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Discussing Art in the Early Childhood Classroom: An Action Research Study in Professional Development

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Discussing Art in the Early Childhood Classroom: An Action Research Study in Professional Development

by

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Dedication

For my students, past and present. You have challenged me, inspired me, encouraged me, and guided me to become a better teacher and a better person. I hope I have done the same for you.

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Abstract

Discussing Art in the Early Childhood Classroom: An Action Research Study in Professional Development

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This study uses an action research methodology to create, implement, evaluate, and improve a professional development workshop for early childhood educators. The purpose of the workshop was to provide training in art education for practicing teachers in a childcare center. The workshop was intended to enable teachers to lead art discussions in the early childhood classroom derived from museum education teaching strategies. As a museum educator and early childhood teacher, the researcher was compelled to develop the workshop based on her experience in the field. Realizing that professional development opportunities in art education topics other than art making are not readily available to educators, the researcher used the existing, state mandated annual training requirement to address this void in early childhood teacher education. The learning potential within art discussions is addressed to make a case for the inclusion of these teaching strategies in early childhood classrooms. The findings of this study identify successful elements of professional development workshops for early childhood

educators and make suggestions for other teacher-educators designing and leading such workshops.

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Chapter 1: *Introduction to the Study*

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This study was conceived from my personal experience as an early childhood educator and art education graduate student focusing on museum education. Beginning in 2010, I have been employed at The University of Texas Child Development Center in Austin, Texas as a two- and three-year old teacher. The following year, I began my graduate studies, also at The University of Texas. My classroom became my laboratory and my students became my test subjects as my academic studies progressed. As I learned more about museum education, I began to utilize discussion strategies in my classroom practice. I was surprised to find that even my two- and three-year old students were receptive to and interested in discussing art reproductions. It had been my practice for many years to display reproductions around my classroom. However, once I began leading regular art discussions, I began to notice students looking at these art images more thoughtfully. I knew that I was on to something as I watched one of my students sit before a display of Matisse portraits. She reached out and traced the outline of each portrait's face and body with her finger. When she saw I was observing her, she pointed to one of the reproductions and said, "She is sad." Those three words amazed me. This child, like most two-year olds, had a difficult time understanding her peers' emotions. Yet, here she was, empathizing with the woman in the painting. I began to see evidence of my students' learning everywhere, as they developed their language skills, learned their shapes and colors, improved their social skills, and became more aware of others' emotions. I knew their growing abilities in these and other areas were due, in part, to my classroom experiments.

My dual identities merged and intertwined in ways I had not expected, informing both my teaching practice and my academic pursuits. As I tested new teaching strategies and encountered new ideas, my abilities as an educator grew. Knowing that my studies had improved my teaching practice and my students' learning, I wanted to share this new knowledge with my colleagues and the community of early childhood educators in which I practice. In reflecting upon my personal experience over the years, I realized how few professional development opportunities there were in art education for EC teachers. Recognizing this need and my ability to fulfill it, I chose to assume an additional identity as a teacher-educator. While I had previously dabbled in teacher education, I wanted to dive head first into this study and accomplish two goals at once: sharing my knowledge of museum education theory with early childhood educators and improving my personal teaching practice as a teacher-educator. Deciding to engage in this study, I assumed one final role as a teacher-researcher.

This study, therefore, investigates the creation and implementation of early childhood professional development, focusing specifically on the application of museum education teaching methods in the early childhood classroom. Wanting to investigate this issue through my personal experience, I developed my central research questions and created and presented a workshop to address this gap in available trainings.

CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How can I effectively share my knowledge of museum education with other early childhood educators to improve the quality of art education within The University of Texas Child Development Center and the early childhood education community at large? What supports and resources do early childhood teachers need to implement new instructional strategies related to art in their classrooms? How can I improve my practice

as a teacher educator and better meet the professional development needs of early childhood educators?

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Current research shows that the education level of early childhood teachers directly affects the quality of their classroom environment and instruction (Burchinal, Roberts, Riggins, Zeisel, Neebe, & Bryant, 2000; Cassidy, Hestenes, Hestenes, & Mims, 2005; Kontos, 2003). Despite these findings, college educated teachers are a rare occurrence in childcare centers due to low wages in the largely private early childhood job market. Most states (Kagan, Kauerz, & Tarrant, 2008) have instituted policies designed to combat this, which require all caregivers to complete annual training in a variety of topics related to the care of young children.

While the field of art education has established a growing research base regarding the value of and best teaching practices in the early childhood years, this research has not historically been communicated effectively to early childhood (EC) educators (Kindler, 1996). While EC teachers are not receiving professional development regarding art instruction, most early childhood curriculums rely heavily on art making activities of varying educational and expressive quality (Mulcahey, 2009).

The early childhood classroom is often a child's first exposure to art materials beyond markers and crayons. For this reason, the EC teacher should be a recognized and valued member of the art education community. However, as Baker (1994) explains "Research efforts related to the visual arts in early childhood education often seem to be arrogant toward, and irrelevant to, those who change the diapers, wipe the noses, and hug the hurts of very young learners" (p. 6). This disconnect between art educators and the

teachers who are practicing in the classroom must be overcome in order to provide the highest quality art education possible in early childhood settings. By addressing professional development needs and working within the existing system, art educators can begin a dialogue with the EC community that would benefit both fields. As art educators, it is imperative that we concern ourselves with the art experiences of young children and work to ensure that EC teachers are well trained in visual arts instruction.

My study will attempt to bridge the gap between educators and the field of art education. The need for professional development opportunities to fulfill licensing requirements provides an avenue for art educators to establish a connection with the early childhood education (ECE) community and improve art education for our youngest learners.

MOTIVATIONS FOR RESEARCH

I have worked at the UT Child Development Center since 2010 and am invested in the community of teachers and families within the center. As a teacher, I recognized that our art curriculum could be improved to better facilitate learning in all developmental domains. My experience in other childcare centers has demonstrated that there may be a larger need for improvement in art education training among other early childhood teachers as well. As a museum education student, I am acquiring the knowledge to address this problem. Through exposure to new teaching strategies and reconsidering how and why art should be taught, I know that my teaching has improved as a result of my studies. From these changes in my teaching practice, I have seen my students make gains in their development. I want to share this new knowledge with my colleagues and the early childhood community at large. By creating a professional

development program that addresses the needs within my current workplace, I hope to influence the art education practices of my participants and colleagues. I also hope to inspire other art and museum educators to take an active interest in early childhood education and create collaborative relationships between the fields.

HYPOTHESIS

The purpose of this study is to improve my practice as a teacher educator and, through professional development workshops, share my knowledge of art and museum education, in order to improve the quality of UTCDC's art curriculum. The goal of this study is to design and implement an effective training program for early childhood educators that would expand their teaching practices in regards to art education. I hypothesize that the training program will benefit from incorporating participants' feedback into the training. I also hypothesize that some teachers may be hesitant to try new instructional methods in their classrooms and may require additional supports and resources to begin incorporating the information from the training into their teaching practice.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I chose to use an action research methodology based on my central research questions and the location of my research. Action research relies on a cyclical model of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting to answer research questions (Costello, 2011). This methodology is often used in educational settings to evaluate teaching practice from the practitioner's perspective. Being practice-based, action research is conducted from an insider perspective, where the researcher takes on an active, engaged role in executing the research (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010). In looking at my research questions, I decided

that this methodology was most appropriate to improve my practice as a teacher educator. Likewise, as a UTCDC staff member, this methodology reflected the personal involvement I already had in my research location and participants.

LOCATION AND PARTICIPANTS

The study took place at The University of Texas Child Development Center in Austin, TX. The center operates two childcare locations on the University's campus, which serve staff, faculty, and student families. UTCDC enrolls approximately four hundred children from six weeks to five years of age at both centers. UTCDC currently holds accreditations from the National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs (NAC) and Texas Rising Star. Both of these recognitions certify that UTCDC exceeds Texas Minimum Standards for Childcare Centers (Texas DFPS, Licensing Division, 2010) and provides high quality educational services.

The participants in this study were early childhood educators and administrators employed at UTCDC who were seeking professional development training in the visual arts. Teachers chose to participate in the study to earn professional development hours, which is required for all childcare teachers in Texas. I presented the first training session as part of a daylong professional development conference on March 15, 2013 to twenty-five participants. In the second research cycle, I conducted the revised training at one of UTCDC's centers on September 27, 2013 to twenty-two participants.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

I collected the data for this study using qualitative methods. Throughout the research process, I wrote personal reflections and kept a journal to document my thinking

processes and experiences. Participants provided feedback through two questionnaires administered before and after the workshop, as well as in informal conversations with the teacher-researcher. A critical observer participated in each workshop and provided feedback on my teaching and the workshop experience. Using these sources, multiple viewpoints on the research were collected and evaluated to make improvements. These sources provided a deeper understanding of the research experience to develop a rich description of the workshop.

Within the action research methodology, the data analysis process is ongoing throughout the research process (Mills, 2000). Therefore, I analyzed the data for recurring themes and patterns within each data source and throughout each research cycle. Once I established these themes, I triangulated sources to corroborate the information. After completing both research cycles, I compared the data from each workshop to draw findings from the research and determine if learning objectives were met. I used the findings drawn from data analysis to improve the second workshop and develop suggestions for other teacher educators.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Best Practices – Teaching practices based on research, which exemplify effective and appropriate methods of teaching.

Child Development Association Credential (CDA) - A nationally recognized entry-level credential for early childhood educators.

Childcare Center – An educational institution that is not part of a public school.

Developmental Domains – In early childhood education, this term is used to refer to specific areas of growth and learning in young children. Common examples of

developmental domains are social-emotional, language, cognitive, fine motor, and gross motor.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) – Defined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children as the education of children from birth to age eight. This thesis study specifically focuses on ECE occurring in a private childcare center serving children birth to age five.

High Quality Education/Environment – An educational setting and/or experience that exceeds minimum licensing requirements and places an emphasis on educational practices and child development. These characteristics are often measured and monitored by an accrediting body such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children or National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs.

Learning Environment – The classroom environment and the complete experience of being educated in that environment, which encompasses the physical environment, teaching practices, and other elements that affect the students' learning experience.

Professional Development – Workshops, classes, or trainings presented to practicing teachers to fulfill state mandated continuing education requirements.

Social-Emotional Development – The developmental domain that relates specifically to children's social skills and emotional learning processes.

Teacher-Educator – A teacher who leads professional development activities for practicing teachers.

Teacher-Researcher – A teacher who is conducting a research study evaluating his or her own teaching practice.

Teaching Practice – The manner in which a teacher creates the educational environment of their classroom including their philosophical beliefs, curriculum, and teaching style.

The University of Texas at Austin Child Development Center (UTCDC) – A childcare center located on the university's campus, which operates two locations providing early childhood education services for children of the University's faculty, staff, and students. The centers serve children from six weeks to five years of age.

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) – A research-based art discussion method that relies on specific questions and facilitator behaviors to implement.

Workshop – In early childhood professional development, professional development opportunities are commonly presented in a workshop format to teachers in need of training hours. Workshops are often short, informal learning experiences focused on a specific aspect of early childhood professional development.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Location and participants limit this study. UTCDC is a well-established center with low staff turnover and has access to extraordinary resources as part of a public research university. The center and its staff are not necessarily representative of ECE professionals as a whole in education, experience, job stability, or dedication to the field. Therefore, other teacher-educators may or may not recreate the experience of this study.

This study details my personal experience and is closely tied to my education, background, beliefs, co-worker relationships, and experiences as an early childhood teacher. The findings of this study may not be applicable in all situations or for all teacher educators.

CONCLUSION

Rising from my personal experience as an early childhood educator and art education graduate student, this study uses an action research methodology to develop a professional development workshop for EC educators. Focusing on art discussion strategies from museum education, the purpose of this study is to improve my practice as a teacher-educator while filling a gap in current professional development opportunities for teachers. Using multiple data sources, this study reflects multiple viewpoints to develop a rich understanding of the experience for all stakeholders.

In the following chapters, I will present the previous literature on which this study relies, the research methodology and design, data sources and analysis, and findings drawn from the data. Chapter 2 reviews the literature that forms the content of the workshop and creates the case for early childhood professional development. In Chapter 3, I explain my research methodology and the design of the study, including how data was collected and analyzed. Chapters 4 and 5 describe the action research process in each research cycles and present the data that I collected. The final chapter concludes the study and presents findings from the study as well as suggestions for other teacher-educators.

Chapter 2: *Literature Review*

As I began my background research, I focused on three main topics that inform my study: early childhood teacher education, early childhood professional development, and early childhood art education. To investigate these areas, I looked at literature from the fields of early childhood education, educational policy, teacher education, and art and museum education, which is outlined below.

The current state of early childhood teacher education illustrates the need for improvement in education of EC teachers, and the research (Bellm & Whitebook, 2006; Burchinal, Roberts, Riggins, Zeisel, Neebe, & Bryant, 2000; Herzenberg, Price, & Bradley, 2005; Kontos, 2003) that supports the importance of teacher education in relation to children's success. Looking at the factors that have made long-term employment of qualified teachers difficult in the early childhood education system in the United States develops a case for high quality professional development opportunities for teachers.

Early childhood professional development establishes the requirements for early childhood professional development per Texas childcare licensing guidelines (Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2010). This topic examines requirements for professional development programs as well as characteristics of successful professional development programs as described in teacher education research (Epstein & Trimis, 2002; Karoly, 2012; Malone, Straka, & Logan, 2000; Vesay, 2008). The licensing requirements and research about early childhood teacher education helped me develop the workshop, as explained in Chapter 4.

Early childhood art education outlines best practices in early childhood art education (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Epstein, 2007; Mulcahey, 2010) while

developing the content for the training. The literature develops an understanding of current barriers to high quality early childhood art education (Brittain, 1979; Kindler, 1996). I also explore the Reggio Emilia approach, an ECE model from Italy that values artistic expression as a method of communication. (Gandini, Hill, Caldwell, & Schwall, 2005; Griedling, 2011; Tarr, 2001) I explore developmental stage theories of aesthetic development (Kerlavage, 1995) to obtain a general understanding of how young children grow in artistic appreciation. In conducting the background research, I searched for museum education strategies for young children in art education research. I explore Visual Thinking Strategies, a museum education model, in depth as an especially useful method for teachers to use art as a teaching tool in the classroom (De Santis & Housen, 1996; Housen & Yenawine, 2001; Yenawine, 1998). I used this background research to determine and explain the content of the workshop in Chapters 4 and 5.

EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER EDUCATION

The care and education of young children has balanced on the edge of the educational field since the 1970s (Rose, 2010). Policy makers have been divided through the years in their views of early childhood education, some believing that ECE is only a practical service for working parents and others seeing ECE as an educational necessity in preparing young learners for school (Rose, 2010). While this question has been debated, and often shoved aside, demand for ECE services has grown dramatically over the years. Bellm and Whitebook (2006) report that in 1976 there were only 18,300 licensed childcare centers in the United States compared to 117,284 licensed centers in 2002. Nearly double the number of mothers of young children entered the workforce in the same time frame and this accounts for the nearly six-fold increase in childcare

centers. Despite this growth in the field and the demand for qualified teachers this should have created, wages have remained low due to the expanding pool of entry-level workers supplied by welfare-to-work programs and immigration. Among these populations, ECE has been a popular career choice because of the low qualifications for obtaining a position (Bellm & Whitebook, 2006).

In 1970, the federal government created the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential to provide basic training to teachers working with young children (Rose, 2010). This credential requires approximately the same number of class hours as one year of post-secondary education. Despite the creation of the CDA, the federal government has established no education requirements for teachers and states have been left to decide how to regulate programs and teacher qualifications.

Studies have found that only 30% of teachers and administrators working in childcare centers have four year degrees, 40% have some college but no degree or have EC specific training such as a CDA, and the final 30% have only a high school education (Bellm & Whitebook, 2006; Herzenberg, Price, & Bradley, 2005). As research has increasingly uncovered the importance of early childhood education, the ECE field has struggled with how to raise teacher qualifications while still keeping costs of childcare within the reach of working parents. Salary and benefits are the main issues keeping qualified, college educated teachers out of the ECE workforce. Bellm & Whitebook's study also found that teachers within a school environment have significantly higher earnings than teachers in other child care settings, however, only 16% of EC educators work in a public school. Herzenberg et al. (2005) found that EC teachers with a degree are more likely to be fifty years of age or older. This finding indicates that over the next twenty years, many of the more educated teachers will retire and the percentage of teachers with a four year degree is likely to continue to decrease.

Numerous studies (Burchinal et al.s 2000; Cassidy, Hestenes, Hestenes, & Mims, 2005; Herzenberg et al. 2005; Kontos, 2003) have demonstrated the importance of teacher education in predicting high quality EC services. Burchinal et al. (2000) conducted a study measuring cognitive development and language skills of 118 African-American childrens' abilities at 12, 24, and 36 months. Simultaneously, they evaluated the quality of the childcare environment in which the child was enrolled. Burchinal et al. (2000) found that when the classroom teacher had a higher level of education, the classroom scored higher on environmental quality scales. This study also indicated that higher quality environments raised children's scores in cognitive development, expressive language, receptive language, and communication skills at all three evaluations. Cassidy et al. (2005) also found a relationship between teacher education and the quality of the learning environment. Using established, research based educational assessments that measure for the overall classroom environment, the researchers found that teacher education level could predict how high a classroom would score on the assessment. Grouping participants into five categories based on their level of education (high school diploma, some college with no degree earned, two year degree, four year degree unrelated to ECE, and four year ECE degree), the classrooms of teachers with only a high school diploma had the lowest scores. The researchers found that quality scores increased incrementally as teacher education increased over the five education levels they evaluated. Cassidy et al. (2005) determined that teachers must possess at least a two-year degree to achieve a rating of good on their scale. Kontos (2003) also demonstrates a connection between teacher education and high quality learning. She found that teachers with degrees in any subject had higher classroom quality. The researcher found that teachers with specialized education in ECE had the highest quality teacher-child interactions.

As research into the value of EC teacher education has revealed its importance, the ECE field has replied in different ways. Administrators of Head Start, a federal early childhood program for low-income children, mandated that as of October 1, 2011 each Head Start classroom must have one teacher with an Associates degree or higher in ECE (Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, 2008). Previously, Head Start's requirement was a combination of experience and a CDA credential. Many states have adopted annual professional development training for childcare workers to provide ongoing education and education. Teachers with degrees generally do not seek employment in private child care because, as Herzenberg et al. (2005) found, teachers working in childcare centers earn on average only 52% of the average female college graduate's salary.

While attracting degreed teachers in the current ECE market seems unlikely, professional development opportunities present a way of providing education to practicing EC teachers. With a clear understanding of the value of ECE teacher education, the importance of professional development opportunities for teachers becomes clear. For many teachers, professional development may be the only ongoing education they receive and is crucial in disseminating current research and best practices.

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Officials in each state have set their own education and professional development requirements for ECE teachers and these requirements vary greatly across the country. Most states require that early childhood teachers complete a specific number of annual training hours related to their positions. According to Kagan, Kauerz, and Tarrant (2008) twenty-three states require between one and twelve hours of annual training, twelve states

mandate between thirteen and nineteen hours, nine states ask for nineteen hours or more, and two states and the District of Columbia do not specify an amount. These statistics show a wide array of requirements and illustrate the lack of federal policy regarding ECE. Teachers in the state of Texas must receive twenty-four annual hours of training for each caregiver (Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2010). Texas guidelines state that training must cover a variety of subject areas related to art education including: understanding child growth and development, planning age-appropriate curriculum, facilitating positive teacher-child interactions, working with special needs, teaching about cultural diversity, planning developmentally appropriate activities, and observing and assessing children's development. Also outlined are requirements for training programs: specifically stated learning objectives, experiential or applied activities, an evaluation tool to determine if the participants have met objectives, and a certificate of completion. These guidelines served as the basis of the professional development program that I developed for this study, as it will have to comply with Texas Minimum Standards.

The professional development workshop is the most common method of training for ECE teachers (Vesay, 2008). Vesay's study found that both teachers and administrations had difficulty finding professional development opportunities that were high quality, relevant to their professional development needs, and immediately applicable to their classroom practice. Malone, Straka, and Logan (2000) discovered that typical professional development programs were disconnected from classroom practice and, thus, failed to meet the training needs of the participants.

Katz and Goffin (1990) note that preparing ECE teachers is vastly different from teacher preparation for the later grades. While educators commonly define ECE as ranging from birth to age eight, necessary teacher preparation varies greatly depending on

the age of students in the class. Educators working with children under age five face different roles both within their place of employment and within the education community. Katz and Goffin (1990) point out that the younger the child being educated, the broader the range of responsibilities related to basic functioning of the child that the teacher must assume. Time consuming but necessary routines such as diaper changing, nose wiping, and other caregiving tasks define the fundamental responsibilities of the ECE teacher. Younger children are also more vulnerable than older students and, for that reason, ethical issues need more attention in ECE than in other teacher training programs. In addition, teacher training needs to address the social-emotional learning domain, which is critical in the early years when children are developing their social abilities. For this reason, teachers need more training in this area than teachers of older children. Finally, teachers need training that addresses the educational mission and possibilities for learning in ECE. The United States lacks a clear mission for ECE services. Teacher educators must prepare teachers to view themselves as educators, in addition to caregivers, and give them the curriculum and teaching tools to fulfill this role (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1993, November).

In describing how California has reformed its ECE professional development system, Karoly (2012) looks at six characteristics common among effective training programs: specific and articulated learning objectives, explicit link between knowledge and practice, collective approach where teachers in the same classroom and school are trained together, intensity and duration of training is consistent with the goals, a method to assess students and interpret findings is used, and alignment with state and local early learning standards. Three of these characteristics overlap Texas Minimum Standards requirements for professional development – having learning objectives, connecting

information to practice, and using an assessment tool. The other characteristics provide further insight into quality professional development.

The concept of collective training, where teachers participate in professional development with their co-workers, has been found to encourage teachers to put ideas into practice within their school through increased accountability and knowledge (Karoly, 2012). When teachers who work together in one classroom receive training together, they are able to collaborate on curricula and practices that related to the topics discussed. By putting new ideas into practice together, teaching teams are able to learn together and from each other after the training itself has ended.

Likewise, it is necessary for teacher educators to match their learning objectives with an appropriate format and length to ensure that goals can be met for participants. Professional development can only be effective when it is effectively delivered and teacher educators must provide adequate discussion and classroom time for students to absorb the material being covered.

Interestingly, Karoly (2012) also points out a need for professional development to align with state and local learning standards, which is not required by Texas Minimum Standards. By aligning ECE practices and curriculum with state learning standards, teachers begin to see themselves as part of the education system and can advocate better for the importance of ECE within the local and state systems.

Another consideration that must be addressed in professional development is encouraging ECE teachers to view themselves as continuous learners (National Association on the Education of Young Children, July 2009). By failing to create strong qualifications for ECE teachers, states have fostered an environment within the ECE community that does not value education and training as an asset to teachers. Since centers are unable to provide higher wages, higher education is of little extrinsic value to

the early childhood teacher in most settings. Teacher educators need to concern themselves with preparing teachers who understand the intrinsic value of education and will seek out new research and training, evaluate their classroom practices, and put new ideas and theories into practice despite a perceived lack of value to increased education.

Specifically related to early childhood art education, Epstein and Trimis' (2002) claim that current deficits in early childhood art education come from a lack of teacher knowledge is especially interesting:

> There is universal agreement that it is appropriate and essential for young children to explore various art media and create art. Yet art appreciation, the critical understanding and knowledge-based awareness of the meanings and aesthetics of art, is generally absent in early childhood curriculum. Why? Are young children really incapable in engaging in art appreciation? Do teachers misguidedly believe that young children can manipulate art materials but not art ideas? Or … do early childhood teachers, like teachers at other grade levels, simply lack confidence in their own ability to view art and discourse about it knowledgably? (p. 52)

The researchers draw the conclusion that teachers' lack of confidence in their personal art expertise is the cause of art appreciation not being included in EC curriculum. For this reason, Epstein and Trimis (2002) recommend that ECE teachers receive training that gives them vocabulary and strategies to talk about art. Using experiential training methods, teacher educators need to guide their students through the experience of discussing art to develop the confidence to lead discussions in their classroom.

ART EDUCATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Mulcahey (2009) introduces the current conundrum in early childhood art education:

> With so much emphasis today on the quality of education, many teachers might determine that including more art-related activities in their curriculum is too time-consuming and unnecessary. And that is understandable, given today's education climate with its emphasis on accountability and testing. Many teachers of young

> children use art in their curriculum as a change of pace, as a break from the 'important' things. Art is fun, creative, relaxing, imaginative, and helps develop certain skills. What many people, teachers and parents alike, don't know is that using art in the curriculum can go way beyond traditional art teaching, and can provide so much more for children. (Mulcahey 2009, pp. 1)

Accountability driven education, even at the preschool level, is leading teachers away from art activities and towards instruction in academic subjects. While art is still used, its teaching is not given thoughtful planning to unlock the full potential of the visual arts.

Brittain (1979) identified two types of early childhood teacher approaches to art: the teacher who is too hands off and provides no guidance to the child; and the teacher who uses art to teach concrete development skills such as fine motor control and color recognition. Brittain (1979) attributed these two types of teachers to one problem: teachers did not understand how children learn through the arts. Three decades later, Mulcahey (2009) identified the same problem, citing activities that are either too open-ended or too close-ended. She explained that activities that have too little guidance (too open-ended) can be intimidating to children who are not familiar with the art materials presented and are socially isolating when art, in fact, should be a social experience. On the opposite end of the spectrum, teacher-directed (close-ended) activities, where everyone makes the same product, are still a common occurrence in ECE classrooms, which discourages creativity in young children. Mulcahey (2009) attributes these issues to the teacher's desire for control and organization, limited art knowledge and art making experience, discomfort discussing art and responding to children's artwork, and a lack of faith in the teachers' own artistic knowledge.

Why are the same instructional issues persisting through the years in early childhood art education? Kindler (1996) asserts that ECE has placed too little emphasis on artistic development and failed to understand the value of art education. The focus on developmentally appropriate practice and school readiness has eclipsed the value of art

education and training for teachers since the early 1990s. She goes on to explain that while the field of art education has embraced the importance of art in the early years, art educators have failed to disseminate current research to the EC field in an effective manner.

Representative of this divide, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) lacks a formal statement on the value of arts education in early childhood while the National Art Education Association (NAEA) has released a position statement that emphasizes the importance of early childhood art education.

> The visual arts are essential to early learning. Every child is innately curious and seeks to construct personal knowledge and understanding of the world. Children construct knowledge in meaningful social contexts with peers and adults. Children experience their environment in holistic ways that are best served by an interdisciplinary approach that includes both guided and spontaneous learning experiences. The arts support multiple ways of knowing and learning that are inherent in the unique nature of each child. The arts empower children to communicate, represent, and express their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. The arts offer opportunities to develop creativity, imagination, and flexible thinking. The arts can enrich a young child's understanding of diverse cultures. Early childhood art programs should be comprehensive in scope, including studio experiences, interactions with artists, visits to museums and art galleries, and opportunities to respond to art through conversation, storytelling, play, dramatics, movement, music, and art making (NAEA, 2010, April, p. 1).

This statement calls for a thoroughness to early childhood art education that is not currently present in most ECE programs including artist visits, museum and gallery trips, and opportunities to discuss art, in addition to art making.

Despite communication discrepancies across these two fields, art is a commonly used teaching method in early childhood education, forming a "cornerstone" of the early childhood curriculum (Bleiker, 1999). For early childhood educators, art has remained an important tool in teaching young children, used to varying degrees of effectiveness. By bringing together art education research and the community of ECE workers, teachers

can receive the knowledge they need to unlock the educational potential of art as well as the internal world of their students.

There are many sources that provide learning objectives across a broad range of developmental domains for art education. Since my research study is being created for teachers who work with children in a childcare setting in Texas, The Texas Pre-K Guidelines (University of Texas System and Texas Education Agency, 2008) was the focus of the professional development program. The Guidelines cover ten skill domains for kindergarten readiness in the state of Texas including: social and emotional development, language and communication, emergent literacy-reading, emergent literacy-writing, mathematics, science, social studies, fine arts, physical development, and technology (UT System and TEA, 2008). While the guidelines include a specific skill area related to the fine arts, the practice of art education has the ability to develop each skill domain when purposefully used in the classroom.

Reggio Emilia Approach

Within the field of early childhood education, there was a resurgence of interest in art education with the rise of the Reggio Emilia approach (REA) in the early 1990s (Schiller, 1995). The REA philosophy is one of the few in early childhood education that places art education at the center of learning. From this framework of art as a method of communication and the research it has produced throughout the years, educators develop a greater understanding of how art facilitates learning. Beginning as a parent movement after World War II, REA's holistic and creativity-centered approach has greatly influenced current attitudes towards art in ECE, including a shift towards valuing the process of creating art over the final product (Schiller, 1995).

Following World War II, the town of Reggio Emilia in Northern Italy began a school for young children as part of its post-war reconstruction efforts. Through the sale of a military tank, the citizens of Reggio Emilia secured the financing for their school and began one of the most innovative early childhood programs of the century (Hewett, 2001). Presently, the city runs thirteen infant-toddler centers and nineteen pre-primary schools serving almost half of the city's eligible children and commanding 10% of the city's budget (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998).

In this unique cultural environment that values the education of young children, the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education has flourished and became an inspiration to educators around the world. REA is unique in the emphasis it places on the visual and performing arts as a method of communication. By recognizing that children communicate their knowledge and experiences in multiple ways, REA creates an environment that nurtures and encourages creativity. Described by Edwards et al. (1998),

> This approach fosters children's intellectual development through a systematic focus on symbolic representation. Young children are encouraged to explore their environment and express themselves through all of their available 'expressive, communicative, and cognitive languages,' whether they be words, movement, drawing, painting, building, sculpture, shadow play, collage, dramatic play, or music, to name a few. (p. 7)

Reggio Emilia schools promote visual arts by the inclusion of an atelier, a large art room, and an atelierista, an arts specialist, in each school. Every classroom is also equipped with a mini-atelier to provide continuous access to art making.

Loris Malaguzzi, founding director of the Reggio Emilia schools, thought of the atelier as a laboratory for expression and exploration. Malaguzzi wanted to move expressive education to the center of the teaching approach. To accomplish this the atelier became an integral part of the school in both philosophy and architecture. Malaguzzi describes his vision for the atelier:

> For us, the atelier had to become part of a complex design and, at the same time, an added space for searching or, better, for digging with one's own hands and one's own mind, and for refining one's own eyes, through the practice of the visual arts. It had to be a place for sensitizing one's taste and esthetic sense, a place for the individual exploration of projects connected with experiences planned in the different classrooms of the school. The atelier had to be a place for researching motivations and theories of children from scribbles on up, a place for exploring variations in tools, techniques, and materials with which to work. It had to be a place for favoring children's logical and creative itineraries, a place for becoming familiar with similarities and differences of verbal and nonverbal languages. The atelier had to emerge as both the subject and the intermediary of a multifaceted practice; it had to provoke specific and interconnected events, making it possible to transfer new knowledge acquired about form and content in the daily educational experience. (Gandini, Hill, Cadwell, & Schwall, 2005, p. 7)

This vision of the atelier eventually led to the creation of the atelierista in Reggio Emilia schools in the 1970s. Adding an atelierista was an expensive proposition and Malaguzzi felt compelled to make it valuable to the education occurring in the schools. Through experimentation by the first group of atelieristi, the position evolved into one of support and collaboration with classroom teachers. Through these collaborations, classroom teachers developed a deeper understanding of the language of art. As teachers placed more emphasis on the value of art, mini-ateliers were incorporated into each classroom to allow constant access to creative materials for children.

From the ideas of Reggio Emilia many aspects of thoughtful art education have been incorporated into curriculums throughout the United States (Schiller, 1995). It is becoming common practice for teachers to have children explain their artwork and display their words with the art. The ECE field has shifted towards an appreciation of the process of making art, recognizing that the finished product is not as important as the learning that takes place while creating.

However, in my analysis, REA overlooks the ability for young children to respond to the artworks of others. While the value of communication through art is the

central value of REA, children are not encouraged to communicate about the artwork of others. By building on the concept of art as a method of communication, the value of children's reactions to other works of art becomes apparent. Children have the possibility to communicate their inner worlds through discussions of artwork, as well as in the process of creation.

Developing a Creative Pedagogy

A primary goal of my research study is to help teachers develop a teaching style that encourages creativity, conversation, and critical thinking. To develop this creative pedagogy, a variety of teaching methods were incorporated into the training so that teachers would have multiple approaches to discuss art.

Epstein (2007) introduces the concept of intentional teaching, which combines child and teacher initiated activities to maximize learning. This style of teaching requires teachers to set clear learning goals across all domains, develop a strong understanding of child development, employ a broad mix of instructional strategies as needed, perform continuous student assessment and observation, adjust their teaching based on assessment, and conduct meaningful, reflective conversations with students to deepen learning. Epstein (2007) explains:

> Intentional teaching does not happen by chance; it is planful, thoughtful, and purposeful. Intentional teachers use their knowledge, judgment, and expertise to organize learning experiences for children; when an unexpected situation arises (and it always does), they can recognize a teaching opportunity and are able to take advantage of it, too. (p. 1)

Children's interests and actions initiate child-guided activities and teachers provide support and reflective questions to extend children's learning. Adult-guided activities are initiated to meet the teacher's goal but should be actively adapted by children's questions

and ideas. The intentional teacher uses both teaching methods to create the ideal learning situation for each child.

Epstein (2007) also addresses visual arts learning specifically as an important component of intentional teaching. The value of communication and the opportunity for teachers to lead a discussion of art as a way to build language skills is emphasized as an important component of art learning. Art making provides an opportunity for teachers to assess language development in children while engaged in interactions with teachers and peers. Also important is the social-emotional development of students through the visual arts. Epstein's (2007) view of art as a social learning experience requires children to interact and problem solve while engaged in art activities with their peers. By looking at and discussing their art and the art of their peers, children learn to value diversity and the perspective of others.

Mulcahey (2009) focuses on how to use works of art with young children as a way for children to extend learning and construct meaning. Mulcahey asserts that simply making art is not enough and that, without incorporating discussion about works of art, the full potential of art in education is not being used. She describes a method of purposeful art instruction that begins by looking at art with children before leading into an art activity. By respecting and valuing each child's comments on the artwork, Mulcahey creates a safe space for children to express themselves and begin to value diversity. Using open-ended questions, the teacher may begin by asking, "What do you see?" As the children answer, Mulcahey suggests that teachers should build on the children's responses with more open-ended questions to help children further develop their ideas. Engaging children with the artistic properties of a work and the story it is telling make a natural transition into art making.

The importance of conversation continues through the art making process. In art making activities, Mulcahey (2009) writes that it is imperative for teachers to be respectful of children's artistic choices and avoid making assumptions or suggestions about how children should create their art. An important goal of art education is for children to learn to "think like an artist," which emphasizes problem solving and personal choice making. This can only be accomplished when teachers are conscious of how to talk to children about art and being careful to avoid making assumptions and giving hollow compliments. Mulcahey (2009) councils against making assumptions in looking at children's artwork,

> As teachers and caregivers, we feel a need to know what a child is doing. Because of that we are often quick to make assumptions…. But it is not necessary for us to know what a young child is depicting. Their symbol system is different from ours and we may not understand it completely. (p. 34)

Instead of focusing on what the picture as a whole may represent, teachers should focus on what they can recognize in the artwork: shapes, colors, and artistic properties. The other pitfall of teachers is using compliments too generously. Compliments, while they may make adults feel good, do not necessarily recognize the efforts of the children in completing the artwork and do not value the importance of the artistic process to the child. Mulcahey (2009) argues that when children ask, "Do you like it?" what they are really asking for is that the teacher pay attention to their accomplishment and learn about their work. Teachers can gauge the quality of their response by asking themselves if their statement was specific to the child they were talking to or if it could be used interchangeably to respond to multiple children's artworks. Art making, as a deeply personal activity, is a chance for children to make choices and learn to value their opinions. By shifting the voice of approval from the teacher to the child, valuable social-emotional development occurs.

Epstein (2007) and Mulcahey (2009) present valuable suggestions for EC teachers who are developing their pedagogical skills. As previously mentioned, one of the problems in early childhood art education is that teachers often exert too much or too little presence in art teaching. Epstein's concept of intentional teaching provides guidance for both types of teachers to create activities that balance planned and spontaneous learning. More so than with any other developmental domain, art offers an equal playing field for students and teachers to co-create knowledge and intentional teaching encourages this collaboration. Mulcahey's (2009) method of teaching provides a simple model for teachers who are not experienced in discussing works of art. By focusing on the children's interpretations and their meaning making process, teachers do not feel pressured to provide background information on the artwork. Both Epstein (2007) and Mulcahey (2009) present the importance of conversation and provide a framework for teachers to lead conversations about art.

Art Appreciation for Young Children

Recent studies in developmental psychology (summarized by Gardner, 1990) have shown that children have the ability to understand and reflect on works of art in a meaningful way. However, teachers may not recognize this ability in their students because it emerges through encouragement.

> Untutored children do not show a tendency to focus on the aesthetics of art. They are more likely to focus on subject matter, judging artistic merit by size or cost and rarely connecting their own artistic activities with the art on display in museums or reproduced in books. Yet, if given help and support, young children can begin to display sensitivity to the qualities of art. (Epstein & Trimis, 2002, p. 51)

As discussed earlier in relation to teacher training, children will not know how to talk about art until they are guided through the experience and encouraged.

Research in best practices has established that EC teachers need a thorough understanding of child development to teach effectively (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Developmental theories form a basis for teachers to understand how children learn and the stages through which they commonly pass. In learning about developmental theories, the purpose is to predict how children might learn and then use that information to inform teaching practices and set learning goals. Understanding the stages of aesthetic development in young children helps teachers to encourage art appreciation skills in their students.

Kerlavage (1995) presents a flexible stage theory to understand how children connect with and appreciate works of art. Her theory presents three stages – sensorial, concrete, and expressive – that emerge with the child's development rather than their age. While sensorial and concrete are the stages most commonly experienced in the preschool years, an understanding of all three is necessary to appreciate what is appropriate in each stage.

The first stage Kerlavage (1995) identifies is sensorial. Children in this stage connect with works of art intuitively based on the colors and patterns that the piece of art contains. This is due to the child's curiosity, lack of higher order thinking, and egotistical worldview. In the sensorial stage, abstract works are especially effective. Early in this stage, children are unable to explain why they are attracted to an artwork. Even as they develop the ability to verbalize their interest, a child in the sensorial stage will often focus on one aspect of the artwork at the expense of all others. For example, the child may focus on one favorite color in the painting or a specific shape.

However, as children enter the second stage of art appreciation, they become more dependent on subject matter of the artwork in forming an opinion. The concrete stage is marked by "judgments based on theme, realism, and the beauty of the image" (Kerlavage, 1995, p. 58). Abstract artwork is no longer as interesting for viewers in the second stage, as children need to connect with visual subject matter that is relevant to their lives and understanding of the world. Children in this stage can verbalize why they like a painting and begin to develop an understanding of the story being depicted. An emerging concept of time is displayed in the concrete stage, which allows a greater appreciation of the artist's intent.

The third stage identified is the expressive stage (Kerlavage, 1995). As children develop the ability to think abstractly, they become interested in stylistic aspects of artwork. They are able to discriminate between subtleties in composition, color, and message. Children in the third stage are now able to understand the point of view of another person and no longer rely solely on personal experience to construct meaning. They understand that artwork can convey emotions or ideas and employ a more developed sense of time to make judgments about an artwork.

VISUAL THINKING STRATEGIES

Developed from Abigail Housen's developmental theory of aesthetic appreciation, Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) is a museum education method that is especially useful in the early childhood classroom (Housen & Yenawine, n.d.). Housen began to research aesthetic development in an effort to understand how exposure to art affected the viewing experience (De Santis & Housen, 1996). Out of this research, Housen identified five stages of aesthetic development based on how viewers with

different levels of art exposure related to artworks. In the first stage, accountive viewers look for the story in an artwork and create a narrative. Constructive viewers, in the next stage of development, use their personal knowledge and experience to form opinions and make value judgments. Classifying viewers in stage three seek to identify art historical information about a work of art in order to identify meaning and significance of the piece. In the fourth stage, interpretive viewers create personal experiences with an artwork and use their experience with art to decode meaning. In the final stage, re-creative viewers have an established history of viewing and making meaning of works of art. They take their time viewing artworks and develop relationships with favorite pieces. (De Santis & Housen, 1996) Unlike Kerlavage (1995)'s theory of aesthetic development, which is specific to early childhood, Housen's theory encompasses art viewers of all ages. In Housen's model, all young children would most likely fall into the first stage of development. Kerlavage's theory provides more detail in the early years ,making this theory more useful for EC educators.

Teaching Method

Due to the reliance on only three questions, VTS, developed from Housen's theory, is a highly structured process that EC teachers can use to begin discussing art in their classrooms. The first question to ask is, "What's going on in this picture?" Students should begin sharing observations about what they see in the picture. When a student makes an interpretive comment, teachers should respond by asking, "What do you see that makes you say that?" Finally, to keep students engaged in the observation process, teachers should ask, "What else do you see?" VTS relies solely on these three questions to facilitate learning through art (Housen & Yenawine, 2001).

VTS facilitators also use five instructional strategies to encourage learning: listening, pointing, paraphrasing, accepting without correcting, and linking (Housen & Yenawine, n.d.). They must listen carefully to every comment and understand the student's meaning. When a student refers to something in the artwork, point to the object or area. Facilitators should paraphrase each comment without changing the meaning to model use of vocabulary for students. Teachers should accept each comment without correcting students. VTS theory indicates that by emphasizing the thinking process rather than right answers, students are learning even if their statement is not factual. Finally, teachers using VTS should link together comments that are related to one another, even if the statements disagree. This helps deepen understanding and illustrates multiple viewpoints as well as how thinking can evolve.

Supporting Research

According to Phillip Yenawine (1998), who co-founded VTS with Housen, VTS was developed to accomplish two learning goals for participants:

> It has two congruent purposes, the first of which is to help beginning viewers develop a rapport with art and increase their aesthetic understanding – a broad and deep amalgam of intellect and emotions. The second is to expand participants' ability to solve problems cooperatively. (p.2)

Both of these purposes are applicable in the early childhood education, along with additional learning opportunities also presented through VTS discussions that are critical to young children's development. Preschoolers are still developing language, communication, social skills, and conversational abilities, all of which can be encouraged through VTS's open-ended group discussions. Important social-emotional development can also occur as children grow to understand that people have differing opinions and

may not always agree. By recognizing others' viewpoints, young children begin to expand their worldview past their own knowledge and experience.

The second purpose of VTS according to Yenawine (1998) touches on the critical thinking skills that are central to VTS's educational value. Critical thinking abilities include multiple skills that help children gather, examine, and make sense of the information they encounter. Snyder and Snyder (2008) explain why critical thinking is so important to success in school and life:

> Simply put, students who are able to think critically are able to solve problems effectively. Merely having knowledge or information is not enough. To be effective in the workplace (and in their personal lives), students must be able to solve problems to make effective decisions; they must be able to think critically. (p. 90)

Despite the importance of critical thinking, it is infrequently taught in schools (Snyder & Snyder, 2008). In fact, current instructional strategies such as standardized curriculum, rote memorization, and the focus on test scores, actually undermine students' critical thinking abilities, as these practices place emphasis on the content being taught over the learning process in which the students engage. By providing opportunities to develop and refine critical thinking abilities, students are challenged by VTS to exercise their natural curiosity and ask their own questions. (Snyder & Snyder, 2008).

According to Housen & Yenawine (2001), "VTS uses art to teach thinking, communication skills, and visual literacy" and "produces growth in aesthetic thinking, and that other cognitive operations also grow … specifically, observing, speculating, and reasoning" (p. 2). Studies (Burchenal & Grohe, 2007; Housen, 2001-2002) have demonstrated that VTS produces significant changes in critical thinking abilities of elementary students.

VTS uses only three carefully crafted questions to engage participants in the search for deeper meaning, explain their thought process, and provoke extended processing. According to Housen (2001-2002):

> These questions promote extended, careful and intricate observations. They focus learners, allow choice, require learners to be active, call for reflection, invite many kinds of responses as well as change in responses, allow group participation, and elicit responses which provide a source of information and learning for further discussion. Directed towards carefully chosen art images, the questions create a kind of 'critical thinking studio' in which learners observe carefully, evaluate, synthesize, justify and speculate – habits of mind which have a long history in education and which we find central to aesthetic growth and critical thinking. (p. 101)

This type of teaching is rooted in constructivist educational theory and was developed from Housen's work in aesthetic development (Housen & Yenawine, 2001; Housen, 2001-2002).

Burchenal and Grohe (2007) identified seven aspects of critical thinking and measured how VTS affected the growth of these skills in third, fourth, and fifth grade students participating in a multiple museum visit program at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston. These aspects of critical thinking include: observing, interpreting, evaluating, associating, problem finding, comparing, and flexible thinking. Using multiple measures to gather data, the researchers concluded that students who participated in the VTS program at the museum showed more instances of using critical thinking than the control group. Significant increases were shown in five of the seven aspects of critical thinking: associating, comparing, flexible thinking, and, most significantly, observing and interpreting. VTS participants were also found to participate more vocally in critical thinking situations than the control group and were more likely to draw their conclusions from evidence that they had gathered using critical thinking skills.

Housen (2001-2002) also conducted a study showing transfer of critical thinking skills to other domains and content areas among elementary students who participated in VTS discussions. Over a five-year period, Housen and her colleagues collected data from two schools to assess how VTS developed critical thinking skills and allowed for their transfer between subject areas. One school was used as a control group, while the other school received VTS curriculum and corresponding teacher training. Data collected indicated that two types of critical thinking transfer were occurring in the experimental group: context transfer and content transfer. Context transfer occurred when students were able to use their critical thinking skills in a social or learning situation that differed from the learning context of VTS, but still in a capacity related to works of art. Content transfer occurred when students applied critical thinking abilities developed through VTS to a different subject area. Context transfer scores were found to increase in both the experimental and control groups over the course of the study, however, students receiving VTS instruction showed context transfer at three times the occurrence as the control group and content transfer at two times the rate of the control group.

By acknowledging the vital importance of critical thinking abilities to success in school and life, the value of VTS as an instructional method becomes apparent. As evidenced by the studies showing transfer of critical thinking skills to other areas, VTS becomes important for all subject areas and can facilitate learning and development that goes deeper than rote memorization or high test scores. While the methodology has not been studied at length in preschool age children, the research has established its effectiveness with children in the early school grades. The development of critical thinking skills begins prior to entering elementary school and, guided by Kerlavage's (1995) theory of aesthetic development in early childhood and knowledge of best practices, VTS methodology can develop these skills in preschoolers. Since VTS

encourages the teacher to facilitate a discussion for students rather than provide information to students, it is an ideal method for early childhood teachers who may or may not possess the necessary art history knowledge to conduct a traditional content-based art discussion.

CONCLUSION

In reviewing the related literature, the need for professional development in early childhood becomes apparent. The obstacles that the field of early childhood faces in hiring well-educated teachers were explored. Current practices in and the requirements for professional development provided an opportunity for teachers to gain more knowledge about art education. Looking at current research in art education specific to early childhood illustrated many intriguing topics related to ECE, which helped me develop the content of the workshop. Specifically, the Visual Thinking Strategies methodology was discussed as a method for use in the early childhood classroom. This background research will be used in upcoming chapters to develop the training workshop

Chapter 3: *Research Methodology*

This chapter provides an overview of the selected research methodology and explains its suitability for this research study. Action research is described in depth to develop an understanding of key characteristics. I also explain data collection and analysis methods for this study, including validity of findings.

SELECTION OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

After developing my central research questions, I knew that a qualitative methodology would be most appropriate for my study. Since my central research questions probe both my experience as a teacher educator and the participants' experiences in the workshop, I knew that a qualitative research methodology was the most appropriate framework. Qualitative methods are commonly used in educational research because quantitative methods often leave out data sources and description that can potentially inform the conclusions of the study (Freebody, 2003). Qualitative data collection commonly involves materials such as interviews, field notes, audio or video recordings, photographs, and other visual materials that document the human experience of a research topic (Saldana, 2011). Collecting data in this fashion would best answer my research questions and provide a more complete understanding of the questions asked in the study.

As I began to explore different qualitative methodologies, I decided that action research was most appropriate to my study. As described by May (1993), "action research is the study and enhancement of one's own practice" (p. 114). Due to my research questions focusing on my practice as a teacher educator and the development of an effective training program, this form of research was a natural fit. Additionally, since

action research is practice-based, the research is conducted from the perspective of an insider (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010), which allows me to use my place of teaching practice as my research location. In conducting this research, I sought to improve my personal practice as well as generate suggestions to help other museum educators share their knowledge with the early childhood community. Since action research recognizes that the teacher-researcher is the generator of knowledge, this methodology allows me to explore these goals simultaneously (Mills, 2000).

Action research appeals to me as a researcher because it immediately improved my practice as a teacher educator. The immediate benefits to myself, as well as workshop participants and the larger community of practicing educators, drew me to this methodology. While generating knowledge is important for the future of educational practice, I strongly believe that "merely knowing about education won't change it" (McTaggart, 2002, p. 14), and action research provides an opportunity to do more than develop knowledge by putting new ideas into practice.

ACTION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Action research can be a vehicle for social and cultural change due to its focus on "helping us find better ways of living together successfully" (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010). Kurt Lewin is commonly credited as the founder of action research in the 1940s (Costello, 2011; Mills, 2000) for his cyclical model of research with four basic steps: plan, act, observe, and reflect (Costello, 2011). John Collier, a commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, is also credited as the founder of action research for his work, which precedes Lewin's methodology (Efron & Ravid, 2013; McNiff, 2013). Collier reportedly coined the term action research in the 1930s (Efron & Ravid, 2013). He created it to describe the community education projects that he conducted on Indian

reservations in the United States. He wanted to develop a new research methodology that would dispel the idea that all tribes had the same needs and that research conducted on one reservation could be applied to all reservations. In developing the action research methodology, he created a form of research that emphasized the uniqueness of each community and its needs (Efron & Ravid, 2013). Through his research, Collier wanted to develop a sense of community and encourage the democratic process within the communities he was researching (McNiff, 2013).

Stephen Corey, a dean and professor at Teachers College, introduced action research to the field of education during the 1950s. According to Efron and Raid (2013), Corey believed that "educational change will not take place unless practitioners are involved in developing curriculum and instructional practices, drawing on the experiential knowledge they gain through inquiry" (p.6). Action research focuses on practitioners as experts, a defining feature of its application in educational settings. In the following decades, action research came in and out of favor with educators as perceptions of teachers' knowledge and purpose has shifted and changed.

Today, action research is most commonly used in educational settings because of its focus on reviewing and systematically improving practice (Costello, 2011). It is defined by Mills (2000) as "any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers… with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes…and improving student outcomes" (p. 6). Costello (2011) presents a cyclical model of action research as it applies to education with four steps: plan, act, observe, and reflect.

> From the point of view of teachers and teaching, it involves deciding on a particular focus for research, planning to implement an activity, series of activities, or other interventions, implementing these activities, observing the

> outcomes, reflecting on what has happened and then planning a further series of activities if necessary. (Costello, 2011, pp. 9-10)

To fulfill these characteristics, my study progressed through two research cycles before the central research questions were adequately answered.

McNiff and Whitehead (2010) identify key qualities of action research as being practice-based, leading to improvements in practice, creating new knowledge and theories of practice, and focusing on improving learning. These qualities are what differentiate action research from the teaching practice that all educators engage in each day. In conducting this study, I hope to further refine my practice as a teacher educator, improve the teaching practices of participant teachers through training, gather data related to classroom experiences and student learning, and create a collaborative community of early childhood art educators.

Being practice-based, action research is intrinsically conducted from an insider perspective rather than the outsider perspective common in most research. The researcher is understood to be a participating member of the community within which the research is being conducted. The participants are also viewed as integral to the action research process and possessing valuable knowledge and experience. The researcher and participants are all actively involved in all aspects of the research and are not expected to be objective observers. This sharing of power is unique to action research, as McNiff and Whitehead (2010) explain,

> In traditional research, the theory is usually the researcher's theory, and its form is propositional, about other people; the expectation is that the theory can be applied to practitioners' practices. Traditional research is therefore usually located within an asymmetrical power relationship between researcher and practitioner, which positions the official researcher as 'the one who knows' whereas the practitioner is positioned as an aspirant. This is one reason why action research is so popular: it puts practitioners in control of their own practices – but this also carries the responsibilities of offering explanations for those practices. (p. 20)

This view of participants as important resources engages participants and increases their investment in the research. By incorporating teacher feedback in the evaluation of the professional development program, participants in this study have a valued voice in directing their continuing education. As the daily practitioners of early childhood art education, participants are indispensible to this research process.

Action research emphasizes the applicability of new knowledge and strives to make immediate improvements for the community of researchers and participants. McTaggart (2002) explains:

> In the action research genre, knowledge is not produced with a view to later incorporation into practice as it is in other research. Knowledge production is embodied in the enactment of emerging understanding. That is, the research aspect of participatory action research is not an end in itself; it defers to practice. (p. 8)

As such, action research is undertaken purposefully by a group of people looking to create immediate change in their practice. Unique from other forms of research, action research values not only the creation of knowledge, but also its usefulness to practitioners.

STUDY LOCATION AND PARTICIPANTS

The study took place at The University of Texas Child Development Center in Austin, TX. A letter granting permission for research from the center's director is located in Appendix A. UTCDC operates two child care centers serving approximately four hundred children on the University's campus, serving staff, faculty, and student families. UTCDC enrolls children from six weeks to five years of age. There are fifty-five full-time, permanent employees at UTCDC in addition to part-time, temporary, and student employees.

The participants in this study were early childhood educators employed at UTCDC and seeking professional development training in the visual arts. Teachers had the chance to participate in this study to earn professional development hours, which is required for all childcare teachers in Texas. All participants voluntarily chose to participate in the study.

The first training session occurred on March 15, 2013 and was provided as part of a daylong professional development conference with multiple workshop choices. Twenty-five teachers and administrators participated in the first training session. I offered the second training on September 27, 2013 during teachers' lunch hours and twenty-two teachers and administrators participated. Teachers take their lunch breaks in two shifts, so two back-to-back, hour-long sessions. Two participants, including my critical observer, participated in both workshops.

DATA COLLECTION

Qualitative data collection methods are almost always used in action research (May, 1993). Since action research occurs in the field, researchers commonly use ethnographic methods of data collection. These collection techniques provide detailed, rich data sources, such as field notes, journals, observations, interviews, and audio or video recordings. Action researchers need this type of data source because they are trying to understand the nuances of their practice and gather details that are often missed in routine practice.

I chose to collect data using many of these methods, including teacher-researcher journals, two participant questionnaires, conversational feedback from participants

documented in a field notebook, open interviews with a critical observer, and audio recordings of each workshop and all interviews.

My extensive journals provided a detailed data source regarding my decisions while developing the training program, as well as my reflections following completion of each workshop. This data provides insight into my decision making process and my growth as a teacher educator. McNiff (2013) explains that the researcher must monitor her own thinking to understand how it influences teaching practice. Understanding my own actions will allow me a deeper understanding of my position as teacher educator and researcher.

Participants completed questionnaires (Appendix B) at the beginning and end of each workshop. Preliminary questionnaires established participants' teaching experience, educational background, and current use of art in their classrooms through multiple-choice questions. Understanding the backgrounds of participants informs the conclusions and validity of this research. Since the preliminary questionnaire seeks background information on participants, close-ended multiple-choice questions are appropriate (Bradburn, Sudman, & Wansink, 2004) and encourage consistency in how participants chose to answer questions. In contrast, the reflection questionnaires use open-ended questions to gather participants' views of the training session. An advantage of using open-ended questions is that they provide a richer illustration of participants' thought processes than multiple choice questions and allows them to fully express their opinions in an unrestricted way (Bradburn, Sudman, & Wansink, 2004). As suggested by McNiff and Whitehead (2010), I piloted my questions for the reflection questionnaire with various co-workers to test objectivity and clarity. Questions were clearly worded to help participants understand what information was being requested without leading them towards a particular response. (Bradburn, Sudman, & Wansink, 2004)

Shortly after each workshop, I met with a critical observer who participated in the workshops to get another viewpoint on the training. A critical observer is a colleague who participates in the research by providing insights and reflections during the research process (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010; Mills, 2000). An unsturctured interview occurred following each workshop with a critical observer to obtain an additional viewpoint on the workshop. In this study, the critical observer attended the workshops, shared observations on my teaching, and suggested improvements that could be made. Mills (2000) describes the purpose of a critical observer as providing an additional view on the research that is not tainted by the researcher's close connection to the study. For my critical observer, I used a colleague at UTCDC who has many years experience in early childhood education as a program director, accreditation validator, and teacher educator in Texas. These open interviews provided a chance to reflect on the research with an experienced and knowledgeable teacher educator and gather their suggestions.

I used a field notebook to record feedback received from participants after completing the workshop. Since the research occurred in my place of employment, the participants were also my co-workers with whom I interacted daily. This method is complimentary to the informal, meandering conversations that occur naturally between colleagues. The purpose of this feedback was to learn how participants used the information presented in the workshop in their classrooms and what questions or concerns they still had. As suggested by McNiff (2013), this feedback from participants provides further understanding of the responses given on the reflection questionnaire and a clearer picture of how information presented in the workshop has been put into practice.

DATA ANALYSIS

I analyzed data by looking for recurring themes and patterns across my sources. Action researchers frequently use coding to analyze data collected from surveys, interviews, and questionnaires. (Mills, 2000). Using this process, I analyzed data sources individually to identify themes for each particular source. Coding categories are partially pre-determined by my research questions (Gough & Scott, 2000) and include suggested improvements to training program, successful elements of the training program, how information presented is used in classroom, and resources and supports needed for successful implementation. Looking at these topics helped me answer my central research questions. Understanding the needs of my participants and how they were making sense of and using the information presented in the workshop helped me evaluate my effectiveness as a teacher educator. Following action research methodology, these coding categories changed throughout the analysis process as new ideas emerged from the data. (Gough & Scott, 2000; Mills, 2000)

Following this analysis of the data, I triangulated the data sources to explore potential themes occurring in multiple data sources. Mills (2000) describes triangulation as establishing themes in data across multiple sources to create credibility. Since data is being collected across six sources representing multiple viewpoints, triangulation is possible across a variety of data collection methods. The number of data sources used in my research allows for triangulation across methods of data collection as well as multiple viewpoints on the research (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010) to increase the creditability of research findings.

Data analysis occurred in three phases. Following each research cycle, I analyzed the data collected from that cycle for recurring themes and the findings were used in improving and implementing the next research cycle. After the second research cycle

onward, I analyzed the data a second time by looking at all research cycles completed. This second analysis was used to determine the success of the changes I made to the second workshop. As this research strives to improve my practice as a teacher educator, this second analysis evaluated my growth as an educator. Finally, I undertook a third analysis to determine if the central research questions had been adequately answered and drew findings from the data.

VALIDITY

One of the limitations of action research is that my personal reflections and experiences are heavily represented in the data. To increase validity, I used questionnaires and interviews to overcome this obstacle and incorporate additional perspectives into the data. Interviews with a critical observer added another perspective and increased the validity of my data analysis. Using triangulation in data analysis also establishes themes and ideas across multiple sources of data, lending creditability to my analysis as well. Ongoing conversations and interactions with participants in our daily work environment also allowed for the process of member checking. Efron and Ravid (2013) describe member checking as making data available for participants to review and discuss my analysis. By providing participants chances to give feedback on my data analysis, I was able to verify the accuracy of my conclusions.

While action research centers around its participants and the environment in which it is conducted, the findings and teaching suggestions generated can be applied in other educational environments as appropriate. By incorporating multiple data sources and establishing triangulation, this study has generated ideas that can potentially be used by other teacher educators and early childhood teachers who wish to incorporate new information into their teaching practice.

CONCLUSION

By using an action research methodology, this research provides new knowledge about teacher education for early childhood educators and insight into using art discussion techniques in the early childhood classroom, including Visual Thinking Strategies. I selected action research for this study because it embraces an insider perspective appropriate to the research environment I am exploring, as well as its immediate benefits to my teaching practice and the practice of my co-workers. Through the use of a variety of data sources including interviews, questionnaires, audio recordings, and researcher journals, I gained multiple perspectives on the research and this is reflected in the data analysis. Validity measures such as member checking, including a critical observer, and triangulating data during analysis increased validity of findings to other educational settings.

Chapter 4: *Research Cycle One*

The first research cycle began with a professional development program conducted on March 15, 2013. Following action research methodology, the organization of this chapter explores the four steps of action research – plan, act, observe, reflect - to evaluate and improve the workshop. Each section looks at the experience of completing that step of the research process and contains information drawn from my personal experiences and data sources.

Guided by the research location and participants, the planning stage explains the selected workshop format, learning objectives for participants, and workshop content. The next section, Act, describes my experience of presenting the workshop and the beginnings of the data gathering process through participant questionnaires. Data gathering continues in the observing stage as I gather additional data sources. Finally, through reflection, I propose changes for the second research cycle based on my data analysis.

The central research questions from Chapter 1 guided the data analysis process. Improving my practice as a teacher educator and developing an engaging teacher workshop are the central goals of this research. To evaluate these goals, data sources include participant questionnaires, my reflections, observations of a critical observer, and follow up interviews with participants.

TRAINING LOCATION AND PARTICIPANTS

I conducted the Cycle One workshop on March 15, 2013 as part of a daylong professional development program for University of Texas Child Development Center staff. Throughout the day, eight different presenters offered workshops and the

participants selected four to attend. Twenty-five participants selected my workshop and provided data for this study. All participants are employed at UTCDC. Twenty-one participants are employed as permanent classroom teachers, three participants are employed as administrators, and one participant was a temporary employee. UTCDC has two locations in Austin and this professional development day included teachers employed at both centers.

I decided to conduct my first research cycle as part of this professional development day at the suggestion of UTCDC administration. This location accommodates the workshop format that I was envisioning and allowed teachers who worked together to be trained together. Prior to the day of the training, I did not know how many participants would select the workshop, as signing up in advance was not required.

PLAN: DEVELOPING THE WORKSHOP

In this section, I describe the process of engaging in the first step of the action research cycle. Research on early childhood professional development from Chapter 2 guided my choices in workshop design. Research in early childhood art education helped me develop the content of the workshop. Throughout the planning stages of this research cycle, my goal was to provide research-based information to the workshop participants that would enhance their art education practice in their classrooms.

Licensing Requirements for Professional Development

In exchange for providing a site for my research, UTCDC administration asked for my workshop to meet Texas Childcare Licensing standards for professional

development. By doing so, the participants would receive training hours for the workshop that would count towards their yearly requirement. To be counted as training hours, my workshop had to meet the standards set forth by Texas Minimum Standards, as described in Chapter 2. I incorporated these standards throughout the workshop to comply with childcare licensing requirements to issue training hours for the participants. Minimum standards also outline content areas that professional development must cover. From these content areas, I selected three that suited my vision for the workshop: age appropriate curriculum, teacher-child interaction, and planning of developmentally appropriate activities. Stephanie Cook-O'Neal, UTCDC's curriculum coordinator, reviewed my planning to ensure that I complied with these requirements and adequately addressed content areas.

Format

In selecting a format for my workshop, I considered my own professional development (PD) experiences and my knowledge of UTCDC's training practices. In my personal experience as an early childhood educator, most PD opportunities are presented in a workshop format. As explained in Chapter 2, this is the most common training opportunity for center-based teachers and also the preferred format. This type of professional development is familiar to UTCDC teachers and integrates well into the participants' existing training schedules. For these reasons, I knew early on that a short workshop format would be most appropriate for this research study.

I conducted the Cycle One workshop as a seventy-five minute training during UTCDC's first bi-annual professional development day on March 15, 2013. During my employment at UTCDC, I have attended a variety of different workshops to accrue professional development hours. These professional development days were created to

unify the center's training practices. Most often, teaching staff attended trainings after work hours or on the weekends. Occasionally, teaching staff would attend professional development workshops during the regular workday, when substitute teachers could be arranged. Finally, administrators also used staff meetings during teachers' lunch breaks to provide professional development opportunities. Beginning in 2013, however, UTCDC administrators decided to create twice-yearly professional development days when the centers would close and all staff would receive training together. By consolidating the center's professional development practices, the center would be able to reduce costs and exert more control over training topics. I chose to conduct my research as part of the first professional development day because it worked with my selected workshop format. Conducting my research as part of this professional development day also allowed for cooperative training, where teachers who taught together would be able to attend the training together and receive the same information. In UTCDC's professional development practices, this was not often an option for teaching teams.

Developing a Vision

After deciding on a workshop format and the date of the training, I began the process of deciding what my goals and vision for the training were. My research, outlined in Chapter 2, had opened my eyes to a variety of ideas in early childhood art education, but I needed to sift through them and decide what would be most useful to my colleagues.

To begin this process, I looked at my own experience as an early childhood educator and how it had changed since I began my graduate studies. My motivation for doing this research was to share my new knowledge with my co-workers. Studying museum education had changed my teaching and challenged my classroom practices in positive ways and I wanted to share this experience. One of the most significant changes I

have made in my teaching since beginning my graduate studies involves the way I discuss art. I have long displayed art reproductions in my classrooms but, until I encountered the VTS method, I had not attempted to have meaningful discussions with students about the artworks. I was skeptical about VTS at first. However, upon trying it a few times, I found that even my two- and three-year old students were engaging with the artwork and each other. During this time, I was reading extensively about early childhood art education and discovered a variety of sources about discussing art with young children that inspired me to try even more ideas in my classroom.

With this experience in mind, I decided to focus the training on discussions about artwork in the early childhood classroom, with an emphasis on the VTS method. At this point, I began to make a list of topics and ideas related to this goal to determine what information to address in the workshop. I also made a list anticipating what the participants would need to incorporate the new methods into their classrooms. After this preliminary brainstorming, I identified four topics that I thought were important for EC teachers to learn about in order to use VTS in their classrooms. These initial topics were defining aesthetic development and its importance, including developmental theories; using art vocabulary; planning and facilitating VTS discussions; and aligning these discussions with learning objectives. From these topic areas, I developed a rough outline for the workshop, from which I wrote learning objectives and the more detailed workshop presentation.

After deciding on the content to be covered, I decided that a slide presentation (available in Appendix C) would be the most appropriate structure to facilitate large group art discussions. I wanted the workshop to be informative and engaging for the participants while providing opportunities for discussion and active involvement. I also decided to provide each participant with a folder containing information about the study

and handouts highlighting major topics. (Materials are reproduced in Appendix D.) Since I wanted teachers to actively engage with the discussion, I hoped that this information would encourage them not to silently take notes throughout the entire workshop.

Later on in the planning process, a UTCDC administrator asked me to address open-ended art making in the workshop. She shared that she was concerned about craft-style art making activities happening in some classrooms and wanted the teaching staff to receive some training regarding planning art making activities that would allow for more personal choice and creative expression. Following this conversation, I reflected on my own teaching practice and the characteristics of developmentally appropriate art making. From my personal experience, I identified five criteria of open-ended art making that were supported by research. Open-ended art should provide opportunities to make personal choices, solve problems, explore materials through the five senses, engage in social interactions with peers and adults during the process, and reflect on the art making experience. I also considered the ways in which I facilitated these experiences in my classroom and selected four facilitation strategies that support open-ended art making. These strategies include using art vocabulary, displaying artwork and art reproductions in the classroom, engaging children in conversation about art making and artworks, and providing a variety of art making materials. While this topic is not addressed in my original plan for the workshop I incorporated it into my learning objectives, as is discussed in the next section.

Learning Objectives for Participants

After creating the outline for the workshop, I devised clear learning objectives that addressed what I wanted the participants to gain from the training. From my outline,

personal experiences, and research in early childhood art education, I identified five learning objectives that I used to guide my workshop development and lesson planning.

Learning Objective: Participants will be able to use art vocabulary to describe students' artwork and art reproductions.

From my personal experience, I know how important developing a vocabulary to talk about art is. Throughout my academic studies, I have spent years developing an understanding of technical, art-specific vocabulary that enables me to feel comfortable discussing works of art. Knowing the value of my art vocabulary to my own teaching, I wanted to introduce the participants to new art vocabulary and encourage them to use it in their classrooms.

Learning Objective: Participants will be introduced to Visual Thinking Strategies and its implementation method. Participants will have the chance to participate in a VTS discussion and see the model in action.

When I first encountered VTS, I was drawn to the simplicity of the methodology. I began to tentatively experiment with the strategy in my classroom and, after a few attempts, my students began to engage with the artwork or book that we were looking at in a different way. VTS also requires no art historical knowledge about an artwork on my part in order to implement the teaching method. This made a VTS discussion an ideal "pocket activity," something I can organize in a moment's notice when necessary. From the research conducted that supports VTS' method and my personal experience, I chose to make this method the central focus of the workshop.

Learning Objective: Participants will be able to explain how discussions about art contribute to children's learning and support learning domains in the Texas Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines.

To comply with Texas Childcare Licensing, I wanted to highlight the learning opportunities present in art discussions. An important skill for any teacher is to be able to explain how the students in their classroom are learning and why it is important. This is especially important for early childhood educators, who often face a stigma within the education community.

Learning Objective: Participants will be able to explain what aesthetic development is in young children and its importance.

Developing an understanding of how children interact with art and grow aesthetically was important to improving my teaching practice. While VTS is based on Housen's theory of aesthetic development, I chose to focus on an alternate theory that is specific to early childhood. From my own experience, I recognized that Kerlavage's theory of aesthetic development was more useful to me as an early childhood educator. By understanding how children develop aesthetically, I learned how to select appropriate artworks for discussions that suited my students' developmental levels. The theoretical foundation of aesthetic development helped me understand the skills and cognitive processes that were being encouraged by VTS discussions in my classroom.

Learning Objective: Participants will be able to define open-ended art making and understand how to plan curriculum that encourages creativity.

After being asked by a UTCDC administrator to address this issue in my workshop, I decided to include a discussion about open-ended art making. Open-ended art making embraces the ideas of choice and experimentation in art making activities. Within the early childhood field, open-ended art is often referred to as process art. This

theory of art making works to discourage art making experiences that produce a definitive final product or craft with a predetermined appearance. While research has established open-ended art making as best practice, the principle is applied unevenly in early childhood classrooms. From conversations with colleagues throughout the years, I have come to believe that teachers rely on product art for a number of reasons including habit, parent expectations, and lack of personal art making experience. Considering these reasons, I chose to focus on the value of open-ended art making from an educational standpoint by highlighting how children learn through process art. This information would help teachers explain art making to parents who wanted a cute final product while explaining practical considerations for the classroom and curriculum planning.

Content Development

With learning objectives established and a basic outline in place for the training, I began to put together the lesson plan (Appendix E) and slide presentation. By this point, my rough outline had grown from the four original content areas I had identified. These initial topics were aesthetic development and its importance, including developmental theories; art vocabulary; how to plan and facilitate VTS discussions; and the alignment of these discussions with learning objectives. As my planning continued, I chose to include additional information regarding open-ended art making and information specific to using art reproductions with infants and toddlers.

At this point in the planning process, I began to think about how I wanted to sequence the information during the workshop. I decided to begin by introducing the idea of best practices in art education. I shared NAEA's position statement on early childhood art education as a way to introduce the idea of a multi-faceted art education experience

for young children. This served as a means to introduce the idea of discussing art with their students as part of early childhood art education.

Following this introduction, I decided to present a discussion of aesthetics and provide a chance for the participants to share their understandings of aesthetic development. I also planned to discuss how aesthetic development is already being addressed in classroom environments through sensory activities, art making, listening to music, observing nature, etc. Tying into this, I introduced a variety of art vocabulary terms that teachers could use in their classrooms. Participants' folders contained two handouts that addressed this topic; a list of art vocabulary words and their definitions and a list of examples of how to use these words. At this point, I planned to show Philip Yenawine's children books (Yenawine, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c, 1991d, 1993a, 1993b) to the participants by passing them around the group. Yenawine, a co-founder of Visual Thinking Strategies, wrote these books before developing VTS with Abigail Housen. All six of these children's books are illustrated with works of art from the Museum of Modern Art and encourage readers to look closely at the images and answer questions. The books give examples of how to use and discuss different art vocabulary terms, which provided a connection to the discussion.

Next, I planned to introduce VTS and its purpose. I wanted teachers to learn about the research that went into developing this method as well as the studies that have looked at its effectiveness. I provided a brief history of VTS including its goals and outcomes before introducing developmental theories of aesthetic development. Since developmental theory is an important part of ECE practice, I thought that this information would help the participants connect with the theoretical background of VTS. For the purpose of this workshop, however, I decided that Kerlavage's (1995) theory of aesthetic development as discussed in Chapter 2 was more useful for early childhood educators

than Housen's theory on which VTS was based. Since Housen's theory extends into adulthood, the additional stages were not necessary for participants to know about in order to implement VTS in their classrooms. Kerlavage's theory has only three stages relating to the early years of child development and provides more detailed stages for these years than Housen's theory. Following this theoretical information, I planned to introduce the VTS method. After discussing the three VTS questions and facilitator behaviors, I modeled a VTS discussion so participants could see the method in action. For the discussion, I chose a painting by Paul Klee, *Insula Dulcamara*, 1938 (Appendix F). I knew that the students in my classroom would enjoy this abstract work and I hoped that the participants in the workshop would have a lively discussion about it. In addition to showing the participants how VTS works, this portion of the training would also provide an opportunity for the teachers themselves to connect with an artwork and gain an understanding of how discussing art could be educational in their classrooms.

The next area that I wanted to discuss was how to align VTS discussions with learning objectives that are familiar to teachers and parents. Throughout the development of the program, I chose to use the Texas Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines as my reference point when discussing development and learning objectives to align the concepts with state learning standards. I made this decision because teachers attending the workshop exclusively work in Texas. While the Guidelines are designed for pre-kindergarten classrooms (generally understood as the year directly prior to attending kindergarten, with students aged four and five years), I think they are useful to teachers of all ages and I use them extensively in my own lesson planning. The skills presented in the Guidelines are being developed throughout a child's time at the center, which makes them relevant in all of UTCDC's classrooms. In addition to learning objectives, the Guidelines also provide instructional strategies for each objective that can be adapted by teachers

working with younger children. The Guidelines include a dedicated Fine Arts Domain, dealing solely with aesthetic development, in addition to developmental domains with which teachers are more familiar. In looking at the fine arts objectives in the Guidelines as well as objectives in other domains that art education supports, I wanted participants to cultivate a rich understanding of how the arts educate young children.

The last area that I wanted to address in the workshop was open-ended art making. Based upon my research and personal experience, I included in the presentation criteria and facilitation strategies for open-ended art making. As part of this section of the workshop, I also asked teachers to think about how they could link together art discussions with art making activities through selection of materials, vocabulary used, and open-ended questions.

I also expanded my initial outline for the training by adding information directly related to discussing art reproductions with infants and toddlers. Since UTCDC serves children as young as six weeks of age, I knew that this information would be important to teachers attending the workshop. My research provided some information on this topic, as well as my experience as a teacher and knowledge of developmentally appropriate practice and child development. The week before the workshop was scheduled, I attended the National Art Education Association conference in Fort Worth, Texas. While at the conference I attended a session about new research being done at The Toledo Museum of Art and the tours being offered at the museum specifically for infants and their caregivers (Danko-McGhee, 2013 March). These tours were designed specifically to help caregivers facilitate learning experiences for infants that provide visual and verbal stimulation, which encourages brain development. Danko-McGhee also presented her research into images that appeal to infants and effective engagement strategies. By incorporating this

information into the training, I hoped that teachers would have a broader range of strategies to use with the children in their classrooms.

Each program participant received a training packet with resources. In addition to consent forms and questionnaires related to the study, the packet contained resources for teachers to use in lesson planning. Materials included in the training folders were: a glossary of art vocabulary words from Epstein and Trimis (2002); a list of artists and artworks sorted by themes; a list of online resources related to the workshop's content, lesson plans, and image selection; a handout about talking to children about their art using art vocabulary based on Epstein (2007); and Housen and Yenawine (n.d.) in English and Spanish from the VTS website. The list of artists and artworks by theme came from Mulcahey (2009) and was supplemented by my personal teaching experiences. The handout based on Epstein (2007), titled "Real Talk With Children About Their Artwork" was originally provided to me by another teacher-educator and its source is unknown. These resources are reproduced in Appendix D.

ACT: THE WORKSHOP EXPERIENCE

This section will explain the experience of delivering the workshop from my perspective, as well as the data from the two questionnaires delivered during the workshop. Data from audio recordings of the workshop are incorporated throughout the chapter.

Preparing for the Workshop

Since the day of the workshop was going to be chaotic, I prepared all my materials ahead of time. To meet my own professional development requirements, I

planned on attending workshops before and after I presented my training session. About thirty minutes before the start of my workshop, I set up the computer for the presentation and arranged the desks in the classroom into a semi-circle for discussion. I also choose to put participants' folders on the desk so they could begin reviewing the research documents as soon as they arrived.

The workshop began with an introduction of my research study and an explanation of my central research questions and what their participation in the study involved. After obtaining consent (Appendix G) from the participants, they completed the preliminary questionnaire (Appendix B).

Preliminary Questionnaires

The participants completed these questionnaires at the beginning of the training. The questions served to collect data pertaining to teachers' early childhood experience, length of time at UTCDC, level of education, and a general overview of current art education practices in their classrooms. Participants who do not have permanent classrooms, such as administrators and substitute teachers, did not answer the questions specific to classroom practice. A summary of participant responses is presented below in Table 1. Participant responses appear in bold.

Table 1: Preliminary Questionnaire Responses – Cycle One

Question	Participant responses in bold N=25
1) How many years experience do you have working with children, birth to age five?	a) Less than three years **(0)** b) Three to six years **(7)** c) Six to ten years **(2)** d) Ten or more years **(16)**
2) How many years have you worked at UTCDC?	a) Less than three years **(13)** b) Three to six years **(3)** c) Six to ten years **(8)** d) Ten or more years **(1)**
3) What age are the children enrolled in your class?	a) Less than eighteen months **(3)** b) Eighteen months to two years **(4)** c) Two to three years **(6)** d) Three to four years **(5)** e) Four to five years **(3)**
4) What is your highest level of education completed?	a) GED **(0)** b) High school diploma **(0)** c) Some college, no degree **(8)** d) CDA **(7)** e) Two year degree **(2)** f) Four year degree **(8)**
5) How do you currently use art in your classroom? (Select all that apply)	a) Art center **(18)** b) Art activities included in your written lesson plans **(20)** c) Teacher guided (or initiated) art activities **(18)** d) Children's artwork is displayed in the classroom **(21)** e) Art reproductions are displayed in the classroom **(14)** f) Field trips to see museums, galleries, etc. to view artworks **(2)** g) Classroom visits by artists **(4)**

Presenting the Workshop

After answering questions about my research study and having the participants complete the consent forms and preliminary questionnaires, I began the workshop presentation. As described in the lesson plan (Appendix E), the first few slides introduced the idea of a well-rounded art education and the meaning of aesthetic development. As I presented these slides and moved onto art vocabulary, participants listened quietly. I had noticed as soon as the lights were dimmed and the presentation began that the group became very quiet. While presenting these topics, I began to notice that the participants' attention seemed to be wandering.

As I introduced the VTS methodology, I sensed that the participants were becoming more interested in the presentation. As I discussed the three VTS questions, they were looking over the handouts and began to participate in the discussion. They expressed surprise at the regimented VTS strategy and the limited facilitator questions. A participant asked, "So do we use this when taking art dictation? Or is it only for professional art works?" UTCDC teachers often display a child's description of their artwork along with the art piece, which we refer to as dictation. I said that VTS was designed for discussing art works, but that I had also used the first question (What's going on in this picture?) while recording dictation in my classroom because it encouraged the child to describe their work without leading them.

The VTS discussion began slowly, but the participants quickly began to understand how the process worked. As discussed earlier, I chose a Paul Klee painting for the discussion. To encourage participation in case the group was shy, I had brought candy with me to reward participation. The participants responded to the first VTS question quickly and enthusiastically. In Klee's abstract work, they saw a puppy's face, an

elephant, a human eye, a whale in the ocean, a map of a town, an obstacle course, a brontosaurus, and a submarine among other suggestions. Despite the participants being my co-workers and colleagues, the workshop had felt formal up until this point for me. Once the VTS discussion began, the atmosphere in the room shifted and everyone seemed to relax as we began to interact. Everyone seemed to really enjoy hearing each other's ideas about what the image looked like and the group began to laugh and joke with one another. While the discussion this sparked was interesting and engaging for participants, comments tended to be of a more observational variety rather than interpretive. While this was very engaging for the participants, it relied heavily on the first VTS question (What's going on in this picture?) rather than facilitating a more robust discussion. When I used the second VTS question, participants' responses were much more hesitant than when answering the first question. For instance, when a participant said the artwork looks like a brontosaurus and I asked the second "What do you see that makes you say that?" and she responded, "Because I can see the long head and the line that goes down curves like the tail and feet." Other participants accepted this explanation silently and did not respond or comment further on this line of discussion. Due to the abstract nature of this work, I felt that the participants did not want to disagree with each other over personal interpretations of the artwork. Immediately, I thought that a representational artwork would generate a deeper discussion where participants would be able to build on each other's thoughts to deconstruct the artwork.

At the conclusion of the discussion, I introduced a few additional questions that veered away from the VTS method. Wanting to encourage the participants to think about multiple ways to discuss art, we used some art vocabulary words to encourage close looking and learning. One participant asked, "So who made this and what is it?" and everyone began to immediately ask about the artist and the meaning of the artwork.

Participants expressed surprise that I was not going to share any art historical information about the artwork. I explained again that VTS does not rely on this type of information to facilitate learning, but instead encourages thinking processes and cognitive abilities. I did, however, provide some additional information at the participants' request.

The participants began to discuss how to incorporate this into their weekly lesson plans. A participant asked, "How do I start practicing this? How do I start incorporating this in the classroom?" I told her, that in my classroom, I had simply begun a VTS discussion one day during circle time by holding an artwork up and asking the first VTS question. On that day, I was unsure how VTS would work or if the children would even respond to the artwork and questions, but that I found they were full of ideas and comments about the artwork. I recommend that she incorporate a VTS discussion into her circle time or as a small group activity and select an artwork that relates to the curricular theme or special interest of the children.

A participant also offered a suggestion that sensory experiences could be incorporated into an art discussion that related to the artwork. I said that providing objects for children to hold during a discussion could provide sensory stimulation and help focus their attention. Participants made suggestions for textural objects that could relate to an artwork, such as canvas and other fabrics, rocks, leaves, pieces of wood, and paint samples that matched the artwork. Participants also thought music could be used to enhance the art viewing experience and stimulate sensory development. A participant asked, "If you are introducing artwork into your classroom do you ever use it as a starting point for them to make their own recreations? Like say this painting is on burlap, would it be a good idea to let them try painting on a piece of burlap?" Even though I planned to discuss art making later in the workshop, I was excited that the participants were already

linking VTS discussions with their classroom practice. Other participants liked this idea and I agreed, saying that we would return to art making a little bit later.

Moving forward, we began to discuss learning objectives that can be achieved through discussions about art. I asked participants to discuss possible learning objectives for VTS discussions in self-selected, small groups. The participants seemed to enjoy this portion of the discussion and were freely offering suggestions and participating in discussions with the entire group. Some of their suggestions included: new vocabulary, shape recognition, color recognition, visual literacy, developing a love of art, learning to respect other people's opinions, higher order thinking, problem solving, and critical thinking. I was very pleased with the understanding of art learning that participants displayed during this discussion. They listened attentively to each other and encouraged and expanded upon each other's comments. One participant told a story about a child who liked to make paintings of the covers of his favorite books. He would bring the book from the library to the easel and use it as a reference while creating his painting. The participant said, "It shows how he was working out his thoughts about this book and I think it started because of how his teacher would read storybooks at circle and talk about the covers and illustrators." She linked this to VTS by sharing that she thought the questions could be used while reading books aloud as well.

A participant asked me during the small group discussion about learning objectives. "So what do I do with my toddlers? They aren't verbal enough to respond to an artwork with these questions." This made a great transition to the next topic, how art reproductions could be used with babies and toddlers. A number of participants work with children age two and under and were interested in how this workshop was going to relate to their teaching practice. During this portion of the training, the participants asked a lot of questions and shared personal stories about infant and toddler interactions with art

making. I did, however, begin to notice again that the group seemed to be a bit restless. At this point, we were sixty minutes into the workshop and I began to feel the group's attention drift from time to time. This was especially true of participants who worked with older age groups.

Our next topic was open-ended art making, which the participants had already begun to ask questions about earlier in the workshop. We looked at criteria for open-ended art making and ways to encourage creativity in the classroom. These ideas, discussed further in the previous section of this chapter, were drawn from my classroom practice and participants were familiar with the ideas. I also introduced some information about Reggio Emilia, that art is one of the methods of communication that children employ. We discussed how, if art making is to be considered a method of communication as in Reggio Emilia, then open-ended art making where students exercise free choice is necessary to allow them to share their knowledge and thoughts.

After discussing the concepts of open-ended art, we talked about ways to link art discussions to these art making experiences. Using a Piet Mondrian painting (*Composition of Red, Blue, Yellow, and White: Nom II*, 1939, see Appendix F) as an inspiration, the participants shared ways that they could link the concepts in the artwork to an art making activity in the classroom. "I would probably give them different sizes of cut paper, different rectangles and squares with paint and glue," one participant, who works with toddlers, suggested. Other participants also liked the idea of creating collages, especially with different textures of paper. Another participant thought the artwork could lead to a discussion about primary and secondary colors and then experimenting with color mixing at the easel or art center. There were also a number of suggestions for materials that could be put in the art center that were related to the artwork: rulers, geometric shape stencils, tissue paper for layering, fabric scraps, pipe cleaners, and

scissors to create their own shapes. One participant asked if it was wrong to give children rulers or stencils because everyone who used the stencil would have the same shape on their paper. I stated that the students who used them should still be freely choosing these materials and that a ruler was a tool that can help them achieve their vision for their artwork. Some children may not want to use a stencil or ruler and create their own shapes and lines and should be allowed to make that choice.

The last topic that we discussed was using these strategies with books. Early childhood teachers read multiple picture books to their students each day and this presents an opportunity to discuss the illustrations using the VTS methodology, art vocabulary, or other ideas presented in the workshop. Many participants indicated that they often encouraged students to make predictions based on illustrations in books while reading aloud.

Finally, I offered time for participants to ask any questions they may have. During this time, the participants also filled out their reflection questionnaires and began to prepare for their next session. Some participants came to me directly and asked to have the information about looking at art with infants and toddlers emailed to them.

Reflection Questionnaires

The participants completed a questionnaire (Appendix B) immediately after the workshop. I asked them to indicate whether they would like to participant in a follow up interview and answer five open-ended questions about the training session. The questions and a summary of participant responses appear below in Table 2. Following the workshop, I grouped similar together with an overarching theme. Each theme is listed, followed by the number of participant responses in bold.

Table 2: Reflection Questionnaire Responses – Cycle One

Questions	Participant Responses Grouped by Theme N=25
1) What was most interesting to you about today's workshop?	• VTS discussion and/or discussion **(13)** • Displaying art reproductions in the classroom **(3)** • Looking at art with babies and toddlers **(2)** • Open-ended art making **(2)** • Art vocabulary **(1)** • Texas Pre-K Guidelines **(1)** • Encouraging comments **(3)**
2) What was confusing to you about today's workshop?	• Kervalage's Theory of Aesthetic Development **(1)** • VTS, translating the discussion method into the classroom **(1)** • No Response **(23)**

3) How will you incorporate today's workshop into your classroom?	• Non specific use of art reproductions **(7)**
	• Art making **(7**)
	  o Selection of materials **(3 of 7)**
	  o Using art making to provide sensory stimulation **(3 of 7)**
	  o More open-ended activities **(1 of 7)**
	• Use art discussion techniques while reading books aloud **(2)**
	• Art vocabulary **(2)**
	• Use VTS method in classroom **(1)**
	• Encouraging comments **(2)**
	• No response **(4)**

4) What would you like to learn more about?	• How to use art reproductions in the classroom **(4)** • Looking at art with babies and toddlers **(3)** • More resources for finding art works and artists to use in the classroom **(3)** • Kerlavage's Stages of Aesthetic Development **(1)** • VTS **(1)** • How to talk with children about their artwork **(1)** • How to observe and assess children's learning during art discussions (**1)** • Art and other cultures **(1)** • Ideas for art making activities **(1)** • Encouraging comments **(7)** • No response **(2)**

Table 2 (continued)

5) How can I improve this workshop?	• More active, hands on activities **(3)** • More resources for finding art reproductions **(2)** • Additional methods for discussing art other than VTS **(2)** • Creating a handout about looking at art with babies and toddlers **(1)** • Examples of how art reproductions can be displayed in a classroom **(1)** • Providing an opportunity for participants to practice leading a VTS discussion **(1)** • Playing a video of a VTS discussion with young children **(1)** • Giving ideas for art center materials (**1**) • Non specific (**13**)
6) Are you willing to participate in a group interview with other workshop participants?	• Yes **(14)** • No **(9)** • No response **(2)**

OBSERVE: DATA GATHERING AND ANALYSIS

During the observe stage of the action research cycle, I continued the data gathering process. Additional sources include my personal reflections, an interview with a critical observer who attended the workshop, and my field notes containing feedback gathered from conversations with my colleagues and participants. These sources provide data from three different viewpoints to develop a greater understanding of the workshop experience.

Teacher-Researcher Reflections

Following the first workshop, I personally spent time reflecting and writing about the experience and considering future improvements. This process of reflection began

shortly after completing the first workshop and continued over the next several days. In reviewing my written reflections, I identified several recurring themes, which are discussed below. Relying on my personal experience as a teacher educator helped me to understand my own insights into the professional development process.

I noticed in the beginning of the training that it took some time for the participants to become engaged. The first portion of the presentation involved a lot of explanation and talking on my behalf and did not provide opportunities for participation. Participants were very quiet and reserved until I introduced the VTS method and the discussion began. From that point forward the conversation was more spirited and there were more opportunities for engagement in the discussion. By the end, the participants were becoming restless in their seats again.

Following the workshop, I had a lot of ideas for additional information to include in the workshop. I thought that the discussion on art making could be expanded and more information and discussion could be incorporated about selecting artworks. As an enthusiastic early childhood art educator, I enjoy discussing these topics and wanted to share more information with my participants. At the same time, however, I had the nagging feeling that I had tried to cover too much information for a seventy-five minute workshop. Over the course of the workshop, I addressed aesthetic development, art vocabulary, VTS, discussions with children about their art, looking strategies for infant and toddler teachers, and open-ended art making. While I had enjoyed the discussion about open-ended art making, I questioned if I had provided enough new information. Participants seemed to already know the information I presented. To engage deeper with the idea of open-ended art making, I think additional activities would have been necessary to round out the discussion. Considering both of these analyses, I began to doubt that this topic should be included in the next workshop.

I really enjoyed the VTS discussion and observed that it was successful in engaging the participants and demonstrating the VTS method. One element that was lacking was that participants were not able to see how VTS works with young children. I have the personal experience of using this method in my classroom to know how young children respond, but the other participants do not. Until using the VTS method in my classroom, I could not picture how it would work with such young students. Judging from the participants' comments following the VTS discussion, I believed this is a hurdle for some participants to implementing this teaching strategy. Many participants questioned how VTS could be an effective teaching strategy for all ages of art viewers and voiced an uncertainty about how their classes would respond to the VTS questions.

A structural change that I wanted to make to the overall workshop was adding an outline at the beginning of the presentation. Often, participants were asking questions about information that was coming up because they did not know that it would be covered. A number of participants also asked to have an outline of the slide presentation. For the next research cycle, I considered including an outline in the information packet to orient the participants.

Finally, I noted that I wanted to place a greater emphasis on how art aids children's development in the social-emotional domain. During the discussion of learning objectives for art discussions, the participants focused on learning objectives that related to cognitive, pre-math, and pre-literacy skills when discussing learning objectives related to art discussions. As explained in Chapter 2, it is especially important for EC teachers to receive training related to social-emotional development because young children are still developing these skills. Many social skills are practiced during large and small group discussions of art, which will assist children in future social interactions. Art discussions also have the unique ability to encourage children to look beyond their lived experiences

and VTS, in particular, creates an opportunity to generate compassion, empathy, and an understanding of other people's points of view through works of art. Due to these qualities of art education and their value to young children's healthy development, I wanted to place a greater emphasis on the importance of social and emotional development through art.

Critical Observer Reflections

A few days after presenting the workshop, I met with a critical observer to gather data regarding the workshop. The critical observer was a colleague and administrator at UTCDC who attended the workshop and has experience as a program director, accreditation validator, and teacher-educator.

The critical observer noted that the beginning of the workshop was not immediately engaging to participants and "felt dry [in the beginning] but continued to go up and up and up" and the audience become more interested. "The real change in momentum came for me was when the picture of the art…and there was lots of great dialogue and discussion about that and I think people found that interesting," she elaborated. She identified two reasons for this slow start: the necessary information about the research study and signing of release forms and an information heavy beginning to the slide presentation. We discussed additional activities that would allow for greater participation, especially small group activities. "Sometimes when you put people in smaller groups it gives them an opportunity to speak more as opposed to not wanting to speak in front of all these people," she said. She suggested providing artworks and asking participants to use art vocabulary words to comment on them.

She suggested that I bring examples of how I had used art reproductions in my classroom and artworks that I have used with my students. “I loved you talking about bringing pieces of art to a circle time or the classroom and I would have loved to have some pieces of art there. I think I was most interested in when you said hang some art in the block center. I would have loved to have an example there of what you would have hung in the block center or science center or art center,” she explained.

The critical observer stated that the VTS discussion was one of the most engaging parts of the presentation and that the discussion was exciting. She suggested that I begin the workshop with the VTS discussion to engage the participants quickly, “What if you began with the discussion and then went back and broke down what had been done.” She also suggested that I provide an opportunity for small group discussions where participants get a chance to lead a VTS discussion with their peers. She felt that this could help people become more comfortable with VTS and more likely to use it in their classrooms.

The participants’ information packets were something that the critical observer really liked. “Your handouts were great. I love that you do VTS in English and Spanish. That’s very helpful and I love the glossary with the vocabulary. [The handouts] keep the resources for them, right in front of their face,” she said. She felt the handouts were informative and supported the goals of the training. She agreed with me that this information was useful to teachers and could be implemented immediately in the classroom.

I asked the critical observer if she felt that the discussion of open-ended art making was necessary in the workshop. She said that it detracted from the goal of the training, which centered on the discussion of art, not making it. She brought up a previous training that she had given at the center and I had attended. She had felt that she

had been too rushed while delivering it because her plan had been too ambitious and included too much information. In the end, she had felt dissatisfied because none of the topics she wanted to discuss had been addressed sufficiently. She agreed with me that this had happened in the workshop, regarding the topic of open-ended art.

We also discussed resources for participants to find artworks. The critical observer liked that I gave participants a list of possible artworks arranged by theme, as that is how UTCDC plans the classroom curriculum. I commented that I might not have provided adequate resources for the participants to find artworks. We discussed how selecting artworks might be overwhelming for people who do not have a history of engaging with art. She liked the information that I chose to include with the packets and said she had looked at most of the websites and thought they were sufficient.

Participant Feedback

Shortly after conducting the training, I began receiving feedback from the participants through informal conversations. Since my participants are also my colleagues, I anticipated that informal discussions with them would be an important data source, which I documented through the use of a field notebook. I collected feedback from eight participants following the workshop.

Every participant that I talked to told me that they would have liked to have art reproductions provided to them at the training. In designing my training packets, I had provided each participant with a list of electronic resources where they could find their own reproductions. In my teaching experience, I have always preferred to select my own artworks for use in my classroom and assumed participants in the training would want the same freedom. They explained that they were not thoroughly implementing the VTS

method discussed in the workshop because of the time and effort required to find artworks to use. A number of participants informed me that they were unsure how to select artworks and found the sheer number of options to be overwhelming, despite my having provide a list of suggestions. Compounded by a limited amount of work time to devote to selecting art images, two participants said that they had not looked at the online resources to find reproductions.

Five participants also shared that they were using the art vocabulary that we discussed more frequently in the classroom. They liked having a glossary of terms that they could refer to when creating lesson plans. One participant said that she was trying to use the vocabulary words when commenting on students' artworks, rather than offering generic praise.

REFLECT: IMPLICATIONS FOR CHANGE

During this last step to the action research cycle, I examined my data together and began to decide on changes that would be made in the second research cycle. Looking at the common themes that had emerged in analyzing the data, I identified five changes based on the data that I would make in the next research cycle. In Chapter Five, I will describe how the following changes were implemented in the next workshop.

Change One: Create more opportunities for participation

Multiple data sources showed that the participants wanted more chance for participation during the workshop. In my personal reflections, I noted that participants were slow to engage in the beginning of the training, which I felt was due to the amount of information I presented early in the workshop. The critical observer echoed this

observation, saying that I should provide opportunities for participation and discussion to engage workshop participants earlier. On reflection questionnaires completed by the participants, four people asked for more hands-on activities or discussions.

Considering this data from multiple sources, I determined that more opportunities for the participants to brainstorm together in small groups and participate in large group discussions should be included. The critical observer suggested specifically that I add more participation opportunities in large and small groups to accommodate participants who might not want to speak in front of the entire workshop. I considered this factor in the second research cycle when planning discussion activities.

Change Two: Engage participants early in the training

Building off of the first proposed change, I planned to schedule the VTS discussion earlier in the workshop. Thirteen participants indicated on their reflection questionnaires that the VTS discussion was the most interesting topic covered in the workshop. The critical observer's and my teacher-researcher reflections supported the conclusion that this was an engaging activity for the participants. By doing the VTS discussion earlier in the workshop, participants would become involved earlier.

Additionally, I believed that I needed to reduce the amount of text in the beginning of the slide presentation. The first few slides included a large amount of text on them and emulated the lecture format that I am used to in an academic environment. Based on different data sources, my participants wanted a more interactive, hands-on presentation. By responding to this feedback, the workshop would be more engaging to participants and better suit their learning needs.

Change Three: Provide art reproductions and additional resources

After the workshop, participants indicated that image selection and finding resources was an obstacle preventing them from using VTS in their classrooms. To overcome this, art reproductions would be provided so that participants leave with an image they can use immediately. Additional attention should be paid to criteria for selecting art images that will interest young children at different stages of their development.

The participants wanted more resources in their folders, including handouts about aesthetic development and looking at art with babies and toddlers. I ended up emailing this information to participants and should instead have included it in their folder. Participants appreciated having the information conveniently available following the training.

Change Four: Provide more information about image selection

Participants in this research cycle indicated that choosing artworks was a hurdle to their implementing VTS in their classrooms. While I planned to add additional resources to training folders and distribute reproductions as part of the second research cycle, I also wanted to include more information in the workshop about how to select images and some criteria for doing so. While the participants had asked for reproductions, I also wanted to help them become more comfortable and confident selecting art images on their own for discussion.

Following the critical observer's reflections, I decided to add examples of artworks I had used in my own classroom. By illustrating how I chose artworks for my classroom, I hoped that this would make the selection process more transparent to participants.

Change Five: Eliminate discussion of open-ended art making to focus on Visual Thinking Strategies

In keeping with the research objectives of this study, the discussion about open-ended art making would be eliminated. As evidenced by the critical observer's and my teacher-researcher reflections, it was beyond the focus of the workshop. By creating a clear focus on the discussion of art in the early childhood classroom, the topic of open-ended art making was unnecessary. While related, it is more appropriate for a separate workshop that can address the concepts more thoroughly. This change helped to focus the training on VTS and allow more time to concentrate on art discussions.

FINAL THOUGHTS: CYCLE ONE

In conducting the first research cycle, I gained greater insight into my practice as a teacher-educator and the process of developing professional development workshops. Using multiple data sources, I evaluated the experience of participating in the first workshop and identified changes to be made in the second research cycle. While considering this data, I noticed that the proposed changes were related to one another.

The importance of providing numerous discussion opportunities arose from multiple data sources. The participants indicated that they wanted more opportunities to interact and share ideas with each other. My journals and the critical observer interview supported the conclusion that participants appeared most engaged in the workshop during group discussions. From my analysis, I learned that participants prefer active, hands-on discussions to lecture-style classes.

I also learned that it is necessary to provide ample resources to the participants. The folders that I distributed included some of the information presented but the

participants also needed additional resources in order to implement the discussion strategies presented in the workshop. Receiving this information helped me understand the needs of my participants and how they differed from my own teaching experience. While my position as a classroom teacher helped me anticipate these needs to a certain degree, my experience with works of art and knowledge of art education gave me a greater ease with art discussions than the participants. In addition to needing to include more resources in their folders and to provide art reproductions, I found that my participants also needed more information about how to select images and examples of how I used artworks in my classroom.

Data sources also indicated that the workshop needed a clearer focus on art discussions. At the suggestion of a UTCDC administrator, however, I had included a discussion of open-ended art making in the workshop. Looking over the date collected in this cycle, I realized that this discussion had obscured the workshop's purpose.

By closely examining the workshop experience from multiple perspectives, I was able to better understand my identity as a teacher-educator and the professional development needs of the participants. In the next chapter, I explain how I modified the workshop and worked to improve my teaching practice using this information.

Chapter 5: *Research Cycle Two*

This chapter looks at the second research cycle. Like the previous chapter, it is organized into four sections, reflecting the steps of the cyclical action research process: plan, act, observe, and reflect. Beginning with the implementation of the changes proposed in the previous chapter, I describe the process of improving the workshop and implementing it for the second time. At the end of the chapter, I will analyze data sources to evaluate these changes and determine how they improved the workshop.

TRAINING LOCATION AND PARTICIPANTS

The Cycle Two workshop was offered to teachers at one of UTCDC's two locations on September 27, 2013. Unlike the first workshop, it occurred during the participants' lunch breaks as a part of their regular workday. Additionally, the workshop was only sixty minutes long to accommodate participants' schedules, which is fifteen minutes shorter than the cycle one workshop. Holding training sessions during lunch breaks is common practice at UTCDC in order to provide convenient opportunities for teachers to complete their annual training hours. As such, the same workshop was delivered twice, back to back, to accommodate participants' separate lunch schedules. Twenty-two participants attended the two sessions in total, including three administrators and nineteen classroom teachers. One administrator and one teacher who participated in the lunch hour workshop also previously attended the training during the first research cycle. All participants were employed at UTCDC's Comal location except for two teachers who work at UTCDC's San Jacinto location and one administrator who works at both centers. Compared to the first research cycle, with twenty-five participants attending one workshop, the individual workshop sessions were smaller and more intimate. In this

research cycle, the first session had thirteen participants and the second session had nine participants. While this workshop technically occurred twice, I analyzed the data collected together as both groups received the same presentation.

Being familiar with UTCDC's operating procedures, I knew that there would be differences between the two sessions of this workshop and their participants. UTCDC teachers are employed in one of two positions in their classroom – lead teacher or assistant teacher. Lead teachers are in charge of the classroom and are responsible for lesson planning. They supervise assistant teachers and distribute the classroom workload. While each teaching team is different, in most UTCDC classrooms the lead teachers are solely responsible for planning classroom activities and leading large and small group times. This power structure affected the composition of each workshop session because lead teachers commonly take the first lunch break and assistant teachers take the second lunch break.

Initially, I had reservations about conducting the workshop in this manner. Unlike the first research cycle, teachers who worked together would not attend the workshop together, which was an important consideration in my original planning. In conducting this research, my goal was to develop informative professional development using research based, best practices. However, the workshop also has to provide an accessible and realistic professional development opportunity for early childhood educators. After considering the situation, I decided to go ahead with doing a lunchtime workshop because this practice reflects the reality of professional development opportunities for teachers at my center.

PLAN: IMPROVING THE WORKSHOP

This section will look at how the workshop was revised from the first research cycle, based on the changes identified in Chapter 4. I will describe how I implemented these changes in the second research cycle through modifications to the learning objectives of the workshop and the lesson plan, slide presentation, and participant folders.

During the planning stage of this research cycle, I focused on the five changes I planned to make following data analysis in Cycle One. These changes included creating more opportunities for participation in the discussion, engaging the participants in discussion from the beginning of the training, providing art reproductions and additional resources, providing more information about selecting images, and eliminating the topic of open-ended art making from the workshop.

Revisiting Learning Objectives for Participants

As my first step in improving the workshop for this cycle, I looked at the learning objectives that had guided my lesson planning in the first cycle. At this stage in planning, I wanted to reconsider my learning objectives for the second research cycle and make changes as necessary. As a result of this evaluation, I eliminated the learning objective related to open-ended art making to refocus the workshop on art discussions.

Learning Objective: Participants will be able to use art vocabulary to describe students' artwork and art reproductions.

After considering the data from Cycle One, I concluded that this learning objective was still appropriate to my vision for the workshop. To enhance the participants' learning in this area and incorporate more opportunities for participation into the workshop, I decided to increase the discussion surrounding vocabulary in the

second research cycle. Participants in the first research cycle had reported that they found this topic useful and were incorporating more art vocabulary into their teaching.

Learning Objective: Participants will be introduced to Visual Thinking Strategies and its implementation method. Participants will have the chance to participate in a VTS discussion and see the model in action.

This learning objective also remained unrevised from Cycle One. In the second research cycle, I decided that VTS would remain the focus of the workshop. While teachers in the first research cycle had been interested in VTS, no participants had reported using the method in their classrooms. I wanted to see if changes to the workshop would help the participants feel more comfortable with VTS and cause them to use it in their classrooms.

Learning Objective: Participants will be able to explain how discussions about art contribute to children's learning and support learning domains in the Texas Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines, especially in relation to social and emotional developmental domains.

Due to the need to comply with Texas Minimum Standards in order to issue training hours, this objective continued to be important to my planning. In my teacher-research reflections in the previous chapter, I identified that the discussion about learning objectives had revolved around cognitive, math, and literacy skills. While these are suitable learning objectives for art discussions, I wanted to encourage participants to consider social-emotional development as well. From my teaching experience, I have learned how critical these skills are to healthy development and the arts provide a unique way to reach these milestones. As explained in Chapter 2, the social-emotional developmental domain is especially important in the early years, as children develop

these skills. To create a greater focus on this domain, I slightly amended this learning objective to reflect this goal.

Learning Objective: Participants will be able to explain what aesthetic development is in young children and its importance.

During my evaluation of this learning objective, I became torn as to its importance. While having an understanding of aesthetic development has been important to my teaching, I began to wonder if it was absolutely necessary to early childhood educators in order to lead art discussions. Even though it contributes to the overall understanding of children's learning in the arts, I questioned whether or not it enhanced participants' understanding of the strategies being presented in the workshop. In the previous research cycle, one participant had indicated that Kerlavage's theory had been confusing, and another indicated that she wished to learn more about the topic. Considering this data, I concluded that I had not adequately explained how knowledge of aesthetic development related to classroom practice. After debating whether or not to include it, I chose to keep the discussion in the workshop. However, I clarified its application to teaching and curriculum design as a way to understand children's aesthetic development and provide structure to lesson planning. I made this change with the intention to clarify why the information was important to classroom practice.

Changes in Cycle Two

In revising my lesson plan (Appendix E) and slide presentation (Appendix C), I focused on the proposed changes from Chapter 4. These changes included creating more opportunities for participation, engaging the participants earlier in the training, providing more resources and art reproductions, focusing on image selection, and eliminating the discussion of open-ended art making to focus on VTS. With these changes and my

revised learning objectives in mind, I revised my lesson plan and presentation to reflect the modifications that I wanted to make to the workshop

As discussed above, the first major change I made to the workshop was to eliminate the discussion of open-ended art making. This was necessary to create a clear focus for the workshop and helped with the narrower time constraints of the second workshop session.

The second change I made to the lesson plan was to streamline the beginning of the workshop. I decided that, overall, the workshop had a natural progression through topics that I wanted to preserve in Cycle Two. Looking over my original lesson plan, I thought the transitions between ideas were natural and built on previous concepts. To make the beginning of the workshop more engaging while preserving the structure, I eliminated some introductory information that was not necessary. My original workshop was lecture-oriented during the first twenty minutes or so and participants were slow to engage in the discussions. I eliminated the information about the National Art Education Association's position statement on early childhood art education to help with the flow of the workshop. I also removed as much redundant discussion or superfluous information as possible from the presentation. Part of these changes was to relocate the discussion of Philip Yenawine's children's books to the end of the workshop when we discuss using these discussion strategies with books. This positioned the VTS discussion earlier in the workshop, as data from the previous chapter indicated that this activity had been highly engaging for participants in the first research cycle.

The information presented about aesthetics and art vocabulary remained very similar to the original lesson plan. The participants in the first research cycle had applied this information in their teaching practice and found it useful according to the participant feedback that I had received and which I explained in the previous chapter. Knowing that

the participants were using this information, I wanted to preserve it in this research cycle while also providing a discussion opportunity.

The discussion around VTS formed the bulk of the second workshop, as I intended after reviewing the data from Cycle One. As in the first workshop, I began by addressing the history of VTS and how it was developed. Next, I planned to transition into a discussion of Kerlavage's Stages of Aesthetic Development. A change that I made at this point was to explain how this developmental theory is useful in curriculum planning for teachers. I also added a discussion where participants would be able to identify the stages children in their classroom were in and give examples of how that knowledge could help them plan art discussions.

After looking at developmental theory, I planned to introduce the VTS method, including the questions and facilitator behaviors. Following this introduction to the teaching method, I planned to begin our VTS discussion. In this cycle, I knew I wanted to select a representational artwork, rather than an abstract piece, that would encourage the interpretive discussion that I felt we had missed out on during the last workshop. I chose to use a photograph by Joel Sternfeld (*After a Flash Flood*, 1979, see Appendix F). The image shows a suburban landscape after a disaster that is not easily identified without background information, For this reason, I believed it would encourage participants to discuss and challenge each other's interpretations during the discussion.

After the VTS discussion, I planned to explore some of the image selection resources that were included in the participant folder and we would begin a discussion about image selection. I shared image selection criteria that are useful to me in my curriculum planning with participants and encouraged them to think about how aesthetic developmental theory could be applied to the process. At this point, I also planned to provide an example of a Picasso painting (*Three Musicians*, 1921, see Appendix F) that I

would be using in an upcoming art discussion in my classroom. The participants in the previous workshop had asked for examples of how I used VTS in my classroom and this made an ideal opportunity to explain my curriculum development and lesson planning processes.

At this point, I planned to explore the topic of learning objectives for art discussions. To remove unnecessary information, I eliminated the slide that looked specifically at the Texas Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines' Fine Arts Domain as it simply reiterated information presented elsewhere. As in the previous workshop, we discussed examples of learning objectives as proposed by VTS and the Texas Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines. We also engaged in a group discussion where we generated our own ideas about learning objectives that could be used in planning art discussions. At this point, I wanted to encourage participants to consider social and emotional development in particular and share ways that art learning promotes these developmental domains through group discussion.

The next few slides would address looking at art with babies and toddlers, presented in the same way as the original workshop. After talking about discussion techniques, I incorporated another discussion about image selection specific to children under age two. I also incorporated another discussion opportunity, where the participants would generate ideas for using Franz Marc's *Blue Horse*, 1911 (Appendix F) with this age group.

At the conclusion of the workshop, I planned to address how these strategies could be used in conjunction with children's books. I introduced the topic by passing around children's books by Philip Yenawine (1991a; 1991b; 1991c; 1991d; 1993a; 1993b) that contain artworks. We discussed books available in UTCDC's library that are

specifically related to art and art works, as well as using picture book illustrations as an opportunity to discuss art and develop visual literacy.

Finally, I added some additional resources to participants' folders (Appendix D) and prepared art reproductions for participants. I added two handouts to the folders that summarized Kerlavage's Stages of Aesthetic Development and strategies for looking at art with babies and toddlers. In the first research cycle, the participants had indicated that they needed more information about aesthetic development. To accommodate this, I included the handout in addition to reworking the discussion, as explained earlier in this chapter. Many participants had also asked me to email them the information specifically about infants and toddlers so I chose to include it in their folder. I also prepared a number of art reproductions for distribution to the participants. Using old calendars and second-hand books, I obtained a number of reproductions that I mounted and laminated so that they were ready for immediate use in the classroom.

ACT: THE WORKSHOP EXPERIENCE

This section explores the experience of leading the workshop from my perspective, as well as the participants' responses to the two questionnaires administered during the workshop.

Preparing for the Workshop

As opposed to the first research cycle, the day of the workshop was less hectic this time around. I had about an hour to set up prior to the workshop, which helped me relax and feel comfortable. The workshop took place in the conference room at UTCDC's Comal center. The room has a large table, around which participants would be interacting with one another during the discussion. Since this training occurred during lunch,

participants came directly from their classrooms and trickled in a few at a time. As each new person arrived, I began to explain the research study so they could begin signing their consent forms and complete their preliminary questionnaires.

Preliminary Questionnaires

The participants' responses to the preliminary questionnaire are presented in the table below. There were no changes made to the preliminary questionnaires in the second research cycle. Participants who do not work in classrooms did not respond to all questions. Responses are indicated in bold.

Table 3: Preliminary Questionnaire Responses – Cycle Two

Question	Participant responses in bold N=22
1) How many years experience do you have working with children, birth to age five?	a) Less than three years **(3)** b) Three to six years **(3)** c) Six to ten years (**2)** d) Ten or more years **(14)**
2) How many years have you worked at UTCDC?	a) Less than three years **(8)** b) Three to six years **(4)** c) Six to ten years **(9)** d) Ten or more years **(1)**
3) What age are the children enrolled in your class?	a) Less than eighteen months **(7)** b) Eighteen months to two years **(5)** c) Two to three years **(3)** d) Three to four years **(3)** e) Four to fine years **(1)**

Table 3 (continued)

4) What is your highest level of education completed?	a) GED b) High school diploma c) Some college, no degree **(4)** d) CDA **(4)** e) Two year degree **(4)** f) Four year degree **(10)**
5) How do you currently use art in your classroom? (Select all that apply)	a) Art center **(13)** b) Art activities included in your written lesson plans **(18)** c) Teacher guided (or initiated) art activities **(14)** d) Children's artwork is displayed in the classroom **(18)** e) Art reproductions are displayed in the classroom **(8)** f) Field trips to see museums, galleries, etc. to view artworks **(2)** g) Classroom visits by artists **(3)**

Participants' responses indicate no meaningful difference in years of experience or education level from the first research cycle. Upon analyzing this data after the completion of the workshop, there were more participants in the second research cycle who worked with children under two years of age.

Presenting the Workshop

The experience of presenting both second cycle workshop sessions are discussed together because both workshop sessions received the same presentation. The most striking difference between the two sessions was the participants' engagement with the workshop, which will be explained further in this section. I believe this has to do with the power structure of UTCDC's classroom teaching teams. While I considered during the planning phase that the first session would primarily be composed of lead teachers and

the second workshop of assistant teachers, I had not considered how this would affect the group discussions. As previously discussed in this chapter, job responsibilities for these two positions vary greatly. Lead teachers are largely responsible for lesson planning and leading activities and discussions within the classroom. Since this is the responsibility of lead teachers, it makes sense that they would generally be more engaged in a workshop about lesson planning, as this is a key responsibility of their positions Assistant teachers, by contrast, generally do not take on this task and would not find the workshop as relevant to their positions. As will be discussed further in this section, these differences caused the discussions in each session to vary, depending on the topic being discussed and how it related to the participants' job functions.

After introducing the study and answering questions, the workshop began with a discussion of aesthetics and art appreciation. Participants in both groups gave examples of how they encourage aesthetic development in their classrooms through art activities and reading picture books. This led into the discussion of art vocabulary and how these terms can be used in the classroom. Looking at the art glossary handout in their folders, the participants suggested different terms they could use in their classrooms such as still life, complementary colors, foreground, background, palette, and relief. They also shared the art terms they are already using regularly – shade, primary colors, secondary colors, portrait, landscape, and sculpture, among others. One participant suggested that everyone hang the "Real Talk With Children About Their Artwork" handout in their art centers so they would be able to refer to it easily when talking with children about art. At this point in both sessions of the training, I noticed that the participants seemed more engaged in the material than in the previous research cycle. Participants in both groups had a lot to say about art vocabulary and how they could use the terms in their classrooms.

Following these two topics, I introduced the VTS method. Teachers in both sessions seemed interested in the methodology based on their comments and questions. A participant in the first session was excited that VTS does not require art historical knowledge, "I like to look at art but I am always scared to talk about it because I don't want to say the wrong thing." While discussing aesthetic development, the first session group seemed instantly interested in how the theory applied to students in their classrooms. A toddler teacher in the second session connected the second stage of aesthetic development to the behaviors of her students, who love to look at images of dogs. As I explained the VTS questions, one participant asked if she could change the questions when discussing an artwork. While I explained that the VTS method prescribes the exact wording and questions, I encouraged her to adapt the questions as necessary for her classroom.

In this workshop, I chose to use a different discussion image (Joel Sternfeld, *After a Flash Flood*, 1979, see Appendix F) to encourage an interpretive discussion and was very pleased with the results. Both groups discussed the image at length and there were plentiful opportunities for me to model the use of all three VTS questions and facilitator behaviors. At some points, the participants in both sessions were so involved in the discussion that they were responding directly to one another and sharing ideas. Both groups immediately began trying to figure what was happening in the image and came up with a number of possibilities – a landslide, an earthquake, a sinkhole, and vandalism were all possibilities discussed. Using the landscape for context clues such as palm trees and architecture styles, they debated the location where the photograph was taken. Overall, participants were more deeply engaged in the discussion during this research cycle. I was extremely excited about this, as I felt it demonstrated an effective VTS

discussion. A participant in the first group said, "I am surprised by how much we had to say about that photograph and how much we were able to figure out about it."

Following the VTS discussion, I introduced some ideas about selecting images for art discussions in the classroom. I directed the participants to related resources in their folders, as well as criteria that I use to select images for my classroom. I also provided an example artwork that I was planning on using in an upcoming unit in my classroom. I explained that I had chosen an image by Picasso (*Three Musicians*, 1921) to correspond with a unit I had implemented about musical instruments. I explained my process of planning, including choosing art vocabulary words that related to the work and questions that would help them link the image to the musical instruments with which they were familiar.

Next, we looked at aligning art discussions with learning objectives in lesson planning. In the first session, participants were excited to share ideas as soon as the topic was introduced and, for that reason, we focused more on the discussion than the information I had prepared. Especially during the first session, I noticed that the participants liked to discuss the topics I introduced with each other as they processed the new information. There was a strong sense of comradery and support within that workshop session that I did not experience in the first research cycle or the second workshop session during this cycle. I asked the participants to use a Henri Rousseau painting as a starting point, and generate ideas for learning objectives. Participants in the first session suggested a number of learning objectives including color recognition, conversational skills, expressive language, descriptive language, and observational skills that could be addressed by a discussion of this image. I prompted them by asking what social or emotional learning objectives could be accomplished and they came up with a variety, including emotional awareness, self-confidence, turn-taking, and listening. The

second session participants were much less engaged in this discussion and provided fewer suggestions for learning objectives. They mentioned communication skills, feelings, and color recognition. One participant in the second session said that she would use art vocabulary like tone, shade, and hue to discuss the image.

Teachers in both sessions listened intently while I presented the information about looking at art with babies and toddlers. As compared to the first research cycle, more participants in these sessions worked with these younger age groups. Going over this information, the participants in the first session began to discuss how they would use art reproductions in their classrooms. One participant suggested hanging art reproductions near changing tables to engage the children. Another participant said they wanted to find artworks with dogs in them because her toddlers were very interested in pets. A couple of the participants shared that it had never occurred to them to discuss art with children so young and had previously only displayed them for children to look at. "I talk to the infants a lot but never about art. I didn't think about that," shared a participant in the first session.

Finally, we discussed how these strategies could be used with picture books. At this point, I observed the participants' attention was shifting away from the workshop as they began moving around in their seats and gathering their belongings. I am familiar with this feeling from my own experience of attending lunchtime trainings. Towards the end of the hour, I always begin to wonder if I will have a chance to fill my water bottle or go to the bathroom before I return to the classroom and begin to wish the training would end. With this understanding in mind, the discussion about this topic was not particularly robust. Participants had a chance to ask questions and then filled out their reflection questionnaires.

Reflection Questionnaires

Participants' responses to the reflection questions are listed in Table 4 below. Following the workshop, I analyzed the responses and grouped similar responses by theme. The participants' responses appear in bold.

Table 4: Reflection Questionnaire Responses – Cycle Two

Questions	Participant Responses Grouped by Theme N=22
1) What was most interesting to you about today's workshop?	• VTS method and/or discussion **(11)** • Looking at Art with Babies & Toddlers **(7)** • Displaying art reproductions in the classroom **(4)** • Resources to find art works **(2)** • Learning Objectives **(1)** • Non-specific **(1)**
2) What was confusing to you about today's workshop?	• Art vocabulary **(1)** • VTS, translating the discussion method into the classroom **(1)** • No Response **(20)**
3) How will you incorporate today's workshop into your classroom?	• Displaying more art reproductions in the classroom **(8)** • Use discussion techniques for babies and toddlers **(4)** • Plan art discussions as part of classroom curriculum **(5)** • Use art vocabulary words **(3)** • Use provided resources to find new artworks to display in classroom **(2)** • Use VTS method in classroom **(1)** • Look for larger images to display in classroom **(1)** • Create image library for teachers **(1 – administrator)** • No response **(2)**

Table 4 (continued)

4) What would you like to learn more about?	• Visual Thinking Strategies **(2)** • Talking about art with babies and toddlers **(2)** • Art making for young children **(2)** • Planning museum field trips **(1)** • Instructing children in proper use of art materials **(1)** • More examples of how I discuss art in my classroom **(1)** • Resources to find artworks **(1)** • Selecting images **(1)** • Non specific **(11)**
5) How can I improve this workshop?	• More active, hands on activities **(1)** • More discussion about learning objectives **(1)** • How I use these techniques in my classroom **(1)** • More about VTS method **(3)** • Non specific **(18)**
6) Are you willing to participate in a group interview with other workshop participants?	• Yes **(7)** • No **(15)**

Upon analyzing their responses, I noticed that more participants in this research cycle indicated their interest in the information specific to infants and toddlers than in the previous cycle. This aligns with the greater number of infant and toddler teachers noted on the preliminary questionnaire. More participants also indicated that they would use the art discussion techniques in their classrooms than in the previous research cycle. Unlike the previous research cycle, however, fewer participants asked for more hands-on activities or discussions.

OBSERVE: DATA GATHERING AND ANALYSIS

This section looks at three data sources that I gathered after the completion of the workshop: my reflections, critical observer reflections, and the participant feedback gathered from conversations with my colleagues. These sources incorporate three different viewpoints about the workshop to provide a detailed understanding of the experience.

Teacher-Researcher Reflections

Looking back at this experience, overall, I was pleased with the improvements that I made to the workshop. In particular, I thought that the group discussions had improved from the previous research cycle. In the second workshop, the participants had more opportunities to discuss and it created a livelier workshop. As I thought about this change from the first cycle, I considered factors that might have made this possible. I determined that this is evidence that two of my changes from Chapter 4 – to create opportunities for participation and to increase participant engagement – had been successful. I also decided that two other factors influenced this change: the participants and the location. By offering this workshop primarily to UTCDC staff at one of the centers rather than both locations, participants had stronger personal relationships with the other people attending the workshop. By conducting this within the participants' work location, I created an additional layer of comfort for participants. When I first began planning for this research cycle, I had reservations about conducting the workshop during lunchtime because I thought the participants would be distracted, thinking about their classrooms and the workday still in progress. This did factor into the workshop, especially towards the end, but I had not anticipated the unexpected benefits of presenting the workshop during this time slot.

While presenting the workshop, I was surprised by the differences in the discussion quality surrounding certain topics. In the second session, participants were more reserved than the first session while discussing lesson planning and learning objectives. Going into this cycle, I had considered that the first session would be mostly lead teachers and the second session would be mostly assistant teachers. I had not anticipated how this would affect the discussions that occurred, however. Since lesson planning and leading activities are not typically the responsibility of assistant teachers, they had less input on these topics. The participants' in both sessions, however, were engaged with the information about art discussion strategies and art vocabulary.

I was especially pleased with the VTS discussion during this research cycle. By changing the image that I used in the discussion, participants were more engaged and delved deeper into the artwork. In both sessions, the discussions lasted so long that I had to cut them off to stay on schedule. This allowed for a more thorough modeling of the VTS method. Participants shared that they felt they understood the teaching method well after seeing the discussion in action.

Another element to the increased discussion was that the participants were able to demonstrate their understanding of the material. Through our discussions, teachers showed that they understood how to use art vocabulary in a variety of ways, select learning objectives for art discussions, choose images for these discussions, connect images to a variety of content areas, and use the VTS method.

Critical Observer Reflections

Three days after completing the workshop, I had a conversation with the critical observer who had participated in the training to gather feedback. I used the same critical

observer as in the previous research cycle, who is an administrator at UTCDC and an experienced teacher educator.

Overall, the critical observer shared many positive comments on the workshop. She said that she was very happy with the fact that the information was applicable to all the different age groups that the center serves. The critical observer said, "I thought you did a really comprehensive, tangible presentation that teachers could take back to their classrooms and implement right away." In particular, the critical observer found the examples of art discussions that I provided from my own classroom helped teachers understand how they could use the discussion strategies.

She was very pleased that I included additional resources and art reproductions in the handouts for the workshop. Working at UTCDC, she understood the difficulties that teachers had securing reproductions after the first research cycle. She thought participant folders would keep the information fresh in their minds and encourage them to implement the discussion methods. "If you had put in more information, it might have been too much. You gave them what they needed to know to use VTS in their classrooms. I liked that I was able to focus on the conversation because I already had all the references in my folder," she explained.

One of my concerns in this research cycle was that the focus of the training be discussing art. The critical observer shared that she thought the focus of the training was clearer this cycle. She agreed with my decision to eliminate the information about open-ended art making and streamline the amount of information being presented so as not to overwhelm participants. While she said that open-ended art making is something that UTCDC teachers need more training on, she liked that the workshop focused on one aspect of art education rather than trying to incorporate too many ideas.

In my reflections, I thought about reasons why the workshop felt so different this time and concluded that this was mostly environmental. The critical observer, however, had a different interpretation. She attributed this to my clarifying of the workshop's focus and the more visual presentation. In modifying the slide presentation for this workshop cycle, I eliminated a lot of text and added more visuals, which she thought this made the workshop feel more like a discussion and less like a class. She also noted that the smaller group sizes felt more intimate and comfortable.

Once again, the critical observer really enjoyed the VTS discussion and said it was her favorite part of the workshop. She also believed that the discussion was richer than during the last research cycle and liked the new artwork. She shared that it helped the participants get comfortable with the VTS method. During our discussion, she said that she liked the simplicity of the VTS method because, as a previous classroom teacher, she had often felt that she did not know enough about art history to bring reproductions into her classroom. "You helped dispel some of the formality about it. You put it in layman's terms and made it not so scary. I appreciated that you put the information on my level and the teachers' level," she elaborated. In her opinion, the VTS discussion helped participants understand the process and dispel this idea for themselves. The only suggestion she made for this research cycle was to provide opportunities to participants to lead their own VTS discussions in small groups, but also noted that this would not have fit into the sixty-minute time constraint.

As we were wrapping up our conversation, we both wondered to each other whether the participants would begin using the VTS method. While the center's administration was supportive of the workshop and wanted to improve art education within the center, no clear expectations had been placed on the teachers to change what they were doing. "Quite frankly, some of our teachers don't delve into things as much as

I think they should. I would like our teachers to scuba dive instead of snorkel and I want to figure out a way to get them to do more of this," she shared. To encourage art discussions, she said that she would begin putting together a reproduction library that teachers could access.

Participant Feedback

Through informal conversations with some of the participants documented in my field notebook, I collected feedback from participants following the workshop. During this research cycle, I collected feedback from nine participants.

The next workday after presenting the training, I returned to give the participants art reproductions. On the day of the training, a colleague and I had miscommunicated about who was bringing the reproductions to the workshop location and I did not have them to provide immediately following the training. This ended up being a serendipitous mistake, however, because the participants provided me with interesting feedback when the workshop was fresh in their minds. I provided a large selection of reproductions and let the participants chose four or five for their classrooms. While selecting their reproductions, I was able to discuss with participants ideas for incorporating the artwork into their upcoming units. One participant wanted to find nature scenes because she was beginning a unit on trees. Another participant who works in an infant classroom chose bright abstract images because she remembered that Kerlavage's Theory of Aesthetic Development recommends abstract art during the first stage of development. A participant who was a toddler teacher chose images of farm animals that she planned to hang in her art center with photographs of farm animals. Many of the other participants did not have a particular type of image in mind and we worked together to choose images that were appropriate for the age group. This provided me an opportunity to review art

vocabulary with the participants and link images to specific related terms. Helping teachers select their images and hearing them talk about their plans provided me with insights into how they would use the information presented.

I also took this opportunity to ask the participants about the folders I had provided them. Four participants shared that they had already looked back at the information, specifically the art vocabulary glossary. Another participant said that she really appreciated that I had included the VTS handout in Spanish and that it had helped her understand the methodology better.

Over the next few weeks, two more participants shared that they were using art vocabulary terms in their classrooms. Similar to the first research cycle, they found this to be a simple and convenient change for them to make in their teaching practice. These two participants reported that they were using the art vocabulary terms to both describe children's artwork and when reading picture books aloud.

Another participant shared that she had "attempted" to use the VTS method a couple times of in small group discussions with approximately five children. She said that her preschool students had lots of things to say about the artwork. She found it difficult to stick to the VTS questions, however, and often used additional questions in these discussions. She felt these additional questions helped her link the artwork being discussed to the curricular theme and expand on concepts previously explored in other activities. I was curious to find out why more participants were not using VTS in their classrooms. I asked them if they had any questions about the method or if they need more information to incorporate it into their teaching. Approximately seven participants answered that they understood the VTS method and knew how to use it. Two participants indicated that they still intended to try a VTS discussion at some point in the future. One participant explained that she chose not to use VTS purposefully, because she was not

interested in the methodology. Approximately six participants who provided feedback reported using some information from the workshop in their classroom. Finally, two infant and toddler teachers shared that they were discussing art images with their students. Using art vocabulary terms and their own observations, these participants were describing artworks as a way of encouraging language development.

REFLECT: EVALUATING THE PROCESS

In the reflection process of the second research cycle, I used the available data to assess the workshop. I began by assessing the success of the changes I made to the second workshop. Next, I established how I met learning objectives for the participants and Texas licensing guidelines. Fulfilling these requirements enable them to count the workshops towards their annual requirement.

Analyzing the Data

While examining my data sources from this research cycle, I looked for signs that the changes I made were successful. I analyzed each modification from multiple viewpoints within this research cycle to establish credibility. Additionally, I compared data from both research cycles to look for examples of change from the first workshop to the second.

Modifications to the lesson plan and slide presentation in the second research cycle created more opportunities for participation and there were chances for large and small group discussion. The reflection questionnaires showed a decrease in feedback asking for more hands-on activities and discussion. My teacher-researcher reflections and interview with the critical observer supported the conclusion that this modification had been successfully implemented, as did the audio recording of the sessions.

I also sought to engage the participants earlier in the second workshop, as the first workshop had been slow to capture the participants' attention. By removing some information from the presentation and reorganizing a few topics, I was able to position the VTS discussion earlier in the workshop and provide additional opportunities for participation prior to introducing VTS. The critical observer explained that this had made the workshop more interesting and interactive for participants. As the teacher-researcher, I also noticed that participants were more involved in the material than in the previous research cycle.

The participants appreciated having additional resources as well. Since more of the participants in the second cycle worked with infants and toddlers, providing a handout about this topic helped them bring what they had just learned into their classrooms more easily. All participants were especially excited about the reproductions and used them in numerous ways in their classrooms, such as displaying them in different centers and linking images to their weekly themes.

In addition to providing reproductions, I provided more information about image selection during the workshop. In the first research cycle, the participants had indicated that this was a barrier to their using VTS, as was obtaining reproductions. While the participants were selecting reproductions, I was able to see how they were choosing images through their feedback. While some participants chose images that linked to their students' interests or a curriculum theme, still others used aesthetic developmental theory to select images that were appropriate to their class.

Finally, I wanted to focus the workshop on art discussions by eliminating the topic of open-ended art from the training. Looking at the participants' reflection questionnaires, I found that more participants indicated that they would use VTS or other discussion strategies in their classroom than in the first cycle. The critical observer also

shared that the workshop was more focused and streamlined around the topic of art discussion.

Meeting Learning Objectives

In the planning stage of this research cycle, I described the four learning objectives that I set for the workshop. I used my data sources to analyze how each learning objective was met and how the participants demonstrated their understanding. As a teacher-educator, this information helps me evaluate if the workshop effectively met its educational goals.

Learning Objective: Participants will be able to use art vocabulary to describe students' artwork and art reproductions.

To accomplish this goal, I introduced the topic of art vocabulary early in the workshop. Learning objectives supported by exposing children to an increased number of words illustrated the value of using art vocabulary in the classroom. The participants' folder included a glossary from Epstein and Trimis (2002) that defined a number of art specific vocabulary words. After looking over the glossary, we discussed different ways that teachers could use words from the list and participants gave examples. We discussed how these vocabulary words could be used to discuss a number of concepts – children's artwork, art reproductions, children's books, observations of nature, children's creative play in the classroom, etc. Finally, I passed around a series of six children's books by Philip Yenawine for the participants to look at. Focusing on different concepts in art, these books use a variety of art vocabulary terms and encourage children to engage with the images.

The participants demonstrated their ability to use art vocabulary through group discussions and feedback provided after the training. Approximately six participants with whom I spoke after the workshop were using art vocabulary in their classroom and introducing the terms to their students.

Learning Objective: Participants will be introduced to Visual Thinking Strategies and its implementation method. Participants will have the chance to participate in a VTS discussion and see the model in action.

In the workshop, I introduced the history of VTS and its development, as well as the developmental assets of the methodology. After discussing aesthetic development in early childhood, I introduced the facilitator questions and responses. In their folders participants had a VTS handout, and I encouraged them to follow along with the questions and responses during the discussion. Approximately twenty minutes of the training was spent engaged in a VTS discussion that I facilitated. During the discussion, I used the VTS questions and facilitator responses to model the method and the participants enjoyed engaging in the lively discussion. At this point, the participants were offered the chance to ask any questions they had about VTS. Finally, we discussed learning objectives from the Texas Pre-K Guidelines that are supported by VTS and the participants provided their own suggestions as well.

On their reflection questionnaires, eleven of twenty-two participants in this research cycle showed an interest in the VTS method. Following the training, approximately three-quarters of the participants with whom I spoke reported that they felt they understood the strategy and could use it in their classroom. My reflections and the interview with a critical observer both indicated that the methodology was well explained and that the participants actively engaged in the process.

Learning Objective: Participants will be able to explain how discussions about art contribute to children's learning and support learning domains in the Texas Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines, especially in relation to social and emotional developmental domains.

The workshop explored learning objectives in a number of different contexts within the presentation and discussion. As this research was conducted in Texas, I used learning objectives from the Texas Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines. The participants discussed in large and small groups what learning objectives could be accomplished through art discussions. I also shared examples of learning objectives from research into VTS.

Through group discussions during the workshop, the participants demonstrated their understanding of this learning objective. In both research cycles, the participants generated a number of learning objectives that relate to art discussion, which are documented in the research chapters. In the second cycle, I wanted to create a focus on social-emotional development and prompted the participants to explain how skills in this domain link to art discussions.

Learning Objective: Participants will be able to explain what aesthetic development is in young children and its importance.

After introducing the VTS method and its history and foundation, I introduced Kervalage's theory of aesthetic development to participants. Looking at the three stages, the participants considered where the students in their classrooms would fall and how this might inform decisions they would make about art education in their classrooms.

Participants in the second research cycle demonstrated an understanding of aesthetic development during a group discussion about how they encourage aesthetic development in their students. The participants further demonstrated their understanding

through the feedback I received when the teachers were selecting reproductions to suit their students' developmental levels.

Meeting Licensing Requirements

In delivering this workshop, one of my primary responsibilities was meeting childcare licensing requirements so that the participants could receive training hours for their participation. During the initial planning stages for the workshop, I choose three content areas from the ones described in Chapter 2 that I would address: choosing age appropriate curriculum, planning developmentally appropriate activities, and creating positive teacher child interactions. In this section, I will consider how I met these requirements through the workshop.

Creating age appropriate curriculum and planning developmentally appropriate activities were topics that I addressed throughout the entire training. The purpose of the training was to provide teaching strategies that would inspire learning through art discussions in early childhood classrooms. Based on my background research, the workshop highlighted best practices that must be both age and developmentally appropriate. I presented information specific to infants and toddlers so that all teachers who attended the training would learn an appropriate strategy to use in their classrooms.

The teaching strategies discussed in the training all focus on positive teacher-child interactions. The VTS methodology creates a safe, positive space for sharing and exploring ideas. The discussion around art vocabulary illustrated ways to teach new words and stimulate language learning. I provided the participants with a handout in their folders that modeled how to use art vocabulary words to describe children's artwork. This strategy, in particular, demonstrates that the teacher is paying close attention to the

children's creation and encourages positive conversation, thereby building a child's self-esteem.

In addition, Texas childcare licensing also requires training programs to meet these additional criteria: having specifically stated learning objectives, including experiential or applied activities, providing an evaluation tool to determine if participants have met objectives, and supplying a certificate of completion (Texas DFPS, 2010). I used these criteria to guide my planning in each research cycle.. To meet these requirements, I included clear learning objectives in my lesson plan, incorporated opportunities for the participants to engage in art discussions and gain experience analyzing works of art, and provided opportunities for the participants to demonstrate their new knowledge through group discussions. I also issued certificates acknowledging attendance to each participant for their training records.

FINAL THOUGHTS: CYCLE TWO

In the second research cycle, my planning process and data analysis focused on the changes that I identified in Chapter 4. Using the knowledge I gained from the previous workshop, I made modifications to the lesson plan, slide presentation, and participant folders for the second workshop. In my analysis of data sources, I found that participants appeared to be more engaged in this session and had richer, more involved discussions than in the previous research cycle. The composition of the participant groups and the familiar location of the workshop contributed to the heightened participant involvement, as did the additional discussions that I incorporated in the workshop.

The participants shared that they appreciated having additional resources provided to them. Unlike the first research cycle when I had to email information specific to infant and toddler classrooms to teachers after the workshop, participants in the second

workshop had it available in their folders. Additionally, I provided art reproductions so that participants could use the information presented in the workshop immediately. Talking to the participants as they selected images for their classroom was an unexpected window into their lesson planning process and how they would use the information presented.

In analyzing data from the second cycle, I observed that participants' comments and feedback were focused on art discussions. By eliminating the discussion of open-ended art, the purpose of the workshop was clear to the participants. In creating the first workshop, I expanded the outline to include this topic instead of staying focused on art discussions. This was an especially important lesson for me as a teacher-educator, that it was important to focus on a specific topic in order to explore it meaningfully.

In the next chapter, I will present my data analysis findings from both research cycles. I will also make for future research and other teacher-educators based on the data collected in this study.

Chapter 6: *Data Findings and Suggestions for Teacher Educators*

This chapter examines the data from both research cycles to answer the central research questions. I explain my data findings and their significance for this study and my practice as a teacher-educator. Issues of validity are addressed as well, by discussing demographic information about the participants gathered from the preliminary questionnaire. In conducting this study, my practice as a teacher-educator improved as I purposefully explore the experience. In addition to the value to myself as the teacher-researcher, the findings from this study can help other teacher-educators who are interested in conducting a professional development program for early childhood teachers. To this end, I make suggestions for teacher-educators to consider in their practice and identify positive characteristics of the workshop from the data analysis. Finally, I make suggestions for future research to expand upon the ideas that I explored.

CUMULATIVE ANALYSIS

In preparing the final analysis of this study, I looked at my central research questions to see how they had been answered by this research. From my data sources I identified six findings that answered my research questions. Each finding is supported by data from the two research cycles. It is also important to address generalizability by comparing demographic information about this study's participants with the findings of other studies. For other teacher-educators, it is important to understand how participants' education and professional backgrounds differ as it may have an effect ontheir experiences.

Revisiting the Central Research Questions

As described in Chapter 1, this study sought to improve my practice as a teacher educator and generate new understandings about effective early childhood professional development. Three research questions formed the basis of this exploration:

- How can I effectively share my knowledge of museum education with other early childhood educators to improve the quality of art education within The University of Texas Child Development Center and the early childhood education community at large?
- What supports and resources do early childhood teachers need to implement new instructional strategies related to art in their classrooms?
- How can I improve my practice as a teacher educator and better meet the professional development needs of early childhood educators?

These questions guided the study through two cycles of action research as I learned more about creating effective and engaging professional development, designing professional development workshops, and understanding the training needs of early childhood educators.

Demographic Information Regarding Participants

In analyzing the participants' preliminary questionnaires, it became apparent that the participants in this study had greater levels of education and experience than is common in childcare centers. The participants also enjoyed greater job stability and longevity in their positions than other researchers found in previous studies. For purposes of validity, it is important to understand how UTCDC teachers and participants in this program may differ from the average early childhood educator in education, experience, and job stability.

As explained in Chapter 2, studies (Bellm & Whitebook, 2006; Herzenberg, Price, & Bradley, 2005) have found that nationwide 30% of early childhood teachers have high school diplomas, 40% have completed some college coursework (including two year degrees and Child Development Associate credentials), and the final 30% have four-year degrees. In my study, every participant had completed some college coursework or a secondary credential (such as a CDA) in addition to a high school diploma. Thirty-eight percent of participants had earned a four year degree, 23% had began college coursework but not completed a degree program, another 23% had earned a CDA credential, and 13% had earned a two year degree. Looking at these numbers, UTCDC teaching staff has a greater percentage of employees who have completed some secondary education (some college, two year degree, or CDA) than the childcare industry at large.

The participants also had more years of experience those in other studies. Whitebook and Sakai (2003) found occupational turnover to be a contributing factor in the quality of early childhood educational services. Their study indicated that 30% of early childhood educators leave their positions each year, with nearly half of them leaving the field of early childhood altogether. Another study found an even higher annual turnover rate of 41% (Machado 2008). The majority of the participants in this study (66%) had more than ten years of experience. No participants reported teaching for less than three years.

Understanding the education and experience of the participants in this study helped me anticipate their needs and create a professional development experience that fulfilled them. The participants in this study do not represent the typical early childhood educator. Due to this, other teacher-educators may or may not experience the same results.

Understanding this data, it is important for other teacher-educators to consider how the early childhood educators that they are training may differ in demographics from the participants in this study.

Data Analysis Findings

This section draws conclusions from the data presented in Chapters 4 and 5 that help to answer the central research questions of this study. To answer my central research questions, these findings frame what I have learned in the process of conducting my study.

Finding One: While one-time professional development workshops are the most common form of professional development and preferred by teachers, these workshops may not be the most effective method of training.

Previous research found that the one-time workshop format is the most common form of professional development available and is popular among center-based teachers and administrators (Vesay 2008). While this has also been my professional experience, my research suggests that greater support and training is necessary to create change in classroom practice.

While the participants who provided feedback after the workshop indicated that they did use some information presented in their classrooms, they also said that they were hesitant to use the VTS method to discuss art. As detailed in Chapter 5, participants shared concerns that it would be unsuccessful and this doubt ultimately led them to not use the methodology at all. Only one participant in the second research cycle indicated that she had attempted to use VTS and that she had heavily modified the approach because of these concerns. Since the workshop was a one-time event, participants did not

have additional opportunities to discuss VTS and gain the confidence to implement it. Likewise, there was no incentive to use VTS in their classrooms without continued training and interactions with the teacher educator. It was easy and without consequence for participants to simply never attempt a VTS discussion.

In the second research cycle, I had the opportunity to see participants four days after they completed the workshop when they selected their art reproductions. I was able to discuss with a number of participants how they planned to use the images. From this, I gained an understanding of how they were processing the information from the workshop. This also presented an additional opportunity for participants to ask questions and talk about their ideas with me. These conversations were informative to me as a teacher-researcher and made me wonder how multi-session trainings or classroom visits by teacher-educators could provide sustained, ongoing engagement for teachers.

Finding Two: Participants are unlikely to incorporate new teaching methods into their classroom practice when it is optional.

During the conversations with the critical observer, we both questioned whether or not the participants would incorporate VTS into their classrooms. The critical observer said that she wants UTCDC staff to employ new teaching methods and incorporate more of their continuing education into their classroom practice, but that she had not seen this happening in the centers. She shared that my training presented information that would be very easy for teachers to bring back to their classrooms immediately, but that she had doubts as to whether or not they would.

I also had this concern from the beginning of this study. The UTCDC teaching staff is given a lot of freedom to plan curriculum for their own classrooms, with very little direction or input from the centers' administration. This freedom, in my opinion, is a

double-edged sword. On the one hand, teachers who are motivated have the freedom to try new things in their classrooms and are not forced into a curriculum that does not work for them or their students. On the other hand, there is very little reason for teaching staff to change their practice or try new instructional methods because they are not required to do so. As indicated in the preliminary questionnaire responses, many of the participants have worked with children for a number of years. While this experience and stability is truly an asset to UTCDC, teachers have a tendency to repeat curriculum from past years as opposed to developing new lesson plans. Being a part of the center, I have experienced this first hand with other teachers in my center.

Finding Three: Participants preferred discussion-based workshops that provide opportunities for large and small group activities and hands-on experience.

Multiple data sources indicated that the participants wanted more opportunities to participate in discussions. In the first research cycle, they asked for more hands-on activities and chances for discussion. My teacher-researcher journal and the critical observer's reflections revealed that the group discussions were the most engaging points in the workshop for the participants. Participants seemed most interested in the workshop during the VTS discussions and while sharing ideas with each other.

By creating a workshop that allowed opportunities for discussion, the participants were more engaged with the ideas presented and were able to share ideas with other educators. As a teacher educator, I was also able to assess the participants' understanding of the information in the workshop when facilitating a group discussion.

In the second research cycle, the importance of group size also became apparent. As suggested by my critical observer, using a mixture of large and small group discussions helped participants feel comfortable and got everyone talking.

Finding Four: Participants wanted information that is practical for their teaching style and will adapt methods or selectively implement strategies accordingly.

In the months after both workshops were completed, I have had a number of conversations with my colleagues about art discussions. As documented in Chapters 4 and 5, many participants had incorporated some of the ideas presented in the workshop into their teaching. Of the 17 participants from both research cycles that I collected feedback from following the workshop, eleven said that they are consciously using art vocabulary words when responding to children's art making. Multiple participants also shared that they are encouraging students to look at illustrations in books more closely. One teacher who works with toddlers began hanging art reproductions in her classroom and talking to the non-verbal students about them. Two participants from the first research cycle reported that they are planning art-making activities for their classrooms with greater attention to sensory experiences in mind. In describing how they were using the information from the workshop, a number of participants prefaced their answer with the warning that they had done something different from the information I had presented in the workshops. This data shows that participants understood the information presented and chose which elements they wanted to incorporate into their teaching. It also shows their desire for flexibility in implementation, which VTS does not offer. Although some participants indicated that they were planning to use VTS in their classrooms, to the best of my knowledge, only one participant has actually used it.

Understanding how participants are using other information presented in the workshop, I believe they want flexible teaching strategies that they can adapt for their teaching style. This desire for flexibility may be a contributing factor that prevented them from using the rigid VTS methodology. Even though VTS was the main focus of the

workshop, the participants' perception of the methodology as confining prevented them from implementing it.

Finding Five: More professional development opportunities are needed for early childhood educators that cover a variety of art education topics.

In conducting the research for this study, I encountered a wealth of knowledge about early childhood art education. Due to time constraints and the workshop format, I was only able to focus on one aspect of early childhood art education in the training. As I discovered in the first research cycle, the amount of information that can be presented in a workshop needs to clearly fulfill the purpose and learning objectives of the training. Additional topics in art education would provide enriching educational opportunities for teachers and possibly influence classroom practices.

On the reflection questionnaires, the participants indicated a number of topics about which they would like to learn more. See Table 2 in Chapter 4 and Table 4 in Chapter 5 to view all of the participants' responses. These included: discussing children's art creations, evaluating and assessing learning in art discussions, artworks for other cultures, open-ended art making, selecting art reproductions for discussion and display, and tailoring art activities to suit specific age groups.

Finding Six: My experience as a classroom teacher was an invaluable resource in the planning process.

While planning the workshop, I relied heavily on my experience as a classroom teacher and knowledge of UTCDC's culture to guide my process and make decisions. My familiarity with curriculum development at the center was particularly helpful because I knew how my participants created curriculum in their classrooms and developed lesson plans. Due to this knowledge and experience, I understand the classroom practices that

participants already employ and related information to their pre-existing methods. Likewise, the fact that I am a practicing teacher gave creditability to the information I presented. Being able to provide concrete examples of how I used the ideas in the workshop in my classroom helped participants envision themselves doing the same.

My teaching experience helped me understand participants' needs and tailor the workshop to the culture at these specific centers. This created a more informative professional development experience that was practical for the classroom. When I began the research process, I expected my museum education knowledge to be my greatest asset as a teacher-educator. In the process, however, I discovered how important my experience as a classroom teacher and knowledge of ECE practices was to developing the workshop.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS

From my research study and its findings, I developed some suggestions for other teacher-educators. These suggestions are based on the unique environment and participants in this study and may not be generalizable to all contexts.

An important concern for other teacher-educators developing professional development opportunities is selecting an appropriate format for the training. As suggested by my findings, the workshop format – though preferred by EC educators – may not be the most effective vehicle for professional development. In designing this study, I was bound by the practices of my research site in choosing my format. As will be discussed further in this chapter, other professional development formats might produce greater change in participants' teaching practices.

My research demonstrated that early childhood educators need more opportunities to learn about art education. While participants in this research demonstrated that they

provide art-making opportunities in their classrooms through their questionnaire responses, opportunities to discuss art and interact with other people's artworks were limited. As discussed in Chapter 2, a robust early childhood art education program should include artist visits, museum and gallery trips, and opportunities to discuss art in addition to art making. (NAEA, 2010, April) To incorporate these additional elements into early childhood practice, EC teachers need a greater number of trainings that focus on these topics. Through participant feedback, many participants indicated that they had never attended a training that focused on art education practices other than art making.

From my experience, another important consideration for teacher educators is developing an understanding of participant needs in planning a training opportunity. As a UTCDC teacher, I was familiar with the professional environment in both centers and how teachers plan curriculum. This gave me the insight to determine what information would be useful and practical for participants in the training. While this situation is impractical for most teacher educators, it demonstrates the importance of understanding your audience. For teacher educators who do not have experience teaching in the early childhood classroom, I would suggest spending some time observing in a center. By developing an understanding of an EC teacher's responsibilities and teaching practices, teacher educators will be better able to develop programs that are practical for classroom implementation. It is also useful for teacher-educators to familiarize themselves with early childhood curriculum practices and models. Preschool curriculum can be very different from elementary school curriculum and this is useful to know for teacher educators who are used to working with elementary audiences.

Due to the wide range of developmental levels found in early childhood classrooms, it is important that teacher educators provide information that is adaptable to different age groups of students. The abilities of very young learners require specialized

developmental knowledge and teachers want teaching strategies that are flexible in their implementation. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the participants used teaching strategies from the workshop that they felt comfortable adapting to their personal teaching style. Data indicated that participants used the flexible teaching strategies presented in the workshop, rather than the more rigid VTS method.

Finally, this research indicates that teachers need a reason to try new methods in their classroom. In this case, participants were not required to incorporate information from the training into their classrooms. To create true change in early childhood art education, center administrators need to hold teachers accountable for improving their teaching practice.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE TRAININGS

Throughout this research, I identified characteristics of the training that were effective from different data sources. In triangulating my data between multiple perspectives, I found that these characteristics appeared to be effective. Participants want workshops that are discussion-based, engaging for the participants, relevant to and applicable in the classroom, and present flexible teaching strategies. Workshops should also have clear learning objectives, allow ample time to explore the topic presented, incorporate small group activities, and provide real world examples of implementation. These characteristics are drawn from my experience conducting this research and may or may not be applicable in all other settings.

The participants overwhelmingly preferred a discussion-based workshop. Even though cycle one contained opportunities for discussion, participants asked for even more discussion in cycle two. They indicated that they enjoyed hands-on activities and group discussions more than lectured-based workshops. Discussions also proved to be more

engaging than lectures for participants, drawing them into the workshop and helping them process the information presented.

Another important characteristic of the workshop is that it was relevant to the participants' needs. In this study, I used my understanding of UTCDC's training needs to select a topic that would address a void in our curriculum. In other EC settings, this training topic might not be as practical for the needs of participants. If a teacher were struggling with behavior management in the classroom, workshops dealing with art education might not fulfill their professional development needs. Knowing that my participants are seasoned teachers with high levels of experience and education, this workshop was appropriate for my audience.

I also strove to present the information in a way that could be immediately applied in the classroom. By planning the workshop to focus on teaching methods rather than theory, the participants received information that can be easily translated to the classroom. These teaching strategies should also be flexible, so that teachers can adapt them to their unique classroom environments.

In the development of the workshop, having clear learning objectives for participants helped focus and refine the training. In addition to the planning process, the learning objectives helped me evaluate the workshop and make improvements. Crafting learning objectives also assisted me in matching the content of the training to the length of the workshop and ensured that I would be able to address the content sufficiently in the time allotted.

Using a variety of large and small group activities helped encourage participation in discussions. In both research cycles, I found that teachers who might not want to talk in front of the entire group were comfortable sharing in smaller groups. In the second

research cycle, at the suggestion of the critical observer, I included more small group discussions to help participants feel more comfortable.

Finally, workshops should provide real world examples of how to implement teaching methods in the classroom. The participants indicated that hearing about VTS discussions in my classrooms and seeing examples of artworks that I had discussed with my students helped them better understand the teaching strategies presented in the workshop. This understanding helped participants bring the information presented in the workshop to their classrooms, especially art vocabulary and book reading strategies.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The research started by this study could be expanded to explore the effectiveness of different training formats. I designed this study to fit into UTCDC's existing professional development structure and, thus, it occurred as a one-time workshop. It would be beneficial to study how training programs that occur in different formats or as multiple sessions over time would affect how participants understand and utilize the information presented.

Further research into how early childhood teachers implement art education in the classrooms would help teacher educators understand the professional development needs in early childhood. Specifically, research into how EC teachers discuss art works in their classrooms would inform the development of future trainings on this topic. My knowledge of UTCDC's art education practices helped me isolate a gap in teaching and design a program to address it. Since this is not probable for most teacher educators, research in EC art education practices would help them understand the needs of the community overall.

As explained in Chapter 2, a number of research studies support the Visual Thinking Strategies methodology and its effectiveness in increasing cognitive abilities. However, in conducting my background research, I was unable to locate studies researching the use of VTS in preschool classrooms. From my experience as a teacher, I believe VTS to be a valuable teaching tool in these years. Researching how VTS promotes learning before age five would be beneficial to early childhood educators and museum educators.

CONCLUSION

Conducting this research study helped me understand my central research questions and understand my multiple roles, as early childhood educator, teacher-educator, and museum educator. As I have conducted this research study, these identities have intertwined and informed each other. Moving forward in my experience as a teacher-educator, I will have a deeper understanding of effective professional development and be better able to serve the community of educators in which I practice.

Delving deeply into this study, I began to question the professional development workshop format and whether it can provide meaningful change in teachers' classroom practices. Wanting to understand how the participants used the information presented in the workshops, I found that the participants selectively chose how they used the information and the vast majority chose not to use Visual Thinking Strategies in their classrooms. While this method comprised the bulk of the training and most participants indicated that they understood the methodology, participants were not implementing it. I was pleased to find that the participants were using art vocabulary words and discussing art with their students, I was disappointed that they did not attempt to use VTS. I have

raised a few possible reasons why, in addition to participant feedback on the subject, I believe that the workshop format was a contributing factor. As a one-time event, there was no accountability for participants to put the methodology into use. As a reformed skeptic of VTS, I understand why participants were hesitant to try it. If it had not been for my academic interest in the methodology, I might not have tried it. For participants who had no incentive to use the VTS method, there was no reason to overcome this doubt. Adapting the format and providing professional development opportunities that occur in multiple sessions could help encourage participants to expand their teaching practice.

This research process has helped me understand the teachers that I educate in a new way. While my experience in ECE has given me a unique perspective, my role of teacher-researcher in this study opened my eyes to a new way of understanding the participants. An important characteristic of action research is viewing participants as experts and valuing their voices. Guided by this principle, the data I collected helped me listen to and honor those voices in the creation of the workshop.

Overwhelmingly, I hope that this study has demonstrated the need for increased professional development opportunities for early childhood educators in the arts. As the first art educators that young children encounter, EC teachers deserve informative, engaging professional development opportunities to expand and enrich their teaching practice. I also hope that museum educators will reach out to the early childhood community and develop these professional development opportunities. Collaborative efforts between early childhood educators and museum educators can lead to great improvements in early childhood art education, enhancing each child's development through interactions with artworks.

Appendix A: Site Letter

February 17, 2013

Dr. James Wilson, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board
P.O. Box 7426
Austin TX, 78713
irbchair@austin.utexas.edu

Dear Dr. Wilson,

The purpose of this letter is to grant Lucy Kacir, a graduate student at the University of Texas at Austin, permission to conduct research at The University of Texas Child Development Center (UTCDC). The project, "Meaningful Connections: Teaching with Art Reproductions in the Early Childhood Classroom," entails Ms. Kacir conducting a professional development workshop for us and using questionnaires and interviews to collect data on participants' teaching practice. UTCDC was selected because Ms. Kacir is a current staff member and is familiar with the center and teaching staff. I, Hara Cootes, do hereby grant permission for Lucy Kacir to conduct "Meaning Connections: Teaching with Art Reproductions in the Early Childhood Classroom" at UTCDC.

Sincerely,

Hara Cootes, Director
University of Texas Child development Center
The University of Texas at Austin
1 University Station, A2701
Austin, TX 78712
512-471-3974

Appendix B: Questionnaires – Cycles One and Two

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONNAIRE

6) How many years experience do you have working with children, birth to age five?
   a) Less than three years
   b) Three to six years
   c) Six to ten years
   d) Ten or more years
7) How many years have you worked at UTCDC?
   a) Less than three years
   b) Three to six years
   c) Six to ten years
   d) Ten or more years
8) What age are the children enrolled in your class?
   a) Less than eighteen months
   b) Eighteen months to two years
   c) Two to three years
   d) Three to four years
   e) Four to five years
9) What is your highest level of education completed?
   a) High School Diploma
   b) Some college, no degree
   c) CDA
   d) Two year degree
   e) Four year degree
10) How do you currently use art in your classroom? (Select all that apply)
   a) Art center
   b) Art activities are included in your written lesson plans
   c) Teacher guided (or initiated) art activities
   d) Children's artwork is displayed in the classroom
   e) Art reproductions are displayed in the classroom
   f) Field trips to see museums, galleries, etc. to view artworks
   g) Classroom visits by artists

REFLECTION QUESTIONNAIRE

7) What was most interesting to you about today's workshop?

8) What was confusing to you about today's workshop?

9) How will you incorporate today's workshop into your classroom?

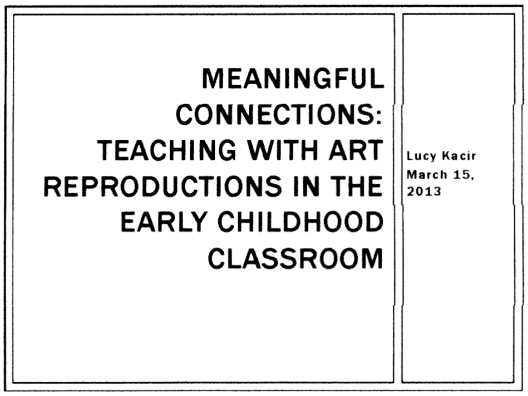
10) What would you like to learn more about?

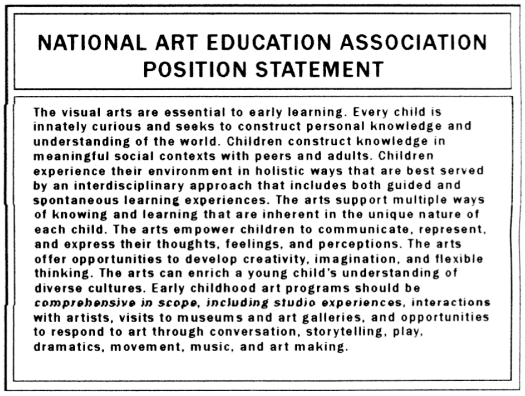
11) How can I improve this workshop?

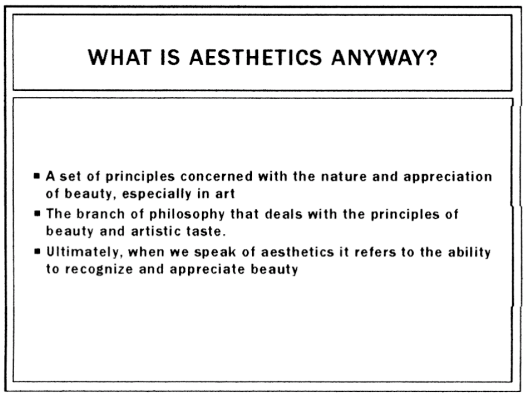
12) Are you willing to participate in a group interview with other workshop participants?
    a) Yes
    b) No

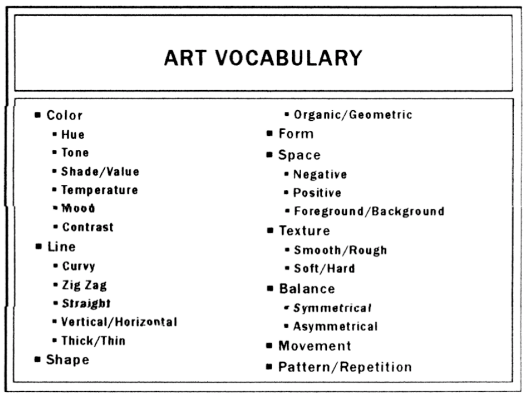
Appendix C: Slide Presentations

CYCLE ONE PRESENTATION









VISUAL THINKING STRATEGIES

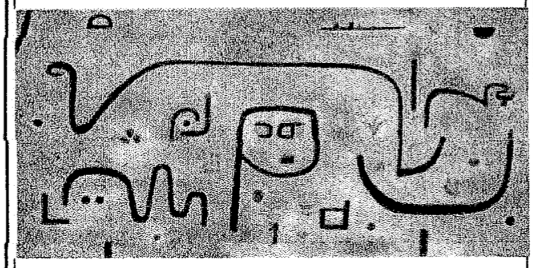
- Museum education method
- "VTS uses art to teach thinking, communication skills, and visual literacy" and "produces growth in aesthetic thinking, and that other cognitive operations also grow ... specifically, observing, speculating, and reasoning"
- Does not require facilitator to have art historical knowledge
- Based on a theory of aesthetic development with five stages:
  - Accountive
  - Constructive
  - Classifying
  - Interpretive
  - Re-creative

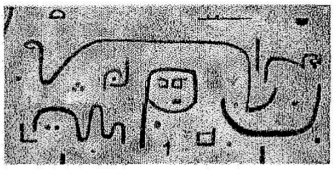
KERLAVAGE'S STAGES OF AESTHETIC DEVELOPMENT

- Sensorial:
  - Connect with artworks intuitively
  - Interest is usually based on colors, shapes, or patterns
  - Often focus on one aspect of the artwork – a particular color or shape
  - In this stage, children are especially attracted to abstract works
- Concrete:
  - Connect with subject matter, theme, realism, and beauty
  - Want artworks to look realistic
  - Representational works – subject matter that is relevant to their lives and understanding of the world
- Expressive:
  - Begin to become interested in stylistic aspects of works
  - Discriminate between composition, color, and intent
  - Able to verbalize more complex thoughts about an artwork

VISUAL THINKING STRATEGIES

- **Questions:**
  - "What's going on in this picture?"
  - "What do you see that makes you say that?"
  - "What else do you see?"
- **Facilitator Responses:**
  - Listen carefully to each comment
  - Point to the area of the artwork being discussed
  - Paraphrase each comment without changing the meaning
  - Accept each comment without correction
  - *Link together related* comments





PAUL KLEE
Insula Dulcamara
1938
Oil on newsprint and burlap

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- What can children learn from looking at works of art?
- Take a few minutes to discuss possible learning objectives with your neighbors before we share.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- VTS
  - Communication skills
  - Language
  - Visual discrimination/visual literacy
  - Observation skills
  - Predictive skills
  - Critical thinking
  - Reasoning
- Pre-K Guidelines
  - Ability to focus
  - Displays empathy and caring for others
  - Understands that others have different perspectives
  - Listening comprehension
  - Conversational abilities
  - Uses a wide variety of words to label and describe
  - Descriptive communication
  - Shape recognition
  - Color recognition
  - Patterning
  - Recognizes similarities and differences

PRE-K GUIDELINES FINE ARTS DOMAIN

Child uses a variety of art materials and activities for sensory experience and exploration.

Child uses art as a form of creative self-expression and representation.

Child demonstrates interest in and shows appreciation for the creative work of others.

Behaviors:
- Comments on artwork of a classmate
- Responds to comments made by classmates about a picture
- Recognizes books by the same illustrator
- Comments on pictures in books
- Explores art from a variety of cultures

Instructional Strategies:
- Displays examples of children's artwork
- Displays art, structures and artifacts that are representative of various cultures
- Provides books and photographs that depict a variety of art media and artist's styles
- Takes children to art museums or invites local artists to visit classroom
- Calls attention to illustrations in books

LOOKING AT ART WITH BABIES & TODDLERS

- How can these ideas be applied to babies and toddlers?
- Research shows that visual and verbal stimulation promote brain development.
- For this reason, babies and toddlers benefit from looking at and discussing art, just like older children.
- Because babies are learning to process sounds and make meaning, describe the artwork that you are looking at. Using vocabulary is important, even with very young children.
- At birth, babies see black and white.
- At two months, babies are able to see color as well.
- As visual processing is developed, high contrast images seem to be most engaging for babies.

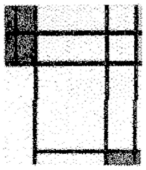
LOOKING AT ART WITH BABIES & TODDLERS

- Studies show that babies like images that are...
  - Both abstract and representational
  - Colorful
  - Portraits with big eyes
  - Portraits of babies
- Babies show interest in an image by...
  - Staring
  - Reaching
  - Smiling
  - Wiggling
  - Squealing

OPEN-ENDED ART ACTIVITIES

- Art making should include opportunities for...
  - Sensory exploration
  - Problem solving and choice making
  - Social interaction with peers and adults
  - Reflection on the creative process
- Teachers can facilitate this through...
  - Providing a variety of materials
  - Developing a vocabulary to discuss art and art making
  - Enriching classroom environment with a variety of art reproductions
  - Encouraging children to describe their actions while making art
  - Encouraging children to describe their finished artworks

OPEN-ENDED ART ACTIVITIES



Piet Mondrian
Composition of Red, Blue, Yellow, and White: Nom II, 1939
Oil on canvas

- After discussing this artwork, what related art activities could you do?

APPLYING THESE STRATEGIES TO BOOKS

- Making predictions by looking at illustrations
- Modeling observation and discussion of illustrations
- Using art terms while commenting on the illustrations

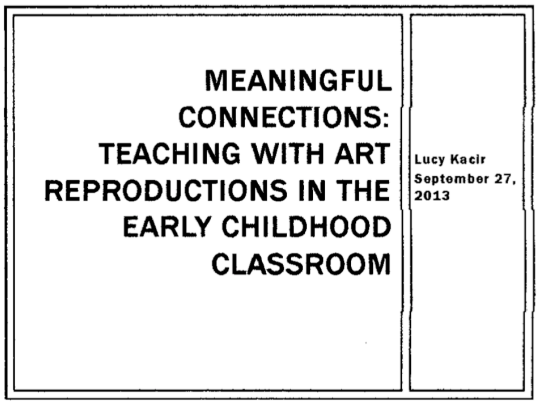
ANY QUESTIONS?

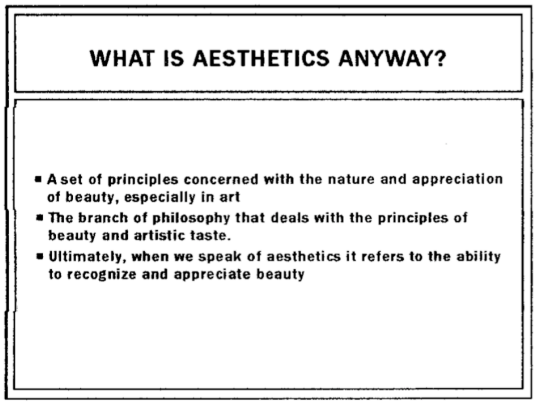
THANK YOU!

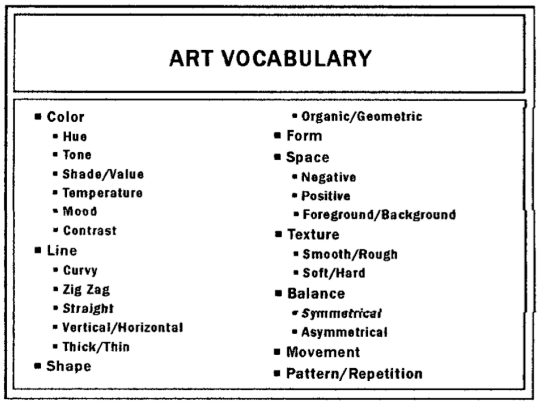
- Please complete your reflection questionnaire.
- Thanks for participating in my study!

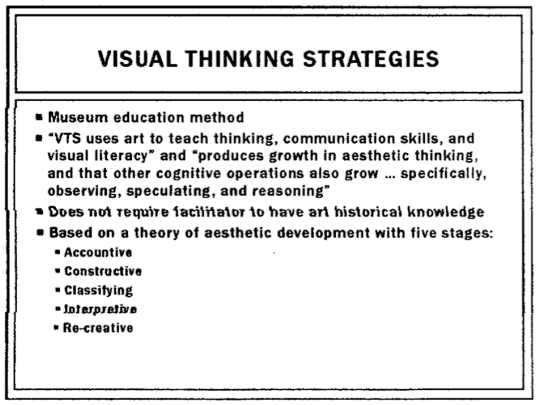
- If you have questions, comments, or concerns about this study, please contact me at (860) 480-5416 or lucy.kacir@gmail.com

CYCLE TWO PRESENTATION









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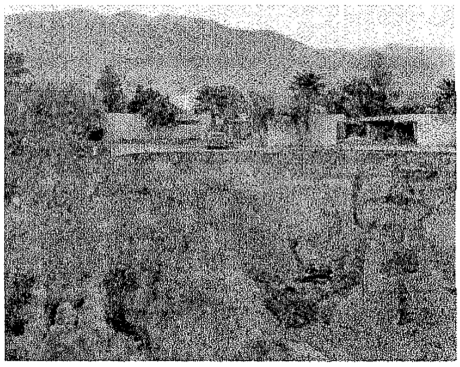
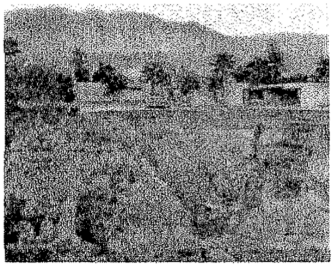
  - Connect with subject matter, theme, realism, and beauty
  - Want artworks to look realistic
  - Representational works – subject matter that is relevant to their lives and understanding of the world
- Expressive:
  - Begin to become interested in stylistic aspects of works
  - Discriminate between composition, color, and intent
  - Able to verbalize more complex thoughts about an artwork

VISUAL THINKING STRATEGIES

- **Questions:**
  - "What's going on in this picture?"
  - "What do you see that makes you say that?"
  - "What else do you see?"
- **Facilitator Responses:**
  - Listen carefully to each comment
  - Point to the area of the artwork being discussed
  - Paraphrase each comment without changing the meaning
  - Accept each comment without correction
  - Link together related comments





JOEL STERNFELD

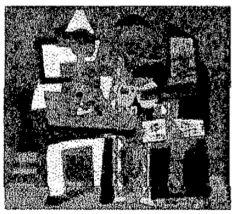
After a Flash Flood

Rancho Mirage, California

July 1979

SELECTING IMAGES

- Use a variety of sources – don't limit yourself to traditional fine art disciplines or artists
- Consider tying art discussions to themes/ curriculum in your classroom or to children's interests and life experiences
- Choose images that you find exciting to spark discussion
- Plan in advance art vocabulary that relates to your image



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- What can children learn from looking at works of art?
- Take a few minutes to discuss possible learning objectives with your neighbors before we share.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- VTS
  - Communication skills
  - Language
  - Visual discrimination/visual literacy
  - Observation skills
  - Predictive skills
  - Critical thinking
  - Reasoning
- Pre-K Guidelines
  - Ability to focus
  - Displays empathy and caring for others
  - Understands that others have different perspectives
  - Listening comprehension
  - Conversational abilities
  - Uses a wide variety of words to label and describe
  - Descriptive communication
  - Shape recognition
  - Color recognition
  - Patterning
  - Recognizes similarities and differences

LOOKING AT ART WITH BABIES & TODDLERS

- How can these ideas be applied to babies and toddlers?
- Research shows that visual and verbal stimulation promote brain development.
- For this reason, babies and toddlers benefit from looking at and discussing art, just like older children.
- Because babies are learning to process sounds and make meaning, describe the artwork that you are looking at. Using vocabulary is important, even with very young children.
- At birth, babies see black and white.
- At two months, babies are able to see color as well.
- As visual processing is developed, high contrast images seem to be most engaging for babies.

LOOKING AT ART WITH BABIES & TODDLERS

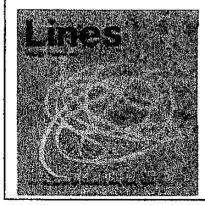
- Studies show that babies like images that are...
  - Both abstract and representational
  - Colorful
  - Portraits with big eyes
  - Portraits of babies
- Babies show interest in an image by...
  - Staring
  - Reaching
  - Smiling
  - Wiggling
  - Squealing

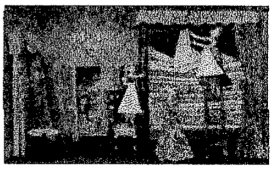
LOOKING AT ART WITH BABIES & TODDLERS

- Identify colors and shapes with toddlers
- Images of families and children around the world
- Think about children's interests when selecting images

APPLYING THESE STRATEGIES TO BOOKS

- Making predictions by looking at illustrations
- Modeling observation and discussion of illustrations
- Using art terms while commenting on the illustrations





ANY QUESTIONS?

THANK YOU!

- Please complete your reflection questionnaire.
- Thanks for participating in my study!

- If you have questions, comments, or concerns about this study, please contact me at (860) 480-5416 or lucy.kacir@gmail.com

Appendix D: Contents of Participant Folders

CYCLE ONE

Artists and Artworks by Theme

- Self-Portraits and Portraits
  - Frida Kahlo
  - Alice Neel
  - Rembrandt
  - Kitagawa Utamoro
  - Matthew Brady
  - Amedeo Modigliani
  - Jack Niven
  - Kathleen Blackshear
  - Marie Atkinson Hull
  - Phillip Morseberger
  - Karl Zerbe, *Woman on trapeze**
  - Robert Wilson, *Princess Caroline of Monaco**
- Friends and Families
  - Mary Cassatt
  - William Johnson
  - Pablo Picasso
  - Carmen Lomas Garza
  - Auguste Renoir
  - Bo Bartlett
- Faces and Emotions
  - Max Beckman
  - Frida Kahlo
  - Edvard Munch
  - Picasso
  - Gargoyle Sculptures
- Transportation
  - Arthur G. Dove, *The Train* 1934
  - Rene Magritte, *Time Transfixed*
  - Paul Delvaux, *Trains du Soir*
  - Egon Schiele (boats)
  - Franz Marc (Abstract horses)
  - Edgar Degas (racehorses)
  - Winslow Homer (ships)
  - Frederic Remington (horses and cowboys)
  - Roger Brown
- Architecture
  - Frank Lloyd Wright
  - Antoni Gaudi
  - Loius Sullivan
  - Eero Saarinen
  - Le Corbusier
  - Zaha Kadid
  - Roger Brown
  - Robert W Tebbs

Elemore Morgan Jr.

- Animals
  - Deborah Butterfield
  - Cave Paintings
  - Currier and Ives
  - Roy de Forest (dogs)
  - Edward Hicks
  - Pablo Picasso (bull prints)
  - Edgar Degas (horses)
  - Arthur G. Dove, *Cow and Fence (Bull)*
  - Gwen Knight, *Running Horse*
  - Serge Lemonde (animal close ups)
  - Andy Warhol (endangered animal prints)
  - Alan Gerson
  - Jack Niven
- Birds
  - Jean Dallaire, *Birdy*
  - Currier and Ives, *The Happy Family*
  - Alexander Calder, *Only Only Bird*
  - Morris Graves, *Wounded Gull*
  - Karl Knaths, *Duck Decoy*
  - Vincent van Gogh, *Wheat Field with Crows*
  - Frida Kahlo, *The Frame*
  - Keiichi Nishimura, *Cranes over Moon*
  - Marsden Hartley, *Chanties to the North*
  - Ancient Egyptian and African sculptures
  - Pudlo Pudlat (Inuit)
  - Mark Messersmith
- Plants
  - Henri Rousseau
  - Kai Chan (sculptures made from natural materials)
  - Andy Goldsworthy (natural material installations)
  - Georgia O'Keefe
  - Piet Mondrian
  - Imogen Cunningham
  - Vincent Van Gogh
  - Alan Gerson
  - Minnie Roberts
  - Woody Woodruff (woodywoodruff.com)
- Ocean Life
  - Winslow Homer
  - Paul Klee, *Fish Magic, The Golden Fish*
  - Seitei Watanabe, *Crayfish*
  - Malcah Zeldis, *Fish*
  - Bo Bartlett
  - Alan Gerson
- Seasons and Weather
  - Jennifer Bartlett
  - David Hockney
  - Winslow Homer
  - Impressionist works

- Imaginary World
    - Marc Chagall
    - Keith Haring
    - Red Grooms
    - Sandy Skoglund
    - Magritte
    - Salvador Dali
    - Raphael (St. George and the Dragon, Lady with Unicorn)
    - Shawne Mejor
- Food
    - Wayne Thiebaud
    - Clas Oldenburg (sculptures of food)
    - Isabel Bishop, *Lunch Counter*
    - Mary Ann Currier
    - Paul Cezanne (fruit)
    - Guiseppe Arcimboldo
- Letters and Numbers
    - Stuart Davis
    - Charles Demuth
    - Jasper Johns
    - Ed Ruscha
- Patterns
    - Betty LaDuke
    - Aboriginal Art
    - Piet Mondrian
    - Paul Klee
    - M. C. Escher
    - Kenojuak (Ashevak), *Sun Owl and Foliage*
    - Islamic Art (geometric patterns)
    - Gee's Bend quilts
    - Sol Lewitt
    - Minnie Roberts
    - Woody Woodruff (woodywoodruff.com)
    - Alfred Jenson, *Mayan Temple**
- Colors & Shapes
    - Jackson Pollock
    - Kandinsky
    - Morris Louis
    - Pablo Picasso
    - Sol Lewitt
    - Kendall Shaw
    - Helen Frankenthaler, *Over the Circle**
    - Kazuya Shakai, *Filles de Kilimanjaro**
- Music & Dance
    - Edgar Degas
- Jungle
    - Henri Rousseau
- Landscapes
    - John Kelly Fitzpatrick
    - Marie Atkinson Hull
    - Edward Gustav Eisenlohr

Robert Julian Onderdonk
William Jameson
Elemore Morgan Jr.
Stuart Davis, *Lawn and Sky**
Matias Duville, *Espiritu Guardian**

- Texas Artists

Edward Gustav Eisenlohr
Robert Julian Onderdonk
Artistsoftexas.org

*starred works are part of the Blanton Museum's collection (blantonmuseum.org)

Portions of this list from:

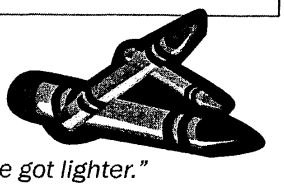
Mulcahey, C. (2009). *The story in the picture: Inquiry and artmaking with young children.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Online Resources

- Visual Thinking Strategies
  - http://vtshome.org
  - http://vtshome.org/research/articles-other-readings
- ARTstor
  - Searchable database of art images
  - Must sign-up for free account through UT
  - Available through UT libraries (lib.utexas.edu)
  - Research Tools> Find Articles Using Databases> Databases Alphabetical by Titles> A
- Denver Art Museum
  - Lesson plans for early childhood
  - http://creativity.denverartmuseum.org/lesson-plans/
- Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center
  - Smithsonian Institute's early childhood center and model museum school for ECE
  - http://www.si.edu/seec/resources
- National Art Education Association Position Statement on Early Childhood Art Education
  - http://www.arteducators.org/about-us/Position_Statement_on_Early_Childhood_Art_Education.pdf
- Texas Pre-K Guidelines
  - http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2147495508

Questions, Comments, Concerns?
Contact Lucy Kacir, Principal Investigator, IRB Study # 2013-02-0082
(860) 480-5416
lucy.kacir@gmail.com

REAL TALK WITH CHILDREN ABOUT THEIR ARTWORK:
More than just "That's a pretty picture!"



COLOR
- **Hue-** *"I see that you used blue and yellow."*
- **Temperature-** *"That orange is such a warm color."*
- **Tint/Tone-** *"When you added the white paint, the circle got lighter."*
- **Relationship-** *"The red flower really stands out next to the green leaves."*

LINE
- **Kind-** *"I see you made squiggly lines with the paint."*
- **Beginning/End-** *"You started your blue line in this corner and it went clear to the other side."*
- **Direction-** *"When you follow this wavy line, it makes your eyes look up."*
- **Length-** *"The lines you made for the grass are shorter than the others."*

FORM/SHAPE
- **Size-** *"The building you drew is so tall."*
- **Name-** *"You made a necklace with triangles and squares."*
- **Solidity-** *"The blue square is filled in, but the red one has colored dots."*
- **Relationship-** *"I see you cut out a yellow shape and put it inside a red one."*

TEXTURE
- **Roughness-** *"These dots on your picture make it look bumpy up close."*
- **Regularity-** *"The silver crayon makes such a shiny circle."*

SPACE
- **Distance-** *"You drew the two cats close together."*
- **Location-** *"You painted your flowers right in the middle of the page."*
- **Positive/Negative-** *"I see you painted a blue square and left the rest of the paper white."*

DESIGN
- **Symmetry-** *"The pattern on this side matches the pattern on the other side."*
- **Repetition-** *"Your picture has three stripes on bottom and three on top."*
- **Variation-** *"You used a light red up here and a darker red over there."*

Adapted from *The Intentional Teacher* by Ann E. Epstein (2007)

VTS: *Visual Thinking Strategies*

Basic VTS at a Glance

by Abigail Housen and Philip Yenawine

Starting the Lesson

Introduce the VTS: it allows students to examine art, to think, to contribute observations and ideas, to listen, and to build understandings together. Ask students to recall these aspects of the process often.

Call students' attention to the first image. Always give students a moment to look in silence before you invite them to speak.

Asking the Questions

After they have examined the image, ask the question, **What's going on in this picture?** Once students have learned this question, use variations.

Whenever students make a comment that involves an interpretation (a comment that goes beyond identification and literal description), respond first by paraphrasing, and then ask, **What do you see that makes you say that?** Once students understand the point of this question, begin to vary it.

In order to keep students searching for further observations, frequently ask them, **What else can you find?** Again, variations are useful once students are familiar with the point of the question.

Responding to Students' Comments

Listen carefully to students, making sure that you hear all of what they say and that you understand it accurately.

Point to what they mention in the slide. Be precise, even when it is a comment that has been repeated.

Use encouraging body language and facial expressions to nurture participation.

Paraphrase each comment. Change the wording, but not the meaning of what is said. In rephrasing, demonstrate the use of proper sentence construction and rich vocabulary to assist students with language.

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Accept each comment neutrally. Remember that this process emphasizes a useful pattern of thinking, not right answers. Students are learning to make detailed observations, sorting out and applying what they know. Articulating their thoughts leads to growth even when they make mistakes.

Link answers that relate, even when there are disagreements. Show how the students' thinking evolves, how some observations and ideas stimulate others, how opinions change and build.

Concluding the Lesson

Thank students for their participation. Tell them what you particularly enjoyed. Encourage them to think of viewing art as an ongoing, open-ended process. Avoid summaries; linking throughout is enough to show how conversations build.

VTS: *Visual Thinking Strategies*

Un Vistazo al VTS Básico

Empezando la clase

Presentar VTS: permite que los alumnos observen las obras de arte, piensen, contribuyan con observaciones e ideas, escuchen y construyan juntos un mejor entendimiento del arte. Pide a los alumnos que se fijen a menudo en estos aspectos del proceso.
Hacer que los alumnos presten atención a la primera imagen. Siempre darles unos minutos para mirar en silencio antes de invitarles a hablar.

Haciendo las preguntas

Después de que hayan observado la imagen, pregúntales: ¿Que esta pasando en esta imagen? Cuando los estudiantes ya hayan aprendido esta pregunta, usa variaciones. Siempre que los estudiantes hagan un comentario que implica una interpretación (un comentario que vaya más allá de la identificación o de una descripción literal), primero responde parafraseando lo que se ha dicho, luego pregunta: ¿Qué ves que te hace decir eso? Cuando los estudiantes ya entiendan la finalidad de esta pregunta, empieza a variarla.

Para que los estudiantes sigan involucrados en observar más detalles, pregúntales frecuentemente: ¿Qué más puedes encontrar? De nuevo, las variaciones son muy útiles una vez que los estudiantes ya entiendan la función de la pregunta.

Respondiendo a los comentarios de los estudiantes

- Escucha atentamente a los estudiantes, asegurándote de que oyes y entiendes exactamente todo lo que ellos te digan.
- Señala lo que ellos mencionan en la diapositiva. Se preciso, aun cuando se trate de un comentario ya repetido.
- Utiliza gestos y expresión corporal para alentar la participación de la clase.
- Parafrasea cada comentario. Cambia las palabras, pero no cambies el significado de lo que dicen. Cuando parafrasees, usa correctamente la gramática y un vocabulario amplio para ayudar a los estudiantes a enriquecer su vocabulario.

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- Aceptar cada comentario de un modo imparcial. Recuerda que este proceso no está dirigido a conseguir respuestas correctas sino a establecer unas pautas útiles para pensar. Los estudiantes empezarán a aprender cómo hacer observaciones detalladas, clasificando y aplicando lo que ya saben. Una articulación coherente del pensamiento conduce al desarrollo, incluso cuando se cometen errores.

- Asociar las respuestas que estén relacionadas entre sí y también intentar hacerlo cuando parezca que hay diferencias de opinión. Así se mostrará de qué modo evolucionan los pensamientos de los alumnos y como algunas observaciones e ideas estimulan a los demás, de la misma manera que las opiniones van cambiando al irse agregando información y construyendo una visión más rica y compleja.

Concluyendo la clase

- Da las gracias a los estudiantes por su participación.
- Cuéntales las cosas que más hayas disfrutado.
- Anímales a pensar que mirar obras de arte es un proceso en curso, siempre abierto y sin final.

Evita hacer sumarios, conectar y enlazar las ideas durante el proceso es suficiente para enseñar como la conversación se va desarrollando.

From Supporting Young Artists
Ann S. Epstein & Eli Trimis

Glossary of Art Vocabulary Words[1]

This glossary of art vocabulary words will help adults familiarize themselves with the terms used by artists and critics. In simpler language, adults can include the ideas behind these definitions in their discussions with young children. As conversations about art become part of the everyday classroom experience, adults may introduce some of these actual words to young children to expand their language for talking about art.

abstract art. Art that is not realistic or recognizable as actual objects and events (also called non-objective or non-representational art); emphasizes formal elements instead of depiction. Opposite of figurative art.

aesthetics. The branch of philosophy that considers the question "What is art?"

architecture. A unifying method or style of building.

background. The area of an artwork that appears to be behind other objects or farther away from the viewer. Opposite of foreground.

canvas. A heavy cloth (made of hemp, linen, flax, or cotton duck) stretched on a wooden frame and used as a surface for painting.

clay. A natural earthy material that is plastic (capable of being shaped or formed) when wet.

collage. An artistic composition of materials and objects attached to a surface.

color. Property caused by different qualities of the light reflected or emitted by objects.

- ***hue***—The name of a color.
- ***primary***—Red, yellow, and blue; pure color.
- ***secondary***—Orange, green, and violet (made from combining two primary colors); mixed color.
- ***complementary***—Colors that are opposite one another on the color wheel: red-green, blue-orange, and yellow-violet.
- ***intensity***—Brightness or dullness of color. Also called saturation.
- ***value***—Lightness and darkness of color.
- ***shade or tone***—The darkness of a color; may be achieved by adding black. Opposite of tint.
- ***tint***—The lightness of a color; may be achieved by adding white. Opposite of shade or tone.
- ***temperature***—Quality associated with different hues; colors at the blue end of the spectrum are cool and those at the red end are warm.
- ***relationship***—How colors change when they are mixed or put next to one another.

conceptual art. Art that focuses on ideas as well as images.

criticism. The analysis of the formal or expressive properties of an artwork.

design. The planned arrangement of elements and principles in an artwork.

- ***design elements***—Line, form, space, texture, shape, color. Also called formal elements.

[1]Adapted from Marshall, 1999

design principles—The way in which the elements of art are organized in a composition, including balance, symmetry, movement, repetition, alternation, unity, variation, and emphasis.

figurative art. Art that depicts objects and events (also called representational art); emphasizes realism or subject matter. Opposite of abstract art.

foreground. The area that appears to be closest to the viewer. Opposite of background.

form or shape. External shape, outline, or contour of a two- or three-dimensional object.

size—Continuum from small to large; perception of size affected by color, placement, and surrounding objects.

geometrics—Named (recognizable geometric shape) or unnamed.

other qualities—Open or closed, regular or irregular, empty or full (solid), separated or connected, isolated or enclosed, independent or overlapping.

fresco. Italian for "fresh"; a wall-painting technique in which water-based paints are mixed with lime water and applied on wet plaster.

functional. Referring to how an artwork is used rather than how it appears.

gouache. A method of painting using opaque water colors mixed with white powder or chalk along with gum arabic or honey.

impasto. The technique of applying dense amounts of paint by brush, knife, or hand to form a textured, low-relief surface.

kiln. An oven or furnace used to fire clay (ceramic) products; firing in a kiln dries and hardens the clay.

line. A mark used to define a shape or represent a contour; any of the marks that make up the formal design of a picture.

kind—Straight, curved, or a combination.

length—How long the line is.

beginning/end—Where the line starts and finishes.

direction—Where the line moves up and down, side to side, or diagonally; whether the line follows one path or changes direction.

other qualities—Width, steadiness, heaviness.

relationship—How lines appear relative to other lines (separate, intertwined, parallel, crossed).

medium. Material(s) used to create an image (plural: media); mixed media is the use of different media in the same artwork.

minimalism. A style of art that uses the least amount of formal elements; reduces images and ideas to their simplest forms, shapes, and colors.

mosaic. The technique of embedding pebbles, stones, glass, tesserae (small squares of stone or glass) and so on in the surface of stucco or plaster.

motif. A dominant theme, pattern, or idea in an artwork; motifs are often repeated.

mural. Any painting or other decoration made directly on a wall or ceiling.

oil paint. Pigment bound in oil (usually linseed oil).

palette. A holder or surface for mixing paint colors; also refers to the range of colors chosen by an artist and included in an artwork.

performance art. Artwork that combines visual arts with other artistic media, including music, theater, dance; often includes audience participation and may

therefore change from one performance to the next.

pigment. The coloring agent, in powdered or other form, used in painting and drawing media.

pop art. Art that includes everyday and common objects from life (such as food, tools, media stars, cartoons); focuses on mass culture and advertising.

portfolio. An artist's body of finished work or a representative sample of that work.

relief. The projection of figures or forms from a flat background; may be low relief or high relief.

reproduction. A copy of an artwork such as a photograph in a book, post card, or slide.

sculpture. Three-dimensional representations, forms, and figures that have been carved, cut, hewn, cast, and/or molded.

space. The way objects fill the artwork and the distances between them.

- ***positive space***—The area occupied by the object.
- ***negative space***—The area left unoccupied.
- ***other qualities***—Crowded or sparse, open or restricted, bounded or unbounded, inclusive or exclusive, solid or permeable.

still life. Representation of inanimate (non-moving) objects such as flowers, fruit, books.

support. Surface used for drawing and painting, such as paper, canvas, or wood.

symbol. Lines, shapes, and colors used to represent something else.

technique. A specific procedure or set of procedures used to create artwork.

tempera paint. Paint made from powdered pigments mixed with water and egg yolk.

texture. Surface characteristic(s) of an artwork.

- ***actual or implied***—texture may be inherent in the object or visually suggested.
- ***other qualities***—soft or hard, rough or smooth, regular or irregular, reflective or absorptive, shiny or dull (matte).

three-dimensional. Artwork that has height and width and depth and occupies all dimensions of space (see two-dimensional).

two-dimensional. Artwork that has height and width and occupies only the surface space (see three-dimensional).

watercolor paint. Pigment bound in water.

weaving. The interlacing of threads on a loom to make fabric; the fabric so made.

- ***warp***—The fixed threads on a loom, usually vertical.
- ***weft***—The filler threads on a loom, usually horizontal.

work-in-progress. An artwork that is not yet finished.

Looking at Art with Babies & Toddlers

- Looking at art provides visual stimulation that is important for brain development
- Verbally describing the artwork that you are looking at helps babies begin to make meaning from sounds
- At birth, babies see only black and white
- Around two months, babies begin to see color
- Babies are still developing their ability to process visuals and, for this reason, high contrast images are most engaging for infants
- Babies like images that are
    - Colorful
    - Portraits with big eyes
    - Portraits of babies
- Babies show interest in an image by staring, reaching, smiling, wiggling, squealing
- The child's reaction to the artwork will guide how long to engage them
- Identify colors and simple shapes to engage toddlers with art
- Look for colorful images related to children's interests

Kerlavage's Stages of Aesthetic Development

These stages were developed specifically to address aesthetic development in early childhood. This information can be used to select artworks based on children's development or to document children's progression.

- Sensorial:
  - Connect with artworks intuitively
  - Interest is usually based on colors, shapes, or patterns
  - Often focus on one aspect of the artwork – a particular color or shape
  - In this stage, children are especially attracted to abstract works
- Concrete:
  - Connect with subject matter, theme, realism, and beauty
  - Want artworks to look realistic
  - Representational works – subject matter that is relevant to their lives and understanding of the world
- Expressive:
  - Begin to become interested in stylistic aspects of works
  - Discriminate between composition, color, and intent
  - Able to verbalize more complex thoughts about an artwork

Kerlavage, M. S. (1995). A bunch of naked ladies and a tiger: Children's responses to adult works of art. In C. M. Thompson (Ed.). *The visual arts and early childhood learning* (pp. 56-62). Reston VA: National Art Education Association.

Appendix E: Lesson Plans

CYCLE ONE LESSON PLAN

Meaningful Connections: Teaching with Art Reproductions in the Early Childhood Classroom
March 15, 2013

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will be able to use art vocabulary to describe students' artwork and art reproductions.
- Participants will be introduced to Visual Thinking Strategies and its implementation method. Participants will have the chance to participate in a VTS discussion and see the model in action.
- Participants will be able to explain how discussions about art contribute to children's learning and support learning domains in the Texas Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines.
- Participants will be able to explain what aesthetic development in young children is and its importance.
- Participants will be able to define open-ended art making and understand how to plan curriculum that supports creativity.

Materials:

- Powerpoint presentation.
- Participant packets with consent form, questionnaires, and handouts.
- Art reproductions.
- Childrens' books using art reproductions.
- Philip Yenawine's childrens' books.
- Candy.

Procedure:

- Slide 1: Introduce study
    - Introduce myself: teacher and graduate student.
    - Introduce study and its purpose (central research questions).
    - Explain participants rights and ask them to complete the consent form and preliminary questionnaire.
- Slide 2: NAEA position statement on early childhood art education
    - Explain that today we are going to be discussing best practices in art education and how art can support child development across numerous developmental domains.

    - Explain that the NAEA is the largest professional organization of art educators in the country and that this position statement reflects the components of a high quality art program.
    - Today our discussion will mainly focus on art discussions and facilitating opportunities for children to respond to art through conversation.
- Slide 3: Define aesthetics
    - Discuss different definitions of aesthetics and how it applies to early childhood education.
    - Aesthetics may also be referred to as art appreciation.
    - How are we already addressing aesthetic development in our classrooms? (Music appreciation, nature, art making, sensory).
- Slide 4: Art vocabulary
    - Explain the importance of using art vocabulary (exposing children to new words, encouraging observation and close looking, build descriptive language abilities).
    - Using art vocabulary with books, observations of nature, etc. in addition to describing artworks or art making.
    - Epstein handout in packet gives more ways to use these vocabulary words.
    - Pass around Philip Yenawine's books which also use art vocabulary.
- Slide 5: Introduce Visual Thinking Strategies
    - Developed for use in museums, there is also a school curriculum.
    - Developed by Abigail Housen and Philip Yenawine, based on Housen's research into aesthetic development.
    - Specifically concerned with developing analytical and cognitive abilities including critical thinking and problem solving.
    - Well documented results, rigorously tested over the last thirty years.
    - Appropriate for early childhood educators because it does not require art historical knowledge or expertise, uses three questions to facilitate discussion.
- Slide 6: Kerlavage's Stages of Aesthetic Development
    - VTS is based on Housen's stage theory of aesthetic development, which contains five stages and stretches from beginning viewers to expert viewers of art. Kerlavage's stage theory focuses specifically on the early childhood years and is more applicable to the teaching we are doing.
    - Stage theories are useful for educators to develop a general understanding of how children develop their aesthetic sensibility, but are not concrete and all children do not develop in accordance with these stages.
    - This information can help educators select artworks for their classrooms and assess development.
- Slide 7: VTS questions and facilitator responses
    - Review the three VTS questions and when you would use them.
    - Review facilitator responses and how to use them.

    - While the VTS process is very structured, encourage participants to adapt the questions to better suit their students.
    - Remind teachers that this is a great time to introduce art vocabulary words.
- Slide 8: VTS discussion
- Slide 9: VTS discussion
    - Provide artist information for image used in VTS discussion.
    - While providing this information is not necessary in a VTS discussion, I felt that as adults you would be interested.
    - Artist and Artworks by theme handout in packet – tell participants that this is a starting point for selecting images but is not an exhaustive list.
- Slide 10: Learning Objectives
    - What can children learn from looking at works of art?
    - Have participants discuss this question with one another and then lead a group discussion. Allow time for participants to share their ideas about what learning objectives can be supported by an art discussion.
    - Point out that learning objectives from a variety of developmental domains were discussed and that art learning can be multi-disciplinary.
- Slide 11: Learning objectives from VTS and Texas Pre-K Guidelines
    - Discuss the learning objectives provided by VTS and how they are meaningful in early childhood.
    - On the right are learning objectives that I pulled from the Texas Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines that I feel are supported by art discussions. Do you agree?
    - Acknowledge that this is not an exhaustive list, but rather my ideas. The purpose of discussing learning objectives is to encourage you to think about the purpose behind art making and discussion in our classrooms.
- Slide 12: Pre-K Guidelines Fine Arts Domain
    - Pre-K Guidelines also identify a separate fine arts developmental domain. We have discussed a lot of interdisciplinary learning objectives and I wanted to discuss that art learning is also relevant to early childhood for its own sake, in addition to the learning it supports in other areas. The Guidelines include teacher behaviors and instructional strategies for the fine arts.
- Slide 13: Looking at art with babies and toddlers
    - Explain that looking at art with babies and toddlers also supports their developmental growth, even though they cannot have a discussion about art using the VTS method.
    - Looking at art encourages cognitive development and provides visual and verbal stimulation, which is important for young children.
- Slide 14: Looking at art with babies and toddlers
    - Select images that will engage young children with bright colors, familiar objects, and portraits.

    - Observe the child to determine their interest level in an artwork and let them indicate their likes.
- Slide 15: Open-ended art activities
    - Art in early childhood is more than discussing art. By linking discussions with art making activities, children's learning is extended and supported.
    - Art activities should inspire creativity, promote sensory exploration, allow for choice making and problem solving, encourage social interactions, and allow reflection on the creative process.
    - Teachers can facilitate this through their lesson planning, providing a variety of art materials, using art vocabulary, enriching the classroom environment, and encouraging children to talk about their work.
    - Remember that the process of art making is more important than the finished product. Think about this as you do your lesson planning and ask yourself is your art activities focus on the product or the exploration of the creative process.
- Slide 16: Open-ended art activities
    - Discuss characteristics of open-ended art making ways for teachers to facilitate open-ended art.
    - Looking at this painting at Piet Mondrin, let's imagine that we have just discussed it with our students. What kind of art making activities could a teacher do that relate to this piece?
    - Allow time for group discussion of ideas.
- Slide 17: Using these strategies with books
    - A simple change we all can make in our classroom is using these discussion strategies when we read a book aloud. Encourage children to look closely at illustrations and make predictions or describe what they see. Teachers can also use art vocabulary while looking at illustrations.
    - Illustrations are often one of the first examples of adult artwork that children are exposed to.
- Slide 18: Questions
    - Allow time for questions and further discussion.
- Slide 19: Thank you and reflection questionnaire
    - Thank everyone for their participation and remind them to contact me with an questions or concerns regarding the study.
    - Allow time for participants to complete their reflection questionnaires.

CYCLE TWO LESSON PLAN

Meaningful Connections: Teaching with Art Reproductions in the Early Childhood Classroom
September 27, 2013

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will be able to use art vocabulary to describe students' artwork and art reproductions.
- Participants will be introduced to Visual Thinking Strategies and its implementation method. Participants will have the chance to participate in a VTS discussion and see the model in action.
- Participants will be able to explain how discussions about art contribute to children's learning and support learning domains in the Texas Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines.
- Participants will be able to explain what aesthetic development in young children is and its importance.

Materials:

- Powerpoint presentation.
- Participant packets with consent form, questionnaires, and handouts.
- Art reproductions.
- Childrens' books using art reproductions.
- Philip Yenawine's childrens' books.
- Candy.

Procedure:

- Slide 1: Introduce study
    - Introduce myself: teacher and graduate student.
    - Introduce study and its purpose (central research questions).
    - Explain participants' rights and ask them to complete the consent form and preliminary questionnaire.
- Slide 2: Define aesthetics
    - Discuss different definitions of aesthetics and how it applies to early childhood education.
    - Aesthetics may also be referred to as art appreciation.
- Slide 3: Art vocabulary
    - Explain the importance of using art vocabulary (exposing children to new words, encouraging observation and close looking, build descriptive language abilities).
    - Small group discussion: how can we use these terms in our classrooms?
    - Using art vocabulary with books, observations of nature, etc. in addition to describing artworks or art making.

    - Epstein handout in packet gives more ways to use these vocabulary words.
- Slide 4: Introduce Visual Thinking Strategies
    - Developed for use in museums, there is also a school curriculum.
    - Developed by Abigail Housen and Philip Yenawine, based on Housen's research into aesthetic development.
    - Specifically concerned with developing analytical and cognitive abilities including critical thinking and problem solving.
    - Well documented results, rigorously tested over the last thirty years.
    - Appropriate for early childhood educators because it doesn't not require art historical knowledge or expertise, uses three questions to facilitate discussion.
- Slide 5: Kerlavage's Stages of Aesthetic Development
    - VTS is based on Housen's stage theory of aesthetic development, which contains five stages and stretches from beginning viewers to expert viewers of art. Kerlavage's stage theory focuses specifically on the early childhood years and is more applicable to the teaching we are doing.
    - Stage theories are useful for educators to develop a general understanding of how children develop their aesthetic sensibility but are not concrete and all children don't develop in accordance with these stages.
    - What stage are the children in your classrooms in? How can this information help you in planning art discussions?
    - This information can help educators select artworks for their classrooms and assess development.
- Slide 6: VTS questions and facilitator responses
    - Review the three VTS questions and when you would use them
    - Review facilitator responses and how to use them.
    - While the VTS process is very structured, encourage participants to adapt the questions to better suit their students.
    - Remind teachers that this is a great time to introduce art vocabulary words.
- Slide 7: VTS discussion
- Slide 8: VTS discussion
    - Provide artist information for image used in VTS discussion
    - While providing this information is not necessary in a VTS discussion, I felt that as adults you would be interested.
    - Artist and Artworks by theme handout in packet – tell participants that this is a starting point for selecting images but is not an exhaustive list.
- Slide 9: Selecting Images
    - Use a variety of sources and don't limit yourself to "fine arts" images. Visual literacy includes being able to make meaning from a variety of image types and we want children to transfer their visual literacy skills beyond traditional artworks.

    - Share ideas for how to select images – relate them to curricular theme, children's interests or life experience.
    - Choose images that you find interesting or exciting.
    - Plan how to use art vocabulary words with art works in advance of leading a discussion if possible.
    - The image on this slide is a Picasso painting that I am planning to use in my upcoming curriculum. My class is very interested in musical images and so we will begin a unit on this topic next week. I am excited to show this image to my class because it ties into our curriculum and their interests. It also displays images that they are familiar with – they are just depicted in an unusual way.
- Slide 10: Learning Objectives
    - What can children learn from looking at works of art?
    - Spend a few minutes discussing with those around you what learning objectives you might plan for a discussion about this Henri Rousseau painting.
    - Have participants discuss this question with one another and then lead a group discussion. Give everyone that wants to share his or her ideas time to discuss what learning objectives can be supported by an art discussion.
    - Point out that learning objectives from a variety of developmental domains were discussed and that art learning can be multi-disciplinary.
- Slide 11: Learning objectives from VTS and Texas Pre-K Guidelines
    - Discuss the learning objectives provided by VTS and how they are meaningful in early childhood.
    - On the right are learning objectives that I pulled from the Texas Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines that I feel are supported by art discussions. Do you agree?
    - Acknowledge that this is not an exhaustive list, but rather my ideas. The purpose of discussing learning objectives is to encourage you to think about the purpose behind art making and discussion in our classrooms.
- Slide 12: Looking at art with babies and toddlers
    - Explain that looking at art with babies and toddlers also supports their developmental growth, even though they cannot have a discussion about art using the VTS method.
    - Looking at art encourages cognitive development and provides visual and verbal stimulation, which is important for young children.
- Slide 13: Looking at art with Babies and Toddlers
    - Select images that will engage young children with bright colors, familiar objects, and portraits.
    - Observe the child to determine their interest level in an artwork and let them indicate their likes.
- Slide 14: Looking at Art with Babies and Toddlers

    - Considerations for selecting artworks: use of colors and shapes, images of children and families around the world, children's interests.
    - Ask participants who work with babies and toddlers how they could use this Franz Marc painting in a discussion. What art vocabulary words could be used to describe the artwork to non-verbal children?
- Slide 15: Using these strategies with books
    - A simple change we all can make in our classroom is using these discussion strategies when we read a book aloud. Encourage children to look closely at illustrations and make predictions or describe what they see. Teachers can also use art vocabulary while looking at illustrations.
    - Illustrations are often one of the first examples of adult artwork that children are exposed to.
    - The image on the left is the cover of one of Philip Yenawine's phenomenal children's books that use art vocabulary. There are a number of good children's books about art and artworks that introduce many of the ideas we have discussed today.
    - Pass around books for participants to look at.
    - The image on the right is an illustration from one of my favorite children's books The Princess and the Pea by Lauren Child. This is an example of a visually beautiful book that offers rich opportunities to discuss beautiful illustrations.
- Slide 16: Questions
    - Allow time for questions and further discussion.
- Slide 17: Thank you and reflection questionnaire
    - Thank everyone for their participation and remind them to contact me with an questions or concerns regarding the study.
    - Allow time for participants to complete their reflection questionnaires.

Appendix F: Illustrations

Illustration 1: Paul Klee, *Insula Dulcamara,* 1938, Collection of Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Switzerland

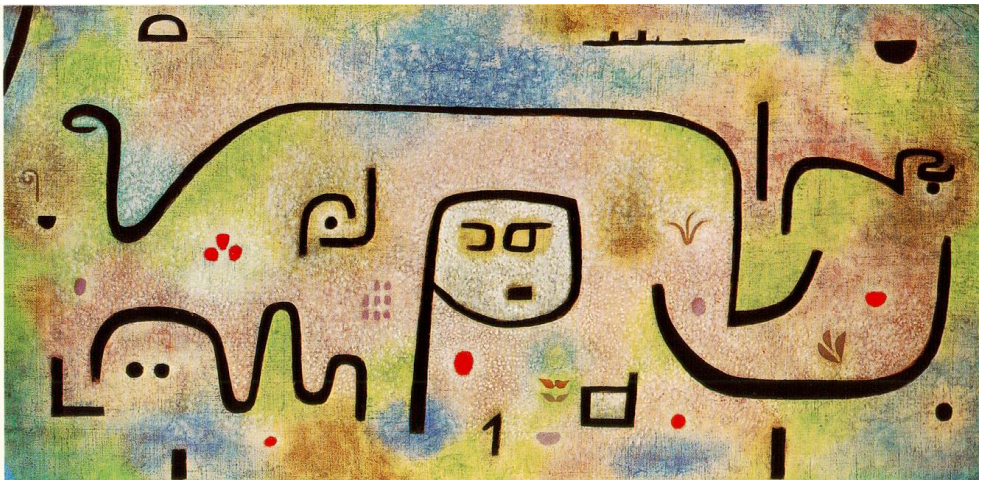

Illustration 2: Piet Mondrian, *Composition of Red, Blue, Yellow, and White: Nom II*, 1939, Collection of Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, California

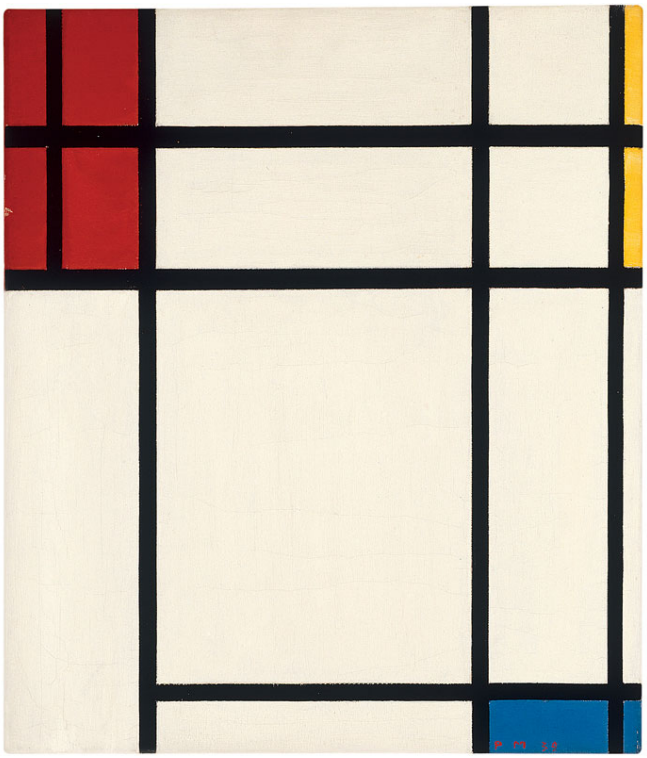

Illustration 3: Joel Sternfeld, *After a Flash Flood*, 1979, Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York

Illustration 4: Pablo Picasso, *Three Musicians,* 1921, Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York

Illustration 5: Franz Marc, *Blue Horse*, 1911, Collection of Lenbachhaus, Munich, Germany

Illustration 6: From The Princess and the Pea by Lauren Child, 2006, Published by Disney-Hyperion

Appendix G: Consent Form

Title: Meaningful Connections: Teaching with Art Reproductions in the Early Childhood Classroom

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. The person performing the research will answer any of your questions. Read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to be involved in this study, this form will be used to record your consent.

Purpose of the Study

You have been asked to participate in a research study about professional development for early childhood educators. The purpose of this study is to develop an effective professional development workshop to teach new strategies of art instruction in early childhood classrooms. A museum education graduate student is conducting this study as thesis research.

What will you to be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete questionnaires both before and after completing the training program. The researcher is looking for feedback regarding the structure and information presented in the training as well as if and how your teaching practice changes as a result. Approximately one month after completing the workshop, selected participants will be asked to participate in semi-structured group interviews regarding their experiences incorporating the workshop content into their teaching practices. Participants will be asked to indicate their willingness to participate in interviews during the initial workshop. This study will require between sixty and ninety minutes for the workshop and questionnaires and an additional sixty minutes for the group interview.

What are the risks involved in this study?

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, you will have the chance to explore new ideas in early childhood education and build teaching skills.

Do you have to participate?

No, your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate at all or, if you start the study, you may withdraw at any time. Withdrawal or refusing to participate will not affect your relationship with The University of Texas at Austin (University) in anyway.

If you would like to participate please return consent form to Lucy Kacir. You will receive a copy of this form.

Will there be any compensation?

You will not receive any type of payment participating in this study.

What are my confidentiality or privacy protections when participating in this research study?

Workshop and group interviews will be audio-recorded. Audio-recordings will be transcribed by the researcher and then destroyed. Participants' first names will be used in the initial data collection but pseudonyms will be assigned to participants to protect privacy. All identifying information will be withheld from publication. Participants will only be asked to share information relating to their teaching practice only.

Whom to contact with questions about the study?

Prior, during or after your participation you can contact the researcher Lucy Kacir at 860-480-5416 or send an email to lucy.kacir@gmail.com

Whom to contact with questions concerning your rights as a research participant?

For questions about your rights or any dissatisfaction with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board by phone at (512) 471-8871 or email at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Participation

If you agree to participate return signed consent form to Lucy Kacir.

Signature

You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

_____
Printed Name

_____ _____
Signature Date

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, procedures, benefits, and the risks involved in this research study.

_____
Print Name of Person obtaining consent

_____ _____
Signature of Person obtaining consent Date

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Vita

Lucinda Kacir attended Northwestern Regional High School in Winsted, Connecticut, graduating in 2003. She completed her Bachelors of Fine Arts at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts' Department of Photography & Imaging in 2007. After moving to Texas in 2009, she entered graduate school at the The University of Texas at Austin studying Art Education, and completed her degree in May 2014. Since 2010, she has taught at The University of Texas Child Development Center. She lives in Austin with her cat, Murphy Brown, and boyfriend, Mike.

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This thesis was typed by the author.