A developmentally appropriate visual art program for K-1 students

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ABSTRACT

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The main purpose of this thesis was to research and share the benefits of a visual art program for K-1st students. The research aimed to examine how a visual arts program enhanced academic and artistic skills and how it met or did not meet the standards, expectations, and developmental needs of K-1st students as defined by the California State Board of Education in the Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools Framework (K-1st grade). Data were collected through participant-observation, work samples (students' writings and paintings), an interview with the creator of the program, unofficial students' interviews during the regular art classes, and comments from parents. The findings of the data supported the basic principles of the Art History program and the significant overall value of the program in the lives of the young students. All sources of data agreed that it is a developmentally appropriate visual art history program that promotes improvement of children's attention span, reading, drawing, and writing skills. Furthermore, the data suggested that the art program enriches children with additional values and skills including the knowledge of visual art history, diversity in the arts, the awareness of different ways of perceiving the real world and the ability to understand how the arts and artists reflect different periods of time. In addition, the arts program promotes the idea of becoming cultural, teaching kids how to create arts by themselves and with others, how to open themselves to others, how to feel connected to history, and how to think of people being successful. This program will be presented both in the U.S., during the 2003 the Annual California Kindergarten Conference, and in Europe with the hope of serving as a model for educators and administrators for future application in the classrooms.
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CHAPTER ONE

VISUAL ARTS EDUCATION

"The arts provide opportunities to better understand ourselves and appreciate others. The arts are Universal languages connecting people across time and place. The arts are the soul of a civilization. We study arts so that civilization may survive."
(Ankeney, 1997)

Introduction

The arts include dance, music, theater and visual art. In an increasingly technological world, the arts help all students to develop multiple capabilities for creating, understanding, deciphering, and appreciating an image- and symbol-laden world. Because each arts discipline appeals to different senses and expresses itself through different media, each adds a special richness to the learning environment. The arts are concerned with intellectual, emotional, and physical faculties and, in combination, can be used to present issues and ideas, teach or persuade, entertain, plan, beautify, and design both functional and expressive works. Experiencing and creating art brings lifelong enjoyment to students. The arts also provide an array of expressive, analytical, and developmental tools to use in their daily lives.

Arts education helps students learn to identify, appreciate, and participate in the traditional and non-traditional art forms of their own communities and the communities of others. As students imagine, create, and reflect, they are developing the verbal and non-verbal abilities necessary for life-long learning. The intellectual demands of the arts help students develop problem-solving abilities and such powerful thinking skills as analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating. Numerous studies (Donmoyer, 1995; Sidelnick & Svoboda 2000; Stewig, 1994) point toward a consistent and positive correlation between substantive education in the arts and
student achievement in other subjects. On the other hand, a comprehensive, well-designed arts education program also engages students in a process that helps them develop the self-esteem, self-discipline, cooperation, and self-motivation necessary for success in life. Most importantly, the arts should be experienced and studied for their own intrinsic value.

The value of visual arts is significant in meeting the basic human needs of self-expression, understanding, and communication. There is a great advantage in encouraging artistic diversity and a sense of community through the enjoyment of making and viewing fine art. Visual arts education benefits the students, because it cultivates the whole person, gradually building many kinds of literacy while developing intuition, reasoning, imagination and dexterity into unique forms of expression and communication. The visual arts are a way of knowing. Students grow in their ability to comprehend their world when they learn the arts. As they create visual works of art, they learn how to express themselves and how to communicate with others. The visual arts provide forms of nonverbal communication that strengthen the presentation of ideas and emotions. The visual arts play a role in shaping cultures and building civilizations.

According to Daniel Rod (2000), over the last decade, there has been a tremendous increase in the arts at preschool, kindergarten, and elementary school levels. Many of these programs, particularly for younger children, are "arts-infused" and use the arts at every level of instruction in every subject. Anyone who has ever worked with young learners knows that children learn at different speeds and in different ways. The arts naturally accommodate those varieties in learning styles.
The Purpose of the Research

The main purpose of this thesis was to research and share the benefits of a visual art program for a selected group of children in a K-1 class in a school where I taught. I examined how a visual arts program enhances academic and artistic skills and how it met or did not meet the standards, expectations, and developmental needs of kindergarten/first grade students as defined by the California State Board of Education in the Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools Framework (K-1st grade). The results of this thesis will be used to inform the community and the teachers of its possible value in the teaching and learning process for young students as well as to validate visual arts program's importance in elementary curriculum. The examination of the importance of the visual arts in the K-1 curriculum may validate the teaching of the specially designed art program for my school and for other schools to use as a model throughout these county and other countries. The research question that was central to this study was: In what ways can a developmentally appropriate visual art program strengthen the academic and artistic skills of K-1 students?

Personal Background

As long as I remember, I was always exploring the world around me. My mother recalls me being very curious to discover how things work or why phenomena are happening. She also recalls the fact that I kept asking questions on the same subject until the explanation was clear to me and I had no doubt or misunderstanding about it. My parents were my first resource for satisfying my curiosity. They helped and supported me by continuously providing all different kinds of challenges in order for me to acquire new knowledge. My mother was
always a supporter of the arts and has spent her entire life working in an art gallery. She was providing opportunities and new ways for me to explore the arts. I remember constantly visiting the gallery where she was working, taking part in openings and receptions, meeting Greek and foreign artists and creating my valuable private art collection.

My interest on the particular subject of the visual arts was motivated by my experience with painters and artists who worked together with my mother in the Municipal Art Gallery of Athens, Greece. From my early childhood, I participated in the preparations and openings of numerous art exhibitions. I enjoyed working side by side with my mother for the past 20 years and also learning the secrets of the trade through my interaction with various artists.

My parents were always encouraging me to participate in various art events and festivals. They believed it is beneficial to expose yourself to new things. In this way you find whether you like or dislike something. I remember visiting lots of museums and archeological sites around Athens to become accustomed to the ancient Greek and Roman art. I consider myself extremely privileged to have been born and raised in Athens because I believe it is one of the most significant cultural centers of the world. The long history of the city permits the examination and exploration of different historic periods through the remains and the numerous exhibits in the museums. I always enjoyed reading history and especially the facts or the parts that had to do with art.

Throughout my school years I took part in theatrical groups, and I attended several events like musical festivals, theatrical performances, and Greek traditional dance groups.
Although I even attempted to learn musical instruments I never really succeeded, but music was always part of my life.

I must add that I always enjoyed singing. In Greece, whenever family and friends got together to celebrate different occasions, there was an abundance of good food and good music as well.

This interest in the arts was part of me for all my life and I took advantage of opportunities to become knowledgeable about the arts. I really enjoyed traveling. I'm looking forward to travel, visit new places, meet people and explore cultures. For me a very important part of my travels is synonymous with entertainment, where I enjoy visiting cultural places (museums, galleries, and sights) that will inform me about the history, the traditions, and the values of the specific place. As part of my traveling experiences in such places, I would like to mention two such experiences that influenced my life.

One of my first memorable travel experiences was at the age of 16 years, when I visited Germany and the old town of Nuremberg. Nuremberg was built many years ago and was surrounded by a high ancient wall to protect the town from her enemies. A wonderful, winding river crosses the town, and there appears the old architecture of most of the buildings that were built with stones and several windows and floors similar to the old European architecture. This was my opportunity to observe the world beyond Greece, and explore similarities and differences. I visited museums and galleries, guided by the German family who invited me and I was learning about another culture from an insider point of view.
Another significant experience was my visit to Paris with my husband in 1998. Having read so many things about this great culture and having heard so many things from my husband, who spent part of his childhood in Paris, it was extraordinary to see things with my own eyes. The city, known for her architecture, impressed me with the evidence of her culture that expressed civilization in every aspect. Our visit in the Old Palace, now the Museum of Louvre, with exhibits from various cultures around the world (Greek, Latin, Roman, Byzantine, French, Egyptian, English and so on) gave me a new perspective. It was then when I could see things with my own eyes and be part of the setting, that I felt I gained true knowledge.

It was not until later that I realized that I was missing my own perspectives and my own experiences and bias to complete the understanding of the whole picture. As I'm looking back in time, I now understand that I had to travel abroad, beyond the borders of my country to understand and appreciate my country's culture and history as well as the whole world's. For me one of the best places to do so is the museums, the art galleries and the sights. They enclose everything that somebody might need to acquaint himself with the culture and aspirations of a country.

Eventually I became a kindergarten teacher. Throughout my undergraduate and postgraduate studies in Greece I completed more than 15 courses in the field of arts (Music, Theatre, Painting, Dance, and Puppet Theatre), which were an integral part of my own education.

As I have mentioned, it was my mother's strong belief that children should be exposed to the Arts from their early ages because there are hidden talents within each child. My teaching experience supports that belief and I always included the Arts as part of my curriculum.
When I met my husband I realized that his father, a really intelligent man, was an admiral of the Hellenic Navy, but also a poet, an author, and a well known art critic and historian. He had attended classes related to Art History and Literature in the University of Athens, Georgia and Sorbonne, France. He owned an incredible treasure: a house full of books (more than 5000) on History and Visual Art. His wish was for his children to honor his books. My husband unfortunately was more inclined to Theoretical Mathematics. When I saw my father-in-law’s inheritance practically unexploited, I decided to become more involved with the Arts that I always enjoyed and thus became beneficiary of this wonderful collection.

Therefore, my keen interested and background in the arts led me to this specific topic of the benefits of the arts for young children’s developmental learning. I also wanted to explore how the Art History Program might be appropriate for the application of the program in different settings.

My Experience with an Art History Program in the U.S.A.

In July 2002, I came to the US and I was hired in a private school as a kindergarten teacher. In this particular school, the principal had established an art history program 10 years before I joined her staff, inspired by her art studies for children in France. She worked in collaboration with the University of fine Arts in Paris-France, where she had been studying. She also visited many schools that had in their curricula art history courses to France. Based on these experiences she created an Art History program based on the same philosophy that the French used to approach art for young children. After she returned to the US, she founded a multicultural school, whose mission and philosophy permitted incorporating this Art History program into their curriculum. She was extremely impressed by the results of the specific
program in France and she wanted to see how this would fit in her school. To that end, she created an innovative school curriculum, which incorporated an approach to integrate the arts and the Art History program into the learning process of all curricula areas. In her specific school, the teachers and the children shape the curriculum together, where all areas of study can be learned while focusing on enriching themes.

This program's special purpose is to allow children of different ages to become aware of Art History of different periods as well as the artists, their special techniques, the themes of their paintings and their general influence on each stage of Art History. It also develops their drawing and painting skills and gives them the opportunity to approach arts and be exposed to this wonderful world. The specific class has a multicultural focus as it integrates artists from all over the world and presents different cultures, ideas and beliefs. It is valuable because children get to know information about history as well.

The class takes place once a week and lasts approximately 45 minutes. The class in question addresses children of ages 5-6. At the time of the writing 20 students attended this class. A few of them were exposed to the same program during the previous years.

The class studies artists from various periods of Art History throughout the academic year. The first unit is the Impressionism movement at its beginnings in France in the 18th century and its influence all over the world. In that unit, the students are exposed to famous French artists of the specific movement like Monet, Matisse, Cézanne, Van Gogh, and Renoir.

In the introduction of an artist the instructor starts with a short narration about his/her life and at the same time presents a collection of the most important and famous paintings in
postcards, books or calendars. Asking certain questions, the instructor always tries to identify for the students the themes, techniques and colors that the artist uses and also to combine their answers with information about the artist’s life and the specific period of time and place that he/she lived. The discussion lasts for at least twenty minutes.

After that the class prepares to draw one of the original paintings that the instructor has chosen. The children receive one hard piece of paper and one permanent black marker to sketch with. The instructor models for them on a piece of paper hanging on the whiteboard, line after line, the basic features of the paintings, by giving them directions and specific explanations. So far, the instructor hasn’t revealed the original to the students, because the main purpose of the program is not to simply “copy” the original but rather to promote expressing the student’s own perspective. This procedure is kind of slow, so that all the students can complete the drawing part. During this section there is always light music related to the artist’s background (culture, country) and the instructor requests from the children to avoid talking to each other so that they can focus to their drawing. The procedure lasts for ten to fifteen minutes, depending on the difficulty of the painting. At the end, before I present the original painting, I always ask the children to infer from the drawing the theme of the painting.

The next part includes painting the sketch. At this stage the instructor gives the children the name of the painting and of the artist but he doesn’t reveal the original. The class discusses the colors and tries to identify the pure colors that usually the artist mixes to reach the colors of the painting. They also talk about cold and warm colors, objects and their shades, as well as dimensions. Next the instructor hands out crayons in a big baskets sorted by color at the center of the table and the children get to colours their drawings.
In this stage, the instructor always repeats three main points that the students need to keep in mind: 1) the children need to work slowly and make sure they cover with colors all the surface of the white paper; 2) they need always to look back to the instructor’s painting in order to clarify all the small details; and 3) they need to avoid comparing their paintings and to always complete their paintings by taking the necessary time.

At this point, the instructor usually walks around the tables and encourages the students to complete their painting by pointing out the parts of the painting that they need to work on more. The instructor always uses as a model completed children’s paintings for the rest of the class. The model paintings are paintings completed by students who followed the instructor’s instructions and managed to approach the artist’s impression. This is everybody’s favorite section because by adding the colors they reach the end of the procedure and they can compare their painting to the original and make comments on their techniques. The instructor never allows general comments unless they are justified with reasonable arguments so that they can start learning to support their opinions.

The last thing that the children do is to work with brushes and watercolors (specific colors according to the painting) in order to smoothen the crayons and cover all the small details they were not able to complete with crayons. After that the instructor reveals the original to the students. The name of the painting, the name of the artist, the year and the place that the painting was created and the collection that the painting is part of, are mentioned to the students as general information. They leave their painting to dry and the next day the instructor puts them up in a display area next to the original painting and the name of the artist.
At the end of each class the instructor always invites the children to spend a few minutes in the display area to see the previous week’s painting next to those of their friends. This part is the visit to the school’s art gallery. This is the most important part of their class as they start from their early years to experience the sense of an Art Gallery.

Limitations

During the design of the research and the literature review, some thoughts urged me to restrict my scope and focus of the study. Initially, almost 15 years ago the art history program was designed and provided to all of the elementary children at the school. Until the end of the academic year 2000-2001 the specific school had regular students up to 5th grade. At the beginning of the 2001-2002 academic school year the Board of Trustees decided to keep the classes until the end of 1st grade for financial reasons and provide an afternoon enrichment program for the elementary students.

As the art teacher during the 2001-2002 academic school year, I taught the art history program to the elementary students in the afternoon. The board requested the application of the program to the younger children of the school. Therefore, during the 2001-2002 academic school year I completed some adjustments in cooperation with the creator of the program and I applied the program successfully to the K-1st multi-age class as well.

When I was thinking of the application of my research to the school this academic year, even though the art program was available for the elementary students as well, I decided to focus my observations to the K-1st multi-age class since I realized that the students of the afternoon enrichment program were not attending the classes regularly which could possibly provide inaccurate results for my observations.
The fact that I actually narrowed down my observations to two grades level (K-1st) instead of five (1st through 5th) would narrow down the ages of the subjects and consequently their educational knowledge, their abilities and their emotional development. Through my observations I examined my students’ performance on specific skills related to Language Arts, Reading, Writing and Listening skills before the application of the program in an observation session and recorded their responses as related to the lessons taught by my co-worker. The results of my observations became more accurate since the Language Arts program was taught by the same teacher with the same instructions in the same setting for all the children I observed.

Also, the specific school is private and the students are considered “privileged” as they mostly belong to the upper socio-economical class, which lacks of multicultural representation. 80% of the students’ population is White (Caucasian), and 20% is partly (mother or father, 2nd or 3rd generation) Mexican, Asian or African American. Consequently, there is lack of equal ethnic representation of the students at the school, so the application of the program cannot be examined in relation with equal samples from different ethnic populations.

Furthermore, the specific art history program finds a place to this school in which the vision, the philosophy, the educational curriculum and the setting allows its application. With these factors under consideration, the application of the program was examined.

The application of this program in another setting might provide other results. The results of this study will address the specific group that is being studied. Although I acknowledge that this research cannot be generalized to all the K-1st multi-age classes in the U.S., it is my hope that it will provide feedback and information for its application to other classes or for the design of future studies.
Definitions of terms

**The Arts:** Include dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts that have endured in all cultures throughout the ages as a universal basic language.

**The Art History program:** A specific visual Art History program created by the principal of a private school in Central California.

**Framework:** Curriculum guidelines from the State Department of Education related to the basic disciplines of the arts.

**Performing Arts:** Dance, drama, music-arts that encompass performance.

**Standards:** The standards describe the content that students need to master by the end of each grade level (pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade).

**Visual Arts:** The arts created primarily for visual perception, as drawing, graphics, painting, sculpture and the decorating arts.

**Participant-observation:** Type of observation in which the observer participates in the daily routines of the setting, develops ongoing relations with the people in it, and observes all the while what was going on. After the observation session he writes down in regular, systematic ways what he was observing and was learning while participating in the daily rounds of life of the subjects.

**Overview of the Study**

The second chapter of this study examined the related literature. More specifically I examined the relation of visual arts and arts education in the U.S., I studied the Art History
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program in relation to the National and State Standards for Visual Arts Education in the U.S., and I searched the relationship between the Art History program and the developmental learning theories (constructivism and multiple intelligences) according to some key theorists (Piaget, Vygotsky, and Gardener).

The third chapter described the research design and methodology. This case study used qualitative research methods. I pre and post observed 20 students of a private school in Central California that had the Art History Program in its curriculum. I also observed my students' language arts - reading, writing, and listening skills before and after the application of the program. I interviewed the creator of the art program to give a context for the development of this art program. I also kept a journal with comments, discussions that people coming into the class shared with me. The interview, the data collection, the journal, observations and personal experience were the basis for the findings for this study case.

The forth chapter described the results of the research of the action thesis. More specifically I presented the findings of the research about the contribution of the Art History program with regards to children's development in the three areas, development of the students' attention span, development of the students' reading skills, and development of the students' writing skills. I also presented the findings of the research after the examination of the California State Standards in relationship with the program, the examination of the program as developmentally appropriate, and the overall value of the program based on the creator's, parents' and students' comments.

The fifth chapter discussed how and to what extent the research findings addressed the initial research purposes. Additionally, I discussed my recommendation on how the arts
program could be further researched and how the arts can be more widely supported throughout the educational community.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Throughout the history of the world, the arts have been one of the most common ways that people have communicated with each other. Pre-historical people drew figures in the caves and wrote symbols, which became the first written language of the people.

As stated, this case study will examine the value of a developmentally appropriate visual art program for K-1 students as part of their regular school curriculum. In this literature review, I will examine the value of a visual art program from three different perspectives. First I will try to find the relation between visual arts and visual arts education in the U.S. Secondly, I will study the specific Art History program in relation to the National and State Standards for Visual Arts Education in the U.S. Thirdly, I will search the relationship between the Art History program and the developmental learning theories (constructivism, multiple intelligences) according to the theorists such as Piaget and Gardener.

Visual arts and visual arts education in the US

A brief historical perspective related to the status of arts in the U.S.A. is useful to the readers to understand the value and the position of arts in the American education.

According to Walling, (2001), “the changing priorities of schools in the early 1950’s – in particular the ascendancy of math and science and the modernist notion of creative self expression pushed art education to the fringe of the curriculum”. Now science – coupled with high standards, an altered world view, and new understandings about teaching and learning – is pushing art education back to the heart of the curriculum”. As Walling also mentions,” the arts
have long struggled -a struggle not only of place but also of definition- to find an appropriate role in the school curriculum". The teaching of visual arts offers a lens through which to view this struggle. He continues stating that before World War II the arts – namely, music, theatre, dance and the visual arts – had a more pervasive presence in the school curriculum than they became during the war years and later. He also adds that school arts “flourished during the first half of the century even through the Great Depression”. However, government support of the arts, which had helped to keep arts education strong in schools, dried up as priorities shifted during the war and in the decades that followed. Then, and particularly after the Soviet launch of the first Sputnik in 1957 the emphasis in American schools swung dramatically towards math and science. The marginalization of arts education crested in the early and mid-1970 as the aging of the boomer generation emptied classrooms and the energy crisis forced cutbacks in programs and facilities. Among educators the crisis was clear. Arts education would need not merely life support but new life if it were to move back to the core of the curriculum. Thus in the late 1970s a movement began across the arts disciplines to push, pull, and drug the arts back to the heart of schooling.

According to Ivey (1991), “It is difficult to imagine a human society without the arts. What dark and empty souls would populate such an environment without paintings, statues, architecture, drama, music and dances? The arts define what we mean by civilization. They are part of the foundation and the framework of every culture. As a universal language through which people can express their common aspirations, the arts are a channel to understanding and appreciating other cultures. To be conversant with the arts is to be a civilized person, to be cultured. The arts are a basic and central medium of human communication and understanding. The arts are how we talk to each other. They are the languages of civilization -- past and present
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-- through which people can express their anxieties, hungers, hopes and discoveries. They are the means of listening to their dreams -- of expressing their imagination and feelings."

According to President George Bush (as cited by Ivey, 1991), in his letter that opens the catalogue of the recent American exhibition of the works of Kazimir Malevich: "Fine art transcends differences in language and culture, providing a bridge between peoples that fosters better understanding among nations."

Ivey (1991), also states: "The arts can make us whole as individuals." He continues by sharing the following story: "Some years ago, the Nobel Prize winning physicist Richard Feynman decided to learn how to draw at the age of forty-four. He eventually got quite good at it, even though he confessed to having been terrible at art in high school. Later, Feynman, who was a brilliant teacher and thinker in mathematics and physics at Cal Tech, explained why he had taken up art so late in life. He wanted to express the awe he felt about the glories of the universe, he said. Art, he felt, might be the only way he could reveal this emotion to someone who might share it. Professor Feynman, of course, wasn't the first or last scientist to seek a perspective on his life through the arts. He discovered late what many others are lucky enough to know intuitively -- that the arts are keys to building the metaphorical bridges that link us to our own creative powers and to each other."

Ivey (1991) adds another perspective on the value of art that was expressed by the Poet Laureate of the Library of Congress, Joseph Brodsky (1982), in his Nobel address: "If art teaches anything... it is the privates of the human condition. Being the most ancient as well as the most literal form of private enterprise, it fosters in a man, knowingly and unwittingly, a sense of
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uniqueness, of individuality, of separateness -- thus turning him from a social animal into a perceptible 'I.'

Ivey (1991) continues by stating: "Today, we live in a society that communicates more and more through visual images. Daily we are bombarded by a constantly changing torrent of messages from billboards, architecture, magazines, four-color newspapers, television and films. New technology controlled by computers combine words, pictures and sound to convey information at a breathtaking pace. More than that, computers, with their power to manufacture and animate images, are creating entirely new art forms". He also believes that the American civilization is increasingly diverse, mixing cultures from Europe, Africa, the Far East and Latin America. In addition to that each group sends its own messages and images, jostling to preserve and advance its own identity and of course, many of the surviving messages from civilizations past exist in visual form.

Ivey (1991) concludes by saying that in order to be educated is also to be visually literate. "That is, to understand the historical and cultural context of the message, to make aesthetic judgments about what one sees, to sort out these images in order to tell the good from the bad, the fake from the genuine, and to interpret accurately the signals of other cultural groups in search of our common humanity. Armed with an ability to make judgments, an educated person will also learn to construct sound value systems for any event or object, whether it is art or not. The arts represent a form of thinking and a way of knowing and, as such, their presence in our schools is as basic as anything can be".

Dr. Ernest Boyer (1985) of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching put it well in his study High School: "The arts are essential parts of the human
experience, they are not a frill. We recommend that all students study the arts to discover how human beings communicate not only with words, but through music, dance, and the visual arts. During our visits we found the arts to be shamefully neglected. Courses in the arts were the last to come and first to go (p.34).

In 1988 the National Endowment for the Arts released the results of a study on arts education that had been two years in the making, titled *Toward Civilization: A Report on Arts Education*. Its assessment of our present state was that "basic arts education does not exist in the United States today." The Report defines four purposes of arts education: to give our young people a sense of civilization, to foster creativity, to teach effective communication, and to provide tools for the critical assessment of what one reads, sees, and hears. The result of the report as stated is that "the artistic heritage that is ours and the opportunities to contribute significantly to its evolution are being lost to our young people."

According to Ivey (1991) Paul Harvey (1990), whose national radio program is part of the listening habit of millions, recently gave the following testimonial to arts education: "The back-to-basics curricula, while it has merit, ignores the most urgent void in our present system - absence of self discipline. The arts, inspiring — indeed requiring — self discipline, may be more 'basic' to our national survival than the traditional credit courses. We are spending 29 times more on science than on the arts, and the result so far is worldwide intellectual embarrassment".

If the arts are so basic to becoming an educated person, why are they ignored in the American schools? Professor Eisner (1991) of Stanford University examined this question in his book *The Enlightened Eye*. He suggested three reasons why the arts are ignored. First, we have tended to regard them as dealing with emotion rather than the mind, and useful primarily as a
release from the serious work of getting educated. This view fails to recognize that creation of images is a matter of mind that calls for inventive problem solving capacities, analytic and synthetic forms of reasoning, and the exercise of judgment.

Second, the arts are not formally assessed and, as a consequence, do not promote the student's academic upward mobility. The arts carry little if any weight in college admission decisions.

A third reason follows from the view held by many art educators that, to the extent that art is taught, it should focus on developing the students' creative ability. As such, many have resisted including any structure or content for fear it would stifle creativity. The result is programs lacking substance and perceived as not worthy of inclusion in the curriculum.

Based on the above, there are values to be realized in addition to the direct benefits of arts education which Professor Elliott W. Eisner described. Skillfully taught and integrated into the general education curriculum, the arts can help to achieve many of the aims of education reform. A study of the arts can empower a child to see and make valid judgments about his environment. The arts can also provide an effective bridge to understanding and appreciating other cultures.

There are reports that students' vocabulary and writing skills improve after having been in a discipline-based art program. Teachers involved in these programs have come to recognize their worth, and, teachers in some schools have begun to correlate arts education more closely with other studies such as history or biology.
For example, according to Ivey (1991), in 1991, the UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation conducted an evaluation of the educational impact of the Los Angeles Music Center's Artist in Residence and Teacher (ART) Partnerships. The report found improvement and growth in all areas of the study, including students' cognitive skills, thinking skills, self-expression, attitude development and social skills. In cognitive skills, the report found that students learned from the factual knowledge and skills presented by the artists and showed overall improvement in academic knowledge and skills. Students also gained in problem solving ability. Moreover, they were able to use the information and skills learned in other subjects, as well as outside of school. In the area of self-expression, students improved in both written and oral communication. They learned how to express themselves better in writing, speaking in front of others, and acting out their feelings. Finally, attitude development showed improvement as well, with gains in motivation and self-confidence, as well as work habit/cooperation report card grades.

Ivey (1991) also questions: “What, exactly, does all this mean for the American schools and the children? It means that it is possible to make a difference. The arts do change lives. The children will grow through the arts, transforming their own lives and that of their community.” He continues by stating that in fact, the arts have a long history in American public education and that arts instruction got its start in the schools in the mid 19th century for purely pragmatic reasons. American businessmen visiting the world's fairs abroad observed the drawing systems used in European schools to help students acquire the skills useful in the textile mills and factories. Thus, the Americans noted, the schools were a source of trained labor for industry.

In addition to that, Ivey (1991), informs us that businessmen impressed by what they saw in Europe, imported an Englishman named Walter Smith to Massachusetts to set up courses
of drawing instruction and to train teachers. Smith developed a system for what he called "free-hand drawing," and his textbooks were published in the United States during the last third of the nineteenth century. Advanced students of this method eventually created some of the design motifs that we associate with late nineteenth century industry.

Finally, Ivey (1991) mentions that early in the 20th century, children's art began to be perceived as encouraging the growth of psychomotor and perceptual skills as well as the development of personality. It was a short step to embracing creative self-expression as a justification for art. Self-expression through art came to be seen as a path to personal growth. This assumption still underlies the practice of studio art in schools today. These ideas and trends, along with others, have helped to shape the American ideas and attitudes about art education. But the actual practice of arts education in the classroom is another matter. Here the history of arts education somewhat parallels that of the humanities. The progressive education movement in the early 1900s turned the schools away from a classical emphasis on cultural content and towards practical preparation for work and homemaking.

According to Colwell (1995), ten years ago, the J. Paul Getty Trust surveyed the state of art education in America's public schools. The picture was bleak. The findings were consistent with the described above findings reported by Professor Eisner and the National Endowment for the Arts study. Few high school graduates had ever been exposed to the arts or art training in their 12 years of schooling. In general, the public regarded art as a fringe activity with little or no importance to a child's education. Colwell pointed out that this notion was widely reinforced by the place of visual arts in the schools, where they were taught more as a recreational and therapeutic exercise than for the development of mental and cognitive skills.
According to Smith (1989), there were in fact other and exciting trends afoot in art education. New ideas and lines of research were developing; some related to the Kettering Project at Stanford University in the late 1960s, which had developed a curriculum for elementary art integrating several art disciplines. These ideas, fortified by subsequent research, became a comprehensive strategy that is called discipline-based art education. It was a humanities based approach that embraced content from art production, art history, art criticism and aesthetics. There were even a few schools struggling in isolation to nurture a version of such an integrated, sequential art program into maturity. In 1982, the J. Paul Getty Trust, through the Getty Center for Education in the Arts, committed itself to helping make such an approach to art education a reality (p.36)

Smith (1989) also states that the experience so far has confirmed the potential of discipline-based art education programs to develop intellectual skills and to create opportunities to explore creative self-expression. Children confronted by a work of art in the context of a comprehensive learning program tend naturally to be fascinated and excited by the challenge and mystery of it. Many classroom teachers, as well, who have had to learn art content through in-service training in order to participate in a discipline-based program, have reported a renewed enthusiasm for their profession (p. 37)

According to Ivey (1991), students in the US were asked to consider art from the standpoints of the artist, the art historian, the critic, and the aestheteician. They soon become more perceptive about visual images and more open to different ways of thinking about the same image. The quality of art produced by students themselves improves measurably as they learn about other artists, are required to solve problems and assess other works of art. Art history
opens the child's imagination to other eras and cultures. If students of the next century are to work and live productively side by side with others from different cultures, they must respect and appreciate cultural differences and, at the same time, discern what they share in common with other peoples. The arts are one of the best ways for achieving this practical goal. Learning how to critique and judge art sharpens critical faculties by obliging the student to think independently, creatively, and to make reasoned judgments based on his or her own knowledge and trained observations. And consideration of aesthetic issues teaches students to be able to deal with the nature and meaning of in their own lives.

Since 1982, a number of states have adopted policies requiring a year of study in the fine arts as a condition for high school graduation (Ivey, 1991). At the university level, the University of California and California State University System now give academic credit to high school students who have completed art courses that have features similar to those of discipline based art education. Children come to school with a multitude of differences as a result of racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural influences. Ideally, approaches to learning should focus on the individual child's unique strengths and styles of learning. When students experience environments and instructional strategies that acknowledge and nurture their particular strengths and interests, such as drawing, they are more likely to feel engaged and satisfied and to want to participate. Teaching strategies should be designed so that the student's cognitive strengths and interests are used to engage or compensate for weaker areas.

According to Sautter (1994), "While the arts have value for teaching all children, they are especially motivational for youngsters who otherwise may be unreachable". Ernst (1994) also claims that aesthetic, narrative, and reflective inquiries using the arts help children attain new
conceptual language to organize and express their learning, and serve as an instrument for acquiring knowledge. Many basic skills can be introduced, explored, understood, and mastered if taught in conjunction with an art activity. The relationship between seeing, telling, drawing, and writing is intimate, essential, and a significant aspect of teaching the writing acts.

According to Sidelnick and Svobova (2000), "Artistic expression enables students to translate what they know and perceive into another medium or modality so they can express meaning. Students' artistic expressions can provide teachers with additional ways of determining what they understand about facts and concepts as well as how they understand them. Drawing can be used to motivate the child to learn and write".

Dean and Gross (1992), regarding the issue of creative motivation, stated that "this creative motivation can be provided at school by using art to create an atmosphere that makes learning fun. Stimulation and involvement generated by hands-on experiences with art can help students learn academic subjects" (p. 613). They also presented three reasons to support their opinions. First, art materials and projects are intrinsically interesting to students, making learning exciting. Second, a sense of accomplishment comes from the completion of a creative task. Third, with the inclusion of art projects, academic assignments no longer hold the threat of potential failure and shame. Instead, they represent opportunities for personal expression and success. These advantages of using art directly address areas for improvement.

Godfrey (1992) also on the same issue stated that "To deny children these artistic, creative experiences is to deny them the potential for achievement" (p.598).
According to Walling, Jerome Bruner deserves credit for articulating the notion that students should gain "an understanding of the fundamental structure of whatever subject we choose to teach". Some arts educators- Manuel Barkin of Ohio State University, for example- took Bruner's ideas and "began to examine how art education might be enlarged beyond the emphasis on creative self expression" (cited by Walling, 2001).

The call to 'creative education' by the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education in 1999 (Robinson, 1999) emphasizes the integral role that visual images and the creative arts play in supporting literacy and numeric as traditionally conceived. Within the USA, an increased call for study of the arts both within and beyond school stresses their relevance to adequate preparation for participation in the new economy and maintenance of a civil society (President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, 1991).

Gryting (2000) states that: "Art educators strive to foster in their students a joy of learning, enabling them to grow intellectually, emotionally, socially and spiritually. They also challenge them to become responsible and dynamic leaders in the future." Gryting sees seven benefits of visual art education as:

1. The joy of learning that is related to the opportunities for creativity that the art classes provide. They foster a joy of learning as they allow students to create.

2. Art education provides opportunities for students to express emotions. Various colors have been found to be associated with different emotional states. Artistic works portray diverse emotions and these feelings elicted when people view a work of art. Emotions can be
released when students create a visual product. Art classes support emotional growth by allowing students to explore and express emotions.

3. Arts education supports social growth. Continuous exposure to the arts is one of the best ways to prepare ourselves for relationship, much better than relying entirely on the psychological in our approach to life. More important than the particular themes we find in the arts which may give us insight into relationship is the general education in poetic thinking and living that the arts provide. Through immersion in the arts, our reflection on life becomes larger, so that when we are confronted with the challenges of relationship we will have a rich imagination to bring to them.

4. Arts education is preparing leaders for the future. Through arts students will be successful in their chosen fields and, no matter what the field may be, creativity is among the tools required for success. Creativity is necessary to generate scientific theories and mathematical models. It is needed to develop new software. Health care providers will need to identify unique combinations of treatments to care for drug-resistant illnesses. Political leaders will be required to find creative solutions to difficult societal problems. Examples of the importance of creativity can be found for every career path.

5. The arts prepare people to work with diverse populations. They also ground people in values that support life and sustain the Earth. When we challenge the students to grow intellectually, emotionally, socially and spiritually they are prepared to be effective leaders of the future. Art classes provide opportunities for students to develop creativity. Art education is among the tools that we have to challenge our students in all of these domains.
6. Art education is inspiring. Clearly, art classes make a vital contribution to our efforts to foster in our students a joy of learning. These classes assist us in our efforts to inspire intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual growth. They provide an effective avenue for challenging students to become responsible and dynamic leaders of the future. Gryting (2000) strongly recommends that all schools meet the standards established by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum (ASC) and include art classes as an integral part of the curriculum.

As a conclusion, the numerous studies point towards a consistent and positive correlation between visual arts and visual arts education in the U.S. An arts education program also engages student in a process that helps them to develop the self-esteem, self-discipline, cooperation, and self motivation necessary for success in life. Each and every educational system should have in its curricula the study of the arts and each educator should provide the experience of the arts to all the students with the purpose for the students to acquire different cultural perspectives.

The Art History Program and the National and State Standards for Visual Arts Education in the U.S.

The arts are central to how people see themselves, what they believe about themselves, and how we present ourselves to each other. Art represents a place in which borrowing, blending, and sharing can really work. The future depends on how well the magic and creativity of the arts is integrated into the lives of the future generations, and that process must begin by ensuring that the arts are essential learning for all children.
Following, there is a presentation of the need and creation of the Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools (Pre K-12), published by the California State Board of Education and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. In the same section there is also a presentation "The National Standards for Arts Education: What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts" published by the Consortium of National Arts Education Associations in the basic principles for examination and comparison of both Standards, along with comments from writers familiar with their context.

According to Bill Ivey (1991), by the late 1970s, Americans realized that along with the scientific knowledge and physical fitness that had been implementing to the school's curriculum the two previous decades, there was a need of feeding the students' imaginations with the arts. By the late 1980s, Congress mandated that the National Endowment for the Arts report on the status of the arts education. As noted above, in its report, Toward Civilization, the Endowment stated that the arts education in our schools was in triple jeopardy; the arts were not taken seriously as important subject matter; arts education focused mainly on production and performance and rarely included history, critical judgment, or aesthetics; and there was no common agreement as to an arts curriculum for all students. In 1992 the National Endowment joined forces with the Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Humanities to fund a two-year project for defining what all students- from kindergarten through twelfth grade- should know and be able to do in the arts. The project, of course, resulted in the development of our national voluntary standards in the arts.

In January, 2001, the California Department of Education and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, published the Visual and Performing Arts Content
Standards for California Public Schools (Pre k-12), based on the above principles. In his Message the President of California Department of Education, Reed Hastings mentions: "The visual and performing arts standards are rigorous, reflecting the types of curriculum and instruction on the best educational systems. At the same time, the content specified in the standards is attainable by all students, given sufficient time. We regard the standards as firm but not unyielding". (California Department of Education, 2001).

According to the Department of Education, the Standards in the five basic fields (Artistic Perception, Creative Expression, Historical and Cultural Context, Aesthetic Valuing, Connections, Relationships, Applications), mention that a Visual Art Program should provide to the students as they are presented in the context of the State Standards for Kindergarten level:

1. Recognize and describe simple patterns found in the environment and works of art.

2. Name Art materials (e.g. clay, paint, and crayons) introduced in lessons.

3. Identify the elements of art (line, color, shape/ form, texture, value, space) in the environment and in works of art, emphasizing line, color, and shape/ form.

4. Paint pictures expressing ideas about family and neighborhood.

5. Use lines and drawings to express feelings.

6. Use geometric shapes/ forms (circle, triangle, square) in a work of art.

7. Look and discuss works of art from a variety of times and places.
8. Discuss their works of art, using appropriate art vocabulary (e.g. color, shape/form, texture).

9. Describe what is seen (including both literal and expressive content) in selected works of art.

10. Mix secondary colors from primary colors and describe the process.

11. Draw or paint a still life using secondary colors.

12. Create artwork based on observations of actual objects and everyday scenes.

13. Recognize and discuss the design of everyday projects from various cultures.

14. Identify and describe various subjects matter in art (e.g. landscapes, seascapes, portraits, still life.)

15. Identify and describe various reasons for making art.

16. Select something they like about their work of art and something they would change.

17. Describe objects designed by artists (e.g. furniture, appliances, and cars) that are used at home and at school.” (California Department of Education, 2001)(See also Appendix 1)

Ankeney (1997), speaking about the California Standards, argues that: “The framework is a path breaking 148-page document that defines a balanced, comprehensive K-12 arts program. It features powerful advocacy statements for the arts; 10 essential ideas of arts
education; definitions of the four arts components and guidelines for planning, delivering and assessing the curriculum across various grade level spans; connections to other disciplines and school-to-career; staff development suggestions; resource lists and more”.

At this point the perspective of Charlene Gould, a middle school teacher for the Ocean View School District (in Orange County) and the chairperson of the curriculum committee that was responsible for the development of the Visual and Performing Arts Framework is significant: “Dance, music, theatre and visual arts are our earliest and most enduring means of communicating between and among all people,” Gould says (cited by Ankeney, 1997,).

According to Walling (2001), some published standards are discipline-specific to dance, music, theater and the visual arts. The Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, which included representatives from the American Alliance for Theatre and Education, the National Art Education Associations, The Music Educators National Conference, and the National Dance Association, published “The National Standards for Arts Education: What Every young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts”. From six to nine standards are given in each field, and each standard is articulate across sets of grades: K-4, 5-8, and 9-12. The five general standards for the visual arts are the following:

1. The student understands and applies media, techniques, and processes related to the visual arts.

2. The student knows a range of subject matter, symbols, and potential ideas in the visual arts.
3. The student knows how to use structures (for example, sensory qualities, and organization principles) and functions of art.

4. The student understands the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

5. The student understands the characteristics and merits of one's own artwork of others." (Walling, 2001)

Walling (2001) mentions that, "One of the most important issues about arts in Education is that they provide discipline". He provides information about the Discipline-based Art Education theory (DBAE). He also claims that the shift in philosophy was slow, but by the early 1980s the idea of Discipline-Based Art Education, or DBAE, had come into its own. DBAE theory proposes that art education focus on four art disciplines: art history, art criticism, aesthetics, and art making or studio art. According to Walling (2001), Dwaine Greer (1997), one of the originators of DBAE theory, explained it this way: "Discipline-based art education, as part of general education, aims to develop mature students who are comfortable and familiar with major aspects of the disciplines of art. The goal is amplified in this manner: students will be able to express ideas with art media; will read about and criticize art; will be aware of art history as the chronological, geographic, and personal context of what they are seeing all around them, not just in galleries and museums; and will have an understanding of the basic issues of aesthetics".

Walling adds that: "Taken together, the art national arts education standards and DBAE theory are urging educators to approach the teaching of art along three broad avenues: universals, the community, and the individual. Communities are multicultural. Individuals cannot be regarded as mere types". (Walling, 2001)
A developmentally appropriate visual art program for K-1 students

In conclusion, the National and State Standards for arts education are extremely helpful guides for all educators. They can support and help creating developmentally age appropriate art programs that will enrich children’s general education. At the same time they will develop children’s art knowledge and will ameliorate children’s life skills.

The Art History program and the developmental learning theories

(Constructivism and Multiple Intelligences)

In the following section, there a presentation of two developmental theories, Constructivism and Multiple Intelligences, and their relation to the arts. More specifically the theorists examine the value of the arts in the development of the children and provide information for the areas of application.

During my studies in Education in Europe, among the greatest developmental theories, Constructivist Teaching, was appealing most to my way of teaching children of all ages. After coming to the U.S., when I started both studying and working, I realized that the constructivist theory has equal value in the educational field in the U.S.

Robert Salvin (1994) defines constructivism in this way: “Constructivism is a view of cognitive development as a process in which children actively build systems of meaning and understanding of reality through their experiences and interactions… Children actively construct knowledge by continually assimilating and accommodating new information” (p.49).

Walling (2001), also adds that “Constructivist philosophy affects assessment in art education. Localizing goals and standards is necessary component of designing assessment that
is, for the most part, ends driven. Teachers must have in mind goals that are measurable and then design instruction that will move students toward the achievement of those goals. This is a highly useful way of thinking about instruction, but in a post modernist, constructivist environment this approach also has limitations and cannot (at least, should not) be used exclusively” (p. 49).

In the visual arts, exploration and experimentation — true "creativity" — are valid ends as well; necessary ends if pluralism and complexity are to be addressed in meaningful ways. This is another thinking point with regard to constructivist teaching. As Maxine Greene (1994) suggests, "If there are to be standards or frameworks, I would like to see them emerge from the class itself spelled out in the light of what is valued” (p.398).

According to Walling (2001): "Orchestrating constructivist teaching is a complex challenge. It is difficult at times to step back to relinquish the directorial role for the facilitative one that such teaching requires” .The conductor Zubin Mehta once said in a television interview: "The secret of conducting knows when not to conduct, when to get out of the musicians' way. This "secret" holds true for effective teaching in the visual arts as well, and it is the only way to meld these various influences” (cited by Walling, 2001).

Earlier in this century, educator John Dewey insisted that being an artist demanded the same intellectual rigor as being a scientist. Indeed, in his book Art as Experience (1975) the philosopher said: "Just as it is the office of art to be unifying, to break through conventional distinctions to the underlying common elements of the experienced world, while developing individuality as the manner of seeing and expressing these elements, so it is the office of art in the individual person, to compose differences, to do away with isolations and conflicts among
the elements of our being, to utilize oppositions among them to build a richer personality." (p. 64)

Dewey’s work helped establish a line of inquiry into how creativity and comprehension in the arts nurtures the intellect. This research continues today, particularly in the work on the relationship between cognition and art being done by Howard Gardner and Project Zero at Harvard (Gryting, 2000)

According to Roper and Davis (2000), “Since the founding of Project Zero in 1967, Howard Gardner has developed a cognitive view of the arts Cognition which was until recently thought of as a mysterious and dubious concept in psychology. Through the tutelage of the computer become very visible, valuable and accountable categories whose virtues have spread far beyond psychology” (p.226).

In his books The Arts and Human Development (1973/1994) and Art, Mind and Brain: A Cognitive Approach to Creativity (1982), Gardner drew principally on Piaget and cognitive developmental theory. However, according to Roper and Davis (2000), over the last 20 years he has increasingly integrated a particular cognitive view, that of a largely computational cognitive science, into his account of the arts and education. Roper and Davis point out that, “in The Mind’s New Science (1985), Gardner outlines the rigor and far-reaching nature of cognitive science and in texts such as Frames of Mind: the theory of multiple intelligences (1983) and Multiple Intelligences (1993) he integrates this into a view of education and the arts”.

Roper and Davis (2000) also add that “according to Gardener the constant in this work has been the internality view of the mind that is continuously and actively working at
understanding the world as presented by the senses. How the mind represents and symbolizes the world becomes the crucial link in the chain from the inside to the outside. To reverse directions, the linking of art and mind involves a complex chain that moves from the languages and symbol systems of the arts and how these need different representations, to the nature of the corresponding mental representations of the mind and how these are in turn involved in various human intelligences”.

Gardner (1983) pointed out the presence of these stronger and weaker areas in each individual in his now well-known theory of Multiple Intelligences, which suggests that “meaning can be arrived at only by combining the intellect with the senses”. He maintained that “instead of general intelligence, people have at least eight intelligences: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic”. Results from Grytting’s work with children in Project Zero indicated that the arts are included within these other intelligences. Use of the arts creates an environment that can expand awareness and reach beyond traditional classroom approaches that usually address only linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities.

Geoghegan (1994), as far as the theory of Multiple Intelligences is concerned recognized that children "need to see bridges between the disciplines. They need to discover how ideas are connected"(p.457).

Armstrong (1993) for the same issue believed that individuals can gain access to skills and information by using alternative symbol systems that match their stronger intelligences. He felt that there are ways to use these strong intelligences to overcome weaker ones, by linking what the student is learning to as much different intelligence as possible. While
any individual may not find connections to all of Gardner's eight intelligences for any given learning set, the more that are activated, the stronger the cognitive and neurological bridge between weaker and stronger sectors of the brain. The relationship between seeing, telling, drawing, and writing is intimate, essential, and a significant aspect of teaching the writing acts.

One particular aspect of art, drawing, can create a bridge between the ideas in a child's head and the blank piece of paper on the desk. Olshansky (1995) stated that "when children's stories are driven by visual images, their writing is transformed in many powerful ways, enriching the story making and enhancing the finished product". Drawing is one way young children gather and organize ideas for writing (Dyson, 1986).

Karnowsk (1986), too, suggested drawing as one of the primary ways young children can communicate. Children should be encouraged to use all of their communication potential to make sense of the writing process. Teachers who value only conventional writing will stifle the exciting literary growth of young students.

Dyson (1986) said that: "Learning to write is the process of gradually differentiating and consolidating the separate meanings of two forms of graphic symbolism, drawing and writing. Both are foreshadowed by young children's scribbling. Thus, for young children written words may be objects, like drawn objects. These children often combine writing and drawing by including written names or letters among the drawn forms on the page. She also claimed that: "Young children frequently interchange the terms draw and write as they discuss their work. Drawing may not precede writing, but rather may develop simultaneously with it. The transition may not be from speech to writing, but from drawing to writing, as the connection to language is made" (Dyson, 1992)."
This transition to the initial understanding of the symbol system of writing (using lines and curves of letters to represent names of entities) evolves from understanding the symbol system of drawing (using lines and curves to represent objects) (Dyson, 1992). Children capture characters, objects, actions, and settings in words and pictures as a bridge to creating written whole words. These symbols acquired in preschool years' access the basic symbol systems refined during the elementary years (Gardner, Ives, Kelly, & Silverman, 1981).

We live at a time of such rapidly accelerating change that few thoughtful people are willing to predict what the world of work will be like for children now in school. As educators of twenty-first-century citizens, we urgently need to look at our curricula with a view to culling those key competencies that will provide the platform for learning and continuously relearning in their future. For this, we must consider the whole array of human skills required to create the powerful learners and thinkers these children will need to be.

According to Schwartz and Pollishuke (2001), so far in education we have been delivering instructions to our young and vulnerable consumers in the form of useful future competencies and we have focused on teaching verbally based, orally delivered curricula. Teaching is based to-a-listen to me approach that serves only those who respond successfully to that mode of learning. Children whose natural competencies allowed them to use these skills as artists, artisans, architects, and engineers in spite of a lack of attention and training in these modalities have been undervalued. Education has failed to serve those with average skills and teach them how to capitalize on their strengths. When a child's ability to develop the requisite auditory processing competencies is compromised through a learning disability, there is left
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unused, undeveloped, and undervalued the potential to learn using visual skills and other modes of learning.

They also continuous by stating that: “Drawing, like speaking, was a natural form of human communication. As evidence in caves and tombs thousands of years old our ancestors related their history, called on their goals for invention, and testified to their king’s importance, wealth and victories through their drawings. In our time this form of human expression is considered child’s play. Its place in the curriculum recedes as the grade level increases, to the extent that no place of honor is given on our school diplomas for excellence in art” (Schwartz and Pollishake, 2000).

According to Heath, (2000), current work in neurobiology and physics brings new understanding of just how important engaging with the visual arts can be for broadening neural circuitry involvement in the brain. This research makes sense to us because of our growing awareness of the ubiquitous power of visual images, moving and still. We have also become aware of the special demands that reading hypertext brings and of the need to grasp information that comes to us through multiple media. We somehow know schooling has to enable students to process and produce information more rapidly than ever and through simultaneous use of new forms and means.

Heath also adds that: “All of these sources firmly support the expected basics of education, such as reading and writing extended texts, but they urge the potential of enhancement of learning and rapid processing that integration of the arts provides”. He continues by saying that: “The visual arts with accompanying focus of attention on details of features, such as color, form and line, ensure attention to perception and engagement of the 'visual brain', which, in turn,
resonates with remembered experience and linguistic representation. Manipulation of these features of the visual arts, from drawing or finger painting in early childhood to the complexities of creating sequences on video, provides essential opportunity for focusing joint attention, taking on numerous roles, bringing memory to external form and developing language. All of these skills are critical for academic achievement and all underlie literacy and numeric as traditionally conceived. But learning through and in the arts in the embodied enacted view of perception suggested by neuroscience research and the recent reports on education and the arts noted above speaks to more than may be immediately evident. Including the arts in meaningful ways in learning opportunities brings shifts in contexts as well as content of learning”.

In conclusion, the examination of the literature review for the value of a visual art program for K-1 students as part of their regular school curriculum from three different perspectives supported the initial thought that it is developmentally appropriate and improves children’s reading, writing skills and attention span. As far as the relation between visual arts and visual arts education in the U.S., the relation of the Art History program to the National and State Standards for Visual Arts Education in the U.S. and the relationship between the Art History program and the developmental learning theories (constructivism, multiple intelligences) according to the theorists such as Piaget and Gardener, the literature showed that visual art programs develops children’s reading, writing skills and attention span.
CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

The art program at the private school where I taught and did my research began with art lessons given by a local visual artist, in 1987. The artist was hired by the former principal of the school to teach 4 and 5 year olds using examples of paintings done by the “masters” (Vincent Van Gogh, Claude Monet, Pablo Picasso) exposing them to hue, coloration, and line. The daughter of the former principal, a teacher at that time and later director of the same school, after having seen the great impact that a visual arts program had in the students lives, spent some time in Europe exploring visual arts programs for young children. Her dream became to take the energy and history of art to young children. Five years later she developed the art history program for K-8 students, in which students modelled their art, using postcard sized reproductions of artist’s work, on the lines, shapes, and coloration of the master’s work. Young children would not work directly from the postcards; she would begin drawing lines, constructing the piece of art with the children. The children would not know what they were drawing until the image would emerge. The main purpose of this case study was to research the benefits of a visual art program for a selected group of children in a K-1 class in the school.

Design of the study

This research used a qualitative descriptive case study research design. I used participant-observation in which I participated in the daily routines of the setting, developed ongoing relations with the people in it, and observed all the participants’ reactions related to my study. After the observation sessions for a period of three months I wrote down in regular, systematic ways what I was observing and learning while participating in the daily rounds of life
of the students. I also collected work samples (writing samples and paintings) from the students at intermittent times to assess whether or not learning or progress of certain academic skills had taken place. At the same time interviewed the creator of the program and I recorded four students' academic responses related to art history during the regular art classes. I also enclosed to the data the notes-comments coming from people familiar with the program during the three month observation period.

Research Setting

The observation took place in a private school in Central California. The specific school was located in a high economic area and it was part of an Educational Park, in which there were two more schools. The park was part of a residential area and it was close to a shopping mall. The school was made up of six classes (K-6) and one of them was the combination K-1st class. Apart from the regular academic program based on the California Content State Standards, the school provided instruction for the students, lessons in music, dance, and drama, Spanish, French and Art History. A significant detail about this school was its ideal location and especially its playground. The playground was part of the woods and the school was surrounded by trees. This was an excellent opportunity for the students to be close in proximity to nature and it was a strong advantage for the parents to choose the school.

Description of participants in the study

I observed 20 students. I chose to work with these specific students because the art program I wanted to study is offered at the private school site that I was teaching. The students in
the program were considered “privileged” as they mostly belonged to the upper socio-economic class, which lacked multicultural representation. 80% of the student population were white (Caucasian), and 20% were mixed (mother or father, 2nd or 3rd generation) Mexican, Asian or African American. As part of my regular teaching assignment, I conducted the study with the K-1 students of the school during the 2002-2003 school years. For that academic year, 20 students were enrolled for the specific class I was teaching; among them were 12 boys and eight girls. The class was made up of eight kindergarteners and 12 first graders. The arts program was presented for the first time to six of the students while for the other 14 students, it was their second year of instruction. All students were included in the study after appropriate parental approval. The children were engaged in typical school activities throughout the study and all the participants and the school was assigned pseudonyms for confidentiality. Each of the participants in the study was given a code letter for identification of their writing and art samples.

Data collection

At the beginning of the school year I examined the students’ performance in their reading, writing and listening skills as related to Language Arts before the teaching of the arts program. In order to examine their reading and writing skills and their attention span, I used a rubric based on the California State Standards for Language Arts for Kindergarten and First Grade (samples of the rubric are available in the appendix 2). In an observation session for a period of three months, I recorded the students’ responses using narrative comments as related to the lessons and taught by my co-worker. I also kept student writing samples to investigate their progress in the writing area of language arts. The main purpose of the observational study was to
obtain a crude indication whether the Art History program would in any way benefit the children in their reading, writing and listening skills. After this initial observation, I taught a unit-movement of Art History for a period of three months, once a week and I continued the informal observation focusing on the same skills throughout the teaching sessions. At the conclusion of the instruction period, I then did a post observational period for almost two hours during the daily instructions of the same co-teacher. The time of the day the class was taught was the same as the observation before the teaching of the Art History Program, early in the morning, and the class had the same structure but it was examining another topic.

During the observation in a Language Arts Reading session, before and after teaching the art history program, I focused on students’ attentiveness and interest to a subject taught by the co-teacher. I also observed students following one-step oral directions, participating in class discussions and I watched for their ability to stay focused on a topic. At the same time I noted their attention span by observation of their behaviour towards the teacher’s instructions; I noted their speaking vocabulary and I also noted their fine motor skills related to writing letters and symbols or drawing pictures when writing about their experiences. I kept detailed notes of all the observation sessions taught by the Language Arts teacher and I consistently kept notes after each Art History session. All notes were related to the skills examined in this case study. I also I examined writing samples, art pieces and vocabulary assessments at the beginning of the school year before teaching the art program as well as three months later.

The three-month observation period (September, October, and November 2002) was dedicated to the study of the Impressionism movement. From the three-month observation period, I have chosen to present three artists, one for every month, and three of their paintings
that the class studied in three different sessions. Of the 20 students that participated in the
program I purposely chose four students, one boy kindergarten, one girl kindergarten, one boy
first grader and one girl first grader. The students' paintings and writing samples are presenting
every month so that their progress during and after the three months of instructions can be
analyzed. In September, the class studied the life and the paintings of the French artist Henri
Matisse. During October, the students studied the life and the paintings of the French artist Paul
Gaugin and in November the class studied the life and the paintings of the Dutch artist Vincent
Van Gogh. Samples of the students' works are provided in Chapter Four of this study.

In addition to observing the students and their work samples, I interviewed the person
who designed and developed the art program being taught at the school. I tape recorded the
interview and transcribed the participant's responses in order to give a context for the
development of this art program.

The questions for the designer of the program were as follows:

1. I remember that you first told me that your idea to establish an art history program
at your school came out of your studies in France. Will you briefly describe how you came up
with the idea and give a little of the background for the development of this program?

2. I've seen you teaching the program at our school. What changes have you applied
throughout the years? What is the purpose of the Art History Program as part of the Curriculum
at this school?

3. Does the Art History Program meet the California State Standards for the Visual
and Performing Arts? In what ways have the California State Standards influenced the program?
4. How does the program contribute to the development of the children's language arts and listening skills?

5. Is the implementation of the program based on some particular developmental theories? If yes, which?

6. What difficulties did you encounter while integrating the Art History Program in the school's curriculum? (Time constraints, multi-age classrooms, children's focusing).

7. In what ways do you believe that the specific Art History Program promotes multiculturalism or does it?

8. Throughout your years of teaching the program, which periods and movements of Art History did you prefer to teach? In your opinion which ones did the children find most interesting to learn?

9. What were the reactions of the parents to the program?

10. How much time after the first exposure of the children to the program would you say that their progress became noticeable? In what ways? What did you observe?

11. One more thing, if you could go back and make a major change to the program what would that be?

Besides the interview with the author of the arts program, I also kept a journal where I recorded all the comments, discussions (spontaneous and instantaneous) that people coming in the class (teachers, guests, parents or even the students-participants) shared with me throughout the instructional three-month period.

Along with the journal, I kept personal notes after each Art History session with the students, on a regular basis. From the very first day, I observed the students' reactions towards
each part of the class and I tried to specify areas of difficulty in the lessons which I could improve upon in the next class. I also examined the student’s skills to complete each session and if not I was recording the part of the session that they did not complete. I was always looking at the students’ general attitude, and behavior during the class; I also observed their mood and feelings during the instructions. In the follow-up class session, I was always testing the knowledge that they had acquired in the previous session and I was also considering the percentage of the students accomplishing the program’s goals and expectations.

Data analysis

To analyze the data I created a Matrix of findings and sources for data triangulation based on the California State Standards for Language Arts (K-18). I included every Standard for Language Arts (K-18) and I used the information received from all my sources related to the Art History Program to record the extent to which every standard is supported by the art program. (See also Appendix 2).

According to Denzin, (1970), as cited by Maxwell,(1996), the general principal known as triangulation refers to “the collection of information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods. This reduces the risk that your conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific method, and it allows you to gain a better assessment of the validity and generality of the explanations that you develop”.

In the following matrix (Figure 1) the different sources that were used in this study are aligned with the California Language Arts Standards (K-1).

C: Information-interview with the creator of the program.
W.S.-C.P: Writing samples from the students and children’s paintings.
I.S: Interviews with the students.
P.O: Personal observations.
J: Comments from people introduced to the program recorded in a journal.

| FIGURE 1: Matrix of findings and sources of data triangulation |
|-------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|                   | Sources of data | C | W.C.-C. P. | I.S. | P.O. | J |
| **Grade Level: Kindergarten** |
| Category 1: Reading |
| Standard 1: Reading-Word analysis and systematic vocabulary development | X | X | X | X |
| Standard 2: Reading Comprehension | X | X | X | X |
| Standard 3: Reading- Literary Analysis and response | X | X | X | X |
| Category 2: Writing |
| Standard 4: Writing-Writing Strategies | X | X | X | X | X |
| Category 3: Listening |
| Standard 6: Listening and Speaking - Listening and Speaking strategies. | X | X | X | X |
| Standard 7: Listening and Speaking- speaking applications (genres and their characteristics) | X | X | X | X |
| Standard 8: Oral and Written English language conventions | X | X | X |
| **Grade Level: First** |
| Category 1: Reading |
| Standard 1: Reading-Word analysis and systematic vocabulary development | X | X | X | X |
| Standard 2: Reading Comprehension | X | X | X | X |
| Standard 3: Reading - Literary Analysis and response | X | X | X | X |
| Category 2: Writing |
| Standard 4: Writing-Writing Strategies | X | X | X | X | X |
| Standard 5: Writing - Writing applications (genres and their characteristics) | X | X | X |
| Category 3: Listening |
| Standard 6: Listening and Speaking - Listening and Speaking strategies. | X | X | X | X |
| Standard 7: Listening and Speaking - Speaking Applications (genres and their characteristics) | X | X | X | X |
| Standard 8: Oral and Written English language conventions | X | X | X |
In examining and providing a data analysis, I used the statements the Art History program creator provided in the interview to examine the reading, writing skills, and attention span of the students before, during, and after the teaching of the Art History program. I also examined the reading, writing skills and attention span of the four students and analyzed the students' art pieces and writing samples during the three month period to look at their progress in specific areas and skills.

I took in consideration my personal observations, the notes that I consistently recorded after the end of each class, and my formal observations I had done at the beginning of the instruction of the Art Program and again after three months of instruction as part of the data analysis. Next to my personal observations, I also added comments that children, parents or guests made about the art history program. In addition I examined the students' reading, writing skills, and attention span. Finally, I studied the answers that the designated four students gave me through informal interviews, which was a natural part of the regular art class.

The interviews, the data collection of the children's writing samples and paintings, the journal, observations, and personal experience were the basis for the findings for this case study, which will be further discussed in Chapter Four.
CHAPTER FOUR
Data Analysis

As mentioned previously in Chapter Three, the children’s and the creator’s interviews, the children’s writing samples and paintings, the journal, my personal observations, and personal experience were the basis for the findings for this action thesis. In this chapter, I will present the data collected from the sources mentioned above. More specifically I will present the findings of the research about the contribution of the Art History program with regards to children’s development in the three areas, development of the students’ attention span, development of the students’ reading skills, and development of the students’ writing skills. I will also present the findings of the research after the examination of the California State Standards in relationship to the program, the examination of the program as developmentally appropriate, and the overall value of the program based on the creator’s, parents’ and students’ comments.

I started teaching the art program at the beginning of the academic year (2001-2002) and I spent one intensive year in which I was also exploring the benefits of the art program. I became immediately interested to learn more about the program, its philosophy and purpose because I thought it could be extremely helpful for children in many ways.

I used interview statements of the Art History program’s author to examine the reading skills of the students before, during, and after the teaching of the Art History program. Also, I examined children’s writing samples and drawings, using personal conclusions from observations during the art class and the language arts class, parents’ comments for the art program, and unofficial interviews with the children during the art classes.
The development of the students' attention span

I started examining and analyzing the data to identify the development of the children's skills after the three month observation period. In this chapter, my analysis will start with the examination of the development of the students' attention span, because I believe that the student's attention span lays the foundation for the success of this art program.

According to the Language Arts Standard 6 (Listening and Speaking- Listening and Speaking strategies) for K-1 students:

Students listen and respond critically to oral messages and speak in clear and coherent sentences that guide and inform the listener's understanding of key ideas, using appropriate phrasing, pitch and stress.

The author of the art history program spoke of how the student's attention span was improved by her experiences. She stated that she believes that the children's attention span developed very much as they had to concentrate and focus on the procedure of the art history program: "...I was trying to tie up the story and I was connecting stories with paintings and I was tying up part of the lesson which consisting of 25 minutes and they were with me at that moment..." Since this the K-1 students had maintained their focus for an extended time.

The personal observations about the development of the students' attention span mostly took place during the instructions at phase of each art class. For the introduction of each art class, I presented the artist sharing a short narration about his/her life. I would also present a collection of the most important/famous paintings by the selected artist in the way of postcards, books, or calendars. The students at the first month of observations, in September, had two different reactions. The kindergarteners who were first introduced to the program had difficulties in concentrating, focusing and paying attention to my instructions. On the other hand, the first
graders who had one year of previous experience and were aware of the procedure and process of
the art program were focused and were paying attention to the teacher’s stories about the artist’s
life. Most of the first grade students were familiar with some of the artists presented and were
answering questions asked by the instructor or were mentioning details from the artists’ paintings
that they had remembered, read or seen from the previous year.

During October, after one month of classes most of the kindergarteners, knowing and
having experienced the procedure of the art class were focusing for a longer period of time and
there was less disruption of my narrations. The first graders were improving their attention span
by focusing for 80% of the entire time. A couple of them shared with the class, experiences of
visits in an art gallery or art books that they found at their homes and brought to the class to
share.

During the last month of the three-month observation period, the attention span of
both age groups had increased. About 10% demonstrated that more time was needed for
extended. Even these children though towards the end of the observation period made a
significant progress of their attention span since the beginning of the academic school year; some
more than others, depending on the developmental maturity of the students.

Another part of the program that contributed to the development of the students’
focusing skills was “a visit to the school’s art gallery”. At the end of each class, I always invited
the students to spend a few minutes in the display area to see the previous week’s painting, next
to those of their friends. At the beginning of the year, only a few students, most likely the first
graders familiar with the procedure from the previous year, would spend some time having an
overview of all the paintings next to the original and they would start commenting and
comparing their paintings. The younger students would rush to move to another activity. Towards the end of the observation period, this attention span has been more developed and students would visit the art gallery, mostly to locate and admire their own painting among the display.

I also researched to find out in what ways the specific art program was developmentally appropriate for the children. The literature review covered the areas of Constructivism and the theory of Multiple Intelligences in which the theorists presented arguments that the visual arts support the intellectual development of the children and stimulate their knowledge. For the same issue the creator believed that the art program has the basic principles of being developmentally appropriate because:

- Modeling and working closely with young children is part of structuring, learning and telling, which is a form of scaffolding.

- “Arts program” is taught in a way that doesn’t hinder their creativity (It wasn’t always the product that was the emphasis, but the process and thinking the children would put into themselves, which encouraged their own creativity).

- She was conscious to make sure that the program was not a frustration for young children in terms of scaffolding.

The creator also stated that she always adapted as a teaching model, the procedure of “scaffolding”, as Vygotsky had defined the term to describe effective teaching/learning interactions. In the case of the Art History program, the creator believes that the art program can support and promote the principals of Vygotsky’s theory, specifically mentioning that:
• She was conscious to make sure that the program was not a frustration for young children in terms of scaffolding.

• Scaffolding model has been through consistent development in this program.

• The art program gives access to everybody "basic principle of being developmentally appropriate and having equity amongst all the students".

• The program is related to the theory of Multiple Intelligences "it is visual and there is listening, interaction, activity of matching up names of the paintings to colors and the history of the painting, and the process of creating".

The development of the students' reading skills

According to the Language Arts Standards 1, 2 and 3: Reading-Word analysis and systematic vocabulary development Reading Comprehension Reading and Literary Analysis:

Students understand the basic components of written materials and are able to hear and manipulate the discrete sounds of words. Students identify the basic facts and ideas in what, they have read, heard or viewed, drawing on such strategies as generating questions and comparing information to prior knowledge or from several sources. Students listen and respond to stories based on familiar characters, themes, plots and setting.

I used the interview statements of the Art History program's author to examine the reading skills of the students before, during, and after the teaching of the Art History program. The author of the art program was certain in her interview about the contribution of the art history program in the area of the reading skills. She gave me examples of these contributions: narrating the artists' stories during the class, naming every detail in every step (drawing, coloring, painting parts) throughout the teaching procedure, identifying the use of each material that she was using—all of the procedures helped the students develop a specific art vocabulary that they were using to answer the teacher's questions and participate in the class.
The author gave more specific examples of how the K-1 students were developing their reading skills:

- A lot of modalities (learning styles) were used to meet almost everyone’s needs.
- Oral discussions using comparison strategies - (students) “discuss critically if they liked Kafka better or if they liked Matisse better”.
- Through a matching game “they would match the name of the painting with historically the time period”.

She specifically believed that the artists' stories make a great impression on the children who seemed to remember details from the artists’ lives and was able to narrate the stories in a later period, which helped them develop their reading skills. Evidence of the detailed knowledge according to her teaching experiences is demonstrated through the following two examples:

- Students were establishing a real sense of wanted to know more “when children were drawing for example Vincent Van Gogh’s paintings of the blue period, they knew that this was done later in his life when he isolated himself and he was recovering”.
- Students were expanding their language development “being able to know the painters’ names and know where they were from, even knowing that there are other parts of the world”.

Evidence for the development of the students’ reading skills, took place during my instructions at each art class and was acquired through personal observations along with informal children’s interviews as part of their regular classes. During my introduction, I presented the artist with a short narration about his/her life and a collection of the most important/famous
paintings in postcards, books, or calendars. The kindergartener students, who were first introduced to the program, during the first month of observations (September) participated less and they seemed to remember only basic information about the new artist. In addition, their answers were short and their vocabulary limited. On the other hand, the first graders who had one year of previous experience and were aware of the procedure were able to answer more questions by using advanced art vocabulary that they adopted from the teacher’s story-narrations about the artist’s life. Most of them were familiar with some of the artists presented and were answering questions placed by the instructor or were mentioning details from the artists’ paintings that they had been taught, read, or seen. To support this statement I will present the comment of a 1st grade student answering my question “why do they think that in most of his paintings Claude Monet used to have bright colors like light blue, yellow, orange, light green or red”. He replied: “Because he was painting in the period of light” (the class was studying Monet as an Impressionist, member of the Impressionism movement, a movement that was introduced to them as the “period of light” in the visual arts).

During October, after one month of classes, most of the kindergarteners, having known the procedure so far, were participating more and were becoming more interested in sharing details from the artist’s stories with their classmates. The first graders’ participation demonstrated an advanced attitude. They were asking more questions for clarifications about the instructor’s narrations and they were carefully observing the details on the display of the postcards reproductions to share comments or personal opinions about the artist’s themes, techniques, and interests. A couple of them shared with the class, experiences of visits in an art gallery or art books that they found at their homes and brought to the class to share.
At the beginning of each art history session, the class would spend five-ten minutes reviewing the previous week’s artist’s life and paintings. During this part of the program, I would examine the students’ reading skills. I would pose specific questions about the artist’s life, studies, paintings, and techniques that we had studied the past week in order to find out what they had remembered. At the beginning of the observation period, some of the kindergarteners were able to restate basic details and events, but they would skip or be confused about the details of my lesson previously presented. On the other hand, the first graders, having knowledge of the procedure from the past year, would participate more and they would be able to answer my questions and share the information with their classmates.

At the last month, November, towards the end of the observation period both age groups were progressing on their reading skills by actively participating during the introduction and the artist’s stories, as well as during the review part in the following session proving that they had become familiar with details from the artist’s lives and paintings, identifying themes for their paintings, drawing and painting techniques, and other areas, which contributed to our discussions.

Just as attention span had been increased, the development of their reading skills was also demonstrated through “a visit to the school’s art gallery”. It was the time when the students would have the chance to discuss and review last week’s artist and painting, sharing information that they were taught the previous week and comparing their painting with their classmates and the original. During this visit to the gallery, they would use specific art vocabulary and details related to each artist to discuss with their friends. I was always inviting the students to spend a few minutes in the display area to see the previous week’s painting next to those of their friends.
This was the most important part of their class for two reasons: first because during the visit, the students would have the chance to review the previous week’s artist and paintings, and second because they would start from their early years to experience the sense of an Art Gallery. In September, only a few students, most likely the first graders, familiar with the procedure from the previous year, would spend any significant time having an overview of all the paintings next to the original and they would start commenting and comparing their paintings. The younger students would rush to move on to another activity. Towards the end of the observation period, more students would visit the art gallery to locate and admire their painting among the display and comment with their classmates. The sophistication of two first graders was captured when they were comparing their paintings to the masterpiece. The first one said: “...look at mine. The angles of the table are the same as Cezanne’s!” The second one commented: “Yes, but look at my curve lines on the flowers. It’s like the original! I like it, it’s a nice painting!” Discussions like these would prove to me that the purposes of the art program to promote the knowledge of the art history movements, artists, and their special techniques were being accomplished and that their pre-reading skills were being developed consistently with their oral language skills.

In conclusion, the specific art history program develops the student’s reading/language arts skills and contributes to their knowledge about art history. The amazing thing is that students’ improvement in skills and knowledge is obvious in a very short period of time after the introduction of the art program. The value of the program’s contribution in other academic areas of the curriculum related to the reading skills (Language Arts, Social Studies, and Sciences) is also vividly demonstrated.
The development of the students' writing and drawing skills

According to the Language Arts Standards 4 and 5 for K-1 students (Writing-Oral and Written English language conventions- Writing-Writing Strategies Writing- Writing applications - genres and their characteristics-):

Students use knowledge of standard English conventions in their oral and written work. Students write words and brief sentences that are legible. Students write clear and coherent sentences and paragraphs that elaborate a central impression, using appropriate stages of the writing process Students write texts that describe and explain objects, events and experiences that are familiar to them, demonstrating command of Standard English and the drafting, research and organizational strategies.

In the interview, when I asked the creator if the program contributes to the development of the children's writing skills, she admitted that as a Language Arts teacher, she was able to observe on a daily basis the children's progress in writing. She believed that the Art History program, through drawing, coloring and painting, supported the development of the children's writing skills. The author more specifically pointed out the following areas related with the development of the students' writing and drawing skills:

- Using a variety lot of modality strategies that meets almost everyone's needs.
- Looking at the shapes instead of using their imagination to draw.
- Teaching the children about curved lines and straights lines and angle lines and circles, dots "start with the shapes and looking to the idea of start with the simple parts and put them back together again, reconstructing the art from the postcards reproductions of the masterpieces".
- Teaching the children the shapes and actually modelling for them how to start to draw.
A developmentally appropriate visual art program for K-1 students

- Training the children's eye (in coordination with their hand as a basic skill of writing.
- Giving quality materials to the children for active engagement.

To better clarify the part of "reconstructing the art from the postcards reproductions of the masterpieces" it is best if I also present the creator's details about the procedure, that also supports the development of the children's drawings: "...young children would not work directly from the postcards...I would begin drawing lines, constructing the piece of art with the children... they would not know what they were drawing until the image would emerge. This was an important step because when someone views art, they see the whole. However, to construct art, you need to know how to put it together. In this way, I was training the children how to see an object in terms of line."

During the second part of the art class, which consisted of the drawing part, I prepared the class to draw one of the original paintings that I chose by modelling line after line the basic features of the paintings without showing the original painting to the students and providing the students directions and specific explanations. I noticed the following:

During September, the drawing procedure was demonstrated slowly, so that all the students were able to keep up with my drawing pace. I played light classical music to provide a calm background that would help students focus on their drawings. In September, most kindergarteners complained that "it is too hard for me" or that "I cannot draw something like that". Other students would comment aloud, "my drawing doesn't look like... (referring to the child sitting next to them)" or that "You are (drawing) too fast for me". Some of the students would stop working saying that they didn't wish to continue and some others could not keep up
with the drawing pace, even if it was slow. Students, disinterested were either noisy or made up their own drawings on the paper. First graders were far more advanced, and were able to keep up with the instructor’s pace of drawing having gone through the program during their kindergarten year and having developed their drawing skills significantly already. In Figure 2 students’ paintings made when the class studied the life and the paintings of the French artist Henri Matisse are demonstrated.

In October, all students’ drawing skills were improving. Kindergartners having spent time drawing during several classes were less complaining and more participating. I think at this point that the multi-age class contributed to the development of their drawing skills because the younger children were able to observe the difference between them and the older children’s drawings, and older students served as models, and the younger K students seemingly tried harder to present more accurate drawings. First graders, on the other hand, having more confidence in their drawing skills, were improving their skills significantly and were starting to compare their own drawings with the instructor’s drawing.

In Figure 3 the children’s paintings made in October, when the students studied the life and the paintings of the French artist Paul Gaugin can be seen, the paintings are demonstrated.

In November, everybody had made great improvements in all areas, but especially in their drawings. Kindergartners were participating in every class, trying to complete their drawings on time, and striving to have their drawings depicted as accurately as possible. Moreover, all the students started feeling more confident about their drawing skills and their paintings had better images. The first graders were continuing to develop their drawing skills as well, and the fact
FIGURE 2: Henri Matisse: "APPLES" – September 2002

Original Painting

Boy K

Boy 1st

Girl K

Girl 1st

Original Painting

Boy K

Boy 1st

Girl K

Girl 1st
was obvious in the more complex drawings demonstrated, which indicated a developmental
difference from kindergartners. In Figure 4 the children’s paintings made in November when the
class studied the life and the paintings of the Dutch artist Vincent Van Gogh are seen.

For the drawing part, the creator of the program mentioned that during the
introduction of the program that, “some children’s paintings were just a mass of lines”. The
reason for some of them, especially the boys at this age, was that the coordination of eye-hand
as a drawing –writing fine motor skill was not totally developed, “…and some children wouldn’t
do that, because the hand, especially the boys, the hand-eye is not really coordinated”. As they
gradually became more familiar with the program they developed their writing skills, and their
drawings started to be more accurate when compared to the masterpiece, “they would get the
idea where they were putting all shapes together…”

The third part of the art program consisted of coloring and painting of the sketch. At the
beginning of the program, in September, this specific part was hard for the kindergarteners.
Almost all students were rushing through the last part of the class, so that they could complete it
and they could be dismissed to spend time in another center. Almost all students didn’t have the
patience to cover all the surface of the paper with crayons and they were filling out only partial
pieces of the drawing. When using the watercolors, even when it was pointed out that specific
parts of the paper should be covered, the students were just mixing everything quickly, creating
an uncertain image. Some of the students requested to exclude themselves from the coloring part
because they were feeling tired or they didn’t want to continue. A couple of times the students
didn’t like the result after the presentation of the original painting and they destroyed their
papers. One student showing her frustration and feeling that she had failed, burst into tears when
FIGURE 4: Vincent Van Gogh: "THE BEDROOM" – November 2002

Original Painting

Boy K

Boy 1st

Girl K

Girl 1st
the artist's postcard was shown. Most of the students asked consistently my opinion as to
whether they had followed my instructions successfully or not. The first graders, knowing what
they were asked to do and having developed their drawing skills a lot more, were able to perform
in a more successful way and presented wonderful paintings. The coloring was the 1st grade
students' favorite part because by adding the colors, they could reach the end of the procedure
and they could compare their painting to the original and make comments on their techniques.

In October, at the second month of instructions, the procedure was easier for the
kindergarteners as they were getting used to the procedure and they gradually became more and
more interested in the program. Their main goal towards the end of the second month was to
complete everything so that they could find out if their painting was accurate as compared to the
original painting. The first graders were developing more of their fine motors skills and they
were becoming gradually more confident in their skills. The main issue for the 1st graders
became identifying the theme of the painting. Before the unveiling of the original work of art by
looking at the instructor's painting, students were trying to identify images, objects, and a
possible title for each painting.

In November, both groups were showing significant improvement towards the
coloring and painting parts of the program. The kindergarteners were developing their fine motor
skills and carefully completed all the parts of the art program. The first graders were
participating throughout the entire procedure and were especially interested in drawing details by
carefully considering each line and shape. The first graders also started supporting, guiding, and
helping the younger kindergarteners with instructions and special tips on "knowing how to
draw", as one student mentioned to another students.
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After examining the children’s drawings, although each child’s version of the artist’s paintings were valued, it was obvious that their drawing skills had developed to a great degree, based on the fact that their lines and details were more accurate in comparison to the masterpieces.

As part of my data, I requested from the Language Arts’ teacher writing samples of the four children selected for this study, one during each month of the three-month observation period (September, October, and November 2002). I provided the teacher with the same kind and size of paper that the students used for the art classes and I also provided the text for each of the sessions. The Language Arts teacher used the same instructions that she uses in her language classes when the children were writing in their journals. She used the whiteboard and she spelled and wrote the text for the students. She used a similar way of modelling the text for the students at the whiteboard as I had modelled and constructed the art from the postcards reproductions of masterpieces.

The children’s writing samples show a continuous improvement of the children’s writing skills. In a conversation with the Language Arts teacher after the observation period, she confirmed that the children had definitely improved in their writing skills since the beginning of the school year. Having also observed the drawing part of the Art History Program, she stated that she believed that the art program contributed to the development of the children’s academic skills. Children’s writing samples of Boy-K, Boy-1\textsuperscript{st}, Girl -1\textsuperscript{st} are provided in Appendix 3. In figure 5 there is the writing sample of Girl-K that shows the progression of her writing over the three month period, September-November.
FIGURE 5: Writing and painting samples Girl Kindergarten

September 2002

October 2002

November 2002

‘A vase of flowers’: October 2002
Overall value of the program

It is important to mention that beyond the examination of the development of the children’s reading, writing skills, and attention span there are some important issues that this research has covered and it is important to be analyzed.

The significance of the art program is summarized by the creator of the arts program:

“...As I was teaching the program I realized how valuable it was for the children and how many possibilities for approaches to the Visual Arts were available through the program. Gradually, I saw children enjoying having the Art Class and learning about the Great Masters. Often I had children coming back to me with more questions that I hadn’t covered during class time. This was the proof, at least to my eyes, that the program had a positive impact and stimulated their interest in the Arts”.

Two additional issues that the creator saw as benefits for the students that children should acquire through their school education were “criticism” and “not training yourself”. According to her, these values should become known to the children so that they can adapt them as a life style that will definitely improve their personal and social lives because:

- The arts are universal things.
- Listening to what other people say can erode one’s willingness to try something again or try harder or in a different way.
- That they don’t have to be exact.
- They don’t have to try by themselves.
- It is a group process.
I also asked the creator to share with me the time length that she needed to notice the difference in the children's skills after the first introduction of the program; she mentioned that the difference could be seen immediately and that it was surprising as well as amazing to her but it would make sense because:

- Of the use of multiple intelligences strategies.
- Of teaching with different modalities.
- Of the experiences (through their senses) they started connecting more paintings together.
- Of building and creating something that was their own.

Another important element that came out of my research along with the rest of the findings is the idea of multiculturalism that the program promotes. The specific art classes promote multicultural perspectives as it introduces artists from all over the world and presents different cultures, ideas, and beliefs. It allows the art instructor to choose among each and every artist from any period of the art history and any culture. That way, the children become aware of several movements in the art history and the different cultures, ideals, and ways of living. They also learn that there is life beyond their state or country, and also before their time as they learn more about the past. The creator believes that the specific program promotes multiculturalism in a way that is constructive and productive for the children because:

- Of the knowledge of many artists painting as many paintings since 1800.
- Of discussion about how different reality is and the contrasts.
- Looking at how things have changed.
- Diversity in the art pieces "African masks and the study of the ancient simplistic shapes that infuses modern art".
- In art there aren't the boundaries that there are politically.
• Of different ways of perceiving in the real world and transferring into the arts.
• Of stories that go along with the paintings.
• Of artists reflecting the period of time that they are in.

The creator also points out that the most important part of the program that is related to multiculturalism is the artists' stories that definitely promote different cultural perspectives and provide valuable knowledge to the children because:
• The stories have so much inspiration but each could be different.
• Of having a way to teach diversity "you can be different you can look differently you do not have to be in the social mainstream".
• The idea of becoming cultural "focus on understanding how amazing, joyful and beautiful life is throughout one's experiences".
• Teaching kids how to generate art by themselves and with others.
• (Teaching kids) to open themselves to others expressively.
• (Children's) behavior would change over time and practice.
• (Children) are exposed to great art at a young age.
• (Students) can feel connected to history.
• (Students) can understand that people express art in a variety of ways.
• (Students) can know of people being successful.
• (Students) experience having wonderful art experiences.

The most important value of the stories is that the artists' lives promoted diversity and became examples for the children's lives and their future. This contribution according to her is perhaps the best lesson for their future. As an experience, it's something that the children will
realize and appreciate later in their lives because the art program promotes multiculturalism through the artists’ life stories. This was demonstrated by the following comments made by the creator of the arts program:

- Children learned that there are many different ways of being a successful human being “they learned from the life of Picasso, that having a hard time in school doesn’t mean that you can’t succeed”.

- Children learned that there is a cost, a sacrifice involved “if you want something, you have to have the willingness and discipline to go to any lengths to achieve your dream”.

- Children have to be aware that what other people think about what you are doing cannot be a priority “Vincent Van Gogh’s life is an example of that no one liked his work except his brother”.

- Children need to believe in themselves.

- Children need to have an on going willingness to learn more.

- Children need to think critically about the failures many artists experienced “they need to think about what they might do differently, how they might avoid some of these challenges”.

- Children had a new set of “invisible” role models (its presence furthered developed each child’s understanding (schemata) of what it is to be a creative human being).

- Children studying art that way allows them to learn a way to be at peace with themselves, to be expressive, to feel cultured.

In examining whether or not State Standards in Visual and Performing Arts were met and after teaching the program for almost one and a half years, I came to the conclusion that many aspects of the program were created to meet the State Standards. More specifically, based
on the text of the California State Standards for Visual Arts Education, the basic parts for K-1 students are covered through the procedure of the program. All five fields (artistic perception, creative expression, historical and cultural context, aesthetic valuing and connections, relationships, applications) are promoted throughout the Art History program.

Specifically, the aesthetic perception is where the students develop perceptual skills and visual arts vocabulary as well as analyze art elements and principles of design. This element has been covered in each of the art classes at the introduction, the drawing, coloring, and painting parts of the program.

The aspect of the creative expression where the students improve skills processes and tools and communication and expression through original works of art has been introduced at the drawing, coloring and painting parts of the program.

The aspect of the historical and cultural context where the students progress role and development of the visual arts and diversity of the visual arts has been mostly analyzed in the introductory part of the program when the artists and their lives are studied.

The aspect of the aesthetic valuing and connections where the students enrich and derive meaning and make informed judgments has been an integral part of the introductory part of the program, the review part of each session, and especially during the art gallery experience.

Finally, the aspect of the connections, relationships, applications where the students develop connections and applications along with visual literacy and career and career-related skills, has been covered in each class session at the introduction, the drawing, coloring and painting parts of the program.
Perhaps the strongest validation of the arts program is demonstrated by the parents' and guests' evaluations and comments about the value of the art program in the lives of their children. Several discussions with the students' parents throughout the observation period supported this study. After the first month of the introduction of the art history program to the students, the parents would come to find me and they would share information from our classes that the students were discussing with them at home. Some of them familiar with visual arts would be impressed with the details about the artists and their works that their children would know at a young age.

Specifically, one mother approached me, and after a short conversation about the program that I recorded later on in my journal, shared with me: "...it's unbelievable. I learned about these artists when I was at high school and my son knows everything at the age of five..." Parents were so amazed with the children's drawings and they couldn't believe that the paintings belonged to their children.

It is also interesting to add at this point the questions that the parents posed or the comments that they made through the observation period about the procedure of the drawing, coloring and painting parts of the program. The most interesting that I recorded in my journal were the following: "Oh, I see. I thought that you were drawing the sketch and they were adding the colors..." or "...that makes sense, because I couldn't understand how they (the paintings) were different from each other since you were providing the copies (from the copier) for the them..." or "I thought that you were giving them books and they were copying the paintings from there".
All of the parents were amazed with the children's drawing skills and some of them towards the end of the observation period were able to observe some improvement in their children's skills that they would share with me. I remember two parents who came to me stating: "I see that my daughter's paintings lately are close to the original painting. This program is definitely wonderful and my daughter loves it. She keeps coming back every day asking me if it's art class day. You should do it more often." Another parent stated: "I like your program. I keep collecting these paintings that you send home and I put them up in his room. What is better than having ones own (painting)? One of them, I framed it and I put it up at my office. Everybody comes and asks me. They don't believe that my five year old child did it!"

It is also important to add the ten-year experience of the creator with the parents' reactions to the program. As she had mentioned to me throughout the years, parents would come in to express their gratitude about their children's experiences with the program and their surprise to the children's abilities. The creator shared with me, "parents were amazed, all of them were amazed, I'm sure that you had the same experience... I just see that they (the students) have a chance to see some wonderful texture,... And I think that at some point you just see all these neat things happening at once and that is what is amazing about this".

An amazing story that is related to the development of the student's focusing skills took place one month after the introduction of the art history program to the students. A parent came in and shared with me the following story: On the specific art day that I introduced Vincent Van Gogh and shared with the class lots of his paintings, a young student went through the family library at home and recognized among the art books that the family owns, one book dedicated to Vincent Van Gogh. He recognized the artist from the paintings. He named the artist
and all the family was both impressed and proud with the student's knowledge. During the next art class the student brought the book into the classroom and shared the story with his classmates.

In conclusion, the findings of the data supported the basic principles of the Art History program and the significant overall value of the program in the lives of the young students. All sources of data agreed on the same conclusion: it is a developmentally appropriate visual art history program that promotes improvement of children's attention span, reading, drawing, and writing skills. Furthermore, it enriches children with additional values and skills that include the knowledge of visual art history, diversity in the arts, the knowledge of different ways of perceiving the real world and the ability to understand how the arts and artists reflect different periods of time. In addition the arts program promotes the idea of becoming cultural, teaching kids how to create arts by themselves and with the others, how to open themselves to others, how to feel connected to history, and how to think of people being successful. Children learned that there are many different ways of being a successful human being, to believe in themselves, to have an ongoing willingness to learn more, to think critically about the failures many artists experienced, to invent a new set of "invisible" role models, to be at peace with themselves, and to be expressive.

Therefore, it's an amazing visual Art History program, with many possibilities and a great value in the children's lives. Its application enriches every educational curriculum and it can be a great asset in the study of visual arts education.
CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion, Implications and Recommendations

As stated, the purpose of this action thesis was to examine the value of a developmentally appropriate visual art program for K-1 students and its implications for students learning the arts as part of their regular school curriculum.

In the literature review, I examined the value of a visual art program from three different perspectives. Firstly, I researched the relation between visual arts and visual arts education in the U.S. Secondly, I studied the specific Art History program in relation to the National and State Standards for Visual Arts Education in the U.S. Thirdly, I specified the relationship between the Art History program with regards to the developmental learning of students.

The above issues were examined in the review of the related literature to give context to the study. Data were collected from the children's and the creator's interview, the children's writing samples and paintings, the journal, my personal observations, and personal experience to show and draw conclusions as to the value of the program. In the following paragraphs I will discuss how and to what extent the research findings addressed the initial research purposes. Additionally, I will discuss my recommendation on how the arts program could be further researched and how the arts can be more widely supported throughout the educational community.
Discussion

The literature review highlighted the fact that the arts in the U.S. have long struggled to find an appropriate role in the school curriculum even though they represent a form of thinking and a way of knowing. Presence of the arts in our schools is basic and fundamental to learning. Presently science, high standards and new understandings about teaching and learning, are pushing art education back to the heart of the curriculum since the arts are essential parts of the human experience and allow human beings to communicate not only with words, but through music, theatre, dance, and the visual arts.

The value of the arts, if skilfully taught and integrated into the general education curriculum, can help to achieve many of the attempts at education reform by providing an effective bridge to understanding and appreciating other cultures, and improving students' academic skills. It is also supported in the literature review that the arts promote improvement and growth in other areas including students' cognitive skills, thinking skills, self-expression, attitude development, and social skills.

Throughout this study and the literature review it was demonstrated how children exposed in the visual arts and other similar programs became more perceptive about visual images and more open to different ways of thinking. The quality of art produced by students improved measurably as they learned about other artists, eras and cultures. Students learned how to critique and judge art, which sharpened students’ abilities to think independently, creatively, and to make reasoned judgments based on their own knowledge and trained observations. Each child also recorded on his painting his impression of the moment and that is the beauty of the
visual arts. Each child’s painting remained unique and different from his classmates and that provided plurality to the program.

Aesthetic, narrative, and reflective inquiries using the arts help children attain new conceptual language to organize and express their learning, and serve as an instrument for acquiring knowledge. Many basic academic skills can be explored, understood, and mastered if taught in conjunction with an art activity. The relationship between seeing, telling, and drawing, can be a significant aspect of teaching writing skills, as it was demonstrated in this study.

Students’ artistic expressions can provide teachers with additional ways of determining what they understood about facts and concepts. Drawing can be used to motivate the child to learn and write and this creative motivation can be provided in schools by using art to create an atmosphere that makes learning fun. Stimulation and involvement generated by hands-on experiences with art can help students learn academic subjects at all ages, but especially for K-1 students who are developing fine motor skills and cognitive process.

In January, 2001, the California Department of Education and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, published the Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools (Pre k-12), to promote effective teaching, to provide for the arts in schools. Through these standards, educators, and members of the educational community can create valuable arts program that can contribute to the children’s lives in their early developmental years.
Finally, the study about the relationship between the Art History program and the developmental learning theories of constructivism and the multiple intelligences provided the following findings.

Constructivism is a view of cognitive development that is a process in which children actively build systems of meaning and understanding of reality through their experiences and interactions. Children actively construct knowledge by continually assimilating and accommodating new information based on their prior knowledge.

John Dewey's work helped establish a line of inquiry into how creativity and comprehension in the arts nurtures the intellect. This research continues today, particularly in the work on the relationship between cognition and art being done by Howard Gardner and Project Zero at Harvard, who has developed a cognitive view of the arts. According to Gardener, the constant in this work has been the internality view of the mind that is continuously and actively working at understanding the world as presented by the senses. How the mind represents and symbolizes the world becomes the crucial link in the chain from the inside to the outside. To reverse directions, the linking of art and mind involves a complex chain that moves from the languages and symbol systems of the arts and how these need different representations, to the nature of the corresponding mental representations of the mind and how these are in turn involved in various human intelligences. (as cited by Roper and Davis, 2000, p.226)

Gardner pointed out the presence of these stronger and weaker areas in each individual in his well-known theory of Multiple Intelligences (linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic), which suggests that meaning can be arrived at only by combining the intellect with the senses. Results from
work with children in Project Zero indicated that the arts are included within these other intelligences. Use of the arts creates an environment that can expand awareness and reach beyond traditional classroom approaches that usually address only linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities.

Drawing can create a bridge between the ideas in a child's head and the blank piece of paper on the desk. Drawing is one way young children gather and organize ideas for writing and is one of the primary ways young children can communicate. Children should be encouraged to use all of their communication potential to make sense of the writing process. Learning to write is the process of gradually differentiating and consolidating the separate meanings of two forms of graphic symbolism, drawing, and writing. Both are foreshadowed by young children's scribbling. Thus, for young children, written words may be objects, like drawn objects. Children often combine writing and drawing by including written names or letters among the drawn forms on the page. Young children frequently interchange the terms draw and write as they discuss their work. Drawing may not precede writing, but rather may develop simultaneously with it. The transition may not be from speech to writing, but from drawing to writing, as the connection to language is made.

This transition to the initial understanding of the symbol system of writing (using lines and curves of letters to represent names of entities) evolves from understanding the symbol system of drawing (using lines and curves to represent objects) Children capture characters, objects, actions, and settings in words and pictures as a bridge to creating written whole words. These symbols acquired in preschool year's access the basic symbol systems refined during the elementary years.
In education, we often deliver instructions to young and vulnerable students in the form of useful future competencies and have focused on teaching verbally based, orally delivered curricula. Children whose natural competencies allowed them to use their skills as artists, artisans, architects, and engineers in spite of a lack of attention and training in these modalities, have been undervalued. Education has failed to serve students with average skills and failed to teach them how to capitalize on their own strengths. Drawing, like speaking, was a natural form of human communication. Its place in the curriculum recedes as the grade level increases, to the extent that no place of honor recognized in our school diplomas for excellence in art.

Current work in neurobiology and physics brings new understanding of just how important engaging with the visual arts can be for broadening neural circuitry involvement in the brain. This research makes sense to us because of our growing awareness of the ubiquitous power of visual images, moving and still. We realize that schooling has to enable students to process and produce information more rapidly than ever and through simultaneous use of new forms and means.

All of these sources reviewed in literature review, firmly supported the expected basics of education, such as reading and writing extended texts, but they urged the acknowledgement of the potential of enhance learning and rapid processing that integration of the arts provides. The visual arts with accompanying focus of attention on details of features, such as color, form and line, ensure attention to perception and engagement of the 'visual brain', which, in turn, resonates with remembered experience and linguistic representation. Manipulation of these features of the visual arts, from drawing or finger painting in early childhood to the complexities of creating sequences on video, provides essential opportunity for
focusing joint attention, taking on numerous roles, bringing memory to external form and developing language. All of these skills are critical for academic achievement and underlie literacy and numeric as traditionally conceived.

The results of the research and the opinions of the participants in this study were fully supported by the literature review. Specifically, as far as the art history program developing the children’s reading skills, all sources of data (the creator, the instructor, parents and students) support that the artists’ stories during the class helped the students develop specific art vocabulary and made a great impression with the children who seem to remember details from the artist’s lives and were able to narrate the stories about the artists. The part of each art history session in which the class would spend some time reviewing previous week’s artist life and paintings examined the students reading skills as well. From the students’ answers to specific questions about the artist’s life, studies, paintings and techniques that the class had previously studied, I could find out what they remembered. The more the class could remember one week later, the more their reading skills had developed. Gradually, towards the end of the three months of art instructions, all students developed in their focusing and reading skills and they participated more to the review part of the lesson.

Development of the children’s reading skills was also supported from the parents’ experiences with the children. After the first month of the introduction of the Art History program to the students, the parents shared information from the art classes that the students were discussing with them at home. Some of the parents familiar with visual arts expressed how they impressed they were with the details that their children would know about the art and or the artist.
Another part of the program that contributed to the development of the students' reading skills was "a visit to the school’s art gallery" at the end of each class, when the students would spend a few minutes in the display area to see the previous week’s paintings. This seemed to be the most important part of their class because during the visit, the students would have the chance to review the previous week’s artist and paintings, practice the art vocabulary they had learned which builds on their reading skills. Towards the end of the observation period, more students would visit the art gallery mostly to locate and admire their own painting among the display.

Contribution of the art program to the children’s writing skills were again supported through all sources of data (the creator, the instructor, parents and students). Children’s writing skills developed more fully with the application of the art program. Specifically, for the drawing part, the creator of the program stated that at the introduction of the program the children’s paintings were just a mass of lines but as they were gradually becoming more familiar with the program, their writing skills were developed and their drawings started to be more accurate as compared to the original masterpiece. As an instructor from my personal observations I recorded improvements both in kindergartners’ and first graders’ writing skills. Students were participating in every class, were trying to complete their drawings on time, and were paying more attention. Moreover, they started to feel more and more confident about their drawing skills and their paintings had better images.

The development of the attention span of the students before, during, and after the teaching of the Art History program, had increased and was demonstrating by the students’ concentration and focus on the procedure of the Art History program. The personal observations
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about the development of the students' attention span at the last month of the observation period showed both age groups were progressing in their focusing skills, although some children who were having a difficulty focusing seem to need more time. Towards the end of the observation period, it was evident that all children had made significant progress in their attention span since the beginning of the academic school year.

An amazing story that was related to the development of the student's focusing skills also took place one month after the introduction of the art history program to the students. A parent shared with the instructor that a young student, after one month of instructions was able to identify a specific artist and his paintings through the family library, something that impressed everybody.

An important part of the program that is related to multiculturalism was the artists' stories, which definitely promoted different cultural perspectives and provided valuable knowledge to the children. The most important value of the stories is that the artists' lives can become examples for the children's lives and their future. This experience of reading and knowing about artists and their works is something that the students will appreciate later in their lives. The integrated Art/Art History program also offered examples of diversity and modeled positive qualities of character. As the children were exposed to various artists' life stories, they learned that there are many different ways of being a successful human being.

The specific program is developmentally appropriate for the children. The literature review covered the areas and value of Constructivism and the theory of Multiple Intelligences in which the theorists presented arguments for the fact that the visual arts support the intellectual development of the children and stimulate their knowledge. For the same issue, the creator stated
that the program was inspired by Lev Vygotsky’s learning theory, where children scaffold the knowledge by structuring, learning and telling.

Another aspect that the research examined was whether the specific art program met the expectations of the California State Standards for Visual Arts Education. The literature review covered the decision of the State of California to establish State Standards for Visual Arts Education and their context for K-1 students. The creator mentioned that it was the school’s philosophy that each and every aspect of the curriculum met these standards. From the instructor’s personal study on the State Standards, and after teaching the program for almost one and a half years, it was found that many aspects of the program were created to meet the State Standards. More specifically, based on the text of the California State Standards for Visual Arts Education, the expectancies for K-1 students are covered through the context and the procedure of the program. All five fields (artistic perception, creative expression, historical and cultural context, aesthetic valuing, and connections, relationships, applications) demonstrated throughout.

**Implications and Recommendations**

The Art History program is a unique and integrated art/art history program in which students model their art, using postcard sized reproductions of artists’ work, on the lines, shapes, and coloration of the master’s work. This program seemed to be promoting a positive impact for their interest in the arts and artists.

This program's special purpose was to allow children of different ages to become aware of art history of different periods, as well as the artists, their special techniques, the themes of their paintings and their general influence on each stage of art history. It also developed their
drawing/painting-writing skills, reading skills and attention span. The specific class had a multicultural focus as it integrated knowledge of artists from all over the world and presented different cultures, ideas and beliefs. This multicultural emphasis proved to be valuable for the children in all aspects of their learning.

After teaching and researching the arts program for almost one and a half years, I realized its value and decided to let the community know of its possibilities. In December 2001, June 2002, and December 2002, I organized three different art exhibitions with the children's paintings, two in a place out of the school after a social event that the school planned and one on the school site. I invited the children's families and friends and people from the community to learn more about the program and admire the children's paintings. Everybody was impressed and amazed with the exhibition and the children's artistic creations.

At the same time, I dedicated several articles at the school's monthly newsletter providing information about the program and daily experiences with the students at the art classes. In appendix 4 there is a copy/issue of one newsletter in which I described the amazing story of a young student after one month of instructions in the regular art classes.

Also, I applied and was accepted as a presenter at the Annual California Kindergarten Conference organized by the California Kindergarten Association. During the conference in January 2003, I will present the results of my action thesis and share with educators around California, my experiences as an instructor of the Art History program. For me it will be a valuable experience and there I will also have the chance to introduce the program to many educators and administrators and invite them to examine and use the arts program in their classrooms.
As a student at the university, where I did this study as part of my action thesis I presented the Art History program to my professors and classmates, in several occasions in order to receive feedback from professional educators with experience in education. At the same time since all my classmates were related to education this was another way to inform the community about the arts program and its value.

Furthermore, the action thesis will be added to the University’s archives and will be posted in electronic version to the University’s library site. From there it will be accessible to all people interested in the specific topic of arts education around the world. Some people may decide to further study the arts program or may decide to implement the arts program throughout various educational settings around the world.

In a few months, I complete my sojourn in the U.S. and I return back to my home country, Greece. I will try to explore several applications of the program in different settings there and will become more involved with the arts. I will try to examine if there are art institutes that would be interested to examine the application of this multicultural art history program in relevant settings. Greece is part of the European Union and as a country has a great past and history in the arts. Greek artists have been the ambassadors of the arts thousands of years ago. In such a country the importance and the value of the visual arts in people’s lives, is well accepted.

Moreover, as a Greek educator, I will examine the possibilities of the application of the art program in public or private educational settings in Greece. It is almost certain that there will be Greek or International educational settings that will be interested to learn more about the program and its value to the children’s lives and educational experiences. It would be nice after
all, for my own further research and conclusions about the program, to examine if the application in a different setting will provide the same remarkable results.

Finally, over the long term, another perspective that I will examine in cooperation with the author of the program, would be a possible publication of the Art History program either in the U.S. or in Europe. So far, there is nothing written about the program and it is my belief that such a valuable arts program should be accessible in several ways to as many people as possible. My dream is to find out one day that the specific program was approved and adopted by the State of California to be used in the public education system or that private educational institutions will adopt the specific program as part of their curricula. If possible I would like to see something similar happening in Europe, as well.

The arts are central to how people see themselves, what they believe about themselves, and how they present themselves to others. Art represents a place in which borrowing, blending, and sharing of culture can be manifested. The future depends on how well the magic and creativity of the arts is integrated into the lives of future generations, and that process must begin by ensuring that the arts are essential learning for all children, everywhere.
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1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION
Processing, Analyzing, and Responding to Sensory Information Through the Language and Skills Unique to the Visual Arts
Students perceive and respond to works of art, objects in nature, events, and the environment. They also use the vocabulary of the visual arts to express their observations.

Develop Perceptual Skills and Visual Arts Vocabulary
1.1 Recognize and describe simple patterns found in the environment and works of art.
1.2 Name art materials (e.g., clay, paint, and crayons) introduced in lessons.

Analyze Art Elements and Principles of Design
1.3 Identify the elements of art (line, color, shape/form, texture, value, space) in the environment and in works of art, emphasizing line, color, and shape/form.

2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION
Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Visual Arts
Students apply artistic processes and skills, using a variety of media to communicate meaning and intent in original works of art.

Skills, Processes, Materials, and Tools
2.1 Use lines, shapes/forms, and colors to make patterns.
2.2 Demonstrate beginning skill in the use of tools and processes, such as the use of scissors, glue, and paper in creating a three-dimensional construction.
2.3 Make a collage with cut or torn paper shapes/forms.

Communication and Expression Through Original Works of Art
2.4 Paint pictures expressing ideas about family and neighborhood.
2.5 Use lines in drawings and paintings to express feelings.
2.6 Use geometric shapes/forms (circle, triangle, square) in a work of art.
2.7 Create a three-dimensional form, such as a real or imaginary animal.
3.0 **HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT**

**Understanding the Historical Contributions and Cultural Dimensions of the Visual Arts**

Students analyze the role and development of the visual arts in past and present cultures throughout the world, noting human diversity as it relates to the visual arts and artists.

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**Role and Development of the Visual Arts**

3.1 Describe functional and nonutilitarian art seen in daily life; that is, works of art that are used versus those that are only viewed.

3.2 Identify and describe works of art that show people doing things together.

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**Diversity of the Visual Arts**

3.3 Look at and discuss works of art from a variety of times and places.

4.0 **AESTHETIC VALUING**

**Responding to, Analyzing, and Making Judgments About Works in the Visual Arts**

Students analyze, assess, and derive meaning from works of art, including their own, according to the elements of art, the principles of design, and aesthetic qualities.

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**Derive Meaning**

4.1 Discuss their own works of art, using appropriate art vocabulary (e.g., color, shape/form, texture).

4.2 Describe what is seen (including both literal and expressive content) in selected works of art.

**Make Informed Judgments**

4.3 Discuss how and why they made a specific work of art.

4.4 Give reasons why they like a particular work of art they made, using appropriate art vocabulary.
5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

Connecting and Applying What Is Learned in the Visual Arts to Other Art Forms and Subject Areas and to Careers

Students apply what they learned in the visual arts across subject areas. They develop competencies and creative skills in problem solving, communication, and management of time and resources that contribute to lifelong learning and career skills. They also learn about careers in and related to the visual arts.

Connections and Applications

5.1 Draw geometric shapes/forms (e.g., circles, squares, and triangles) and repeat them in dance/movement sequences.

5.2 Look at and draw something used every day (e.g., scissors, toothbrush, fork) and describe how the object is used.

Visual Literacy

5.3 Point out images (e.g., photographs, paintings, murals, ceramics, sculptures) and symbols found at home, in school, and in the community, including national and state symbols and icons.

Career and Career-Related Skills

5.4 Discuss the various works of art (e.g., ceramics, paintings, sculpture) that artists create and the media used.
1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

Processing, Analyzing, and Responding to Sensory Information Through the Language and Skills Unique to the Visual Arts

Students perceive and respond to works of art, objects in nature, events, and the environment. They also use the vocabulary of the visual arts to express their observations.

Develop Perceptual Skills and Visual Arts Vocabulary

1.1 Describe and replicate repeated patterns in nature, in the environment, and in works of art.

1.2 Distinguish among various media when looking at works of art (e.g., clay, paints, drawing materials).

Analyze Art Elements and Principles of Design

1.3 Identify the elements of art in objects in nature, in the environment, and in works of art, emphasizing line, color, shape/form, and texture.

2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Visual Arts

Students apply artistic processes and skills, using a variety of media to communicate meaning and intent in original works of art.

Skills, Processes, Materials, and Tools

2.1 Use texture in two-dimensional and three-dimensional works of art.

2.2 Mix secondary colors from primary colors and describe the process.

2.3 Demonstrate beginning skill in the manipulation and use of sculptural materials (clay, paper, and papier maché) to create form and texture in works of art.
Communication and Expression Through Original Works of Art

2.4 Plan and use variations in line, shape/form, color, and texture to communicate ideas or feelings in works of art.
2.5 Create a representational sculpture based on people, animals, or buildings.
2.6 Draw or paint a still life, using secondary colors.
2.7 Use visual and actual texture in original works of art.
2.8 Create artwork based on observations of actual objects and everyday scenes.

3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Understanding the Historical Contributions and Cultural Dimensions of the Visual Arts

Students analyze the role and development of the visual arts in past and present cultures throughout the world, noting human diversity as it relates to the visual arts and artists.

Role and Development of the Visual Arts

3.1 Recognize and discuss the design of everyday objects from various time periods and cultures.
3.2 Identify and describe various subject matter in art (e.g., landscapes, seascapes, portraits, still life).

Diversity of the Visual Arts

3.3 View and then describe art from various cultures.
3.4 Identify art objects (e.g., Japanese screen painting, Mexican tin art, African masks) from various cultures and describe what they have in common and how they differ.

4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

Responding to, Analyzing, and Making Judgments About Works in the Visual Arts

Students analyze, assess, and derive meaning from works of art, including their own, according to the elements of art, the principles of design, and aesthetic qualities.

Derive Meaning

4.1 Discuss works of art created in the classroom, focusing on selected elements of art (e.g., shape/form, texture, line, color).
4.2 Identify and describe various reasons for making art.

Make Informed Judgments

4.3 Describe how and why they made a selected work of art, focusing on the media and technique.
4.4 Select something they like about their work of art and something they would change.
5.0 CONNECTIONS, RELATIONSHIPS, APPLICATIONS

Connecting and Applying What Is Learned in the Visual Arts to Other Art Forms and Subject Areas and to Careers

Students apply what they learned in the visual arts across subject areas. They develop competencies and creative skills in problem solving, communication, and management of time and resources that contribute to lifelong learning and career skills. They also learn about careers in and related to the visual arts.

Connections and Applications

5.1 Clap out rhythmic patterns found in the lyrics of music and use symbols to create visual representations of the patterns.
5.2 Compare and contrast objects of folk art from various time periods and cultures.

Visual Literacy

5.3 Identify and sort pictures into categories according to the elements of art emphasized in the works (e.g., color, line, shape/form, and texture).

Career and Career-Related Skills

5.4 Describe objects designed by artists (e.g., furniture, appliances, cars) that are used at home and at school.
APPENDIX 2
CONTENT STANDARDS:

Language Arts

Grade: Kindergarten

6/15/99
Language Arts
Grade Level - Kindergarten

Standard 1:
Reading - Word Analysis and Systematic Vocabulary Development

Students understand the basic components of written materials and are able to hear and manipulate the discrete sounds in words.

Concepts About Print:
1.1 Identify the front cover, back cover and title page of a book
1.2 Follow words from left to right and top to bottom of a printed page
1.3 Recognize that text carries meaning
1.4 Recognize that sentences in print are made up of separate words
1.5 Distinguish letters from words
1.6 Recognize and name all upper and lowercase letters

Phonemic Awareness: (auditory)
1.7 Distinguish and use initial consonants and the final sound in single-syllable words
1.8 Blend vowel-consonant sounds to make words or syllables
1.9 Identify rhyming words in response to spoken words
1.10 Distinguish orally stated one-syllable words into shared beginning or ending sounds (e.g., can/cat; top/mop)
1.11 Track auditorily each word in a sentence, each syllable in a word and each sound in real and nonsense words

Decoding and Word Recognition:
1.12 Match all consonant and short vowel sounds to appropriate letters
1.13 Read simple one-syllable and high frequency (sight) words
1.14 Understand that as letters of words change, so do the sounds and the meanings of the words (alphabetic principle)

Vocabulary and Concept Development
1.15 Identify and sort common words from basic categories (e.g., colors, shapes, foods)
1.16 Describe common objects and events in both general and specific language

Standard 2:
Reading - Comprehension

Students identify the basic facts and ideas in what they have read, heard, or viewed, drawing on such strategies as generating questions and comparing information to prior knowledge.

Comprehension and Analysis:
2.1 Use pictures and context to make predictions about story content
2.2 Connect information and events in texts to life experiences
2.3 Retell familiar stories
2.4 Clarify meaning by asking and answering questions about essential elements of text

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LANGUAGE ARTS
Grade Level - KINDERGARTEN

Standard 3: READING - LITERARY ANALYSIS AND RESPONSE

Students listen and respond to stories based on familiar characters, themes, plots, and setting.

Narrative Analysis of Grade Level
Appropriate Text:

3.1 distinguish fantasy from realistic text
3.2 identify different text genres, including everyday print materials such as storybooks, poems, newspapers, signs, labels
3.3 identify characters, settings, and key events

Standard 4: WRITING - WRITING STRATEGIES

Students write words and brief sentences that are legible.

Organization and Focus:

4.1 use letters and phonetically-spelled words to write about experiences, stories, people, objects, or events
4.2 write consonant-vowel-consonant words (demonstrate the alphabetic principle)
4.3 write using a left to right, top to bottom progression

Penmanship:

4.4 write uppercase and lowercase letters independently, attending to form and spatial alignment

Standard 5: None

Standard 6: LISTENING AND SPEAKING - LISTENING AND SPEAKING STRATEGIES

Students listen and respond to oral messages and speak in clear and coherent sentences.

Comprehension:

6.1 understand and follow one- and two-step oral directions
6.2 share information, opinions and questions, speaking audibly in coherent, complete sentences
LANGUAGE ARTS
Grade Level - KINDERGARTEN

Standard 7:
LISTENING AND SPEAKING - SPEAKING
APPLICATIONS (GENRES AND THEIR
CHARACTERISTICS)

Students deliver oral presentations about
familiar experiences or interests.

Using the Kindergarten speaking
strategies outlined in the previous
standard, students:

7.1 describe people, places, things,
location, size, color, shape and action
7.2 recite short poems, rhymes, and
songs
7.3 relate an experience or creative
story in a logical sequence

Standard 8:
ORAL AND WRITTEN ENGLISH
LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

Students use knowledge of standard
English conventions in their oral and
written work.

Sentence Structure:

8.1 recognize and use correct word
order in sentences when speaking

Spelling:

8.2 use phonetic knowledge and
sounds of the alphabet to spell
independently
CONTENT STANDARDS:

Language Arts

Grade: First

6/15/99
LANGUAGE ARTS
Grade Level - FIRST

Standard 1:
READING - WORD ANALYSIS AND SYSTEMATIC VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Students understand the organization and contents of books. They use phonics, syllabication, and word relationships to decode and pronounce new words.

Concepts About Print:
1.1 match oral words to printed words (1-to-1 correspondence)
1.2 Identify the title and author of a book
1.3 Identify letters, words and sentences
1.4 use knowledge of basic capitalization and punctuation when reading

Phonemic Awareness: (Auditory)
1.5 distinguish initial, medial and final sounds in single-syllable words
1.6 distinguish long and short vowel sounds in orally stated single-syllable words
1.7 create and state a series of rhyming including consonant blends
1.8 add, delete or change target sounds to change words
1.9 blend one to four sound words stated orally into one, including consonant blends and digraphs
1.10 segment words of two to five sounds into their individual sounds, including consonant blends
1.11 distinguish orally stated one-syllable words into shared beginning or ending sounds

Decoding and Word Recognition:
1.12 generate the sounds from all the letters and letter patterns, including consonant blends and long- and short-vowel patterns (phonograms), and combine those sounds into recognizable words
1.13 use beginning and ending consonants and long and short-vowel sounds to decode single-syllable words
1.14 read common, irregular sight words
1.15 introduce and expose to vowel digraphs and r-controlled letter sound associations to read words
1.16 Identify compound words and contractions
1.17 Identify suffixes and root words
1.18 Know and use common word families when reading
1.19 read aloud with fluency in a manner that sounds like natural speech

Vocabulary & Concept Development:
1.20 classify grade-appropriate categories of words

Standard 2:
READING - COMPREHENSION

Students identify the basic facts and ideas in what they have read, heard, or viewed, drawing on such strategies as generating essential questions and comparing information from several sources.

Comprehension and Analysis:
2.1 respond to who, what, where, when, how questions
2.2 follow simple written instructions
2.3 use context clues to identify word and sentence meanings
2.4 confirm predictions about what will happen next in text by "reading part that tells"
2.5 relate background knowledge to textual information
2.6 describe the central idea of simple expository or narrative information
2.7 retell clearly beginnings, middles and endings of stories
2.8 summarize simple narrative or expository passages orally or through dramatization
2.9 reread sentences when meaning is not clear
LANGUAGE ARTS
Grade Level - FIRST

Standard 3:
READING - LITERARY ANALYSIS AND RESPONSE

Students read and respond to a wide variety of children’s literature, distinguishing between the structural features of text, and literary terms or elements (theme, plot, setting, and characters).

Narrative Analysis of Grade Level Appropriate Text:

3.1 Identify and describe the story elements of plot, setting, and characters including the beginnings, middles and endings of stories
3.2 Describe the role and contribution of authors and illustrators to print materials
3.3 Recollect, talk, and write about books read during the year

Standard 4:
WRITING - WRITING STRATEGIES

Students write clear, and coherent sentences and paragraphs that elaborate a central impression, using appropriate stages of the writing process.

Organization and Focus:

4.1 Select a focus when writing
4.2 Use descriptive words when writing

Penmanship:

4.3 Print legibly and space letters, words and sentences appropriately

Standard 5:
WRITING - WRITING APPLICATIONS (GENRES AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS)

Students write texts that describe and explain objects, events and experiences that are familiar to them, demonstrating command of standard English and the drafting, research and organizational strategies as outlined Standard 4.

Using the Grade 1 writing strategies outlined in the previous standard

5.1 Write brief narratives describing an experience
5.2 Write brief descriptions of a real object, person, place, or event using sensory details
5.3 Read their own writing aloud to others
LANGUAGE ARTS
Grade Level - FIRST

Standard 6:
LISTENING AND SPEAKING - LISTENING AND SPEAKING STRATEGIES

Students listen and respond critically to oral messages and speak in clear and coherent sentences that guide and inform the listener's understanding of key ideas, using appropriate phrasing, pitch and stress.

Comprehension:
6.1 listen attentively by orienting self to speaker
6.2 ask questions to clear up confusion about a topic
6.3 give, restate and follow simple two-step directions

Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication:
6.4 select a focus when speaking
6.5 use descriptive words when speaking about people, places, things, and events

Standard 7:
LISTENING AND SPEAKING - SPEAKING APPLICATIONS (GENRES AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS)

Students deliver oral presentations about familiar experiences or interests that are organized around a coherent theme, demonstrating command of standard English and the organizational and delivery strategies outlined in Standard 6.

Using the Grade 1 speaking strategies outlined in the previous standard, students

7.1 recite poems, rhymes, songs, and stories
7.2 retell stories using basic story grammar, sequencing story events by answering who, what, where, when, how and why questions
7.3 relate an important event in life using simple sequencing
7.4 provide descriptions with careful attention to sensory detail

Standard 8:
ORAL AND WRITTEN ENGLISH LANGUACE CONVENTIONS

Students use knowledge of standard English conventions, including punctuation, capitalization, usage, spelling, and sentence and paragraph structure in their oral and written work.

Sentence Structure:
8.1 write and speak in complete, coherent sentences

Grammar:
8.2 identify and use singular and plural nouns
8.3 identify and use contractions (e.g., isn't, aren't, can't, won't) and singular possessives (e.g., s', my/mine, his/her/their/hers, your/your's) in writing and speaking

Punctuation:
8.4 use period, exclamation mark or question mark at the end of sentences

Capitalization:
8.5 capitalize first word of a sentence, names of people, and the pronoun "I"

Spelling:
8.6 spell three and four letter short vowel words and other sight words correctly
APPENDIX 3
I like to go swimming. I enjoy the sea and the sea animal.

My name is and I am a student. I like my school. I love art.

What I like most in the arts is paintings. I also like to create my own paintings.

November 2002

*A vase of flowers*: October 2002
Writing and painting samples Boy Kindergarten

My name is Sam
I like sheep
I love art.

I like to swim
I enjoy the sea.

September 2002

I like most
at heart is sadness
I also like to paint
My own paintings

November 2002

‘Apples’: September 2002

October 2002
I like to go swimming.
I enjoy the sea and sea animals.

My name is and I am a student.
I like my school.
I love art.

September 2002

October 2002

What I like most in the arts is painting.
I also like to create my own paintings.

November 2002

'The Bedroom': November 2002
APPENDIX 4
The unique ability of children to accumulate and consolidate knowledge has never ceased to amaze me. Channeling this ability with the purpose of enriching a child's personality is among the most demanding tasks of a preschool curriculum. I have been trying to respond to this obligation through a variety of original and unique programs. When I first joined the staff of this school implementing an original Art History Program, two weeks ago I realized that the influence of the program extends beyond the classroom.

Our mother of... came and shared with me the following: Angus, who has been participating in the program for about a month, was going through the family library when he came across a book of Vincent Van Gogh. He is and hasn't learned to read yet.

However, he was able to recognize the artist's paintings and techniques, based on his recollections of the Art History session on Van Gogh.

Experiences like this make me more optimistic and give me the strength to continue my efforts. Seeing the students appreciate the value of art is a rewarding experience that makes me remember why I became a teacher.