public school artist educator. As such, the findings—as presented—are composed to represent the spirit of the identified themes, as opposed to a singular voice. Therefore, many of the participant's statements shared in this section are actually a construction of the emergent themes, created to represent what the researcher identified as the essence of their interpretations and negotiations; however, some of the statements within this chapter are verbatim quotations from a participant. Interwoven with the constructions of participant statements are descriptions of my own experiences and biases to help contextualize the ways I identified meaning in the data.

Introducing the Participants

All of the participant in the study self-enrolled and were provided pseudonyms. District information was also anonymized to preserve the privacy of the participant, for example, the school district was called Lake Wood Independent School District (ISD) and the campus building names were changed.

Hannah worked as an art educator at Pine Point Elementary. She utilized a choice-based curricular orientation and claimed to have aims of social justice intertwined with her goals. She had professional teaching experiences in elementary schools and had worked in one other district before Lake Wood ISD.

Rosemary was a veteran teacher at Lakeside Elementary with over 20 years of art education experience. She too claimed to use a choice-based curriculum and generated many project ideas from internet resources and her previous experiences. Rosemary had taught art in multiple other states, in elementary, middle, and high school settings, and had arts industry experience outside of public schools.

Dawn taught art and one other course at Southwood Middle School. She had lived in the area as a student and teacher for most of her professional career and had taught one year of elementary art in a different district. A central aim of her curriculum was to create a passion for the visual arts with her students, providing them with successes and self-esteem in her activities.

Michael taught art at Lakeview High School and was the only participant with a graduate degree. Before working in Lake Wood ISD, he had taught in two other districts and one other state. A primary aim of Michael's curricular and pedagogic decisions was to build an award-winning program with technically sound student works.

Jonathan worked at Cedar Grove Middle School. He had taught art in one other state before moving to Texas. Jonathan wanted to inspire his students to see art around them every day. His goal was to ensure that his students understood the scope of art careers that exists and instill the belief that they could be artists.

The study participants shared diverse stories about their journeys into art education and the ways previous experiences influenced their praxis. Throughout this chapter, I provide glimpses of each participant's personality and a few factors I believe shape their decisions. In conjunction with my own professional experiences, I have "themed the data" (Saldaña, 2013) in an effort to present the reader with a context for understanding how five teachers in one public school district interpret and negotiate their praxis around contemporary art education policy.

Findings, Part I

Part I of this chapter includes three themes about my findings in the research. The first section titled *Curricular Freedom and Philosophies in Negotiation*, describes formal policy presented in legal code and expected by the state, filtered through the district, and interpreted and negotiated by participants in their curricula and pedagogy. The section *Exhibition, Competition, and Recognition* shares informal expectations about public exhibition create perceived policies that institutionalize competition and recognition as district values while subsequently developing a culture of comparison. The third section, *Seeking Community*, identifies the participants' interactions with their administrators and peers as a means to describe the ways policy expectations are presented, interpreted, and negotiated within the district.

Curricular Freedom and Philosophies in Negotiation

Art teachers' professional freedoms were paramount in importance throughout our interview sessions. The concept of freedom was apparent in different ways with participants; however, opportunities for curricular and programmatic autonomy emerged as their major concern about policy expectations. For all participants, their professional freedoms were evident when structuring course content. From instructional design and planning for student projects to the open-to-interpretation district curriculum, participants frequently championed the amount of autonomy they perceived in their professional practices. They were empowered by the freedom to tailor curricula to their teaching strengths and the specific needs and interests of their students.

The concept of "local control" appears on multiple levels in conversations with participants. Teachers wanted the freedom to design and implement curricula without obtrusive district oversight. Similarly, the district seemed to champion their unique interpretations of the state expectations and how they performed compared to other schools and districts. State policies are manifest in the language of local education agencies—school districts—as they attempt to address the state standards (Spillane, 1999). In my site visits at multiple schools and districts in the area, I found it common to see plaques and banners prominently displayed in building entryways proclaiming state performance achievements of *exemplary* or *recognized.* However, the state accountability rating system was changed for the 2013 school year to yield less glamorous indicators [i.e. met standard, improvement required, and not rated]. On the national level, one of the central arguments against adopting and adapting the Common

Core State Standards initiative is the loss of local control of the curriculum by districts and states.

In this section, I describe how art teachers interpreted their district's policies and the ways it influenced their curricular choices. Examples of subject specific formal policies for content and assessment included state and district student learning standards, curricular scope and sequence documents, art rubrics and portfolio requirements, vocabulary lists, and how courses are aligned—by media and student proficiency (Art I, II, etc.). Alternatively, we also explored how informal policies may only be *implied* within the district, thus leaving great latitude for interpretation.

Framing Foundations

In Texas, the primary formal policy expectation of all public school educators was to address the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) in their curricula. However, the ways districts choose to design curriculum and subject matter content is left to each ISD. Study participants described Lake Wood ISD as having an overarching district visual arts curriculum—created by a curriculum committee in the fall of 2013—that was a rewording of the state TEKS. Their curriculum was divided by elementary grade level K-5 and at the secondary level, by course, for example, art I or advanced placement. One participant described the structure by stating,

> We definitely have a curriculum; I was part of the leadership team that put it together. What we did was take the TEKS and change the language in a way that made sense to us. Additionally, I was on the standards writing committee in another state—and they're all pretty similar—so we just modified things here until they seemed like they fit. We really want everyone to feel like they have 'local control' of their curriculum. The operative concept was to create an overarching framework to provide freedom and choice. The TEKS are so broad, too, that no matter what you are doing, you should be able to use the curriculum. We felt like

> it was really important for teachers to be able to utilize their strengths when building a program. Therefore, the curriculum is loose in that each teacher or school can address the requirements in their own way.

Through this description, my interpretation was that the district wanted to impose the loosest structure possible, shifting power from the department administrators to the individual teachers. Framed as providing "local-control" and teacher autonomy, the policies provided little guidance about the implementation of the state requirements, rather there appeared to be an assumption that all of the visual arts teachers could unpack and effectively integrate the policies on their own. In my conversations with the participants, they were all aware of the generalities of the policies, and seemed to pay little attention to the specific requirements.

Data for this study were collected before the scheduled implementation of the revised visual arts TEKS, and the curriculum materials analyzed reflect the previous version. That said, the Lake Wood ISD curriculum was created during the TEKS revision period and posted publicly on the district website in the fall of 2014, after the state revisions were approved by the state board of education. Michael at Lakeview High School described how the policies are included in visual art programming by sharing,

> At our school, the art curriculum is based on media and technique. So, all of the courses tend to be set up with that structure. We took the TEKS and the [Advanced Placement] (AP) requirements and basically meshed them together. The district gave all art teachers paid time to develop and post our school's modified curriculum on the district visual arts webpage. All of the schools were supposed to put their own requirements together. In the end, I think the other schools basically just copied and pasted what we did—which is fine with me—and then put that up.

At the secondary level, the overarching Lake Wood ISD curriculum was written in common and student friendly language, which was less detailed than the verbiage used

in the TEKS and omits many of the specific performance requirements. The elementary curriculum was a 'copy-and-paste' version of the TEKS; however, it included samples of essential questions, vocabulary terms, concepts and skills, and suggested projects and assessments. In comparison, the elementary curriculum materials included much more guidance and specificity than the secondary curriculum. For example, the elementary curriculum resources included the TEKS as published by the Texas Education Agency and district-developed essential questions, concepts, skills, suggested projects, response assessments, and vocabulary terms for grades K-5.

In my experiences working with different ISDs as a student teacher supervisor, I hear stories about how each site is particularly concerned that teachers address the TEKS in their curricula. When I visit students and their mentors, we spend a little time discussing the ways TEKS are emphasized in the district and strategies for planning and implementation. Most mentor teachers feign interest in standards discussions, stating that it is a requirement of the job, but very few want to discuss the topic at length or seem prepared to elucidate their TEKS planning, instructional, or assessment processes. Rosemary taught art at Lakeside Elementary and described her knowledge of district standards expectations by stating,

> We don't really have a curriculum for the district. If we do, it's never talked about. So, it's nice to have the freedom to do what I want. Yes, I address the TEKS, but only because I have to enter them into our lesson-planning template. I couldn't really tell you exactly what they say. It's hard to explain, but I just kind of *know* what's in them. Nevertheless, no one keeps track of what we do.

At Cedar Grove Middle School, Jonathan explained how he perceives the expectations by sharing,

> Ya know, I think there are a few guidelines from the district. I remember hearing something about them during an in-service once upon a time, but I think it's basically the TEKS. I know that I'm meeting those expectations, or at least I can

say that I am.

Most teachers I talk to tend to readily disparage the repercussions of the standards-based assessment policy movement on the large-scale, but seem unwilling to critically examine and describe their own interactions and practices at the individual level. Opinions about political and administrative consequences abound, but practical implications and strategies are rarely discussed. The things typically left unsaid about standards policies and curricular choices are a major motivator for this study; the following sections elaborate on teachers' approaches to balancing curricular expectations and professional freedom.

Artistic Choices

The visual arts may be seen as a subjective and loosely structured discipline, where strict and specific guidelines hamper creative freedom. The TEKS four basic strands, "provide broad, unifying structures for organizing the knowledge and skills students are expected to acquire" (Texas Education Agency, 2013). While the broad TEKS allow flexibly for teachers to address content uniquely, participants stated they still have trouble "fitting it all in" because with so much variety, "I don't cover it in the depth that I would like to." Therefore, difficult content choices needed to be made, including what topics to include and at what extent. Hannah taught at Pine Point Elementary and shared her interpretations of district expectations by stating,

> We don't really have any curriculum resources in this district. It's kind of sad actually. There is a basic 'rewording' of the TEKS here at the elementary level, a website with a vocab bank, and that's about it. There might be essential questions for each grade level listed somewhere. Regardless, I tend to fall back on the things I learned in college to help guide me more than anything the district provides. And of course, the things I find online.

> However, this set-up works for me because I can just do my own thing. With the [Teaching for Artistic Behavior] (TAB) style curriculum, it gives me the freedom to adjust projects and instruction to meet the needs of my students. Because sometimes they—or I—find a tangent that we want to explore in more depth. I love having that flexibility, because I can just make the TEKS fit where I need them, you know…making sure that I have all of them checked off my list.

Both elementary teacher participants defined their curriculum as "choice-based." They emphasized the importance of creating student autonomy as a key factor for teaching them to "think like an artist." These participants described setting up a few guidelines for projects—such as limiting certain materials or establishing themes and big ideas—but often favored exploratory environments over hard-fast project assignments, wanting to foster creativity before their students entered middle school. Hannah described her curricular design and pedagogical approach by sharing,

> The choice-based curricular design reinforces the innate creative abilities that they already have as children. I try to foster that mindset and instill some confidence in their artistic voice before their creativity wanes and they begin coming too self-conscious—I see it already sometimes in the fifth-graders. Because I think we are *all* artists, when children have the opportunity to own that aspect of their personality that is when they really shine.

> I think the most important thing is for students to have freedom and choice in their artwork. That's why I use a choice-based art curriculum, some people call it Teaching for Artistic Behavior. My lessons are usually connected to a big idea or theme; a medium, process, and technique; or some other way to frame the project. I typically include a professional artist example that I feel is connected in some way, because I want them to be thinking about their work like professionals' too. From there, I try to encourage the students to figure out their own way of addressing the problem, providing support and offering suggestions when needed. I want them to think like artists and to do so they need to have ownership of their ideas. If I constantly provide step-by-step instructions, I don't feel like they take as much ownership. Therefore, I try to set up a theme and let them take it. For me, art education is about expressing ideas, solving problems, and developing an individual and creative voice; because that is what thinking like an artist is all about.

The correlation between artistic choices for students and professional freedom for teachers seemed important to note. In a discipline that emphasizes unique and

creative thought, teachers championed the ability to be artistic in their pedagogical choices and responded negatively towards prescriptive curricula. All participants agreed that they do not desire a more defined curriculum than the accustomed, several going so far as to say that they would quit before they taught from a "canned curriculum." Alternatively, they claimed that the autonomy they experience in their programs is one of the best aspects of the job. Jonathan described his experience transitioning from a job in another state into Lake Wood ISD by sharing,

> Moving here from a small rural school, I really thought with all of the money and resources of this big district, we'd have more support. I didn't expect to get a 'canned curriculum' where all of the lessons are scripted for the year, but at least some sort of curriculum helps. Consequently, I simply made things up as I went along, changing projects a little bit each year. It gave me a chance to plan and teach content as I wanted, but without the experiences I had before getting here, I think it would have been hard to figure it out.

In my K-12 experiences, I taught a few of the same projects every semester. As a novice teacher, I worked hard to develop a couple of lessons for each course prep that covered several *essential knowledge* and *skill* objectives. I had few resources to help me plan sequentially and stumbled through those early years. Through trial and error over several semesters, I refined the lessons to emphasize the concepts and technical skills I thought were important for the students. These lessons became signposts in my curriculum, giving me the opportunity assess student work and check for understanding while providing clues about how I needed to modify the upcoming lessons to address gaps in the students learning.

Planning for Deviation

Closely following choice in our conversations was the topic, boredom; participants seemed to juxtapose the idea of uninspiring working conditions with having

the freedom to change plans and projects at will. On several occasions, participants told me stories about having an idea pop into their consciousness "driving to work" that day or "when watching TV last night" and enjoying the professional autonomy to adjust plans and instruction as they saw fit. They denounced feelings of being stuck in any one set way of "doing." Dawn shared her perspective on modifying lesson plans by stating,

> I try to stay on top of trends in our field because I feel like it is easy to get stuck into the cycle of doing only what you know and are comfortable with, and that gets stale. You know, I think the kids pick up on that, too. That is one of the reasons why I'm always trying to tweak and change things. I tell the students, "we *were* going to do it *this* way, but you know what, I got a new idea this morning, so now let's try doing *this.*" Moreover, I think that helps reiterate for them that the artistic process is fluid; sometimes you need to take chances and it's okay to deviate from the plan. It also gives me an opportunity to show some passion, because I want them to be passionate and develop a *fire* for the arts. When I am excited about trying something new or doing it in a different way, I think it inspires them too.

Dawn was a fast-talking and well-liked middle school teacher with a no-nonsense approach to her planning. She was very organized and methodical in her lesson planning and course structure, maintaining a clean and tidy art room. She used big binders for students that outlined the entire year's coursework. She believed in keeping students interested, "they need to create artwork that they'll love." Dawn's describes her interpretations about curriculum expectations saying,

> We do have a curriculum of sorts, but it's basically another version of the TEKS. I took that information and put it into student language, you know, so it's something they can understand. I have a big spreadsheet with all of my projects and the TEKS listed in a table. That way, from the start of the year, I already have a plan of how we are going to meet all of the state, and therefore, district standards. I've been teaching for a while, so everything is pretty much worked out. The students even get a binder at the beginning of the year, so they know what's coming, what is expected, and how I go about evaluating it. This really helps when my principal—or anyone for that matter—has questions, because I can just pull up my spreadsheet and show him: this is what we're doing in this lesson, on this day, and so on. And really, it's about peace of mind for me,

because I never have to worry about it.

> Some people might think I'm a bit [obsessive-compulsive disorder] (OCD) about planning, but I really try to be organized. I think it helps the students understand expectations and it makes my life easier. Now, this is not to say that we don't improvise, because we change things up all of the time, but the structure of the lesson and the ways that it addresses standards doesn't change. If anything, the lessons will change to include more TEKS.

Dawn felt that through her organized course structure and front-end planning, she could freely alter projects throughout the year. Using the broad TEKS and overarching district curriculum, she created and organized her own specific guidelines. Through planning and structure, she created her own freedoms to deviate when inspiration strikes.

The depth of year-long planning among participants varied widely. Not all of the study participants claimed to be as organized as Dawn. Most admitted that there was a general idea for their yearly plan, though specific projects and pacing were fluid. Relying on their experiences—for example, projects that produced interesting artworks, seemed to capture students' attention, or emphasized a relevant concept—a few participants confided that they do not truly plan long-term. Rosemary described her process by sharing,

> I've been teaching for so long, that most of my curriculum is just stuff I've accumulated over the years. There are binders and file cabinets full of lessons and examples and ideas. Whenever I get bored, I just start looking through that stuff and see what sparks my interest. There is a basic outline for the year in my mind from August onward, and then based on my supplies and any new ideas, I let it go from there.

When planning my high school curriculum, I organized the signpost projects to create a rhythm for the semester; spacing out the in-depth and time-consuming projects to allow for shorter skill development activities. Sometimes the activities were thoroughly planned, though more often than not they were hastily organized

reproductions of skill-building projects I experienced in my college studio courses or high school art class. I found myself focused on teaching technical skills over concepts, and appropriating traditional activities instead of generating ideas and developing contemporary studio practices.

Study participants tended to organize their curriculum by media, technical skill, concept, or some combination of the three. The most basic planning process entailed first quarter drawing, second quarter painting, third quarter three-dimensional art, and leave fourth quarter flexible to cover any other projects they decided to include or add throughout the year. In the next section, I share my interpretations of how participants utilize assessment in their curricula.

Negotiating Standards-Based-Assessments

With the emphasis described by the participants on high expectations for student success and recognition at the district level, I think it is important to discuss how the teachers negotiated assessments within their own classrooms. Student learning standards describe what students should "know and should be able to do" (TEA, 2014a) and therefore imply a logical transfer to classroom assessment methods. However, in practice, only Michael and Dawn demonstrated assessment practices that were rooted in the TEKS objectives. Perhaps this can be attributed to one of the district's stated strategic design goals of "reframing state readiness standards." When analyzing what the teachers claimed to be assessing, whether it was through our conversations, the rubrics shared during interviews, or practices in classroom observations, the teaches' objectives centered on three themes; assessing behavior, technique, and creativity.

In their formative and summative assessment strategies, all of the participants utilized some iteration of an “effort” or “daily participation” grade. Rosemary shared that she used the criteria to “keep them on task” during class, an example of this kind of objective was whether a student followed project directions. Meanwhile, Michael leveraged assessment to justify lower grades; “if they are not in here working, then they must not really be an art kid” he rationalized. Hannah admitted behavior assessments did not really advance her goal of creating artists, but it helped fill in the gradebook with progress reports and satisfied administrators and parents who wanted to be able to account for daily activity in the classroom.

Most closely related to the TEKS, were participants’ assessment criteria focused on techniques. In my analysis of the TEKS outcomes, the objectives were designed to promote experiences with a variety of media and technical mastery of processes over the more conceptually based National Core Arts Standards recently developed by the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards writing teams. Participants’ evaluations of technical skills tended to be quantified in a continuum of mastery wherein students demonstrated some ambiguous level of success. Where the language of standards was written to identify whether a student could demonstrate a skill or not, the participants seemed to try to quantify the degree to which the student was successful in utilizing the skill.

The last criteria common in participants’ assessments was creativity/originality. While one strand of the TEKS is “creative expression,” the art teachers in the study shared admittedly ambiguous definitions of how creativity was assessed. In the TEKS, the anchor standard for creative expression states, “the student communicates ideas

through original artworks using a variety of media with appropriate skills. The student expresses thoughts and ideas creatively while challenging the imagination, fostering reflective thinking, and developing disciplined effort and progressive problem-solving skills" (TEA, 2014b). In practice, what constituted creativity seemed to greatly depend on the teachers' ideological frame. What remained consistent about the concept of creativity in assessments, was that ultimately it was a subjective judgment call on the part of the teacher, and generally an artwork was viewed as creative if it stood out from what other students had done throughout the teachers' accumulated experiences.

In summary, the ways participants negotiated standards-based assessments in their pedagogy was similar to the way they implemented curricula. The formal criteria outlined in policies and evidenced for administrators—such as the number of major and minor grades recorded during each nine-week period and reframed state standards—tended to be designed as a means to fulfill a professional expectation. Participants stated that they tried to correlate assessments to specific projects and present them in a way that was helpful to students, but in the end, the assessments seemed to be performed to satisfy administrators and parents who wanted a validation of the work being done in the classroom.

Pedagogical Philosophy

Regardless of the participant's interpretations of state standard requirements, depth of planning, or assessment criteria, when given curricular freedom, the organization and emphasis of participants' curricula were most influenced by their pedagogical philosophies and beliefs. Ideologies influence all curricular decisions

because they directly relate to the teachers' perspectives about the role of education, interactions between teachers and students, and the possibilities of teachers' roles as professionals. Woods (1996) claims teachers base decisions "on knowledge and beliefs about the current state of the world (such as students' knowledge and abilities, the contents of the curriculum, and what is happening in the classroom), and about what is good and bad about the current state" (p. 118). With few resource to utilize during planning and little district oversight, the participants relied on what they believed to be the best approaches to art education to guide them through their careers. Hannah described how her pedagogical philosophies differed from what she viewed as mainstream beliefs in the district, stating,

> I have tried to share my ideas and curriculum with other teachers in the district by having workshops and doing presentations during our in-services, but most of the other art teachers don't really seem to be on-board. This is a really conservative district, so I'm not sure if that is a factor, but people don't really seem all that open to change. They seem very content in doing things the way they've been done, and a lot of people have been here for a while. I've been here for a bit and am implementing many of the concepts I learned about in my preservice training program, but a lot of what others are doing seem to be projects they developed 30 years ago and have never changed. After trying to share my process on several occasions, I've gotten frustrated and have sought community elsewhere.
>
> Slowly, I think that the other teachers and principal at my school are beginning to understand my logic, but it has taken a few years. I think they understand because they are starting to hear the ways the students talk about the work and their artistic process; they are getting the vocabulary and beginning to understand the language of authentic art-making. On the surface, it may look somewhat chaotic in here most days; classroom teachers and administrators might think it looks like a war-zone. To me, it looks like art-making. My principal has come around, and I think that he is beginning to understand my motivations.

In the interview sessions, participants frequently reiterated their pedagogical philosophies and the ways they influenced their decision-making. All participants believed instilling a life-long appreciation for the visual arts was a primary goal of their practice. The teachers wanted students to feel comfortable engaging art, even if they

did not identify themselves as an “art kid.” One participant stated, “I have to keep them feeling creative, feeling free, feeling comfortable” and that “it's really about a whole person more than an art education.” Likewise, the middle school participants wanted students to build self-confidence and a passion for art over developing specific technical skills. Dawn stated, “I’ll let someone else crush their dreams; they will have a whole life-time of someone telling them they’re not good enough. They don’t need to hear that from me.”

The elementary and middle school participants did not seem concerned with vertical programmatic alignment, though through their comments, I learned the concept was a buzz term in the district. These teachers seemed content that their students learn all of the *real* art skills they needed in high school. The high school participant acknowledged that he is the gatekeeper for students who want to develop as artists. He strove to ensure that students in the introductory art classes gained an appreciation for the visual arts, but was also very concerned about developing technical skills. “I’m a maker,” he stated, and was gravely concerned about the “death of the technician.” Michael shared his overall approach to curriculum planning by stating,

> Around here, our lower-level classes are very much based in developing technical skill and processes. You need to be good at your craft before you worry about developing your voice and point of view. Perhaps, it could be that my background is that I’m a trained potter—which is a very technically based media—but I feel that one needs to have foundational skills first, and expand out from there. We have our Art I kids, and let’s be honest, they’re how we keep the lights on around here, but a bunch of them are not really art kids. They’re here because they have to be or couldn’t get into another class—which is fine—but I hope that they leave with at least a basic understanding of some art appreciation.

In our conversations, Michael consistently reiterated his beliefs about building a high-achieving program by instilling technical skills in lower-level courses so that by the time they become “varsity artist” advanced placement students, they can focus on

developing a voice. He claimed,

> What I really do in that class is try to start scouting and recruiting for my upper-level courses. Some kids know they're artists and I try to push them. Some of them don't know yet, but because they have some promise, or we develop a relationship, or they just enjoy the environment; those are the ones I try to nurture and bring back. Some of the kids that sign up for our level two courses, I never knew were interested in art, but when they come back the next year, that's when we really start moving them forward.

Regardless of the ideologies driving teachers' curricula, the expectations of the district did little to influence the organization of their programs. Participants seemed confident in their approaches—acknowledging that their beliefs evolve over time—and determined to design courses and assessments that fit their pedagogical philosophies. When asked about how they justified their choices, the common refrains were "I can make the TEKS fit with anything I do," swiftly followed by, "No one is going to check anyway."

In my own teaching experiences, as I settled into the repetition of the school year and transitioned out of my novice teacher tendencies, I became more reflective and started to question my course organization and project motivations. Coupled with the coursework taken for my master's degree, I became interested in finding out what teachers do in the vast landscape that constitutes art education. If we have curricular freedom and are essentially left to our own devices when structuring programs, are there other expectations in art education that we share?

Exhibition, Competition, and Recognition

Public exhibition of student artwork was the dominant expectation participants interpreted as part of the informal district policy. Elementary teachers emphasized the need to display art in hallways, at school "open-houses," and along with the middle

school participants, described the need to work on interdisciplinary or collaborative projects with other subject-matter teachers. At the secondary levels, participants shared expectations of representing the district in area, regional, and state competitions. One participant told a story about her resistance to the exhibition requirements and her subsequent internal philosophical negotiations. Throughout this section, themes of quality, comparison, and competition live just under the surface of teacher professional expectations.

Raising the Bar

Michael wanted to work in the best art department in the metro. A few years into his teaching appointment at a large suburban high school, Michael leveraged his role as co-department chair to focus on increasing the quality of student work. In an affluent part of town where success was measured by competitive performance and public recognition, his cadence and message seemed a comfortable fit in the coaches' office or on an athletic field. Describing his approach to program building, Michael stated,

> Here at Lakeview High School we're the top dogs in the district. Our students consistently win all of the awards at the district competition; we do very well at regionals and almost always have a few kids take home top awards at state. We want to be the gold standard of artistic achievement around here, and we'll let you know it.
>
> My mindset is, 'you should be the best at whatever it is that you want to do.' So, if I'm going to be an art teacher, I'm going to be a darn good one. I live, breath, and eat art, and want my students to do the same because their work is a reflection of me and our school. If you're not willing to put in the time and effort to be good at what we're doing, then you should find somewhere else to be.

Seen as the showcase campus for the district, expectations for top performances in academics, athletics, and the fine arts permeated school culture. One method of quantitative measurement for comparing student performance and making inferences

about teaching effectiveness used by Lakeview's principals was the Advanced Placement (AP) programs' exam and portfolio scores. Evaluated externally by the College Board, high school students' portfolios in the college-level curriculum were scored from 5 to 1, corresponding to being extremely well qualified to not recommended for college. Michael discussed the importance of the AP exams by claiming,

> It is very important to us that they score well on their portfolio evaluations; ya know 3's just aren't going to cut it. At the beginning, our AP program wasn't the best; our enrollment was kind of low, and the performance and quality needed to be better. I even had my principal tell me, 'we can't have the art department bringing down our AP scores.' So our department took a look at it and have worked very hard to make the program rigorous and high achieving. Over the last few years, our scores have become phenomenal, enrollment numbers are through the roof, and we are getting awards all over the place.

Michael focused on describing the rigor his department developed to establish and maintain advanced placement portfolio scores—as to not drag down the school's high-performing average—and win district and state competition medals. With an emphasis on high scores for these exams, the art department's programming was redesigned to funnel serious students into the AP courses and 'weed-out' underachievers. Michael described his commitment to developing the AP program by sharing,

> My focus is always on the AP kids. They are the ones who are going to have my name attached to them and may actually do something productive in the world, so I want them to be good. We call them the 'Varsity Artists' in our department and take a very serious approach to their progress. There are mandatory critiques after school on Wednesdays; the entire art department is committed to being there, so we expect the students to show up and participate, too. We make them talk about their work in depth at those critiques; a big part of the AP Portfolio evaluation is based on the student's ability to communicate about their work.
>
> We want to showcase the best and brightest we have. Therefore, if we identify that a student is not committed to the program, then sometimes we need to cut them from the team. We won't completely kick them out of the class, instead we just change them into an independent study or something, which is

> fine. This way the kids who are hardworking and dedicated get our full attention. We know that the 'Varsity Artists' have potential and want them to perform at a high level at any of the competitions that we participate in.

As the researcher I cannot help but wonder about the message sent to the Art I students about their value by increasing the emphasis of the program on advanced level students and how this might impact student thinking about the visual arts on a broader scale. This structure could work very well for the highly motivated and skilled art students. However, I believe that a majority of students in the school, and even most of the students who took mid-level art courses might not be best served by this approach. While I believe all students should participate in rigorous coursework, I would hate to demoralize much of the school population by creating a sense of elitism in the program.

Community Values

In addition to the importance of AP performance, the Lakeview High School art department emphasized participation in art competitions. Reiterating connections to athletics, Michael viewed student exhibitions as marquee events for the school. Strategically scheduled to maximize student and program recognition, the "varsity" team utilized practice exhibitions before competing for state prizes. Michael shared his thinking behind changing the exhibition schedule by stating,

> We modified our exhibition schedule to help prepare them for the tougher competition. We start by having the all-school open contest, where any student can submit work to the show. It is curated and judged; good practice for the high-ability art kids to get their work ready for presentation. Next is the district competition, where we are up against all of the other high schools. This is when we start to separate the 'wheat from the chaff.' The quality of our work is regularly recognized; it gives the students more confidence and helps get us ready for regional and state contests. Because, when we submit work to the landmark competitions, it is the best opportunity for us to shine as a department. Our students are there to clean house.

External validation seemed to be the benchmark for success at Lakeview High School. Although some teachers in the district may have concerns about students simply attending and passing class, Michael expected all students to perform at a high level. Parents and students who expected art credits to pad grade point averages contrasted with the administrative pressure for rigorous advanced-level coursework. Describing how he negotiated the external community factors for high achieving students with his personal and administrative expectations for rigorous coursework, Michael stated,

> I think part of the push for excellence around here is that it seems to be in the fabric of the community. We are in an affluent part of town where mediocracy is not acceptable and parents expect for their children to get the best education possible. From a young age, the students are under a lot of pressure to perform at a high level and get results. We have a lot of 'helicopter parents' who assume that art is a blow-off class and their kids will get an easy 'A.' That causes tension because we don't give out easy 'A's' around here; I mean the kids have to work for it. So when a student is jacking around and not taking the class seriously, we run into problems.
>
> I am not at all inclined to raise a kid's grade because a parent starts harassing me about it, but—and I've had discussions with my principal about this—in the long run, what's the real out-come? What do the students learn? Well, they learn how to game the system. Nevertheless, those aren't the kids who are going off to art school or are going to become professional artists anyway, so they're not really a reflection of me.
>
> I received advice from an administrator a few years ago who described it as, 'You've got to pick which hill you want to die on.' By that I mean, you have to decide what's really important and fight for it; things that are secondary aren't worth the trouble. For me, it's the AP kids that matter; they get recognition at the competitions and in portfolio review. As a department, we make them work, but in the end, we all get to enjoy their accomplishments.

Michael was willing to relinquish some of his power to persistent parents and students in exchange for the ability to focus on the advanced-level students. He felt validated as a teacher when his students won awards and pursued art careers. While exceptional AP portfolio scores and statewide high school competition recognitions

might reflect the pinnacle of achievement in district art programming, expectations for public validation permeated all levels of art education in Lake Wood ISD. All study participants expressed the paramount informal expectation was to publically display student work.

Exhibition Expectations

In all of the schools I visited, having art hanging up in the hallways throughout the year seemed to be an important aspect of promoting visual arts programming. Hannah reasoned, "I think it helps remind people that the arts are an important part of the educational experience." At the Lakeside Elementary, Rosemary shared that her principal likes to have art hanging up in the hallways to display for parents. She stated, "at open houses and parent-teacher conferences, [the principal] likes to have work up in the hall. It's a way for her to show parents that their kids are getting a well-rounded education. Like, 'see, they're making art, too.'" Displaying student artwork in schools and in the community was viewed as an important aspect of supporting art education. It was emphasized by building-level principals and the fine arts department.

Participants stated that the biggest expectation they interpreted from their administrators was to contribute student work to the district-wide public art exhibitions. These pressures to present artwork publically were shared by all participants and focused on annual district-wide spring student shows. For the visual arts department, these exhibitions were the showcase events, housed in a centralized community performing arts center where the art teachers got approximately a week to display their students' 'best' work.

An outside juror that selected the top 120 submissions to exhibit reviewed the high school student art show. The show was beautifully hung with a professional feel in the community center. There were first, second, and third place awards along with honorable mentions in various media categories, along with the juror's, superintendent's, and director's choice grand prizes. At the show opening and awards ceremony, the space buzzed with students, family members, and art teachers. Many brightly colored large ribbons adorned the walls, accompanying the distinguished submissions, often overshadowing the works themselves. The event represented a 'measuring-stick' of artistic quality for the students, teachers, schools, and community members. An emcee at the ceremony remarked, "this is the best, of the best, of the best, of what Lake Wood ISD art has to offer. If your work is hanging in this room, it means that you are awesome."

Due to the size of the district, there were separate shows for elementary, middle, and high school students. To accommodate work from each school, the elementary students' work was divided into the three geographic zones, each with its own exhibition. The participants acknowledged the importance of presenting student art publically; however, they had mixed feelings about the district exhibition. When an elementary teacher with 700 or more students in grades K-6 selects less than four percent of her student population for public display, tensions may arise. Informally, a message is sent to students about artistic quality that may be empowering for students whose work is displayed. However, what messages do the other students perceive?

Not only did the emphasis on exhibition create tough choices for participants about which works to present publically, it also created venues for comparison between

schools and teachers. Whether the viewers of the exhibits were trained artists or had no formal art knowledge, subjective value judgments permeated the culture. Rosemary described why she enjoys the art exhibits, stating,

> It gives me a chance to see what everyone else is doing, checkout the projects, and get a sense of what the quality is like around the district. We hardly ever see each other, so I like the opportunity to compare and measure up. You see some teachers who have the same projects up every year, ya know, it's always 20 copies of the same thing. Don't get me wrong; it typically looks good, but it's all the same. How boring! I can't stand that. And, oh my goodness, other people display stuff that seem to literally come straight out of a coloring book; it's disgraceful. When I go, I look for new ideas and projects to incorporate next year, but I'm also observing how I stack-up. Over the last couple of years, our art has been getting better. My students are really starting to blossom with this new approach I've been trying. At first, it was kind of a mess—and some of it still is—but I'm happy with the way our projects look when we exhibit.

From my own perspective, I believe the intent of the art exhibitions is to celebrate student growth and achievements, creating an event that allows many different community members to gather and recognize the importance of the visual arts in our schools. However, with the current state of our audit culture that trains us to measure and compare, these exhibits—exaggerated by award ceremonies and ribbons—become grounds for evaluations. Consequently, an event that may have been designed as a celebration of students, can quickly evolve into an informal professional appraisal of the art teachers.

Art Show Anxiety

How student work looks could be the most accessible indicator of quality for the public. As such, when principals and parents are not necessarily aware of all of the intricacies of an art lesson, it might be easy for them to make quick value judgments based simply on the final product. Furthermore, personal preferences about what

constitutes “good art” can vary widely. In my experiences, most audiences gravitate toward two extreme: they are impressed either by work that realistically represents subject matter or by art that is highly impressionistic. As I mingled through the crowd at the art show, trying to over-hear conversations about the work on display, most comments also fell into two categories: (1) the student’s mastery of media, which seemed to correlate with realistic representations; or (2) how creative the student was, which was a difficult comment to qualify without interrupting the huddled groups of strangers.

Rosemary was not the only participant who shared that the exhibition gives her a chance to make value judgments; several other participants also confessed that it allowed them to compare the quality of their students’ work against that of students of other district art teachers. Johnathan described how this process affects his professional self-image, stating,

> I get extremely self-conscious at the district art shows. At the reception, some displays look absolutely marvelous with expensive matting and a professional presentation. I know these are the schools that have big budgets and stable student populations; their displays look really good. On the other hand, I fight for scrap supplies, and some of my students are worried about having a roof over their heads after 4:00 PM, so mastering realistic observational drawing is not a high priority.
>
> I want to exhibit good work—trust me—but it’s not the focus of my program. In the end, what the art looks like is not *that* important to me, but I know that is how other people are judging us. I know that my name and school are on the display. I imagine how it is perceived by others, and it makes me anxious. I do the best that I can with what we’ve got here at this school, but I can also admit that I’m not always proud of what we display.

Johnathan worked at a school in the lowest socioeconomic region of the district. His student population was much more diverse than other areas of town, and he recognized that the differences in his students’ personal lives and the neighborhood

community's cultural values influenced the artistic skillsets of his students. Elaborating on the modifications he has made to his curriculum, Johnathan shared,

> I believe I need to be teaching the whole child. There is such a broad range of abilities my classroom that it is hard to develop sound technical skills in all of their projects, so our focus is broader than that. For some, it's a miracle that they get anything down on paper. Other years, the quality of our classes' work is decent when they seem to get it. More often than not, I've got a real tough student population whose art just doesn't end up looking as high quality as other parts of the district. But, when it's all said and done, I just hope that my students leave here knowing that art is all around them, and if it's their passion, that they can make a living at it and dispel these myths about the starving artist.

Johnathan grew up a rural community in the south and shared that people thought he was "uppity" because he went to college. Because of his personal background, he felt like he should try to dispel myths about art elitism. In his pedagogy, he focused on integrating equal parts of art appreciation and exposure to visual arts careers. He acknowledged the importance of teaching technical skills but emphasized it was not the most important aspect of his curriculum. Consequently, when exhibiting art in the district show, he felt that the outwardly visible art product on display did not always represent an accurate picture of the learning that occurred.

Most participants admitted it could be stressful to present the work of their students, and to some degree, they shared that they are self-conscious about how the work is perceived. Like Johnathan, Hannah described how her pedagogical approach of "process over product" was misunderstood in her school community. She stated,

> When I first started at this school and began implementing the TAB [Teaching for Artistic Behavior] structure, I heard unflattering comments about student work. Our goals tend to be process oriented and more conceptual; students don't always develop their art into beautifully crafted objects. I hung projects in the hall that the individual students were really proud of, but wasn't beautifully polished and technically sound artworks, and other teachers scoffed at it. They wanted pretty things hanging in the hallways so that it makes the school look good to parents and visitors.

Hannah's peers' expectations about what quality artwork looked like was different from her own perceptions of the students' learning. She was more interested in how the students' ideas developed over time, wanting to celebrate their growth, which may not be obvious to anyone besides the art teacher and the student. Hannah's emphasis on individual student work and idea development was a central component of the way she implemented choice-based pedagogy in the classroom.

Hannah's decisions about selecting artwork for the district exhibition stayed consistent with her teaching practices. Discussing the motivation for her selection process she shared, "I'd rather display 25 unique projects showing student artistry, opposed to one image copied by students to look the same, even if they are impeccably crafted. To me, that's not art; it just shows they know how to copy." Hannah acknowledged that she felt misunderstood, even by other art teachers. She described feeling that she had a different set of pedagogical approaches and beliefs than her mainstream peers. To Hannah, the differences were most evident at the exhibition, as she stated,

> When I walk into our end of the year exhibit and see project displays where everything looks the same, it makes me feel bad. First, I feel sorry for the students that are not receiving the art education I believe is important. But second, I know that other people see the display—and since it looks organized, neat, and shiny—they think it's good quality, which perpetuates the stereotype about value. Then they come to my display, see lots of different types of work, and it seems like they don't appreciate it as much. Since our art doesn't always look tidy and regimented, they perceive it as lower quality, when in my mind, it is the complete opposite. Consequently, that reflects poorly on me as a teacher.

Hannah became visibly distraught during this exchange, emotion beginning to well-up in her eyes. She continued on, describing how her interpretations of the public's expectations of her program affected her feelings by sharing,

> I want to feel validated, having people understand and value the work that we do

> in here. However, I feel alone in here most of the time. I think some people believe that I'm not doing my job, and that bothers me, it really does. I wish that it were not that way. Sure, I could change my philosophy and entire curriculum to have every student make 'cookie-cutter' projects that look nice and conform to their expectations, but then I wouldn't be giving the students an opportunity to be artists.

Deeply vested in her pedagogical approach, Hannah wanted to provide for her students the experiences she felt were in their best interests. However, she carried the weight of misunderstanding in public perception. She described efforts to enlighten her peers about her teaching approach in the form of presentations and workshops at district professional development sessions. Consequently, after several attempts to provide information received little interest, she conceded her efforts and recessed to the online networks of choice-based teachers she found in the privacy of her own classroom.

The anxieties Johnathan and Hannah shared about how their students' work was perceived publically were palpable. In the accounts they shared, their passion for their pedagogical approaches was evident; they wanted what they felt was best for their students. Much of their teaching approaches could not be seen in one artwork, hanging on a wall in a gallery. They felt the strengths of their pedagogies were in the daily activities of the classroom, as they created attention to the process of an artist's work and development over time.

Resisting Exhibition

In contrast to Michael's emphasis on embracing competition, one participant adamantly resisted submitting work to the show. For years, Dawn shared that she did not participate in the district exhibition because she would not select only a few student

works for presentation. Her philosophy for displaying student work was, “work from all of my kids goes, or none of it goes, and that's it.” Elaborating on her motivations, Dawn stated,

> I’m not the least bit interested it picking-out the ‘best’ works in my classes. My mindset is that everyone’s abilities and ideas are valuable; they all deserve to be recognized and appreciated. When displaying artwork, I put it all up, not just the ones that look aesthetically or technically good. What may seem mediocre to someone on the outside might have been a monumental task for some of these students; it could have been the best thing they ever created. I owe them the gratification of recognizing that effort and achievement. I have some students who are very low-ability or special needs, and for me, teaching art is about helping students achieve to their best ability by building relationships with each of them.

Like Hannah and Johnathan, Dawn wanted the outcome of her time with students to be positive and lasting experiences with the visual arts, not an award-winning artwork. Her pedagogical philosophies hinged on creating positive experiences for students, building self-esteem, and developing relationship. Dawn shared,

> My students are told frequently enough in the other aspects of their life that ‘they’re not good enough.’ In my classroom, I want them to feel like they have value—that what they do is good and interesting—and help boost their self-confidence. I feel the need to help foster their creativity and give them an opportunity to feel successful as an artist before it’s too late and we have lost them forever. They should know that I care about them, the work they do, and that their individual abilities are important and worth celebrating. Not everything we do is great—I and I tell them that too—but they *need* to know that producing an end product is not the most important result.

All of the study participants acknowledged that participation in the district exhibition was the foremost expectation for art teachers in Lake Wood ISD. While not part of any formal policy, the informal expectation of the fine arts director and coordinator was evidenced in “countless emails” about having all schools participate in the art show. The district exhibition could not logistically support the amount of space required to display the work of over 100 students from Dawn’s classes at Southwood

Middle School. After years of Dawn's boycotting the exhibit, the mounting pressures from the fine arts administration became evident to her building-level administrator. Resolving to compromise, Dawn described her decision-making process,

> My principal finally came to me and asked, 'Is this something you really want to fight for?' After much deliberation, I came up with a solution that I could live with: having an 'art lottery' in each class. All of the students would put their name in a dish, and if their name was drawn, then one, they got to decide if they wanted to participate, and two, then choose which artwork they wanted to display. Being part of the exhibit still bothers me a bit, but it is a way that I can make the administrators happy and still live with the fact that only a small portion of my students' work is displayed at the show.

While less than 20 percent of her students' artwork was presented in the district exhibit, Dawn negotiated her own beliefs to meet the expectations of her administrators. Conceding to the expectations in that regard, Dawn found other ways to reiterate the value of every student's development and growth as an artist. She was sure to explain that in the classroom and hallways of her school building, her students' work was frequently displayed and rotated so that all students had the opportunity to see their art on a wall.

Throughout this section of the study, the participants described their experiences with interpreting and negotiating the ways that people outside of their classrooms placed value on their work. Evidenced in recognition and awards at competitions or praise from administrators, peers, and parents, the teachers battled to find a balance between their pedagogic beliefs and the expectations of others. The high school participant focused on the rigor his department developed to establish and maintain high advanced placement portfolio scores—as to not drag down the school's high-performing average—and win district and state competition medals.

Conversely, the elementary and middle school participants seemed much more

focused on building student confidence and lifelong art appreciation. In a culture that emphasizes an end product that can be quantified and compared, the participants fought to preserve spaces that celebrated incremental progress and individual growth. External validation of programmatic success—and consequently teacher quality— came in the form of display and critique by what was perceived as a largely under-informed public population.

Seeking Community

This section explores the participants' relationships with administrators, building-level peers, and other district art educators. The teachers in this study frequently discussed how their relationships with various members of the school staff affected their interactions with expectations. Wanting administrative leaders to provide guidance and protect their best interests, the participants believed these preferred allies understood the needs of their visual arts education community. Furthermore, the participants described how different professional development settings function to construct teacher networks and help art teachers create opportunities to receive peer feedback.

Having a Voice: Administrative Representation

Study participants expressed a strong desire for leadership in their discipline. Having an administrator available to lobby for visual arts department needs was important to the study participants. They were universally optimistic about trends in department affairs, specifically about the recent appointment of a fine arts coordinator. They stated that having an administrative ally to oversee their needs and act on their

behalf affected morale in a positive way.

> Before we had the coordinator, we felt very underrepresented. It seemed like we didn't have anyone fighting for us. Now we have a person [the coordinator for visual arts] who is supposed to be looking out for our interests. Overall, we're moving in the right direction because I have someone that I can send my issues to. There is still a long way to go before we will feel like we are truly represented, still many issues to address, but the trend is good. As a group, we've started to have a little more cohesion under the additional leadership, which helped create more of an identity for us. Our concerns are on the radar; if they get addressed, that is a different issue.

In Lake Wood ISD, the fine arts director was responsible for the entire fine arts staff at approximately sixty schools; however, participants' reported the recent appointment of a fine arts coordinator. The coordinator supported the director and was responsible for supervising the drill team, theater, and visual arts staff. Dividing administrative responsibility between two people gave visual arts educators a sense of representation and easier access to professional support. However, some controversy surrounded the appointment because the newly hired coordinator's teaching background was not in the visual arts. The participants stated that this troubled some of their peers because the visual arts discipline has the second largest number of faculty in the department.

> A lot of visual arts people were really upset when they hired the new coordinator, because she is not one of us. We are by far the second largest population in the fine arts department; you would think that we would get representation. It is difficult for us to take them [the arts administration] seriously when they don't really understand what we are doing in here. If they ever stop in to do an observation, the feedback I get is so general and unspecific that it's basically worthless; you know like, 'good job.' What am I supposed to do with that? That is not constructive or helpful to me.

Study participants openly desired feedback on their curriculum and pedagogy. Most disclosed that they enjoyed taking about the specifics of their work, especially with someone they viewed as a fellow art educator. Several teachers even shared that a

primary motivator for participating in the study was simply getting the opportunity to talk with another person who is knowledgeable about their field.

> I hate to say it, but the fine arts administration as a whole is not very helpful. Our director is a band guy—I mean aren't they always—so it doesn't seem like he is ever very interested in what we do in the visual arts. On the bright side, we now have a coordinator for the visual arts, even though she is not an artist either. It's just somewhat hard to get feedback from them, because I don't feel like they really know what we do.

The biggest critique of their administrators was that they did not truly understand the needs and challenges of visual arts educators. While the fine arts administrators did have backgrounds in adjacent arts disciplines, they were not providing the specific visual arts support that the participants wanted. As a result, the visual arts teachers were reluctant to embrace the fine arts administrative staff as allies.

A potential bridge for the gap between arts administrator specializations and desired faculty support was the visual arts advocacy committee. The committee members included elementary, middle, and high school visual arts teachers and the arts administrators and staff. Posted on the district visual arts resource webpage, the committee's mission includes supporting and giving voice to art educators, encouraging leadership, and creating a network across all grade levels. All of the participants seemed to be aware of the advocacy committee, yet they still felt underrepresented. Michael was highly involved with the group, contextualizing some of his motivations for joining and experiences working the committee, stating

> I've always been of the mindset that leadership is really important. I like to be in control of my own destiny, so if there are rules that I need to play by, then I want to have a part in writing those rules. So, I got involved with the curriculum committee and am on the arts advocacy committee. Through that work, I do spend some time with the arts administrators and think that we have a good relationship. That said, I'm not really sure they know how to work with visual artists. You know, we can be a pretty rough group sometimes, kind of like herding cats. We can be really strong willed and resistant to people we feel are

not working in our interests.

In my experiences in schools and with the public, a common perception about art teachers is that we should embody the counter-culture, avant-garde, out-of-the-box artist persona that pushes back against the mainstream and establishment. Anecdotally, many art teachers I have met over the years are independent people with strong-willed dispositions. Frequently open to collaborative projects that support their program, they can be skeptical, resistant, or even obstructionist towards individuals and initiatives that are perceived to be undermining their visions of art education.

Participants in the study acknowledged the oft-precarious duality of wanting both independence and support. They desired allies in positions of power and tentatively trusted the fine arts administration yet struggled to embrace people they perceived as outsiders. Hannah stated that she aspired to be more involved in leadership roles within the district, and Michael had already situated himself on multiple committees. The participants viewed the fine arts director, recently hired coordinator, and visual arts committees as positive signs for the future of the department. However, they doubted that meaningful attention would be given to their unique needs.

Performance Evaluations

Another factor influencing the visual arts teachers' tentative relationship with the fine arts administrators centers on the district's personnel performance evaluation process. Beginning in 1997, the recommended teacher-appraisal method for the state of Texas became the Professional Development Appraisal System (PDAS). According to the *Commissioner's Rules Concerning Educator Appraisal* (Texas Education Agency, 2010), the PDAS was developed to satisfy Texas Education Code Appraisals and

Incentives Subchapter (Texas Education Agency, 1995), which states that performance criteria "must be based on observable, job-related behavior, including: (1) teachers' implementation of discipline management procedures; and (2) the performance of teacher's students." The State Board of Education approved PDAS evaluation of teachers in eight general teaching domains, none of which addresses the quality of subject specific content knowledge or abilities. District superintendents may select or develop their own teacher evaluation systems; however, my interpretation of the code is that it strongly suggests the use of the commissioner's recommended system.

In response to an open records request for Lake Wood ISD's art teacher assessment processes, the district's Office of Public Information provided a copy of their PDAS form. Additionally, they shared that the uniform evaluation method for all teachers and subject disciplines is completed by building-level administrators and not the fine arts department. Therefore, the fine arts administrators theoretically had little to no control over visual arts teachers' performance reviews. Dawn shared her understanding of the performance appraisal process by stating,

> In the end, the arts administrators have no say in my evaluations or job contract. In our district, it is all about the local level. If I was slacking-off or screwing-up, I'd hear about it from my principal. If I was royally messing up, then there might be bigger repercussions at the broader administrative levels, but that's never been an issue for me.

While I was unable to get the perspective of the fine arts administrators on this topic, I surmised that they might not be interested in—or fully committed to—conducting classroom observations and providing constructive feedback, knowing that performance evaluations were the responsibility of building principals. Consequently, when asking participants about district expectations for art teachers, the conversations were consistently directed toward their building-level administrators and mentions of the

PDAS document were fleeting, although it did represent the formal evaluation policy for educators in the district. The participants' seemed to perceive the PDAS evaluations as an administrative paperwork formality, where no real constructive or specific feedback was generated. Rather, the informal expectation of public student exhibitions constituted the evaluation of their performance as an educator.

Finding Common Ground

Most participants described favorable relationships with their school principals. As the local figureheads of district policy and expectations, the building-level administrators played an important role in the study participants' understandings of their job performance. One participant stated, "as long as [the principal]'s happy with me, then I am doing what I need to do, and really it's just my own ethics that I hold myself to." Participants shared that principals were generally supportive; however, they also believed that their principals did not always fully understand—or have the time to learn about—the complexities of an art classroom. At Lakeview High School, Michael says,

> Our principals are so busy; I think it is really hard for them to keep track of us. Therefore, we are really left to self-regulate in our department. And we do a pretty good job of that. So, we're a pretty 'tight clique' around here now. We are all committed to the same goals and support each other, so it's really nice.

With other art teachers in the same building, Michael could frequently meet with his peers to discuss project ideas, get feedback on instructional strategies, troubleshoot issues, and make decisions about how to negotiate expectations. The other participants lacked the proximity of their peers and shared different experiences about their relationships with principals. At Lakeside Elementary, Rosemary stated,

> My current principal is okay, at least for now. We've had some transition here, so the leadership hasn't always been as consistent as it should be. I've worked with

> a lot of different administrators in my time and have come to the realization that as long as there is decent looking stuff up in the hallways, they don't really care what I'm doing in here.

At Southwood Middle School, Dawn felt like the principal was one of her biggest advocates. She reiterated several times that they had a great relationship and that,

> Lucky for me, I have an excellent relationship with my principal. He gets that what I do in here is valuable, even if he may not completely understand it. I think he tries to level with me and be honest about my teaching to provide constructive advice. But observations are rare, so most of the time I am just left to my own devices. Which is a bit of a double-edged sword; it's nice not to feel the pressure and oversight that I know some other disciplines encounter, but on the other-hand, we have to figure it out on our own.

In these statements, the delicate balance between autonomy and isolation reappears in the ways the art teachers make sense of their professional expectations. They enjoyed the diminished level of oversight and micromanagement that other teachers experience but lacked opportunities for specific feedback. Since the teachers' building principals or assistant principals were their primary performance evaluators, participants felt they needed to keep the administration informed and educated about their art programs. A difficult aspect of this relationship was that the participants stated their principals—even the ones whom they perceived as arts supporters—did not truly understand what good visual arts education or instruction should look like. The teachers shared that their principals liked to see colorful things hanging in the hallways and on classroom walls, could tolerate some controlled chaos and noise, but offered little constructive criticism about refining and improving teaching skills.

Art teachers expressed thoughts that they "spoke a different language" than the administrators and therefore coexisted in a world of mutual ignorance with a mantra of "go about your business, don't make waves, and we'll leave each other alone." Consequently, ambiguous expectations created varied interpretations among the

teacher participants. Without clear lines of communication about expectations between the participants and their administrators, district visual arts teachers relied on each other to help interpret and negotiate expectations.

Alone in the Crowd

At Lake Wood ISD high schools, there were multiple art teachers at each building. The physical proximity of peers enabled planning together, collaboration, and networking, which contributed to a sense of community and support. Meanwhile, at elementary and middle school campuses, there was typically only one visual arts educator in the building. These teachers made up the majority of visual arts faculty in the district; by the numbers, it meant that approximately 70 percent of the art faculty were the only visual arts specialists at their buildings. Consequently, participants in K-8 settings described feelings of isolation in their professional practice. Hannah stated,

> At the elementary level, it is sometimes difficult to develop a network of people who understand your experiences. Classroom teachers have their grade level [Professional Learning Communities] (PLC)s where they share lessons and plan together. They even get dedicated plan time every week so that they can support each other. With the 'specials' teachers, our disciplines are all so unique, that it is hard for us to collaborate. My closest connection is probably the music teacher, but most of the time I feel like we are comparing apples and oranges.

While the pace of project, lesson, and unit planning was decidedly different for classroom and "specials" teachers, the absence of local, building-level peers created a void in community support for elementary school art educators. The lack of dedicated peer collaboration time was perceived to change the dynamic of the planning process for these study participants. For the middle school participants, spending planning time with building-level peers did not seem to be an area of concern. Rather, they

emphasized dissatisfaction with the content of campus-wide in-service activities. Johnathan shared, “nothing we do on building in-service days seems to fit with what I’m trying to do in the art room. It’s always geared to the core subjects, but I try to make it work where I can.” Dawn was more dramatic about the lack of relevance of the meeting, sharing “I can’t stand our in-services; I mean it’s like ‘shoot me now please!’” Furthermore, she admits, “sometimes, I actually skip out on our meetings and go to the technology sessions instead, because then I might actually get something out of it.”

I do not believe these feelings are unique to the district in the study. Most art teachers I have met express a general lack of enthusiasm toward non-discipline specific professional development. In my own experiences as a public school art teacher, I frequently sat through in-service meetings feigning interest and trying to consider ways to implement the latest school improvement initiatives into my curriculum. As an elementary art teacher, the rare collaboration time I spent with the music, physical education, and library sciences teachers did result in a few interdisciplinary projects.

However, the outcomes did not seem overtly relevant to my practices in the art room. When I taught high school art, my principal instituted weekly professional development time, built into our schedule. Twice a month, all of the fine arts teachers at our campus met to plan collaborative arts events, develop curriculum, and work on school improvement projects. Occasionally, the meetings turned into jam sessions in the band room, which were not very productive. Frequently, the most relevant use of that professional development time for me was when we separated into smaller subject specific groups to address issues in the visual arts.

Local Support Groups

Most of the art teachers interviewed for this study, claimed they lacked relevant professional development opportunities at the building level. Without the support of other teachers who shared common experiences—or even similar subject matter content—the participants felt isolated. However, several times throughout the year, the elementary and middle school art teachers met together by zones. Participants told me that Lake Wood ISD created three geographic regions or zones to compartmentalize the district's staff. The three zones represented neighborhood cohorts, allowing for smaller groups of approximately a dozen teachers to meet during rare in-service time allocated to subject specific content. Rosemary enjoyed the zone meetings, stating,

> I get support from the other elementary teachers in my zone; we try to stick together. Occasionally, we meet-up for semi-formal sessions, usually at one of our schools. It gives us a chance to show off the projects we are working on. What I like about those meetings is that they give me a chance to get new ideas and change things up if I feel like it.

A strong social component emerged in the teachers' discussion of the zone meetings. Rosemary utilized the meeting time to swap lesson plans and chat about projects gathered from Facebook and Pinterest. Johnathan liked to meet with the other art teachers in his zone to discuss strategies to serve diverse student needs. He stated,

> I feel like the other middle school teachers in my zone are the only ones who know what I'm going through. I tell people it's kind of like being in the Special Forces together. We have a tough student population, and the other zones just don't have the same problems we do. I love my students, but we deal with a different set of issues here than the other teachers. So, I like meeting up with our group to talk about the things we're going through. They're the best group of people I've found to chat with.

The elementary and middle school participants thought that the zone meetings resulted in the most beneficial in-service time throughout the school year. Broadly, these opportunities provided the art educators with a sense of community. In contrast,

Hannah still felt isolated in the zone meetings because of her choice-based pedagogical approach. She shared,

> The curricular structure I use is misunderstood by many, including other art teachers. Where they might see chaos and disorganization, I see productivity, inquiry, and the creative process. This disconnect can make me feel even more isolated; it seems like there are only a few people who I can talk to that understand what I am trying to do with my classes. Even at the district level, there are simply not enough other people who understand—or care about—what I am doing, so I *have* to expand my network to find relevant support and a sense of community. I attend the state conference on occasion, and have even thought about going to the national convention. However, my truest professional network is through online discussion boards. Luckily, I found active support groups there.

Hannah was not the only participant who sought online networks to build a sense of community. All of the participants stated that some of their strongest support for project ideas and curriculum development came from various digital platforms including discussion boards, list serves, virtual groups, and blogs. These resources gave participants a wealth of assistance about art teaching and content but could not provide strategies to negotiate the specific expectations of their district.

District Development

In addition to building-level professional development and zone activities, on a few occasions throughout the year, the Lake Wood ISD visual arts teachers met as a whole group—all zones and all grade levels—to address, “mostly housekeeping items or a basic overview of some new district initiative, which means we don’t really accomplish anything.” Although the meetings were not always viewed as productive, the study participants enjoyed the opportunity to spend time together as a whole group. Johnathan states that the in-services occurred, “[a few times a year] if we're lucky and we'd like to see more of each other. We've mentioned it.”

Besides the organized in-service meetings, the district required additional independent professional development time throughout the year. Eighteen documented non-contract development hours were expected from each staff member to compensate the district for paid time off; in other words, the district added two and a half days onto the Thanksgiving break, and in return, teachers participated in non-paid development activities. This structure provided staff the flexibility to pursue professional learning opportunities that they could suit to their interests. Teachers could choose to attend in-district training sessions or a variety of other content specific activities such as museum classes, professional conferences, graduate coursework, lesson share meetings, and vendor workshops. Rosemary described some of the in-district sessions she attended,

> I pick whatever sessions I want to attend; maybe someone is presenting about using technology or demoing a technique or advanced media. A lot of times, we'll have a vendor come in—like the guy from Sax—who will show off a new product and usually give out free samples, too. I really like it because it gives me new ideas; so much of what I do with my students is based in exploring media and different techniques, so I feel like this is really beneficial for me.

Michael used the non-contract hours to present district workshops and attend the state art teacher conference, while Hannah sought training for her choice-based curriculum. All of the participants appreciated having the freedom to customize the training to suit their own interests.

Overall, professional development opportunities provided an important sense of community for the art teachers. Often feeling isolated at their buildings, teachers found that the social bonding aspects of the zone meetings created a network of support. Where there was a lack of relevant training at school in-services, teachers used their independent professional learning hours to find activities to meet their specific needs. All of the participants agreed that they would have preferred to have more in-service

time together as art teachers to address the unique demands of their discipline and have discussions with peers who could relate to their challenges.

Throughout the conversations, the teachers frequently described a desire for stronger bonds and relationships within the district. The participants seemed to want an indefinite balance between freedom and guidance, autonomy and support, community and individuality. Coupled with explanations of the district's professional development structure, the participants described how their relationships with administrators and peers created communities to inform work expectations. From the isolation of an elementary teacher who felt that her pedagogical approach was misunderstood by nearly everyone to a close-knit high school department, the participants felt that strong administrative leaders could help to bring structure to the loose and frequently ambiguous district policies by advocating for additional professional development time for art faculty and speak on behalf of the visual arts educators at the departmental level.

Part I Summary

Throughout the findings described in Part I of Chapter 4, three central themes affected the participants' interpretations and negotiations of praxis, providing one districts' context for the ways art teachers interacted with policies. In what could be considered a typical large metropolitan school district, five educators shared their relationship with both formal and informal expectations. Unsurprisingly, the participants described expending their pedagogical capital aligning curricular planning with ideological beliefs and contrasting the freedoms of district-encouraged autonomy with the legal specifications of state learning standards. Based primarily on the expectations

they perceived from their building principals, participants under-emphasized the standards-based policies in large part because they felt their administrators were not holding them accountable. Rather, the efficacy and value of a program was informally assessed through performance in public exhibitions and interscholastic competitions. The 75 teachers in the visual arts department comprised approximately 2 percent of the districts' total teaching staff but were dispersed across the 60 campuses. Consequently, the art educator participants described departmental professional development time as vital to discussing and engaging professional expectations and building relationships with their peers.

Findings, Part II

Framing Decisions in Context

Understanding the diverse influences in teacher decision-making is a complex process, and I cannot claim to account for all factors. However, to help me understand processes of interpreting expectations and negotiating praxis for the participants in this study, the art teacher decision-making framework provided a conceptual map (see Appendix A) for situating the information provided. As described in the literature of Chapter 2, I have identified three broad factors to organize influences on the decision-making process: ideologies, practical knowledge, and professional contexts. Part II of this chapter describes an interpretation of the findings in the data in relation to the framework.

Ideologies

Within the framework, ideologies are qualified as the two different but intertwined concepts of pedagogical philosophies and curricular orientation. Understanding their ideologies helps situate teachers' decisions based on their beliefs about the purposes of education. This construct helped me as a researcher to conceptualize the multiple beliefs and perspectives about the purpose and goals of their curricular choices among arts educators. The concepts outlined by the pedagogical philosophy strand are broad perspectives taken from curricular theorists across the educational spectrum. Situating pedagogical philosophies within the wider context of the educational profession helped me begin to place a teacher's beliefs within established theoretical literature. The three philosophical approaches utilized in the framework are curriculum as product, practice,

or praxis.

If we can consider pedagogical philosophies as the *why* component of ideological choices, in a like manner the curricular orientation would constitute the *how* of implementation. Decisions influenced by curricular orientations underpin the way a teacher conceptualizes, plans, implements, and assesses his or her programs and how teachers organize and emphasize content based on their beliefs. Broadly, there have been a number of "turns" in American visual arts education curricular orientations over the last 125 years (Efland, 1990; Stankiewicz, 2001; Wygant 1993), along with recent attention to the diverse ways art teachers can construct their curricula (Freedman, 2003; Hetland, Winner, Veenema, & Sheridan 2007; Joo & Keehn II, 2011; Quinn, Ploof, & Hochtritt, 2012; Stewart & Walker, 2005; Sweeny 2010).

The inclusion of ideological influences in the decision-making framework helped me understand how expectations were interpreted. Additionally, describing how participants align ideologically humanizes them within the study and provides context for the ways they negotiate expectations. Considering my constructivist-interpretivist researcher lens, I wanted to situate my understanding of each participant's ideology in the decision-making framework. The study participants' pedagogical philosophies and curricular orientations were distributed across the spectrum and often incorporated aspects of multiple visions for art education; however, I identified with which perspective each participant seemed to most closely associate based on what they emphasized as the goals of their curricula.

Michael, the high school teacher, seemed firmly positioned in the curriculum-as-product theoretical philosophy. His introductory and intermediate courses focused on

essentialist skills of mastering the elements and principles of art and technical skills. These curricula appeared most closely situated to the Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) orientation, where instruction was siloed by art production processes, art history research, and criticism activities. Michael was very concerned about funneling students through the program, maximizing performance, and jettisoning low-achievers. In the advanced courses, his curricular orientation shifted closer to a postmodern and multidisciplinary version of art education where he emphasized contemporary artists, attention to visual culture, and developing the conceptual aspects of artworks. However, Michael shared the primary aim of his programmatic design was to develop art "technicians" and satisfy AP criteria. I perceived the goal of his curriculum as creating award-winning students, who would reflect positively on his abilities as a teacher. Of all the participants, Michael's curricula were the most directly tied to the TEKS student-performance standards, and worth in his program was quantified in award ribbons and AP portfolio scores.

Rosemary, an elementary teacher who was in the early stages of implementing a choice-based or TAB orientation, articulated wanting to implement a curriculum-as-practice ideology where project concepts were student-driven and developed through students' reflective activities. During the classroom observation, she seemed primarily concerned that her students create artifacts based on design challenges and creative problem solving skills. However, during our conversations, Rosemary discussed instructional activities that focused on mastering procedural steps and shared that many of her project ideas were collected from internet resources as opposed to student-generated ideas. In all, it seemed her philosophy aligned with the curriculum-as-product

philosophy and was orientated for design challenges that utilized a systematic process.

Dawn, taught at Southwood Middle School and consistently emphasized a curriculum-as-practice philosophy for her program. Her curricular structure was well planned; however, she described having ideas 'pop' into her head and quickly changing daily lesson plans. Dawn felt empowered to shift instructional activities based on the in-progress reflections of her students and her own experiences as a practitioner. She shared that her carefully curated and designed unit structure allowed for fluidity in the moment of her daily activities in the classroom. Although Dawn did not explicitly describe her curricular orientation as creative self-expression, she emphasized curricula that provided her students the opportunity to make artistic choices. She stated the primary goal of her curricula was fostering self-esteem in her students, where value was placed on the process of making and celebrating small incremental growth.

Johnathan also worked at a middle school in Lake Wood ISD and expressed a theoretical philosophy of curriculum-as-practice. Like Dawn, Johnathan felt comfortable changing instructional activities based on reflection during the middle of a lesson. However, where Dawn's changes seemed to emerge from her students' work and ideas, Johnathan described modifying lessons to make connections with pop culture and opportunities to connect with workforce skills, yet mentioned the influences of Viktor Lowenfeld—whom I associate with the creative self-expression orientation—on his curriculum. In the classroom observation at Cedar Grove Middle School, I found the focus of Johnathan's lesson was replicating the style of Impressionist landscape painting—which could be perceived as a traditional art education activity. During the instruction however, Johnathan consistently made connections between art history, his

own development as an artist, and the lives of the students. While the environments in which Dawn and Johnathan taught were on polar ends of the socioeconomic spectrum, both teachers emphasized the importance of situating activities around making connections to the lives of their students to inspire a life-long appreciation of the visual arts.

Hannah was an elementary teacher implementing a choice-based TAB curriculum and aligned with the curriculum-as-praxis theoretical perspective. The goals of her curriculum were to empower students to see themselves as artists who justified their choices and acted as persons who were socially engaged. Hannah described designing her curriculum to develop social justice awareness in her diverse student population. In the classroom observation, she presented a lesson around the theme of caring and prompted students to develop artworks that demonstrated how they cared for others. Hannah claimed to actively participate in self-study, leadership, and advocacy efforts to advance her ideological beliefs and better the experiences of her students.

Policies that have a stated goal of measuring what "students know and should be able to do" (TEA, 2014a) seem best aligned with a curriculum-as-product ideology. In Michael's outcome-based curriculum, student performance objectives and assessments matched the tone of the stated policy expectations. However, the fluid and reflective approaches of curriculum-as-practice and curriculum-as-praxis theoretical perspectives were not as easily quantified. Dawn systematically designed her curricula to address the TEKS, yet utilized a curriculum-as-practice philosophy. For her, the student performance objectives constituted basic participation in course content, while her

ideology emphasized a passion for art making and student self-confidence that was more intangible to record in the gradebook. Participants unanimously stated that autonomy was paramount in their professional satisfaction, regardless of the district exceptions or requirements. Therefore, exercising relative curricular autonomy and incorporating their ideological beliefs dominated how they negotiated pedagogical decision-making processes.

Practical Knowledge

An individual's previous experiences greatly influence subsequent perceptions of the world and the ways it affects decision-making, as described in seminal texts on professional practical knowledge (Schön, 1983) and within educational settings (Clandinin, 1986; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Shulman, 2004). In previous research, I explored how the experiences of art teachers influenced their current practice (Garth, 2011). Acknowledging the effect of practical knowledge in teachers' decision-making, in this study I was interested in the ways teachers negotiated previous experiences in art education in concert with or contrast to what they interpreted as performance expectations in Lake Wood ISD.

Interestingly, all five of the participants had been previously employed in at least one other school district, with three of the participants also having worked in different states. This breadth of experiences across the cases encouraged conversations with participants that enabled contrasts of perceived expectations beyond the scope of the district in the study in ways that I could not have imagined at the beginning of the project. Rosemary, a veteran teacher, had professional experiences in three other

states with standards-based policy expectations. Additionally, Michael stated that he was a member of a visual arts standards writing team in another state.

All of the participants stated that their experiences and practical knowledge of art policy expectations in different contexts influenced the way they interpreted and negotiated the policies of Lake Wood ISD. Based on the size—geographically, student population, and number of art teachers—of the district, all of the participants shared that they had anticipated more curricular resources and guidance from within the department. Furthermore, they all stated in one way or another that it was slightly disappointing or "quite sad" how little help was available for art teachers at the district level.

Four of the participants also had experience teaching art to grade levels different from their current assignments. When asked about vertical alignment in the district curriculum, the participants responded that they thought it had been mentioned in department meetings, but not demonstrated in practice. Rosemary stated, "I know what they need to learn for middle school because I've taught middle school and high school." Similarly, other participants rationalized a lack of engagement in formal vertical alignment by making statements that reflected assumptions valuing their own teaching experiences which different age groups over communicating with other district personnel.

Hannah was the only participant who had taught only one age group, elementary students. She did not express interest in or concern about aligning her curriculum or student skills and outcomes in preparation for middle school art curricula. Participants said that they designed curricula vertically based on their own experiences, rather than

collaborating with other district teachers. Based on their responses, participants seemed to take for granted what other art teachers might expect as vertical alignment.

Professional Contexts

The influence of local contexts on the art teachers' decision-making process constituted the central focus for me in the design of this study. I intended to narrow a gap in the literature by exploring these aspects of the decision-making framework in relation to the policies of the district. Through this study, I have identified three aspects of local context that affected interpretation and negotiation of policy. The central contextual topics are relational, logistical, and institutional.

Relational.

Relational contexts describe how teachers' relationships with school community members—such as administrators, peers, students, and parents—inform and influence their decision-making processes. Study participants were greatly influenced by their relationships with their campus level principals. More than any other district personnel, principals influenced participants' interpretations of policy expectations. As the participants' direct supervisors who conducted their annual performance evaluations, the principals provided the most tangible forms of oversight for district policies.

The building principals did not seem to have any responsibilities in coordinating the district art show. However, all of the participants described feeling pressure from their local administrator to exhibit student work. Johnathan shared that participating in the district show and state art competition, along with displaying art at school events

was important to principals. Those public events, Jonathan states, are a "genital waving contest from one principal to the other. . . you want to represent and show what you can do and you don't want to let your school or your boss down." Consequently, fostering rapport with their school principals by presenting student art in the buildings' hallways and at events, constituted a major policy expectation described by study participants. Furthermore, participants felt explaining pedagogical choices and ideologies in ways their principals could understand helped them negotiate expectations.

At the high school level, other art teachers at the school provided an important peer group with whom Michael could negotiate expectations. As a group, these teachers were able to present a unified front about the policy decisions they made. However, at the elementary and middle school levels, where there was only one visual arts teacher at a building, feelings of isolation were tangible. While there were other "specials" teachers in disciplines such as music, physical education, and instructional media, participants reported policy expectations were interpreted uniquely by each discipline. These isolated art teachers desired more frequent opportunities to collaborate with peers from different buildings. Additionally, several participants at the elementary and middle schools expressed that they felt other teaching faculty at their campus lacked an understanding of the professional responsibilities and expectations for art educators.

Pedagogical decisions influenced by student and parental contexts were manifested differently by participants by grade level. The elementary teachers made comparative statements about different sections of classes and their particular needs. For example, a participant might say, "Boy, this third grade group is a tough one. They

are way behind the blue day rotation, so I need to make some modifications." The relational context between the middle school participants and their students seemed to be focused on skills broader than just art content. They made statements such as, "Someone else can crush their dreams," or "I want to give them a passion for art because this might be the last art class they take."

Each of the middle school participants described relationships they had built with students, highlighting an individual connection that transcended learning in the visual arts. Dawn shared stories about one student with developmental needs who had shown growth through their one on one relationship. Johnathan talked about a former student who had become invigorated through art, was the first in her family to go to college, and was building a career, in part due to their relationship. At the high school level, how Michael's decisions about pedagogy were affected by student relationship concerns were reflected in the sense of community built in the advanced placement "varsity art" classes. These students, who were expected to go on into art careers and would "have my name attached to them," received much of Michael's focus. The pedagogical and programmatic decisions made by this participant were influenced by his perception of its impact on the AP students.

Logistical. A recurrent point of distinction about context in participant interviews was the different geographic zones into which the district was divided. Teachers felt allegiances to their zones as these included the teachers with whom they most frequently interacted outside of their local buildings. A shared bond was discussed within zones, as in "each zone has its own unique circumstances, and that changes the

things we can do with our students." Much of the difference between zones, from what I inferred, came down to social economic status and the ways student populations and home lives impacted the classroom.

Schools in the affluent zones received better budgets and were able to purchase higher quality supplies. Johnathan, in the central zone, stated his budget barely covered costs for pencils and paper, so his curriculum had a heavy focus on drawing. Clay and painting projects, which were more expensive, were at a premium in the curriculum. Dawn, on the other hand, received a substantial budget, stating, "there is little we want for at this school." These tensions are also evidenced in discussions of the district art exhibit. Johnathan referred to how he felt his show would look better and be received more favorability if he could purchase mat board to display student work.

Institutional. The final component of the decision-making framework, and the area of this study that I believe contributes most strongly to the literature for the field, concerns the formal and informal cultural norms of a school district. This component of the framework calls for description of the policy aspects of decision-making in this study. Exploring this context was the central focus of my study and research questions.

Formal expectations. On the formal policy front, Lake Wood ISD had few publically available expectations beyond use of the state visual arts standards. In an open records request to the district, I sought information concerning (a) fine arts department mission, goals, and teacher expectations; (b) visual arts personnel evaluation/assessment methods; and (c) other documents relevant to visual arts

programmatic and staff expectations. Through the request, I was able to obtain the Lake Wood ISD strategic design document that stated district core beliefs, vision and mission statements, and goals.

Additionally, other artifacts collected in the open records request included the employee handbook and Professional Development Appraisal System (PDAS) form. All of the artifacts were utilized with faculty members in all disciplines and across all grade levels. I was also provided two web links; one contained the district's mission, goals, and beliefs—which the Lake Wood ISD Open Records Coordinator stated were "held by all [of the] departments and schools," while the other link directed me to the visual arts department website.

Strategic design goals. The strategic design goals seemed to be important formal policy documents, as they were emphasized on the district website and in my communications with the Open Records Coordinator. Additionally, all of the art teacher participants mentioned that the district had recently redeveloped its strategic design documents. Three of the seven published overarching district goals seemed to be reiterated by participants in the research interviews although they were not cited uniformly by all participants.

District strategic design goal number one, "Reframe state readiness standards in a way that leads to profound learning and has meaning and value for students." All of the participants discussed using the TEKS in their curricula. A common thread in their responses was that they modified the TEKS in a way that made sense to them and was more "student friendly" than the language used in the standards. Based on the

interview conversations and classroom observations, I am not certain whether the participants created these modifications in response to the stated goal of the district. However, that formal strategic design expectation was evident in the data.

My analysis of participants' stated objectives and assessment methods suggested that participants utilized the latitude granted in the goal to rationalize curricular alignment with their ideological beliefs. Michael reframed the TEKS and AP criteria to emphasize the skills he thought students needed for portfolio review. Dawn reframed the TEKS so that they made sense to her students and they could chart growth in their binders. Whereas Hannah, Rosemary, and Johnathan seemed to bypass the TEKS's specific performance standards and instead generalized the four basic strands to justify all aspects of their curricula.

District strategic design goal number two, "Create flexible systems that result in a learning organization supported by innovative and engaged staff." Evidenced in all of the participant interviews, this goal seemed to be an emphasized formal expectation. The participants frequently referred to the district emphasis on curricular autonomy and local control, which in my analysis, I associated with the concept of a "flexible system." However, the word "system" seems to be an important anomaly, as the data suggest the expectations are very flexible but not systematic. Participants unanimously stated that they were encouraged to create curricula designed to their preferences. This expectation was so prevalent in the data that several participants noted more structure would likely be helpful, particularly for new faculty.

District strategic design goal number three, "Design an accountability system that transcends state/national mandates and reflects local values and expectations."

Participants claimed they were formally accountable only to their building administrators via the annual PDAS evaluation. As corroborated by an open records informational request, personnel evaluations were completed by school principals using the state recommended form. I am uncertain how each principal utilizes the evaluation instrument in practice. However, based on participant responses, feedback on evaluations primarily centers on classroom management strategies and instructional practices and does not address content specific concepts or techniques. The participants stated that outside of their individual reflective practices, there were no accountability systems for their unique subject area. Therefore, based on participant responses, there does not seem to be any formally designed system that transcends the state mandates.

Informally, participation in the district art show provided an accountability system for art teachers that reflected local values. While subjective in nature, teachers shared that the exhibit did create an accountability system in which they felt their professional performance was being evaluated. For the secondary teachers, state competitions presented another system in which they could transcend state mandates. For the high school participant, AP portfolio scores represented a third and very palpable accountability system for which his program needed to perform.

Public website. A somewhat ambiguous formal expectation concerns the utilization of the visual arts department webpage. Provided in the open records request and presented to me during interviews by Hannah, Dawn, and Michael, the site provided links to district curriculum information, resources, a running account of the arts

advocacy committee meeting minutes, and links to webpages for each individual school's art program. Based on what the participants shared about their opinions concerning the lack of resources for district art educators, the elementary curriculum resources presented on the website were surprising. They included the TEKS as published by the TEA and district-developed essential questions, concepts, skills, suggested projects, response assessments, and vocabulary terms for grades K-5. At the secondary level, the curriculum resources consisted of a spreadsheet with "reworded" TEKS—which did address the specific performance objectives—across the grades 6-12 coursework in the four strands of creative expression, perception, historical/cultural context, and evaluation. Additionally, specific portfolio requirements were stated for Pre-AP Art I sections that were offered at some of the middle schools and each high school campus.

This webpage seemed to have great potential as a resource for art educators. The participants who shared the site with me, pulled up their own pages and pointed out work being done by other teachers in the district. The site appeared to be the digital public face of the visual arts department; however, it seemed underutilized by staff. As a virtual resource for the art educators, it could help to bridge feelings of isolation by sharing information, documents, and resources with art teacher peers. Since the website is publically available, I can imagine teachers might be hesitant to share the professional challenges they encountered.

Two of the participants stated that every art teacher in the district was expected to post information about his or her school program on the site. At the close of this study, and almost two academic years after announcement of the expectation that

teachers' information be posted on the site, only 22 of the 64 school programs listed had posted curriculum information. There was a stark contrast between the ways elementary and secondary school visual arts programs used their district webspace. Nearly all of the secondary school programs had their full curricula posted on their pages and presented mostly text-based content. At the elementary level, almost every school site included images of student work but little information about actual curricula. The elementary teachers generally had an "about me" section and re-direct links to district blog sites; which I infer was part of an elementary art professional development activity.

Considered as a whole, the formal policies of the district seem to champion innovation and flexibility that the participants enjoyed. In practice, the curricular freedom and professional autonomy that the art teachers desired also presented challenges; the participants seemed to lack the support systems and specific feedback necessary to implement a cohesive district curriculum. They reiterated their individual understandings of state standards as constituting the 'rules' they all needed to live by, even if they felt no one was checking.

As far as participants' opinions are concerned, there seemed to be a fine line between having too much freedom and being subjected to prescriptive oversight. I wonder what it would be like for a student who transfers between two schools in the district. It is easy to imagine the differences that he/she could encounter in teachers' ideologies and experiences; the variety of ways the content objectives are interpreted and implemented seems vast and incongruent. With so much individual curricular freedom, what might be lost to the district as an organization that supports the visual

arts? Incidentally, what could be gained from these different approaches? It seems that with more opportunities for discussion about teachers' interpretations and negotiations at the departmental level, there could be generative ways to teach within the policy contradictions.

Informal expectations. The foremost informal expectation in the district is participation in public exhibitions. From my perspective, it seems completely acceptable to emphasize and celebrate the work of students in community forums. In my experiences in public schools, students, teachers, parents, extended family, friends, and any interested community members or passers-by enjoy visiting student art exhibits. I believe art shows can boost student self-worth, develop artists' presentation skills, encourage students to talk about their work, and function as one of the most accessible arts advocacy opportunities for a teacher's program.

However, the competitive emphasis, comparative implications, and evaluative repercussions of the district's current exhibition design impacts the ways the study's participants interpreted expectations and values of the district. When discussing the importance of performing well at the district exhibition, Johnathan used the analogy,

> Art, theater, band, choir, you're going to sing for your supper at one time or another. People are going to want to see what you can do, what your kids have done. You always want to put on a good show because you're representing your school.

At the exhibition, a program's worth seemed to be literally *on display*. At the high school level, it was measured in award ribbons. At the elementary and middle school levels, the valuations were less evident than for the exclusive juried high school exhibit, which was more like a sample showcase of district work. Needless to say, several of the

participants admitted that they attended the event to compare the quality of work from different schools. Even with the district emphasis on public displays of student work as the most important aspect of promoting their program, all of the participants claimed having a central curricular goal of inspiring life-long appreciation for the visual arts with their students. What we may need to consider is exactly what message does validation through an exhibition culture reinforce about how art is appreciated and valued.

Part II Summary

Part II of Chapter 4 addressed the application of the art teacher decision-making framework to the findings that emerged from the interview data and classroom observations. In conjunction with my analysis of policy documents and district artifacts, this section also situated the data in contexts for the individual participants and across the collected cases to present my interpretations of the broader district environment.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This collective case study explores the confluence of educational policy and art praxis by examining the ways art teachers created and implemented curricula in one public school district. Through the various interpretations of one school district's expectations of art teachers, this research investigates some of the complexities of standards, instruction, and assessment policies in public schools. Utilizing the art teacher decision-making framework to help organize influences in the participants' decision-making processes, the study explores how interpretations of local contextual expectations are negotiated in the curricular decisions of five public school art educators. Part I of the findings in Chapter 4 was organized as a collection of the participants' descriptions as I made sense of the data through qualitative coding processes (Saldaña, 2013). These findings describe the essence of the teachers' stories and perspectives through the three interconnected—and occasionally contradictory—themes of (1) policy expectations and curricular autonomy; (2) exhibition, competition, and recognition; and (3) school community interactions. In Part II of Chapter 4, I shared my understanding of the ways each participant's decisions were influenced by his or her ideologies, experiences, and contexts as a framework for interpreting the data collected in the study. Additionally, I addressed policy documents that seemed relevant in my analysis of the cases' context.

Working with the findings, I synthesized the themes that emerged across all of the participant interviews, observations, and artifacts in an effort to depict the ways I understood the participants' collective interpretations and district expectations.

Dialogue with participants as well as my own dialogue with the data became ongoing and reflexive analysis processes (Birks & Mills, 2015; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2014). Within the findings, I shared quotes taken directly from the audio transcripts in combination with quotes I generated from my own understandings of emerging patterns, to present themes representative of the diverse participants' voices.

The study was designed with one overarching question: How are art teachers' curricular and pedagogic decisions influenced by their interpretations of standards-based school district policy expectations? The following sub-questions were created to help explore teacher interactions with expectations:

- How do participants interpret school district policy expectations?
- How do participants negotiate standards-based assessments in their curricula and pedagogy?

When conducting interviews and learning about expectations in the district, I found the emphasis for data collection shift from formal policies to informal expectations. The degree to which unwritten expectations about exhibition and competition became an unexpectedly rich focus for the ways the participants interpreted and negotiated praxis. From my constructivist-interpretivist perspective, the study's findings described how participants' curricular decisions were informed by their individual ideologies, experiences, and contexts in relation to the shared policies and expectations of their public school district. Therefore, the local policy environment in concert with the teachers' practical knowledge and ideological beliefs influenced the pedagogical process of transferring theories into practice.

This final chapter provides an interpretive summary of the study's findings grounded in both the planned research questions and unplanned evolving discussions about district expectations. As there is little related research on the topic, this study

likely created more questions than it answered. Implications for the field of art education and its stakeholders, along with the broader educational landscape, are shared at the end of the chapter in conjunction with identified areas for additional research.

Summative Conclusions: The Praxis of Policy

When designing this study, I anticipated conversations with teachers about the logistics of working in an environment focused on measurable outcomes. Based on representations of the current American educational system in popular culture, literature about the increasing neo-liberal assessment practices in our schools, standards trends in the field of art education, a pilot study, and anecdotal experiences with colleagues, I envisioned a research project that would reveal constricting formal policy expectations that burdened participants with paperwork and evaluations. While those tensions might exist in other disciplines or districts, the participants in this study described almost no guidance or oversight for compliance with standards-based policies.

Furthermore, participants described administrative attention to implementation of the student-learning standards and assessment practices as nearly non-existent, leaving interpretation and implementation of the standards-based state policies to the teacher. However, equally unexpected, informal expectations emphasizing public exhibition and student competition created repercussions representative of an outcome-driven audit culture. In this section, I make concluding remarks about how policies seemed to be communicated in the case study school district, discuss the culture of exhibition and comparison that I observed and its repercussions for student tracking,

and revisit the utilization of the art teacher decision-making framework for the context of the study.

Negotiating Policies: Balancing Autonomy and Mandates

The primary formal policy interpreted by participants in this study was the inclusion of the state-developed student learning standards in their curricula. At the time interview data was collected with participants, the state was in the process of implementing revised visual arts Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS); however, participants disclosed having little to no knowledge about the content of the revisions. The district emphasized that teachers should "reframe" the state expectations at their local, classroom levels, and participants championed the curricular autonomy encouraged by the district. Yet, the district fine arts administration did not seem to offer any in-house professional development to help teachers interpret or implement the policies, leaving teachers instead to seek the guidance they needed from external sources. Consequently, the participants described a wide variety of ways they implemented the state policies in their practice.

The way the district promoted curricular autonomy over consistency was an interesting and unanticipated surprise. In my own art teaching experiences, I also had great freedom in my curricula. In contrast to the Independent School District (ISD) in the study, the district I worked in was in a state that did not have student learning standards in the fine arts, but my district encouraged alignment of what was taught within and amongst the department. In Texas, where the student learning outcomes have been part of education administrative code for nearly 20 years, I expected to find

overwhelming expectations for compliance with the TEKS with vertical alignment across the grades. Instead, the study participants described their experiences of interpreting and negotiating professional expectations in ways that seemed familiar from my experiences in what I saw as a very different state policy environment.

All of the participants had taught in other districts before being employed in Lake Wood ISD. Therefore, they could make comparisons between their current work environment and that of the other districts in which they were employed. The teachers resoundingly described being surprised by the lack of professional development resources for the visual arts department. Considering the size and diversity of Lake Wood ISD, they anticipated more consistency and support from the fine arts department. Freedom in both curriculum and professional development left a vacuum where the participants seemed to feel overlooked and at times lost. All of the participants described enjoying the freedoms afforded by the administration's policies, and yet at the same time, several of them shared that the lack of oversight bred apathy toward the formal policy expectations.

At this point, I think it is important to discuss the connections I interpreted between national policies and how state and local policies were communicated in this study. The state of Texas seems very persistent in managing its own policies and has gone so far as to pass legislation banning adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (State of Texas HB 462, 2013). This ethos of self-governance was emphasized by the district strategic goals and interpreted as a policy expectation by participants. Yet, at the individual, teacher-policy level, there appeared to be no oversight from fine arts administration or building level principals about how—or to what

degree—art teachers were expected to address the state standards. They were left to their own decision-making processes about student performance outcomes. Considering that (a) three of the participants had previously taught in other states that had differing perspectives on the relationship between national and state policies; (b) practical knowledge and previous experiences influence teacher's professional decisions; (c) the district emphasized curricular autonomy for each teacher; (d) participants implemented student learning standards differently; and (e) there was a lack of professional development to provide consistency, it seems possible, and even likely, that reforms and policies that originated outside of Texas influenced the teachers' decision-making processes.

I expected to find local policies in Texas heavy-handed and burdensome for the participants, yet in the freedom from curricular policy of Lake Wood ISD, the participants described utilizing resources and lesson plans they had developed in other district and state policy environments or found on websites and virtual art educator forums. While the Texas Education Agency and ISD seemed to pride themselves on being uniquely Texan, the participants in this study described having concocted an amalgam of resources developed in a variety of policy environments to produce their curricula. In this context, having the freedom to develop programming at the local level did not necessarily produce unique curricula. The participants' curricula were not created in a vacuum, and policies outside their local contexts did surely influence their decisions.

The challenge of deciphering formal policy expectations for art teacher participants in this study concerns striking a different balance between the curricular autonomy they desire and the professional isolation and lack of administrative support

of which they are critical. In my analysis of the ways formal policy expectations were communicated in Lake Wood ISD, I think the fine arts department administration needs to pick one area in which to allow freedom and be more direct and explicit in the other. For example, if curricular freedom through local control is the penultimate expectation, then specific and in-depth professional development—by master educators in art education—is necessary to ensure teachers have a consistent understanding of how to frame their curricula to address state mandates. If a state law requires teachers to address specific student performance outcomes at every grade level, the district should support their faculty in how to assess and report compliance.

I can imagine how the mixed messages participants' communicated would be frustrating for an administrator. How does an administrator balance freedom and isolation among department faculty, empowering autonomy while seeking to exceed state policies? From data collected in this case study, I can say that the participants wanted an active and approachable surrogate for the art education department at an administrative level. They sought leaders who could be trusted as allies working in their best interests and knowledgeable about the needs of visual arts educators. Critiquing their evaluations based on observations of teaching practice by administrators, participants stated that they simply wanted feedback from someone they trusted to understand the intricacies of visual arts education. The requests for support by art educators did not appear to go unnoticed by the director of fine arts, as evidenced by the appointment of an additional administrator to coordinate the visual arts, drill team, and theater faculty. However, without a teaching background in an art education classroom, the visual arts faculty did not trust the new coordinator, who was perceived

as an outsider.

Describing an all-around lack of support from the fine arts department administration, participants expressed the importance of their relationships with their campus administrators. Most described positive relationships with their principals; nevertheless, they conveyed a limit to the utility of what their principals could provide without visual arts backgrounds. The measure of the helpfulness of participants' principals seemed to be qualified by the size of the art supply budget and the degree to which they supported teachers' ideological beliefs.

It seems the participants could have better articulated their desire for content-specific evaluations to administrators at both the departmental and campus levels. Furthermore, I believe leaders from within the art teacher faculty should advocate for the addition of peer observation feedback opportunities to provide the in-depth content the participants claim to want. Additionally, it seems that a visual arts department mentoring program could help acculturate new teachers to the district by providing training about the district's expectations for addressing the state student learning standards and emphasis on public exhibition.

Auditing Performance through Competition and the Impact of Tracking

As described in Chapter 4, the expectation for art teachers' participation in public exhibition and performance competition was the primary informal policy expectation in Lake Wood ISD. The district exhibit enabled comparisons and performance evaluations not only amongst students, but also for art teachers and school programs at the high school level. Moreover, looking beyond the ways stakeholders within the district used

the exhibition as competitions to jockey for departmental bragging rights, the true prize for a program's success came from recognition at the regional and state levels. Hosted by the Texas Art Education Association (TAEA), the Visual Arts Scholastic Event (VASE) has a mission to "recognize exemplary student achievement in the Visual Arts by providing art students and programs a standard of excellence in which to achieve" (TAEA, 2010). The event has three separate divisions to recognize achievement in elementary, middle, and high school.

When the participants talked about VASE, I sensed the competitive spirit made famous in Texas by high school athletics, and I do not think that the emphasized value of state competitions is unique to Texas. However, I do wonder how much the audit culture of our broader education system factors into the heightened emphasis on award recognition. When districts' schools have students' standardized test scores reported in the press and campuses are given performance awards, it should not be surprising that the nature of the culture for art educators was also competitive.

The focus on performance exhibition, competition, and recognition was most evident in the local data at the high school level. Michael talked in interviews about his students' Advance Placement (AP) Portfolio scores, sharing the process of restructuring the program—along with all five of the art teachers in his building--to emphasize and promote high AP scores. As described, the curriculum was redesigned to recruit and encourage high achievers through the AP track and to keep less motivated students in the lower-level introductory art courses. Performance tracking seemed to be evident in the descriptions of all Michael's courses, along with the rest of the program at his campus.

I can identify with the desire to pour my energy as an educator into classes with the seemingly most promising and engaged students, focusing my efforts on students who might study art at the post-secondary level and pursue art careers. They were the kids who were most like me as students, and I want to help them succeed. Mentoring the "varsity art" kids was easy; conversely, my patience could quickly wane with the disinterested students who were seemingly placed in my class because no others fit into their schedules. However, few of the students in my classes could be categorized in the former group and likewise—in reality—relatively few fell into the latter group either. I must admit that most of the students I worked with were neither highly motivated nor disinterested; they fell somewhere in between.

In my experiences, the disinterested students tended to fall away after the first course, and a large portion of the students in my high school courses—even the upper-level courses—had a genuine interest in visual art, even if it wasn't their passion or career emphasis. What are the implications for, and messages sent to students about what is valued in a program that emphasizes the high-achiever track? Furthermore, as evidenced in the data, the emphasis on performance evaluations impacts art teachers who do not align ideologically with the curriculum-as-product philosophy. Over time, how might the audit culture influence those teachers' job satisfaction and retention? Furthermore, if high school teachers continue to perceive pressures for producing high-achieving and award-winning students works, might there be an increase of downward pressure on elementary and middle school teachers to have competition ready students entering Art I courses?

On a systemic level, issues of privilege and access emerge when considering the

repercussions of tracking and the influence of external validation. Michael's school in Lake Wood ISD was situated in an affluent area of the district where I heard stories about parents who were very motivated by post-secondary aspirations for their children. Absent from these conversations was the topic of cost of participation in AP classes. Across town in a far more economically challenged area, Johnathan was hoping that his students would make it through high school with a diploma. He did not teach in an award-winning school, and his students would not be getting AP credit for their work. If a district measures a program's success by the number of awards it wins and the average AP Portfolio Exam score, what message might the broader community be receiving about which kinds of art are valuable and who can participate in art production and appreciation?

Revisiting the Decision-Making Framework

One method I used to analyze the data was the art teacher decision-making framework. Concepts included in the framework evolved out of a study about instructional influences for Nebraska art teachers (Garth, 2011) and factors that I recognized in my own decision-making process as a practitioner. I began developing the framework as a way to conceptualize influences I identified on visual arts teachers' curricular choices documented in literature and filtered through my experiences. Throughout this collective case study project, I refined the framework in light of the findings about local professional contexts. I used situational analysis cognitive mapping processes (Clarke, 2005) to include themes emerging from the data to organize the decision-making framework as it is presented in Appendix A. The framework is still a

work in progress, and I anticipate that my thinking will continue to evolve as I conduct more research about art teachers' decision-making and as other scholars critique the framework and add to theoretical and empirical literature in the field.

The three pillars of the framework worked in tandem during my analysis to offer a more complete picture of art teachers' decision-making then I understood at the beginning of the study. The decision-making framework includes abstract ideological beliefs about the purposes of art education and practical factors dictated by local contexts. Moreover, what I believe grounds the framework are the unique influences of each teacher's practical knowledge and previous experiences. If envisioned as a spectrum—where ideologies comprise an educator's internal motivations and professional contexts constitute the interpersonal and external conditions for decision-making—then practical knowledge contributes a history of the teacher's accrued experiences to balance that which he or she hopes to achieve and the realities of what can be accomplished given the interpretations of the working environment.

Based on my constructivist-interpretivist beliefs about accumulating knowledge and refining understandings of experience and best practices over time, I interpreted from the data that practical knowledge was the bridge between the abstract and the concrete, the substantive and syntactic, where "*principles*, *maxims*, and *norms*" (p. 11) coalesce into pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986). For the participants in this case study, it seemed their interpretations of expectations in the current professional context of Lake Wood ISD were informed by their previous experiences in various other states, districts, and situations to be negotiated in concert with their ideological beliefs that then led to curricular and pedagogic decisions. Using the

decision-making framework in my analysis helped me conceptualize the complicated and diverse practical factors of participants' professional environments. The emerging factors of local policy contexts were balanced by the contrastingly simple to qualify ideologies influencing their decision-making processes.

I hope the framework contributes to literature and research in art education by presenting a way to consider influences in teachers' decision-making. Furthermore, I believe this investigation of policy expectations in art education by describes how relational, logistical, and institutional professional contexts can affect curricular and pedagogic decision-making. Through this collection of cases, I hope to provide one perspective about how professional contexts affect practice. From this study about policies in practice, I hope to encourage additional studies and further discussion about how art educators interpret expectations and negotiate praxis.

Implications and Possibilities for Future Research

Many scholars before me have explored the theoretical and practical influences of teachers' decision-making processes. It this study, I constructed a decision-making framework based on previous empirical and theoretical scholarship to help analyze, organize, describe, and present my understandings of the data collected in my own research. However, I believe art education still needs more study about policy implementation at the local level.

Utilizing a variety of concepts about what the field of art education understands about praxis, I hope to contribute data about the factors influencing the interpretation and negotiation of policies through descriptive thematic accounts of five teachers in one

district. While it is tempting to generalize information from this collective case study, it is only one small sample. We should only look at the findings in this data within this single context. I hope that in the data, the reader can generate their own meanings and critically consider the influences in their decision-making context; however, this study is simply one collection of cases. With these findings—and in light of what we already knew—I now turn my attention to presenting possibilities for future research.

Policy Makers

Policy-making is often viewed as a top-down process (Spillane, 1996; Wilson, 2000), where the policy writers are removed from the practical realities of policy implementation. For scholars who theorize educational policy-making and its implementation, I hope this study provided a context to consider how one group of teachers and one school district made decisions about policy expectations. I believe this data confirmed that ideological beliefs were important in how policies were interpreted and implemented in practice. They seemed to guide participants' decisions from a broad philosophical perspective, while the local professional context provided the realistic limitations of implementation. How might policy be conceptualized as fluid and organic in our current audit culture of standardization?

For the practical development of national, state, and local policies, I hope policy makers utilize this case as an example of one-way local control was exercised. By gaining an understanding how teachers interpreted, and in some instances passively avoided engaging, the intricacies of policies, I hope policy makers will modify the ways they present implementation practices. Having policies written in a vernacular that was

easily accessible to teachers and could be translated for students seemed imperative for fostering consistent implementation among the study participants.

Removing the barrier of bureaucratic educational language in policies could aid clearer interpretation. Furthermore, by understating the factors influencing art teacher decision-making, perhaps policy makers could bridge the gap between intended policy outcomes and the ideological goals of art educators. Areas of future study for policy makers could include comparisons of policies written in different districts, states, and nations in light of the new national arts standards initiative. How might the ways different groups adapt, adopt, or modify polices change the language, tone, and outcomes of policy documents to reflect evolving perspectives about the aims of art education and local priorities? What might the implementation of local policy look like in states that have adopted the CCSS?

Administration and Art Education

One of the biggest implications I gleaned from that data was the importance of strong leadership within fine arts departments. Anecdotally, visual arts teachers' identities are seen as rebellious, counter-cultural, and combative. However, I found that what the study participants' desired was someone in a power role with whom they could identify and whom they could trust as having their best interests in mind. The participants' shared reluctant enthusiasm about an arts coordinator whose background was in a different discipline; what they really wanted was someone whom they felt understood their needs. Based on these participants' views, anyone who was not previously a visual arts classroom teacher could not effectively be a visual arts

administrator.

For scholars theorizing the role of administrators in art education, I hope this study provides an example of how the participants' compare the efficacy of the roles of the fine arts department administrators and their building level administrators. Considering how the participants perceive the administrative power hierarchy, how might the field rethink the roles of administrators? Is there a way for scholars to develop frameworks that conceptualize the needs of art education or that speak to a general administrative audience?

I hope current administrators gain an understanding of the importance of content specific professional development opportunities for their visual arts faculty. Particularly in settings where there is only one visual arts educator at a building, creating district-wide opportunities for art teachers to collaborate and discuss content-specific issues can be the most important development activities they experience. I would like to find out how much professional development time art teachers in different districts receive to work on content-specific issues and how that that time correlates to teaching effectiveness and job satisfaction. Additionally, in districts with visual arts leadership, how are the development activities organized and what types of content are found to be effective for teaching faculty?

Furthermore, in districts that do not have administrators with visual arts backgrounds, I hope the findings of this study will help reiterate the importance of designing opportunities for specific feedback about art content, even if through peer meetings. For future study, I would be interested in learning about the demography of current arts administrators and consequently, how their organizational behaviors

differed according to their previous professional experiences.

Art Educators

This study reflects the views of a very narrow population, less than seven percent of art teachers in just one district, however many of the issues emerging in their interviews are similar. I hope theorists in art education can use this study as a catalyst to develop concepts about the variety of ways teachers' think about policies and alternative approaches to engaging expectations. How might the field consider the implications of audit culture in the kinds or curricula art teachers develop?

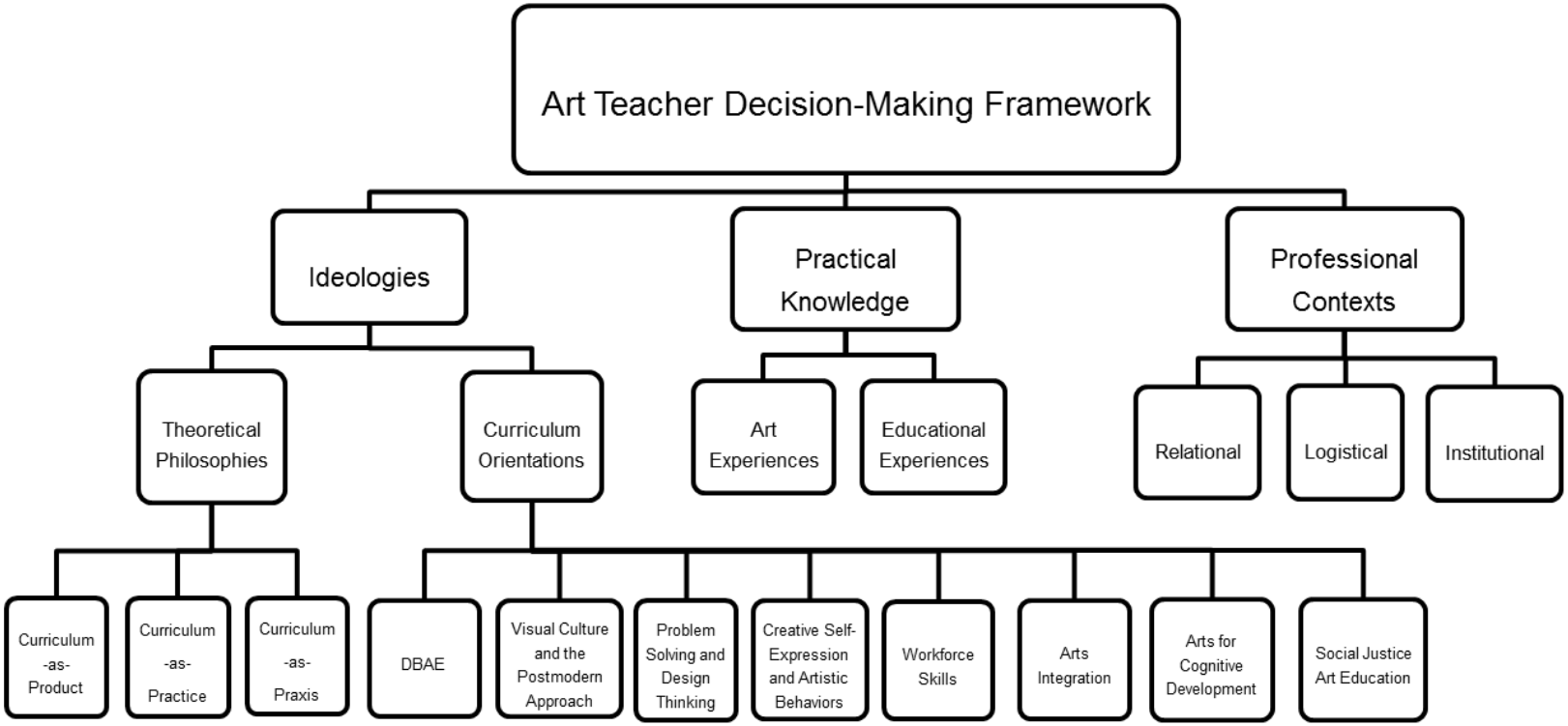
On a practical level, I believe the art education field needs more information about the ways art teachers interpret and negotiate policies. How might the culture differ in a different district, state, or region of the country? With the next generation visual arts standards, how might art educators' engagement with standards evolve over the next decade? This study provides a glimpse at a gap in our empirical knowledgebase, addressing the repercussions of standards-based policies for five art educators in the context of one school district. What else might we learn by investigating the ways policy interpreted and negotiated in other art classrooms?

Furthermore, considering the increasing neo-liberal emphasis on assessment, comparison, and rewards in broader educational policies, I believe we need further study of the implications of exhibition, competition, and recognition in art education programming. I think additional research and case studies should focus on investigating how district, regional, state, and national art competitions function in both theory and practice. How might ideologies, practical knowledge, and professional

contexts influence decision-making and the types of artifacts valued among stakeholders in exhibition competitions in different situations?

APPENDIX A

ART TEACHER DECISION-MAKING FRAMEWORK


Art Teacher Decision-Making Framework
Ideologies
Practical Knowledge
Professional Contexts
Theoretical Philosophies
Curriculum Orientations
Art Experiences
Educational Experiences
Relational
Logistical
Institutional
Curriculum -as- Product
Curriculum -as- Practice
Curriculum -as- Praxis
DBAE
Visual Culture and the Postmodern Approach
Problem Solving and Design Thinking
Creative Self-Expression and Artistic Behaviors
Workforce Skills
Arts Integration
Arts for Cognitive Development
Social Justice Art Education

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

Selecting the Setting and Recruiting Participants

Located in a large metropolitan area, I recruited visual arts educators from multiple sites within one suburban school district. Selecting a singular district for data collection, all participants were accountable to the same set of local policy. Realizing building administrators also interpret, negotiate, and implement policies uniquely, I anticipated variation in the emphasis of different aspects of district policies by school principals. Participant recruitment occurred in four phases. In a study focused on exploring the intricacies of expectations in one school district, selecting a site became an important first task for the project.

In July of 2014, I contacted visual arts directors, coordinators, and district offices of research and accountability in 10 area school districts via phone and email informing them of my study, its purpose, and scope (see Appendix B, Invitation to Study Email). After several attempts, four districts never responded to my inquiry, one took three months to respond, two declined interest, one denied my research application, and two districts approved the study. In one of the two districts in which I was approved to conduct the study, I was able to develop interest in my research with the visual arts coordinator but no teacher participants joined the study. The information that follows, describes the four phases of my participant recruitment efforts in the Lake Wood ISD, which acts as the site for this collective case study.

In phase one, I contacted the district's office of assessment and accountability informing them of my study, its purpose, and scope. Through this initial contact, I made myself available for follow-up questions, seeking permission to conduct research with members of their school community, and to ask for the contact information for any

district art administrators and teachers who may have done curriculum or policy work in the past. The director of assessment and accountability played an important role as the gatekeeper to district personnel and greatly assisted my ability to conduct the study.

As the project was designed, I believed the study could benefit from one interview with the fine arts director or visual arts coordinator—if he/she was willing to participate—during which I would explore how the district describes formal and informal expectations from the perspective of an administrator (see Appendix C, Arts Administrator Interview). In addition to the policy expectations, I intended to use their suggestions about personnel to begin a purposeful snowball sampling method (Patton, 2002) to recruit "information-rich key informants" (p. 237), wherein coordinators with a broad knowledge of district teachers could recommend potential participants. Despite numerous invitations, both the fine arts director and visual arts coordinator declined to participate in the study. Instead, the director of assessment and accountability became my ally in participant recruitment. District protocol was extremely limiting for recruitment because I was not approved to contact teachers directly; conversely, all initial correspondences were filtered through district administrative offices.

Phase two involved the distribution of an electronic invitation to participate in the study (see Appendix B, Participant Invitation). Initially, the invite was distributed only to build principals via the assessment and accountability office as per district protocol. The purpose of the invitation was to introduce the study and researcher as well as supply contact information to address questions and concerns about participation. Criteria used to select participants were (1) years of visual art educator experience within the district, (2) current teaching assignment, (3) self-identified knowledge of

district policy requirements, and (4) willingness to participate in the study. Teachers interested in participating self-enrolled in the study by responding to the researcher via the provided contact email. I am unsure how widely the invite was distributed to faculty members by building administrators, but only two art teachers responded to the first call for participants. Discouraged by the initial response, I scoured available district electronic materials and generated an art teacher email list. Again working through the office of assessment and accountability, an informal invite (see Appendix B, Secondary Informal Invitation) including consent forms was distributed to secondary teachers in the district that produced additional interested art teacher participants.

Ultimately, I recruited five full-time K-12 public school visual arts teacher to participate in the study. Seeking diverse interpretations in a restricted participant pool, my sample was limited to a small number of information-rich core cases that I hoped would produce "useful manifestations…aimed at the insight about the phenomenon, not empirical generalizations from a sample to a population" (Patton, 2002, p. 40). Participants who chose to be part of the study were over the age of 21 and—as limited by the study design—had at least three years of experience in the district. Recruitment and selection of participants concerning gender and racial/ethnic populations was limited by the composition of district employees. The participants demonstrated a variety of experiences and knowledge about expectations regarding district policies and were selected to represent elementary, middle, and high school divisions across the three different geographic areas of the school district community.

In phase three, interested participants were contacted via phone call about participating based on the previous criteria (see Appendix C, Phone Call Script). Upon

confirmation of eligibility, I addressed questions about the study, described the main research agenda, and coordinated a schedule to begin the interview process. Following the phone conversation, participants received an email containing an additional copy of the consent form, which was collected during the first site visit (see Appendix B, Snowball Email to Participants).

During the interviewing sessions, I enacted phase four of recruitment by seeking additional participant recommendations from my initial participants. Based on the participant's knowledge of their peers, I hoped this recruitment method would create a snowball or chain sample. The recruitment method was limiting because it relies solely on participants' responses to build the study sample, which includes their biases. However, I attempted to locate teachers with differing interpretations of expectations than those of the initial participants and emphasized this when seeking recommendations. Several of the recommendations I received included art teachers who were already participating in the study. Consequently, no additional teachers volunteered to join the study based on participant recommendations.

Invitation to Study Email

Dear [*district gatekeeper*],

My name is Timothy Garth and I am a doctoral student from the Art Education/Art History department at the University of North Texas. I am contacting you to get more information about research protocols within your district. I am interested in contacting members of your visual arts department to recruit participants for my dissertation study and want to make sure I go through all of the proper channels.

Briefly, my research's focus is on how visual art teachers interpret and negotiate the district expectations--specifically regarding planning, curriculum, student learning standards, and assessments. I would like to conduct three interviews and one instructional observation with each teacher participant (looking for at least three but no more than nine teacher participants). Additionally, I would like to do one interview with an arts administrator to understand how they describe the expectations for their content area. No data will be collected about students in this study.

Attached is a more detailed summary (2 pages) of the proposed research. If any additional information or clarifications would be helpful, please let me know. I am happy to provide my IRB approval forms if needed. I can be reached at [UNT email address] or via my mobile phone number [mobile phone number].

I appreciate your help in this regard and being an advocate for the education of our community.

Sincerely,

Timothy Garth

Teaching Fellow
Art Education/Art History

College of Visual Arts and Design
University of North Texas

Participant Invitation

Dear Art Educator,

My name is Timothy Garth and I am a graduate student from the Art Education/Art History department at the University of North Texas. As a fellow art educator, I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about the ways K-12 art teachers' curricular and pedagogic decisions are influenced by district expectations. I am particularly interested in learning about how you use art standards and assessments in your practice. You are eligible to be in this study because you have at least 3 years of experience as an art educator in [*district name*].

If you decide to participate in this study, we will meet at your school for three interview conversations of approximately 60 minutes each. I would like to audio record the interviews to ensure an accurate representation of your comments for the transcription and data analysis process, though you retain the right to decline this activity. Additionally, I would like to sit in on one class period of your choosing to see your teaching practice in action. No identifiable information will be collected about students at any point during the study.

You will be given a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality in your responses and information that explicitly identifies the district will be omitted from all records and any resulting publications. Art teacher participants are eligible to receive compensation in the amount of $50 for completing the observation and interviews. This project is supported by a grant from the National Art Education Foundation.

If you are interested in participating, I would like an opportunity to speak with on the phone to answer any questions you may have and schedule a convenient time for

our first interview session. **Please reply to this email** with your preferred phone number contact information and a good time and date for me to reach you. Remember, participation in this study is completely voluntary—you can choose to be in the study or not.

If you have any questions about the study, please email [UNT email address] or via my mobile phone number [mobile phone number].

Thank you for supporting art education in our community.

Sincerely,

Timothy Garth

Teaching Fellow
Art Education/Art History
College of Visual Arts and Design
University of North Texas

Secondary Informal Initiation

Hi, [*district gatekeeper*],

Attached is a list of secondary teachers I would like you to contact along with a copy of the formal participant invitation. Below is a brief blurb explaining the project for you to include in the email body.

"The study, *Art Education Policy: Interpretation and the Negotiation of Praxis*, attempts to share a variety of experiences of how visual arts teachers approach planning, instruction, and assessment in our current educational environment. Through 3 interview sessions and 1 class observation, the research focuses on the ways art educators interpret and negotiate district expectations in their teaching. Supported in part by the National Art Education Foundation, the researcher is offering $50 in compensation to participants for their time commitment.

If you have 3 years of experience as a visual arts educator in [*district name*] ISD and are interested in becoming a participant in the study, please contact Tim Garth at [UNT email address] or via my mobile phone number [mobile phone number].

I am happy to send you the participant list when it is finalized.

Please let me know if you need any additional information.

Thank you!

Tim

Snowball Email to Participants

Hello, Art Education Advocates!

Once again, thank you for participating in my study. I am almost finished conducting interviews in [*district name*] and am asking for one more favor from you…. Can you please urge any of your high school teachers to email me about participating?

The district prohibits me from inviting them directly and I am desperately trying to get a few more HS teachers involved (particularly in the [*district*] zones). Attached are the formal invite and informed consent documents, should they be helpful.

I hope you are having a great start to the new semester!

Tim

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW INSTRUMENTS

Art Educator Phone Call Script

I appreciate your interest in participating in my study, thank you. The purpose of this brief phone call is to give you the chance to get to know me a little bit before we begin and provide an opportunity to chat about research. Do you have any general questions I can address right now?

[*Participant Response*]

A little background information about me, I started my art teaching career at traveling between two elementary schools in an Omaha, Nebraska suburb. After a couple of years working with the youngsters, I then took a high school position, teaching a variety of art classes over the next four years. Most recently, moving to North Texas for graduate school, I have been fortunate enough to be able to teach courses for preservice art education majors, non-art majors, as well as supervise art student teachers in the field.

Through this research study, I hope to get a better grasp of the ways art teachers understand and implement both formal and informal district policies in their classrooms. When I say policy, I'm using a fairly broad and intentionally inclusive definition. Formal policies could include:

how the TEKS are used,

any district curricular scope and sequence that may be in place, and

lesson planning formats.

I am also interested in less explicit and perhaps informal expectations, such as:

participation in annual art competitions,

using specific lessons to teach content (like realistic self-portraits), and instructional methods and philosophical approaches.

Most importantly, I hope to explore the relationship between what art teachers believe the district expects them to do in their classrooms and how those expectations influence the daily practice of being an art teacher.

Next, I'd like to discuss the study's structure.

To help me understand your influences and practice, we'll meet for three interview conversations and I'll stop by to watch one class session with students. Each interview will explore a topic that helps create a context for me that describes your relationship to your district's expectations.

- Interview 1 explores your professional history and how you've come to understand your district's expectations about what it means to be an art teacher.
- In interview 2, I want to learn about the influences and resources for your curriculum and lesson planning, and what the "life" of your classroom looks like.
- At a convenient time after interview 2, I think would be a good opportunity for me to hang-out and experience one of your classes in action.
- Finally, Interview 3 gives us a chance to discuss how you utilize assessments for student learning and the ways you fulfill district policy requirements in your practice.

Do you have any questions about the study or requirements for participants?

[*Participant Response*]

To ensure that you meet participant eligibility criteria, are you willing to answer four questions about your experience as an art teacher?

[*Participant Response*]

- Do you have at least 3 years of experience as an art teacher in your district?

  [*Participant Response*]

- Do you currently work as K-12 art teachers in your school district?

  [*Participant Response*]

- Do you have knowledge of your district's expectations for art teachers?

  [*Participant Response*]

- Acknowledging you may withdraw from the research process at any time, are you currently willing to participate in the described study?

  [*Participant Response*]

If not all criteria are met:

I appreciate your interest in participating in the study, but unfortunately at this time you do not meet all eligibility criteria. Can you recommend any other art teachers from your district who may be interested in participating?

[*Participant Response*]

If all criteria are met:

Great—thank you for your interested in participating! I look forward to learning about your experiences. When is a convenient date and time for me to visit your school for our first interview conversation?

[*Participant Response*]

Do you have any final questions for me?

[*Participant* Response]

Thank you for your time today. I look forward to working with you in the future. Have a great day.

Art Educator Interview One: Learning the Culture

Interview 1 explores your professional history and how you've come to understand your district's expectations about what it means to be an art teacher.

Before your employment in this school district, describe your experiences with art.

What did you consider important about art education?

What did you think was the job of an art teacher?

When you began working in this district, describe what the culture of arts education was like here.

How did you learn about the expectations?

Formal documents? (Curriculum, Scope/Sequence, Handbook)

Were there art teacher meetings?

Content area professional development?

Expectations from Arts Administrator, Principle, other district art teachers, building peers?

How did your ideas of what an art teacher's job was compare to the expectations from the district?

How would you describe power hierarchy in the art department?

Was there a predominant teaching or philosophical style among teachers?

How does that effect the culture?

In your first several years here, how did you decide what to teach?

Content/Topics?

How did your approach compare to other art teachers?

What types of feedback did you receive?

Were there any instances when your style/approach was different from the expectations of the district culture?

How did you know?

How did you react?

Describe any changes that may have occurred in the expectations of the district culture.

Styles, philosophies, content, methods

Is there anything else you can share about your experiences in learning the district culture?

Art Educator Interview Two: Planning for Expectations

Interview 2, I want to learn about the influences and resources for your curriculum and lesson planning, and what the "life" of your classroom looks like.

Describe the current district curriculum materials available to you. Overall structure –> specifics.

Which materials are helpful? Not helpful? Why?

Explain your understanding of curriculum requirements?

Choices left to individual teacher?

Describe your unit & lesson planning process. How do you design units/lessons?

Where do you start? Why?

Which district materials do you use?

What non-district materials do you use?

[*Placeholder question to probe for information about non-district materials*]

[*Placeholder question for classroom artifacts such as bulletin boards/posters*]

Describe your process for assessing students.

Formative?

Summative?

How do your grading methods compare with your peers?

What materials do you need to submit to the district as evidence of meeting expectations?

Are these materials different from your teaching materials? How?

Describe any accountability measures that are in place for you as a teacher?

Who holds you accountable? Principal/Arts Administrator/Peers

Does that influence your planning, instruction, or reported documents?

Is there anything you want to add about how you plan your curriculum?

Art Educator Interview Three: Adaptations for Personal Praxis

Interview 3 gives us a chance to discuss how you utilize assessments for student learning and the ways you fulfill district policy requirements in your practice.

What do you think is important about the current district curriculum? (Content/Structure/Choice)

Why is that important for you personally?

Do you feel like you meet the expectations of the district curriculum? (Quality/Content)

Is it important for you to address the entire district curriculum? Why?

Do you ever feel pressure to make sure that everything is covered?

What do you consider the most important things for art teachers to do/students to learn/experience?

Do you feel like these things are emphasized in the districts policies/expectations/curriculum?

Do you feel like you ever include topics that are not part of the district's curriculum expectations?

Why do you teach these topics?

How do you work them into the curriculum?

How might your curriculum and teaching practice be different without the district expectations?

TEKS?

Considering your practice as an art teacher, what do you think is important for policy makers to know?

If you could create your own art policy or standards, what might they look like?

Art Educator Observation Debrief

How would you describe the main goal(s) of this class session?

How do you feel like the session went? Well? Where does it need more?

Planned

Unplanned

How would you describe this class session to your administrator?

[*Placeholder for Question Generated during Observation*]

Arts Administrator Interview

How do you define [*District's Name*] fine arts department's mission and goals?

What are the district's formal expectations for art teachers?

Curriculum? Scope/Sequence?
TEKS?

How do the teachers know about the expectations?

In-services
Documents

Describe any informal expectations for art teachers.

Assessments?

What professional development resources does the district provide for art teachers?

Other resources?

Describe your ideal art teacher/classroom

What do you expect arts education to look like in your district in 10-15 years?

Is there anything else you would like to share?

Can you suggest art teachers I should contact who may be well-equipped to discuss their understanding of district policies and expectations?

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