

AN INTERPRETIVE STUDY OF JUNIOR HIGH ART EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS
OF SUPPORT

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to several people. The first is my late mother, Yvonne A. Barnes who gave me the courage and strength to achieve my wildest dreams. Next, my loving husband, Brian D. Smith II who cheered with me on the good days and wiped my tears on the bad. Finally, my close friends and family-a win for me is a win for us all.

Abstract

Background: As an educator with experience in multiple districts, I noticed a difference in support between schools where the arts were unappreciated and schools where art courses were popular. Professional development at these schools was primarily district-based and focused on test scores. Professional development at my location that emphasized on the arts was more authentic and geared towards my content. Instructional coaches (I.C.) provide an extra layer of much-needed support to specific core content areas such as science, math, or language arts. Elective areas, specifically fine art educators, lack the additional support that their core content counterparts receive.

Purpose: This study aimed to explore support for fine art educators, including professional development and funding. Professional development provides educators with opportunities to sharpen their skills and excel in their careers. Funding is vital for all government-supported schools because money is disseminated on a per-pupil basis. Regarding fine arts, funding is the difference between the quality and quantity of supplies students use. **Methods:** A qualitative case study approach was employed in the study, and it is considered best in discovering how art educators construct their realities and interactions with their social worlds. Due to COVID-19, social network sampling selected five junior high art educators from local school districts. Each person participated in a 30–45-minute individual interview. Next, the focus group met to continue follow-up and check for new ideas and themes. Lastly, each person participated in a second separate interview to observe if any shifts in thinking occurred. Data was manually transcribed and then cross-checked for increased accuracy. Member checks

were used to ensure correct interpretation of information gathered from interviews.

Results. Results revealed that all the participants valued meaningful relationships with their students and credited them to success with projects and behavior. All participants had a goal they were working towards in their career. Collaboration was critical amongst the participants in their building, at a district level and online. Participants also strive to create worthwhile experiences for their students in the classroom based on their prior knowledge. Emergent themes included relationships, goals, collaboration, experiences, and advocacy. **Conclusion.** All five participants reported receiving some form of professional development regardless of its usefulness through their district. In addition, most of the participants said positive relationships with their colleagues acted as an additional layer of support. Each participant's idea of support varied due to lived experiences both inside and outside of the classroom. Their unique lens influence art education and thus spark a conversation about this population.

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Chapter I

Chapter I includes a personal narrative about the researcher's experience in education, the background of this study, providing a frame of reference for the research, a statement of the problem, and the purpose of the study. This chapter explains the research question and definitions of terms that will occur throughout the research and an overview of the theoretical framework utilized in the study.

Personal Narrative

I did not enter education for the money. Like many educators I have met along the way, I desire to share my knowledge with future generations in hopes they will surpass me and be an asset to their respective communities. Due to a less than desirable score on the ACT, the College of Education at the University of Missouri Columbia did not accept me. Since I knew I wanted to teach art, I decided to major in Fine Arts, emphasizing ceramics and pursuing certification once I completed my undergraduate degree.

Once I completed my Master of Arts in Teaching degree and obtained my art certification for Missouri, I decided to teach in a public school district in one of the larger cities in Missouri. The time I spent in those two elementary city schools, one on the north side and the other on the south side, was brief, but I learned a valuable lesson: how to make do. I did not receive a mentor teacher, there was no professional development outside of the new hire orientation, and my budget for materials was non-existent. All art teachers in the district did not share ideas or discuss our lack of supplies.

After relocating to a city outside of Houston, Texas, where I accepted a junior high art position, I experienced ample funds, materials, and support from my campus. The art department had a little over 300 hundred students total and thousands of dollars to spend on supplies for them. I was able to do projects with my students that I did not have the opportunity to attempt until I was in college. This new location allowed me to purchase any item I saw fit for my classroom and many professional development opportunities. I would often reflect on the earlier part of my career when I was without support. Listening to other art educators in the district discuss projects and materials at their respective schools and how the administration handled professional development made me curious about their idea of support in Fine Arts education.

Background

After teaching in several schools ranging from Pre-K-12 grade throughout Missouri, I finally landed in an independent school district outside Houston, Texas. It was here where I experienced a mentor teacher and professional development outside of district requirements.

At the beginning of my fourth year of teaching, I finally received a mentor teacher. I assumed that first-year teachers received one automatically, but that was not the case. Taylor (2018) notes that subject-specific teachers' needs, such as fine art educators, are often not met when placed in professional learning groups on their campus because they do not have colleagues to collaborate with within the building. By collaborating with my mentor, who taught other art sections, we shared an understanding of the needs of content-specific teachers and how to adapt the information to fit our classroom. I was the

only art teacher at my previous campuses, and I found it challenging to experiment by trial and error.

There was some professional development (PD) days explicitly reserved for fine art teachers in addition to choice PD days my campus administration provided. Fine art PD days offered a space for like-minded individuals to share success and struggles in the classroom. The administration on my campus and two others provided PD options for the staff of all three campuses for two years in a row. Our campus paid for PD opportunities outside of the school district for my mentor and me.

Fine art PDs and open house events for district art shows created spaces for art educators to congregate and share things on their campus. At one of those open house events, I learned from my colleagues that every campus administration did not fund art educators' out-of-district conference expenses. Furthermore, all schools did not give their art department the total amount of money allowed to purchase art materials for students. This conversation led me to question the support art junior high art educators receive.

Statement of Problem

For teachers to be successful in the classroom, they need proper training and resources. Schools pair new teachers with a mentor. This mentor is supposed to show them how to navigate through the school building and the teaching world. The experience is not much different for elective teachers, specifically art educators. Typical core content areas such as math, science, and social studies have an Instructional Coach (I.C.) available to discuss lesson plans, classroom management, data, and bring teams together.

I.C.s act as an extra level of well-needed and valued support for teachers. Elena Aguilar (2012) explains,

They can support the process of gathering data, information and resources so that change can be effective. They can use an inquiry process approach to ask questions and explore root causes. Coaches often see the parts and the whole at the same time -- this is essential in systems change.

Art educators are available to help art educators (outside of a mentor for new teachers, of course) is just one thing that art educators lack. Suppose it was not for local organizations supporting art educators and a sparse number of district-wide art teacher professional developments. In that case, they might not have the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with their peers.

Art educators also run into issues with support regarding funding. An article titled *Do Districts Fund Schools Fairly* shared the results of a study over ten years from 1993-4 to 2003-4 school years (2007). The article discusses a provision after a 1993 Texas Supreme Court order to equalize public school spending. The provision known as the “Robin Hood” law required property-rich school districts to give money to poorer school districts in the state. This transfer of funds from one community to another helps with supplies and programs.

Purpose of the study

Art educators can often be aggregated by grade level when campuses provide professional development. Experience in multiple school districts has taught me that some sections provide art educators with more support than others. Similar to other

subject areas, support for fine arts educators aids in growth and development. The difference between art courses and other subject areas is class sizes, information art educators may or may not be receiving, materials, and funding. Since some subject areas, such as elective courses, require more hands-on materials to teach their content effectively, they must have a proper budget to provide resources to their students. When one school or a group of schools are not getting the same amount of money for their programs, students suffer, and the school district cannot showcase artistic talent. In an article that compares the relevance of art education from the pre-1980s to the present day, Greenwald (2018) states, “The arts were part of everyday life, like shop-class. There was nothing special about them, but there was a sense that they belonged to the curriculum, that they belonged to everyone”. For the time being, fine arts programs are still alive and seemingly well in most major districts in Houston, TX.

The state determines general spending for students on a per-pupil basis. When determining per-pupil expenditures, teacher salary, teacher course load, and student enrollment play a considerable role (Roza, 2009). Meaning the more significant the student population, the more money the school receives. To date, there has been little to no formal evaluation of art educator support in school districts that service metropolitan Houston. Additionally, no standard work exists that exclusively looks at art grades 6-8. Conducting a qualitative case study to understand curious happenings in the various junior high fine arts departments will determine art educators’ perceptions of support.

Research Question

Few studies have explored the deeper perspectives of fine art educators to understand how they interpret support from their respective school districts. Information is sparse as to what art educators do when they do not feel adequately supported.

This study will examine these issues through the following research question: What are junior high art educators' perceptions regarding professional development and funding and their effects on art education?

Definition of Terms

Art Educator. The artist educator is guiding students to take on an approach to pieces that allows them to move from recognizing to analyzing and influences a visual and intellectual process (Pringle, 2009)

Support. To assist or help (Merriam-Webster, n.d., 2020)

Theoretical Framework

The study aligns with the constructivist theoretical framework. Social constructivism is a part of experiential education. Quay (2003) explains, "at the center of experiential education is adaptive experience, moving towards future improved experiences via a process which combines experience and reflection." Social constructivism is based on the work of Lev Vygotsky due to his focus on the social and collaborative nature of learning. Vygotsky (1978) declared, "learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human psychological function." Co-constructed learning tends to come before development.

How a learner constructs their understanding of the world is a subset of how it could be understood. Constructivism embraces the idea that the learners' meaning stems from their direct experiences with the world (Quay, 2003). Rabkin and Redmond (2005) note that arts-integrated rooms “. . . develop essential tools of thinking itself: careful observation of the world; mental representation of what is observed or imagined; abstraction from complexity; pattern recognition and development; qualitative judgment; symbolic, metaphoric, and allegorical representation”. The researcher was interested in how junior high art educators construct their knowledge and experiences. The study ultimately answered the research question by using reflecting on situations and opportunities during participants' careers.

Conclusion

This qualitative study has five chapters. Chapter I gives an overview of the topic, problem and purpose statement, research question, and definitions. Afterward, Chapter II reviews the current literature involving art educators, funding, support for art educators, culturally relevant pedagogy, and art education and social education. Chapter III provides a detailed description of the methodology, including procedures, interview questions, and data collection. Next, Chapter IV presents the findings using five main themes. Lastly, Chapter V wraps up the study with a discussion of findings, implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Introduction

Art education is at its best when art educators have the necessary materials needed to be successful. Lauren Hess (2017) notes that art educators often work in isolation, meaning no one in their building can discuss subject-specific challenges with them. Art educators must have some space to share their frustrations. According to Van Ostrand et al. (2020), schools and districts use more federal, state, and local funds for coaching and coaching programs. Providing teachers with support and coaching opportunities leads to their success and student success. Critically looking at relevant literature about support, funding, critically relevant pedagogy, art educators, and socially responsive art are vital to this study.

The first section, instruction for art educators, examines various approaches pre-service art educators may have towards teaching in the classroom. The second funding section looks at financing for different schools, property taxes, and local policies. The third section, support for art educators, takes a critical look at the types of support art educators receive. The fourth section, culturally relevant pedagogy, explains how educators need to be culturally aware of their students and better foster relationships to serve their classroom needs. The last section, art, and social education, elaborate on the shift in art from occupational to student-centered, including social issues. The review of the literature constructs a rational framework for this study.

Instruction for Art Educators

For art educators to help equip students with a balance of thinking and process skills (Ingalls Vanada, 2016), they must be pliable enough to receive information themselves. Being a changemaker is a quality that one university is pushing their future art teachers to have. It is a term that can have multiple meanings. Heaton and Crumpler (2017) define changemakers as individuals who identify a need or problem in a society that they can address through progressive, moral, or sustainable actions. At Northampton University in the United Kingdom, Heaton and Crumpler are creating changemakers. Their idea is, “If artist-teachers can understand their own cognitive knowledge, through self-recognition, they become positioned to facilitate others” (Heaton & Crumpler, 2017). The study focuses on a cohort of artist-teachers in training interviewed about perceptions of a changemaker and connections to social justice, among other things.

The task in the study was for artist-teachers to create art related to real-life problems and experiences. Heaton and Crumpler (2017) state that this strategy helps artist-teachers become more mindful and generates sustainability in art. Artist-teachers becoming more conscious is beneficial for both the artist-teacher and the students they will teach.

The artist-teachers influence curriculum pedagogy because they take ownership of the experiences they engage in at the university, leading them in new directions and then apply their experience to develop new schemes of work on their placements in schools (Heaton & Crumpler, 2017).

Artist-teachers' social awareness and knowledge of how "self" fits into the grand scheme of art education allow the changemaker philosophy to spread. Art education can use various mediums to provoke feelings, questions and to respond to concerns in society.

Their research indicates artist-teachers must have active art experiences. These experiences help further cognition by artist-teachers making meaningful decisions about their artwork and understanding their process. "When calculating the impact of active art experiences in relation to social justice or *changemaker* philosophy, this research has revealed that reflective critical analysis of both the experience and art created is needed" (Heaton & Crumpler, 2017). Suppose artist-teachers can reflect on their personal experiences within their work, such as remembering which medium worked best on a particular surface or experimenting with texture and color. In that case, they will be able to teach these critical thinking skills to their future students.

Gail Tremblay deals with social issues in her article, *Creating Art Environments that Address Social Justice Issues* (2013). Tremblay insists that if teachers want to encourage their students to create pieces that challenge injustices, they need to do three things.

First, show students works by successful artists who make art that challenges social inequality and teach them to use art to communicate. Second, model ways to create work that is socially engaged and show them how to find sites for exhibiting such work. Third, raise questions about students' works that suggest directions they might explore that will cause viewers of their art to reflect on social realities and the need for a just society (Tremblay, 2013).

She referenced an undergraduate classroom when she stated the three things a teacher needed to encourage their students to create social justice pieces. Still, they can be applied to the junior high art classroom as well. Tremblay (2013) stresses that when teaching students to create art that addresses social issues, the design of the assignments needs to teach specific skills. They need to handle a variety of media so their work will attract attention and spark conversation about young artists. An artist must become aware that the world is unjust first and visually communicate these issues.

Students need to be encouraged to use art to have conversations about issues that are important to them. A field trip into the surrounding community or a summer internship can help with this. Also, bringing in members of the community to share their stories is impactful. When people share their experiences with students, they gain knowledge, and students become self-aware. A chapter by Gayle Curtis (2015), *Choosing to Dance: Choreography Theory and Beliefs in Practice*, highlights the happenings in a novice high school social studies teacher's classroom. The teacher built quality relationships with her students by treating them as individuals and listening to their needs. Students were able to connect their present-day lives through various active learning assignments. The teacher learned about teaching this way through her graduate program. Although this is the teaching our students need connecting to the real world, her principal had an issue with it because it wasn't how the veteran teachers taught to get the desired scores on the state test.

A doctoral student and professor at a midwestern university named Jennifer (Allen) Groman (2015) exposed pre-service teachers to art in her introductory course.

Having incorporated art projects into general education classrooms at elementary and middle school levels for several years, she felt art allowed her students to express themselves a certain way. Her introduction to an education course for pre-service teachers was no different. Groman has two purposes for the pre-service teachers doing the art activity.

. . . foundational purposes: to draw out of pre-service teachers an image of their personal and professional beliefs about what is important in teaching; and to allow them the opportunity to see and articulate their place within the profession. As an added benefit of the work, this activity also supports other points of growth for students. It is vital that students build relationships with one another and be able to articulate what is important to them as educators. The bond that these relationships among peers shows also mimics the relationships that are possible in the school building and in the classroom (Groman, 2015).

Much like the idea of the changemaker, Groman is interested in transformation. Her art activity aims to offer insight into the pre-service educators' beliefs to transform from student role to teacher role. Often in pre-service teacher programs, students are taught to write lesson plans, learn teaching strategies, and review how to administer state assessments. Focusing on only these aspects of a teacher is not teaching the whole person. Holistic education develops the intellectual, emotional, physical, social, aesthetic, and spiritual (Miller et al., 2005).

Before beginning the art activity, the students read about educators, observed classrooms, and discussed teachers' beliefs. Every teacher must write a statement at some

point about their teacher's belief system. The views in this paper usually include good and bad experiences that educators face in their K-12 education. These experiences are what help shape pre-service teachers into beautiful educators. Instead of having the students write one of these classic papers, Groman (2015) decided to have them touch their philosophies. The project she discusses involves the students putting their educational beliefs into a form made of clay. While the students are molding the clay, Groman asks them what brought them to education, what matters in education, and what they want their teaching to be, among other things. Once the forms are complete, students have a moment to look at all of them, and then as a class, they discuss what they see and how that shape(s) fits with the pre-service teachers' beliefs or personality. Groman (2015) believes this exercise is important because teachers need something to keep them grounded when they are in the classroom adjusting to curriculum changes and state assessments. She also stresses that the only way this project is successful is if students have a certain level of trust.

Trust and fostering a safe environment are essential with this assignment because students bring their insecurities with them into class. They may indeed know what got them to the field of education, but they may have a difficult time articulating the why. Grade school was the last time several students completed an art activity, so they had to trust that their classmates would not make fun of the sculpture they created that represents teaching for them. The project is administered later in the semester to ensure that students have formed bonds with each other.

Being an art educator is not solely about teaching art. Art educators must prepare their students with the tools required to talk about change with whoever will listen. Art educators are only as effective as the materials in their classroom and the pre-service program they participated in before entering the classroom.

Funding

Paying for students' education has been an issue for years. Charter schools receive their money from businesses that seek to sponsor them in a way. These charter schools may have a specific curriculum that is beneficial to the people providing them with cash. On the other hand, public schools receive state funds, grants, and local taxes.

When budgets get trimmed, core classes such as math, science, and English are never on the chopping block because they will test students' knowledge later in the school year on the state assessment. State assessments are another way that public schools receive funding. As a result, fine arts courses are the first to go in many cities and states because they are not tested subjects in most states. This information is shocking because 32 states consider art a core subject (Arts Education Partnership, 2012).

The idea of funding public schools with property taxes traces back to the Puritans of Massachusetts (Semuels, 2016). Billy D. Walker, a Texas educator, and historian wrote a paper discussing a property-tax law passed in 1646. "The tax charged specific people based on "visible" property including their homes as well as their sheep, cows, and pigs" (Semuels, 2016). This property tax was new in the sense that it was local and took place annually.

When property taxes and state funding are not enough to cover operational costs of schools, students and teachers feel the effect.

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) dealt a blow at arts education when it laid off over 1,000 teachers as a result of its recent decision to close over 50 schools. Among the most affected areas was arts education--nearly 10 percent of teachers let go taught art or music (Fang, 2013)

Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Washington D.C. schools also received hits to their art education programs. In all these cases and similar ones across the nation, art educators are being let go due to financial issues. The release of art educators for economic reasons deprives students of unique skills gained from taking art classes.

Guin et al. (2007) highlight the concern of equally funding schools within districts. "Mounting evidence suggests that districts commonly distribute different amounts of funding, even when schools serve the same types of students" (Guin et al., 2007). These funding differences could be in the form of teacher salaries and general funds that benefit the school.

Guin et al. (2007) took a comprehensive look at funding differences between and within the State of Texas over a decade. They started in the 1993-94 school year and ended in the 2002-03 school year. It is essential to note the beginning school year of the research was also when the "Robin Hood" law went into effect. Large districts with more than 25,000 students were the focus. "In 1994, the state had 29 districts with an enrollment greater than \$25,000, and that number increased to 39 by 2003" (Guin et al., 2007).

In addition to funding decisions within a school district having a more significant effect on a school's resources, their findings also concluded that funding variation within school districts was high despite successful reforms. Some factors in unequal spending between schools were special education, school size, and academic performance.

Some districts adopted weighted student formulas (WSF). If these formulas were in place across the state at the time, then the researchers would not have been able to find discrepancies in funding. The City of Houston implemented an altered version of WSF in 1998 called student-based budgeting. This program sets a base amount per student and an added percentage dependent upon services the student requires (Guin et al., 2007). Guin et al. (2007) found that Houston made modest improvements since implementing student-based budgeting.

However, Texas has seen a decline in contributions to public school funding over the years, according to DeMatthews and Knight (2018). "Texas has a long history of inadequately funding public education and leaving undue burden on local districts" (DeMatthews & Knight, 2018). DeMatthews and Knight suggest that voters need to demand a new finance system. This system would address funding variations between districts and regions of Texas. Studies at a university in Texas found that the highest poverty districts receive 11% less local and state per-pupil funding than wealthier districts (DeMatthews & Knight, 2018). DeMatthews and Knight (2018) argue that more funding could lead to lawmakers creating more professional development opportunities for educators and administrators. More options for growth for them, in turn, improve student achievement.

Currently, Texas has determined that the base number of funding for each student is \$5,140. The article by Swaby (2019) about the complexity of Texas' school finance system states that the amount of per-pupil funding has not increased in four years, not even accounting for inflation. With no increase to the base amount, all schools are not necessarily receiving the money they need. Swaby (2019) explains, “. . . as local property values have grown, the state's share of public education has shrunk. Currently, local property owners foot about 64 percent of the bill”.

School boards oversee setting school districts' tax rates. Typically, school districts are required to develop a tax rate of \$1 per \$100 of the property value (Swaby, 2019). They must ask the permission of the voters to tax over \$1.04. The community could be getting taxed anywhere from \$1 to \$1.03 without being informed about funding extracurricular activities and programs--the school districts with higher-valued homes and businesses within their borders tax at a lower rate. Poorer communities often tax at a higher rate. They cannot raise their rates any higher according to state law (Swaby, 2019). Fortunately, the districts that may not have as much revenue can receive a boost through the “Robin Hood” or recapture program that is still in use. Poorer districts and charter schools receive money through excess funds from other communities (Swaby, 2019).

School leaders need to take a closer look at student outcomes, according to Marguerite Roza (2009). Her article *Breaking Down School Budgets* analyzes the spending patterns of three anonymous school districts in the United States. Her work intends to show the financial workings of high schools and is not reflective of all school districts. Service costing and determining per-pupil expenditures for courses was first

done in 1996 in New York by analyst David Monk (Roza, 2009). Course enrollment, course schedules, and teacher and teacher aide salaries were components in his calculations.

Similarly, in Ohio in 1999, Jay Chambers merged state-level databases with information on teacher salaries, teacher course schedules, and course enrollment data to calculate per-student spending on courses. The results were a considerable variation in spending by course, with some electives costing twice as much per-pupil expenditures. Roza based her research on these two studies. Each district in her study showed different spending patterns regarding the funding allocated to the core and elective classes. Critical components in the calculations were class sizes and teacher salaries. Overall, AP teachers had smaller class sizes and made more money than teachers who taught remedial courses with more students.

Based on her finds, Roza urges school leaders to see where high-priority items are and if there are low expenditures associated with them. If this is true, they need to decide if there is dissatisfaction with the outcomes for students. There is a need to look closer at what monopolizes the funds at a school and determine if some areas need more or less money.

Support for Art Educators

So often, education stakeholders are concerned with the type of school students attend. Does it have an after-school program? Are all the teachers fully certified in their area? Is each classroom conducive to effective learning? These are valid questions answerable by annual reports and campus visits, which does not matter as much as the

teacher fitting well with the school. The environment needs to be such that teachers feel valued and supported by the administration and other individuals in the school district. From conversations with teachers from other content areas and my own experience as an art educator, I have learned that different teachers require different support.

School districts need teachers to get a particular amount of professional development hours per school year. They should also receive coaching and know their state standards (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills or TEKS). On days when professional development is held at the school building instead of offsite, issues arise for elective teachers. No school where I have taught ever had professional development at the building specifically benefiting elective teachers. Usually, an email goes out to everyone, grouping teachers by content and grade level with instructions at the very bottom in small print asking elective teachers to pick a meeting to attend. Having received these emails countless times, the placement of the elective teachers always seemed like an afterthought. Art educators are seeking the tools needed to improve their craft. Fortunately, these tools are offered at district-wide professional development for art educators through the Texas Art Education Association (TAEA) and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), found on the Texas Educator Agency website.

Lauren Hess (2017), arts integration specialist in Cincinnati Public schools, has been in the arts and art education field for 20 years. She stated a disconnect between administrators saw the need for art educators to have appropriate professional development in their area (Hess, 2017). Along with a colleague, Hess travels across the

State of Ohio to various areas providing arts assessment professional development to art teachers. There was one thing that Hess discovered that all the schools had in common.

They want to learn new skills to take back to their classrooms and to be able to connect with like-minded colleagues. They are typically enthusiastic to have a workshop in their content area with materials that they can apply immediately.

They want to soak up as much knowledge as they can (Hess, 2017).

Hess provides an invaluable service to art educators showing them that their district and school support them and their content.

As far as Texas is concerned, specifically the Independent School Districts outside of Houston, professional development for art educators happens roughly six times throughout the school year. Outside of that, art educators see their colleagues during art shows such as Houston Livestock and Rodeo (HLSR) and the district spring show to name a couple. The professional development is grade-level specific, so high school art teachers are with other high school art teachers; junior high art teachers are with other junior high art teachers, and so on. Taught by familiar teachers, the activities and lessons presented may be immediately implemented into the educator's classroom. These professional development times are critical throughout the school year. They give art educators a chance to share information and ideas outside of when they are just tossed in with any content level.

TAEA is a rich source of information for art educators outside of their school district. Each year they host a conference for member art educators from all over the State of Texas. Each year the meeting is held in a different city throughout Texas. Teachers

from districts in the hosting city are strongly encouraged to participate by providing a workshop or speaking about an important topic concerning art education. This conference allows art educators to build relationships with peers that they may not get the opportunity to interact with under typical circumstances.

The second year I attended the conference, it was in Galveston. Due to the meeting being less than two hours away from Houston, districts in Houston and the surrounding areas presented projects that other art educators could use in their classrooms or give presentations. I volunteered to help someone with materials at their walk-up workshop table. The workshop table was a space where someone could walk up, complete the project quickly or stop by, ask questions, and take the materials back with them. It was refreshing to see art educators excited to gather new information to assist them in their classrooms. Too often, teachers get stuck teaching the same project the same way year after year. Attending content-specific conferences can help you get out of that rut.

Throughout the school year (and summer break), TAEA sends its members regular emails from classroom tips to continuing education. They also offer professional development hours that can be obtained (for a small fee) over the summer.

The Center for Educator Development in Fine Arts (CEDFA) was established in 1998 to help fine arts educators implement Fine Arts TEKS. The group consisted of fine arts teachers and administrators that CEDFA trained to provide professional development workshops that focused on TEKS implementation (Center for Educator Development in Fine Arts, 2019). There is a directory that houses the CEDFA Fine Arts Training Cadre

and ESC Fine Arts contacts. Art educators are also able to share ideas through the website in an online forum. Resources are available to support art programs, discuss funding, expectations teaching at each grade level, and professional development.

Sometimes art educators need support outside of lesson planning and professional development. CEDFA has an art curriculum framework accessible to the public that discusses new programs for Texas, campus considerations, and instruction. The instruction section is the most important due to the inclusion of assessment, strategies for teaching the art TEKS, and motivation. CEDFA states that cause can typically be categorized into extrinsic and intrinsic (Center for Educator Development in Fine Arts, 2019). Extrinsic motivation works for a short amount of time. Intrinsic motivation, where students are genuinely making meaningful connections to art and value more than a reward or a passing grade, is what all educators strive to instill in their students.

Art teachers create a positive learning climate in an atmosphere that encourages students and supports their academic risk-taking, critical thinking, creative experimentation, and problem-solving. Art teachers organize units of study based on purposeful learning objectives and students interests, and structure learning experiences that facilitate collaboration and caring among students (Center for Educator Development in Fine Arts, 2019).

Content areas such as math, social studies, and science all have an I.C. Elena Aguilar (2012) insists that instructional coaches bring teams together, provide emotional support to teachers and initiate change. Instructional coaches providing emotional support and creating change is beneficial for content areas in schools that are fortunate to have

such a position. Unfortunately, fine arts do not have such a position. The closest they come is having a team lead and a department chair. Typically, the team lead is the seasoned individual on the team. Depending on the school, the department chair could be a fine arts teacher if the department is large enough. If not, the department chair could be anyone from the family consumer science teacher to the Spanish teacher because fine arts are a part of campus electives with fewer art teachers.

The team lead and the department chair have similar functions. Both are the voice of individuals that may have concerns about the campus, students, etc. The team lead and the department chair discuss these concerns with the administration via email or in person. The team lead is more likely to listen to primary classroom or project issues and provide emotional support if needed. Neither the team lead nor the department chair can advocate for specific professional development wants and needs as an instructional coach can. Instructional coaches can go into classrooms and provide critical feedback to teachers about things they observed. With instructional coaches being such a necessity in most campus content areas, it is difficult to fathom that fine arts do not have one.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Ladson-Billings (1992) coined the term “culturally relevant” to describe pedagogy that she insists is central to academic success for minority students. According to Ladson-Billings (1995), culturally relevant pedagogy contains three criteria:

1. Students must experience academic success.
2. Students must develop or maintain cultural competence.

3. Students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the social order.

Maintaining cultural competence means ensuring students can use their culture to learn and as an avenue for creating understanding in the classroom. A powerful example of this is having a relative of each student work first-hand with the class by explaining their profession or skill (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Students realize their family members are valuable resources, and the class experiences professions that may not be easily accessible.

Students need to build upon their academic success and cultural competence to question the norms and values that stem from institutions that create and exacerbate the inequities present in our society. An example of this is students and teachers writing letters to a local media outlet informing them of school situations.

Culturally responsive teaching is both a “routine and a radical proposal” (Gay, 2018). Curriculum and teaching strategies filtered through cultural frames of reference create personally meaningful content. The routine and the radical are both excellent teaching practices that will help all students succeed.

The most challenging task for several educators is setting their own cultural biases aside to deliver successful culturally responsive instruction to students (Kozleski, 2010; Lynch, 2012). For teachers to fully adopt culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) in the classroom, they need to be familiar with their curriculum. They know when to challenge and question the curriculum and teach students this same process. Building bonds with

students that extend into the community and fluid relationships between learners and teachers is crucial in a CRP-focused classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Acquiring information about student culture builds teacher-student relationships. This process can be done by simply having conversations, asking questions, and following through with actions. Students confide in their teachers and need reassurance that what they say has value. These conversations can take place between teacher and student and between students and their peers. They are vital in building a classroom that operates on openness, respect, and positivity. “When classrooms are organized into communities that are designed to encourage academic and cultural excellence, students learn to facilitate their own learning as well as that of their fellow students” (Kozleski, 2010). Kozleski (2010) cautions us that this type of environment takes careful planning. Students need to feel comfortable taking responsibility for their learning, exploring different opinions, and accepting help from their peers.

CRP incorporates different content areas such as social studies, language arts, and science. In these courses, students read books by authors with diverse backgrounds or learn about events from various perspectives in different periods throughout history. Students might also participate in conversations about local and global issues. Concerning art education, Wanda Knight (2015) insists that schools in the future will bring on new opportunities and challenges due to structural and cultural changes to meet diverse student populations. “An education that is culturally pluralistic offers an opportunity for art teacher educators to prepare a new generation of art teachers capable of meeting the needs of culturally diverse learners” (Knight, 2015). Art educators can

shape the way students understand and appreciate art. The way art educators shape how students understand and appreciate art could lead to students becoming art educators in the future or increasing their general art appreciation.

Art & Social Education

Years ago, art was a course in school that prepared students for life in the work world. Precision drawing, draftsmanship, and technical skills useful in commercial areas are now called visual arts. During this time, early in the 20th century, art became appreciated for its value in developing children's capabilities (Vallance, 2010). There has been a growing debate between visual culture, material culture, and student-centered art approaches.

Visual culture has to do with the way people engage in looking. How images affect us is visual culture. Garber (2004) notes a shift in objects studied in visual culture within art education; the change was "founded in related beliefs that art education should be grounded in relevant socially active learning." Questions about the content, purpose, and intended audience develop when viewing different items from everyday life. When you link visual culture to critical pedagogy, the objectives and goals of art education become radicalized, "bringing them into the realm of socially responsive art and social justice education" (Garber, 2004). "This is an art education focused not only on the relationship between culture and the arts, but on social change and social justice" (Garber, 2004).

Material culture has to do with manufactured objects and spaces that make up the world; this includes museums and indoor and outdoor spaces. Material culture engages

other senses such as touch, smell, and hearing. Fifth-grade students that participated in a study with Kim & Wiehe-Beck (2016) were allowed to experience stories from cultures other than their own. They used the stories from a Latino artist, a Muslim parent of one of the students, and a woman that grew up in one of her state's first black settlements (now a historical site) to create a mural.

Choice-based art is a student-centered approach in art education that fosters confidence and imagination in students. With choice-based art, the goal is for the student to oversee their learning and the materials they use to make that learning happen. It's more about the process and knowledge that happens when art is created than about how the result looks. There are several ways to introduce choice-based art into the classroom. One way is to allow students to explore different mediums such as collage, painting, and drawing. By the end of the explorations, with some guidance from the instructor, students can create pieces using a medium of their choice.

Bain et al. (2010) suggest that a plurality of more student-centered approaches in a social context is possible. Suzi Gablik (1991) and other contemporary artists are interested in "social interactive" art. Garber (2004) explains, "socially interactive art promotes ideas of socially responsive art and building community through listening" and what Gablik calls "radical relatedness." Gablik (1991) insisted that art should be helpful and not solely for wealthy collectors to contemplate. The moral shaping of culture itself should channel creativity. Bain et al. (2010) express, "meaning making is a central curricular goal of art education." Creating artwork is understood through active interpretation where the artist and others draw purpose and meaning. Critical thinking

and reflection combine with a sense of involvement and hope that each person can contribute to democracy and social justice (Garber, 2004). Social education and art have effectively merged when students create work for a purpose and critically reflect beyond themselves and the classroom.

Conclusion

The literature review about art educators shows that when pre-service art educators have quality experiences in their programs, they have infinite potential to be fantastic art facilitators. Literature from the funding section provides details about the differences between charter and public-school funding. The base funding per student in Texas has been stagnant for several years; accommodating population growth necessitates increased funds. Support for art educators breaks down the types of available local support and explains art educators' desire to participate in conversations with like-minded individuals in subject-specific professional development. Culturally relevant pedagogy is another concept that art educators need to have experience with to be aware of their student's needs in the classroom. As students become more aware of their surroundings, social issues are incorporated more into each subject area's lesson plans.

Chapter III:

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter describes the research design and methodology of this study. This study intended to explore and analyze junior high art educators and support, including professional development and funding and their effects on art education. This chapter will: (a) review the research question; (b) expand on the research design; (c) describe the data collection methods; (d) explain the data analysis procedures; and lastly (e) discuss trustworthiness.

Research Question

Merriam and Tisdell state that research questions reflect the most significant factors for a researcher to study (2016). The literature review in Chapter II shows a gap in the research about junior high art educators' experience with support. Still, few studies have examined art educators' perspectives of support in their school district. Additionally, few studies have revealed educators' support in the fine arts classroom and their opinions. Therefore, this study will investigate the following research question: What are junior high art educators' perceptions regarding professional development and funding and their effects on art education?

Study Methodology

This study will investigate the deeper perspectives of junior high art educators' experience with support, including professional development and funding at their campus and in their district, using individual interviews and a focus group using a qualitative

research design. When there is an interest in understanding how people interpret their experiences or construct their worlds, a qualitative method should be used (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research uses the researcher as the main instrument for collecting and analyzing data. All qualitative research shares the common characteristic of people constructing their reality in interaction with their social worlds. Thus, constructivism underlies preliminary qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

There are many ways to perform qualitative research--phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnographic research, and basic interpretive study--but the method most appropriate for this study is an exploratory case study. Yin (2018) suggests that case study research is relevant when the focus of the study is a contemporary phenomenon, and the researcher has little control over the participants' behavior. The philosophy of phenomenology underlies all qualitative research. To focus on phenomenology is to focus on experiences transformed into consciousness. The grounded theory seeks to understand and build a substantive theory about the phenomenon of interest (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Ethnography involves immersing oneself in the culture of a group which would not be possible with the participants. Researchers interested in a basic interpretive study are interested in how people interpret their experiences and their meaning to their experiences. This description fits all qualitative research, but the other types have additional dimensions.

Case studies can be conducted as a single case or as a comparative case study, also known as a multicase. Harrison et al. (2017) explain that all case studies share the same essential characteristics, "Case study research is consistently described as a

versatile form of qualitative inquiry most suitable for a comprehensive, holistic, and in-depth investigation of a complex issue . . .”. The researcher will perform a single case study for this study. A single case study is a bounded system in which an investigation of an event, situation, or program occurs. Merriam (2009) explains that a bounded system is the unit of analysis that defines a case study. Case studies can include other studies because they do not claim a specific data collection or analysis (Merriam, 2009). The researcher used techniques characteristic of qualitative research.

Research case studies can be explanatory, descriptive, or exploratory. The study’s research question is a “what” question which fits Yin’s (2018) recommendation of “what” questions being exploratory or about prevalence. The goal of an exploratory study is “to develop pertinent hypotheses and propositions for further inquiry” (Yin, 2018). In this case, the researcher is interested in art educators’ perceptions of support related to art education.

Study Methods and Procedures

The following section will describe specific details of the research procedures so future researchers can generalize the results from this study to other situations. The researcher gives a detailed description of the study’s location, time, and context. This section discusses: (a) the interview approach; (b) explains the role of the researcher; and lastly, (c) describes the sampling method and ethical considerations.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Everyone has a unique story, shared in various ways, including written expression, theatrical productions, and word of mouth. Weiss (1995) states that

interviews give researchers access to places they have not visited and settings they have not physically experienced. Interviews can also reveal people's interior experiences, perception interpretations, and how events affect their thoughts and feelings (Weiss, 1995). In general, qualitative investigations are less structured and more open-ended. A semi-structured interview consists of either more and less structured questions or flexibly worded questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The researcher used a guide to ensure consistency when collecting information from each participant during the interviews. The direction used in a semi-structured interview consists of questions that will be asked, not in a particular order. This type of loose formatting allows the researcher to be present in the discussion and respond to new ideas from the participant.

Listed below are sample questions and topics explored during the interviews:

1. How do you as an art educator describe support in your classroom? For example:
Do you have all the resources needed for students to effectively execute projects and for you to continue your own learning?
2. Does the art educators' description include something monetary?
3. What happens to the art educator when they do not feel supported by their campus or district? Do they seek support elsewhere? Do they speak with other art educators in the district to try to make a change?
4. What specific differences do art educators see with art department support at their school versus other schools in their school district?

5. Do divergent themes emerge from the first four questions depending on art educator experience or campus?

Qualitative research involves studying subjects in their natural setting. For art educators, their natural setting is their classroom. In a perfect situation, individual and focus group interviews would take place in an art classroom at one of the participants' school buildings at a time that is convenient for the participants after school hours. Interviews were conducted via Zoom video conferencing due to uncertainty of when in-person classes would resume on campus and the concern for the well-being of the art educators. Using this online tool provided a synchronous meeting able to take place in real-time. The researcher recorded all interviews for transcription purposes. Conversations were conducted with participants ahead of time about recording the interviews. The researcher conducted follow-up interviews for clarification or to explore emerging ideas more in-depth as needed.

Role of the Researcher

The human instrument can be immediately responsive and adaptive, which helps achieve the goal of understanding in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this case, the human instrument is ideal for collecting and analyzing data. Ideally, researchers acknowledge and describe their beliefs and biases early in the research process (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The researcher brought her personal experiences from educating students at various grade levels in school districts in multiple states and her values, beliefs, and assumptions about the type of support art educators should receive for the study. Early acknowledgment of biases allowed the reader to understand the

researcher's position and consciously decide to bracket the biases as the investigation unfolds.

Sampling

The researcher will use one of the most common forms of purposeful sampling known as chain, snowball, or network sampling to select participants. Purposeful was used to interview educators who are likely to have relevant and rich sources of information but also meet specific criteria. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic currently affecting school district operations, teachers are in even more contact with each other, sharing lesson plans and other resources. The following paragraphs describe the criteria for participation in the study. The researcher was explicitly interested in studying junior high art educators who teach in different areas within and outside Houston. This study did not include teachers from general education classrooms, such as science, math, social studies, or language arts. Inclusive art educators in this study are defined as educators that guide students to take an approach to pieces that allow students to move from recognizing to analyzing and influencing a visual and intellectual process at the junior high level.

For this study, junior high art educators are teachers who teach sixth through eighth-grade fine art. Art educators at buildings with these grade levels either teach all three grade levels or two out of the three. Students are introduced to a different art curriculum and focus in junior high school (Li, 2018). "Art in middle school broadens learners' understanding of visual expression. Adolescents explore, organize, understand, and evaluate their abilities in art" (CEDFA, 2021).

Snowball or network sampling involves identifying a few key participants who meet the researcher's criteria to participate in the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Patton (2015) advises that asking several participants for additional leads accumulates new information-rich cases. The school districts the researcher gathered participants from service over 75,000 students grades Pre-K-12 within its numerous schools. The researcher selected five art educators from different junior high campuses. This specific sample is of interest to the researcher to explore and compare themes that develop between schools with varying levels of support for art educators.

Art educators were invited via email or phone call to participate in the study. If interested, participants completed a brief survey about their demographics and years in education. The researcher sent email reminders to the participants after a week.

Ethics

All participants will complete a consent form for human subjects. The consent form will inform the participants of the researcher conducting the study, why they were selected to participate, time commitment, benefits, possible risks, managing them, and confidentiality handling. All participation was voluntary, and participants were allowed to learn about the results of the study afterward.

Data Collection Methods

Interviews

Interviews were used first with quality questions that probed participants. Asking good questions is the key to getting good data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Individual semi-structured interviews lasted 30-45 minutes, and the focus group interview lasted one hour. Semi-structured interviews allowed flexibility in the participants' responses and

made the discussions more conversational. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) recommend that the topic during the focus group is one that all participants can discuss. The goal of the focus group is to help participants refine their opinions, hear the views of others, and bring forth new ideas.

Reflective Journal

The researcher collected information from a journal that took note of her experiences as a researcher when the school year began in August of 2020--starting this process captured early apprehension about the IRB process, participants, and completing the study. Each journal entry will span one week. The following is a brief example of the journaling plan.

August 1st - 8th:

August 9th – 16th:

August 17th – 24th:

August 25th - September 1st:

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis and data collection are dynamic and happen simultaneously. Once the data is collected, the analysis only intensifies. In qualitative research, data analysis is one of few components with a preferred method (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) remind researchers that data analysis involves moving back and forth between concrete pieces of data and abstract concepts.

The researcher used a preliminary tip from Yin (2018) that involves writing memos about observations from the data. Memo writing can begin as early as in the data

collecting phase. Next, the researcher developed codes based on the notes. Baxter & Jack (2008) warn researchers that the danger of analyzing a case study is reporting the data sources independently. They insist “the researcher must ensure that the data are converged to understand the overall case, not the various parts of the case, or the contributing factors that influence the case (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The researcher used the patterns and codes to work the data from the ground up to develop further emerging ideas, which is the goal of exploratory case studies (Yin, 2018). The researcher used member checks to ensure internal credibility. When conducting member checks, it is important to stress your interpretation of what was said. This method rules out the possibility of misinterpreting any information shared during the interviews or focus group.

Trustworthiness

The criteria for trusting a qualitative study are different from testing a hypothesis in a study’s objective (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). “The researcher’s careful design of the study, applying standards well developed and accepted by the scientific community, makes experimental studies scientific or trustworthy” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher used the participants’ views of the world and art education to establish trustworthiness. Credibility enhances when the researcher describes their experiences in the research role (Cope, 2014). The researcher will demonstrate that the data represents the participants’ responses and not the researcher’s viewpoints for confirmability (Cope, 2014). Transferability is achievable if the study results have meaning to individuals outside of the study and readers can reflect on their own experiences (Cope, 2014).

Conclusion

This chapter summarized the research design and methodology of the study. This study explores and analyzes junior high art educators' experiences with their support within and outside of their school district through in-depth interviews. The researcher used purposeful network sampling when selecting participants. Data analysis followed Yin's (2018) suggestions for preliminary analysis and strategy and Baxter & Jack's (2008) warning to report the case study as a whole. The findings of this study produced an in-depth understanding of support from junior high art educators' perspectives in their environments.

Chapter IV

Findings

Introduction

This study aimed to explore the perceptions of junior high art educators regarding professional development and funding and their effects on art education. Study participants described their perceptions and experiences with training, classroom expenses, colleagues, and other subjects in a series of recorded and transcribed in-depth interviews, among other things. They also discussed how they handled difficult situations in their classrooms. An analysis of interview transcripts and the researcher's journal help develop the research findings.

Background

Five junior high art educators participated in this study. All participants had a bachelor's degree in art and identified as junior high art educators servicing grades 6-8 in some capacity. The study involved an individual introductory interview, a focus group interview, and a secondary individual interview. Audio recordings and transcripts were created from each interview and interpreted research findings.

Of the participants, three identified as male, and two identified as female. Three participants identified as White, one as African American and Native American, and one identified as multi-racial (Black and White). The ages of the participants ranged from 27 to 59 years old. Teaching experience ranged from two to twenty-six years. Participants were required to provide a pseudonym for interviews and research analysis to preserve their anonymity.

Almost Retired was a White female with a Bachelor of Fine Art in Textile Design. She has taught at her current building since 2006. She added an interesting perspective to the group interview and expressed a passion for collaboration with other junior high art educators in her district.

Robin was a multi-racial male with coursework experience in a handful of different areas. After finally completing his Bachelor of Science in Marketing, he obtained his art certification. He did not speak up as much in the group interview but shared a plethora of information in both individual interviews.

Tracey Jones was an African American female with a master's in Curriculum and Instruction. Before becoming an art teacher, she spent some time in an in-school suspension classroom and has experience teaching art out of state. Tracey could not to participate in the group interview but offered valuable information in the two individual interviews.

Jason was a White male with a master's in Special Education. Jason taught high school art out of state for several years before relocating to Texas. He was highly vocal in both individual interviews and group interviews.

The last participant, Floyd McCleod, was a White male with a master's in Fine Arts and a previous career in the Armed Forces. He also had experience teaching college art courses. Floyd expressed strong opinions about situations he experienced in individual interviews and dominated the group interview. Table 1 shows the demographic information of participants.

Table 1

Demographics of Participants

Pseudonym	Self-Identified Gender	Ethnicity	Age	Years of Teaching Service
Almost Retired	Female	White	59	26
Robin	Male	Multiracial Black & Caucasian	27	2
Tracey Jones	Female	African American & Native American	52	10
Jason	Male	Caucasian	38	16
Floyd McCleod	Male	White	44	16

At the time of the study, the participants were employed by three different school districts inside the Greater Houston area. Each district has a diverse population of students and staff. Almost Retired and Jason were both from the same district. Floyd McCleod and Robin were from the same district. Tracey Jones was from a different district.

All interviews took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic forced the participants and other teachers to navigate teaching students remotely simultaneously

and in person. This new way of teaching left the participants having to be more flexible than usual. Participants mentioned technology failures, class sizes, and remote students lacking supplies while meeting in person expectations during the interviews. Ideas developed from the first interview impacted the types of questions asked during the focus group. During the final individual interviews, participants elaborated on ideas from the initial discussions.

Freezing temperatures brought power and water outages to the Greater Houston area and other parts of Texas during the winter storm of February 2021. Tracey Jones was affected by the outages and thus was unable to attend the group interview. The rest of the participants experienced power outages before the interview. The study represents all participants.

For the duration of the study, the researcher kept a reflective journal known as a research diary. Engin (2011) explains, “Writers develop and learn during the research process and become the expert other as their research experience evolves.” The research diary represents the internal dialogue with the research process (Engin, 2011). In addition to providing an outlet during a challenging school year, the journal documented the researcher’s doubts and insecurities.

Emergent Themes

Data analysis of the lived classroom experiences from five junior high art educators delineates five significant themes. All the participants referenced the themes that emerged from their responses in some form or fashion. Those themes set the stage

for perceived factors contributing to support and funding and its effect on art education.

The themes were:

1. Relationships
2. Goals
3. Collaboration
4. Experiences
5. Advocacy

Relationships

It is natural for people to form connections with one another. In the classroom, there are teacher-student relationships and student-student relationships. The participants present for the focus group interview were asked a series of questions to explore these relationships:

- Their most recent beneficial professional development
- Their ideal classroom size
- Collaboration regarding elective classes
- Their opinion about art competitions

The focus group interview provided an opportunity to explore ideas from the first round of individual interviews. The relationship theme encompassed using both teacher-student and student-student relationships and information from the researcher's diary.

The teacher-student relationship is unique. There must be mutual respect for the teacher and the students to succeed in the classroom. Robin, for example, attended a recent professional development about social-emotional learning that would reinforce

connections with his students. His most significant takeaway from the session was being present in the moment in the classroom. He explained that the presenter had his group pretend that a student angered them or became overwhelmed in the classroom. Next, they communicated their feelings, perspectives, and what their students needed to know.

Robin stated,

So, I was able to be like . . . I was overwhelmed because I was doing too many things at once. I want you to know that it has nothing to do with you. I just need to work on juggling things a little bit better.

Robin admitted afterward that he is interested in learning more about social-emotional learning and incorporating similar practices into his classroom. When educators allow themselves to be vulnerable with their students, they see them as more human and approachable.

Almost Retired feels like smaller class sizes positively contribute to student-student relationships and the overall classroom community. Almost Retired elaborates,

I think it helps a lot because, umm because you get to . . . you're learning your audience a little bit better. It helps you umm prepare for how you're going to present a lesson or what direction you want to go with it.

According to Almost Retired, even the smallest amount of time spent talking to students helps them grow as artists and feel valued classroom community members. “...*they get the feeling that they're part of this big thing . . .*”.

Jason has moments of frustration regarding the student-student relationships in his classroom. He explains that the larger the class size, the more likely the students will

branch into individual groups. Jason warmly recalls a situation in his classroom towards the end of the school year where he asked the class where a student was by name. One student responded by asking who Jason was talking about, and he replied that the student sat at the table right behind him.

They just don't . . . they don't know each other because they kind of branch off into their own little tribes, which I think is very human and very normal, but if you have a smaller group, you're much more likely to kind of be able to foster a sense of community within that one class.

Students must find a balance between groups they naturally connect with and peers they don't interact with each day.

Floyd discovered that smaller class sizes provided opportunities for the students to form unexpected connections with peers. He explains,

And that's the one thing I was definitely able to create in some of those smaller classrooms. Where you know...maybe a new sense of direction.

Encouraging students to step out of their comfort zone and gain a different perspective is essential for their growth. It is more challenging to change group thinking with larger class sizes. According to Floyd, a larger class size scenario impacts the teacher-student relationship because students receive less individualized attention.

I think everybody needs a lot more individual attention. As educators and umm, you get these impossible sizes that pretty much ties their hands to being able to give that individual attention as needed.

This school year, Floyd felt that he could connect more with his students with smaller class sizes, even the more challenging ones.

. . . maybe one of the biggest blessings about this year . . . I'm able to get them to understand who I am and that I care about them and . . . like even if I'm on their case about whatever it is umm . . . just being able to build that relationship in a smaller classroom helps miles. It brings me so much further.

Robin disagreed with the idea of smaller class sizes in favor of up to 40 students. He notes that a pandemic is currently happening, so it is difficult to have a more significant number of students in each class. When he has more students in a classroom under normal circumstances, he can organize his room into eight tables with five students at each table. Robin's preference for more students in a class gives them purpose and helps develop them into more well-rounded individuals.

Each one has a particular role or leadership thing. And this is much more of a realistic thing for me because, with a magnet advanced class, I'd rather have like ten kids and really hone in on those ten and be like, hey, where do you want to go to high school?

Robin teaches both beginner and advanced art courses. Robin believes that some of the students in his beginner course--a required class—will not pursue art beyond the term.

And these are the only times they're going to see some of their other peers in a class, umm, if they don't have them with a larger campus or anything like that.

The theme of relationships developed from both the focus group and the initial individual interview.

All of the participants involved agreed that relationships played a huge role in the work the kids produced and into the buy in element of art. Producing art in a classroom is asking a student to be vulnerable in front of their peers.

The participants responded to the idea of relationships when discussing large and small classroom sizes during the focus group interview.

Goals

During the first interview, the researcher asked basic questions to establish trust and know the participants better. She followed up with some of those responses during the second individual interview. Analysis of participants' responses revealed moments in their lives when they knew they wanted to teach art as well as current plans. The theme of goals included using information from both individual interviews and information from the researcher's diary.

Sometimes you are called to a career, and other times you are inspired. In the case of Tracey Jones, she was inspired. She realized that she would not be a famous artist and pursued education.

. . . I had such a good time while, you know, in high school with my art teacher.

So, I kind of based it off him.

Tracey loved the relationship she had with her art teacher and her peers. She enjoyed art so much that she took four art classes her senior year in high school when she did not have to be there the entire day.

And that's how much I enjoyed the environment, and so I wanted the same feel. I wanted to have fun while I was working. I didn't want a job that made me feel like I was working.

Tracey Jones reached her goal of becoming an art teacher and providing her students with her remembered enjoyable environment.

As for Jason, all his years in the art classroom have left him wondering what's next. He shared that he found himself teaching art by accident.

I umm graduated art college, and to make money while I was between jobs, I started subbing full time, and the more I subbed the more I liked it.

Recently, he's been looking for a cohort of educators to join.

Where they have like another school system joins up with a local university and funnel teachers in at a discounted price or something.

Jason worked with a cohort of educators to obtain his out-of-state master's degree. He mentioned that he had not seen anything like this in an area of interest.

If I were to go forward, I'd probably do admin as much as I don't want to [Jason laughing] because I don't know what else I can do to make more money in education. I really don't.

Joining an administrative team is not a goal for Jason, but he desires to make more money. Teachers that find themselves wanting to make more money recognize they must leave the classroom and acquire more certifications and more education to do so. The job Jason wants does not exist in his school district.

I. C.! Instructional Coordinator! I would love to be an instructional coordinator!

Jason wants to be an art instructional coordinator. He continues,

And maybe I'd be split between two, maybe three campuses. Cause I get it, there's not as many people. But like, that'd be so fun! I would have so much fun doing that!

For now, he will remain in the classroom, but hopefully, he will be able to create such a position for his school district one day.

Robin, too is developing himself for opportunities outside of the art classroom. He has always had a passion for helping kids and for

. . . trying to find ways to just keep re innovating the classroom experience.

Robin has noticed that his school has been pushing STEM (Science Technology Engineering Math), so he has tried to advocate for STEAM (Science Technology Engineering Art Math).

So, like I started teaching a computer science course for innovators and makers, and there's the option of getting CTE [Career and Technical Education] certified.

After learning more about the CTE certification his school district has available, Robin decided to take advantage of a grant from Verizon that will allow him to get certified and teach different courses. He will take a course over the summer and teach a class about creating an app next school year. Completing the course will position Robin to incorporate technology into his traditional studio art courses and art into his technology courses.

Unlike the other participants, Floyd began teaching college courses to supplement his income from selling art.

Well, I needed a backup plan, and I'm an artist. So, I started actually out thinking that I was going to be a professor full-time, and I adjuncted umm for a very long time for me anyway.

During Floyd's time as an adjunct professor, he had several students in his classes from an early college program in a local school district.

And I got it . . . I got to know them. I taught them for about three years, and like more normally, a professor would teach them for a semester and then never teach them again, quite frankly.

Floyd noticed that as an adjunct professor, there were a lot of cutbacks. He taught several studio art classes that paid around \$5000 per class to two or three of those courses and art appreciation which paid thousands less. His enjoyment of teaching the early college program students, combined with the unpredictability of college course enrollment and travel, made him consider K-12 teaching.

Yeah, after in fact the kids coming in from the college program. I thought, well, if I take alternative certification for Texas teachers, then it would be . . . you know, it really was only a few hundred dollars just to take their initial course, and at the time, they just kind of let you take it on your own time.

Even though he currently teaches junior high art students, he does accept occasional adjunct professor opportunities.

Almost Retired has been in education the longest of all the participants. She was interested in using her art degree.

After my husband was a teacher and I started hanging out, well not hanging out but going out and um being around the students-junior high and high school. I enjoyed those connections um with the kids. . .

She surmised that working in the classroom as an art teacher would be more fun than teaching a traditional academic class. If Texas had a program, and if it was not so late in her career, she would pursue Art Therapy.

As much as I would like to, I'm not moving to Iowa or anything for two years to finish that up.

As her name suggests, Almost Retired has plans to retire at the end of the upcoming school year.

Winter break was a time to rest and code transcripts from the first two participants. Finding ideas and commonalities in Jason's initial interview was interesting.

After reading through Jason's initial interview several times and making notes and highlighting, I'm noticing that he has an exciting view of where he wants to go after he leaves the classroom. I wonder if goals could potentially be a theme?

The researcher reflected on the transcripts from Almost Retired and Floyd McCleod and realized they each had goals to support the possible theme. She made a note of the potential theme on a sticky note.

Collaboration

Teaching can feel like you're working in a silo. It involves working with many different groups inside the school building and outside. Some participants were asked questions in the first individual interview, and the focus group interview led to

collaboration responses. The participants mentioned various things, from the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) to administration. The theme of collaboration included using information from the first individual interview, the focus group interview, and the researcher's diary.

When Floyd first arrived at his campus several years ago, he was the only art teacher. Now that two additional art teachers are at his campus, collaboration looks a little different. Constant communication between the small group and laughter are the keys to success. When deciding on the third member of their team Floyd and his colleague looked at both experience and personality of potential candidates.

This one, he made us laugh, and we were like he could probably you know compared to the other candidates even though he was less experienced than some of the others . . . you have to have a certain kind of personality to handle umm certain groups of students.

They make sure to share lesson plans and allow room for flexibility.

Umm, you probably understand that it's wise that you work together because you're going to get some of the same students. They're going to float back and forth.

Although this school year looked different, having virtual learning and face-to-face students in the classroom, Almost Retired fondly remembers conversations with her colleagues within her school district.

Um, although there is . . . it hasn't kept up as much this year and half of last year but, the junior high art teachers and I . . . would talk and email back and forth

asking questions like, hey do you remember that lesson or um what do you do when you do this.

Tracey Jones also reaches out to her fellow junior high art teachers in her school district.

. . . I do have some of my coworkers in the field that's in the district that I reach out to. If I have any questions, I have like . . . umm two, in particular, I go to, and they're both at the junior high level.

Almost Retired mentioned professional development (PD) regarding collaboration in the building. She explains that she finds other things to do during the professional development days where she must be with academic teachers.

. . . I just take stuff to work on because most of its B.S. in terms of how it's really going to apply to my classroom.

Almost Retired also notes that teachers can teach others on some district professional development days.

The one thing though that they've done in the past that I have enjoyed and have used the most is umm when we had those district PD days umm they've gotten three or four junior high district classrooms together, and we've done what's called teachers teaching teachers.

The teachers would teach a lesson to their peers that they would typically teach to their students.

And you've got the opportunity to sit and do whatever. Stuff that I would have turned my nose up at some points in terms of animation and different things just

because umm, it's out of my comfort zone. Totally fun. I mean, it was amazing how much of that I brought back.

Tracey Jones collaborates with other elective teachers in her building.

The theatre teacher, we work like side by side. And um if I ever have any questions or if she sees something that she knows may interest me to present to my kids, she'll give me um, give me information.

The music teacher also helps Tracey Jones out by providing information about projects or crafts she thinks Tracey might be attractive.

Jason primarily uses technology when working with teachers outside of his school building.

I honestly do a lot of my networking and planning with others through Instagram.

He explains that Instagram provides a visual of potential projects. If he is interested in learning more about the specific project he sees, he can use the hashtags to find similar ones.

. . . find teachers who do it and then just, you can DM [Direct Message] them and talk to them about it and they can like, you guys can do like Google drops and stuff with different things or trade lessons . . .

Like Jason, Robin uses technology and social media to form connections outside the school building. He enjoys using Pinterest, YouTube and he has a teacher-specific Instagram account.

So, I'm constantly seeing what other people are doing and trying to figure out like what's new that might work that they can do.

Currently, his Instagram account has teachers from the school district that follow him.

The researcher noticed four main things in Almost Retired's transcribed audio. Since this was the first transcript of the study to be coded, she wondered how everything would come together.

I began coding Almost Retired's transcript first using sticky notes. Overall, I see expectations, encouragement, and collaboration. For her, collaboration comes in the form of meeting with other junior high art teachers that also teach yearbook. I'm looking forward to discovering if this will remain a theme or be replaced by something else.

As the study advanced, encouragement continued to make an appearance. The idea of expectations showed up again later during the focus group. Ultimately, there was a stronger case for the theme of collaboration.

Experiences

Educators are constantly trying to improve their classrooms' overall community and feel. Improving the general climate in the classroom is especially true in the art classroom, where each project ignites curiosity and excitement in students. There are expectations for art educators to provide an experience for students each day with various materials. Students show up to art class to socialize with peers and problem solve and experiment with unique materials. Regarding competitions, the participants responded to questions about assignments, projects, and stress they may or may not feel. This theme is discussed using the first individual interview, the focus group interview, the second

individual interview, and the researcher's diary. The experiences theme encompassed using data from the first and final individual interviews and the researcher's diary.

Jason recognizes that he has students from various cultural backgrounds in his classroom. He asks them several questions about their own culture to guide them on incorporating it into their project(s). At his second individual interview, his students completed a project about one and two-point perspectives. A one-point perspective drawing has a single vanishing point where items appear to disappear into the direction of the point because of distance. A two-point perspective drawing has two vanishing points on a horizon line, and things disappear to both ends due to distance. After the students used their names, they picked out a word to complete the second portion of the assignment.

So rather than doing an English word, you know? I have a kid who's from China and speaks Mandarin right now. And I was like, why don't you do some symbols, you know? Like, do a Mandarin word. Or like, why don't you do a Spanish word or a word in Arabic or Sans Script?

Communication with students about adding their personal touches to assignments is a way to celebrate differences.

Tracey creates a fun and flexible environment in her classroom while offering choices to her students.

I don't want it to just be about what I want them to do. Although I'll give them the lesson, but I want them to be creative. You know? As creative as they can be.

Students are excited when they are involved in the decision-making process of their projects.

Floyd is mindful of his students' interests. He believes that competitions make stakeholders such as principals, parents, and the community happy but don't necessarily make the students happy.

They feel like that added competition makes the . . . makes it less enjoyable for many of them. In fact, you know middle school's an odd age and so often that they do get a high award they're often embarrassed about it or they seem to be embarrassed about it.

The experience is less enjoyable for students if the expectations are to perform well while utilizing a new concept.

And one, college doesn't necessarily care that much, you know, if you've won all these awards. What does your art look like? That's what they care about. It looks nice, but there's other learning experiences as well.

Almost Retired does not feel pressure from her building to do well in competitions. She notes that the students put pressure on themselves this school year, preparing for the Houston Livestock and Rodeo Competition.

Not from me because I don't like the rodeo stuff because I feel like it's not very creative. It's like you were saying [referring to Floyd] it's a lot of the same stuff when we get ready to do that colored pencil contest work.

Almost Retired's feelings towards this competition did show in the work her students produced. She admits,

But man, when we put our work up there compared to everyone else's, I thought it was really umm, I was embarrassed that we put that little effort into it compared to everyone else's.

Conversely, Robin feels pressure from his school building to participate in things outside of regular art competitions. His students participate in numerous contests, but his building administration has other demands.

So, like, they'll often group the fine magnet and be like ok, we want a Black History Month program. Like, ok well cool. I'll do a little art exhibit, or I'll put like art on the wall, or I'll do a virtual thing.

Robin feels that the administration heavily reinforces the need to showcase student work on a magnet campus.

And I'm like, I can't . . . no kid wants to stand up on the stage for five minutes and say this is the art piece I made. This is why I made it. I was like, that's what VASE [Visual Arts Scholastic Event] is for.

The coding process continued well into March for the researcher. At this point, she is trying to determine her last theme.

I also started coding the focus group interview this week. A lot of good information about building a healthy environment for the students, class size, pressure, collaborating with feeder schools and providing a mindful experience for students came out in the conversation.

I think I might be able to take mindful experience and healthy environment and combine it into experiences. This would be experiences that the educator tries to provide for their students.

Analyzing all initial interviews again and recognizing critical responses from the participants during the focus group interview made her decide to use the theme of experiences.

Advocacy

Art education is an area that has been under scrutiny for years. Art educators frequently will advocate for themselves or their students at some point in their careers. Some of the participants' questions in the first individual interview led to responses about advocacy. The first individual interview and the researcher's diary explain the advocacy theme.

Robin is the youngest of the participants and has the least amount of teaching experience. He's already been put in a position to advocate for the English-Language Learners (ELL) in his classroom. The student body at Robin's school is predominantly Hispanic. He assigns them a buddy student to translate instructions for students struggling with instructions in his class. Robin specifically noticed that his students were behind in some vocabulary words.

So, we have an ELL specialist on my campus, and I reached out to them and was like hey, how can I better support my students?

He communicated with the specialist that many ELL students were the best artists on campus and genuinely loved coming to art class and interacting with their peers.

I don't want them to think that while I'm lecturing it's just in English that they're not considered.

The response Robin received from his ELL specialist was generic. The specialist suggested he use sentence stems or round table talk.

Like if we're doing the art critique absolutely. And I'm going to provide sentence stems for my other students anyways cause its middle school, right?

Robin did not feel like the suggestions were appropriate for his subject matter, so he ended up reaching out to a bilingual teacher on campus instead for help.

In addition to advocating for ELL students, Robin goes out of his way to help students struggling outside his classroom. He has one-on-one conversations with his students to check their grades in all courses and see where they need help.

One student had a zero in a class. ". . . nothing turned in, nothing submitted". "I was like, hey like what's going on and he was like well the teacher doesn't really understand me I don't really understand them, it's a language thing.

According to Robin, the student shared that occasionally other students try to translate for him or explain things. When the students are working need help from the teacher, there's a problem. For this situation, Robin created a dialogue via email with the teacher, a teacher that assists bilingual students, and an assistant principal. He told them about his student's grades and inquired about what they could do to help them. The response he received was overwhelming.

And they were like, ok. Cool. We'll put some tools in place.

He doubts the tools' effectiveness, but he was glad that the response was better than his previous ones when he asked for help with a student.

At Floyd's school, he and his colleagues had to voice their frustrations with an overwhelming number of students in the elective classes.

But then, at the same time every year except this year, I've had at least one class that was at least 48 students. It was that year that I had every class was, you know, 41-51 students.

Floyd's advanced art class was the one with 51 students. According to him, there were 11 students Floyd felt should have been in another room because of their skill level. He explains,

Well, what we did about it as a group is . . . one, we got together with the electives because we knew this was a serious problem. We knew that obviously; we were not being heard because any administration would look at those numbers and fix it before you come to work.

The administration listened to the grievances of Floyd and his colleagues and their thoughts about not returning the following school year. The elective teachers specifically felt that the school would benefit from another Spanish teacher and two other electives in general.

And I will say this by the time we really set out I mean that met and said got all those demands down and were able to sit there and pow wow that was probably November/December.

Eventually, the administration did hire another Spanish teacher and an additional elective teacher. Floyd and his colleagues were able to advocate for themselves to serve the students successfully.

The next step for Floyd was to meet with the other art teacher and make some tough decisions about separating students into appropriate art courses.

And I made sure that nobody got passed by the 7th grader, 7th-grade art teacher unless they had made; I think it was like 85% or more on the final. And or they had to have an amazing portfolio.

Floyd adds that the portfolio was handy for the students that spoke English as a second language at his school.

I would say by the end of that eighth-grade year; this was last year. By the end of that eighth-grade year, all of those kids were amazing. It was the best class ever.

There is a district-wide emphasis on creating an art car in Floyd's district. Art students can work together to decorate a vehicle, participate in a parade, and compete against other schools. Floyd's students were unable to compete due to the large volume of students. As a result, he requested the administration assign him a specific art car course for the following year.

But since all those classes were so big, there was never like a single class that I could trust 100% students. You know, if you're going to be outside in the parking lot, you gotta be able to trust 100% of the students. So, the next year she gave me my art car class and that was the best class in the entire world!

Floyd enjoyed the fact that he “*handpicked every one of ‘em*” and the students’ work ethic in his class.

The researcher finally completed the coding of the initial individual interviews at the end of January. At this point, all five participants received a transcript of their audio recording. The researcher identified information from two participants that could potentially qualify for advocacy.

While reading over transcripts from all of the individual interviews it was clear that advocacy was going to be a theme. Participant Floyd M. shared an empowering story about standing up to his administrative team and getting results! And Robin with his students! There is a high population of Hispanic students at his school, so he makes accommodations in his classroom for them.

These two stories touched the researcher because of her experience with administrative teams that allowed more than 30 students in art classes and other elective classes. Robin's story about helping his ELL students also inspired the researcher.

Conclusion

This chapter identified the findings from this qualitative exploratory study investigating the ideas of the lived experiences of five junior high art educators in various levels of their careers in different K-12 school districts throughout the area of Houston. Generating conversations about the perception of support, professional development, and funding at the junior high art level was the inspiration for this study. The interviews included numerous open-ended questions aligned to the research question guiding this study. Five key findings emerged from the data collected concerning the research

question inquiring about junior high art educators' perceptions regarding professional development and funding and their effects on art education. The participants' perceptions indicated they are supported and have other more pressing areas of concern.

Chapter V

Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the implications of findings detailed in Chapter IV. The research question was: What are junior high art educators' perceptions regarding professional development and funding and their effects on art education? Discussion in this chapter will attempt to bring cohesion to this research. That is executed here by drawing connections between the identified themes and elements from the literature review in Chapter II.

Summary of Findings

Chapter IV revealed five emergent themes. The researcher collected data through a focus group interview and individual interviews that were audio recorded. The five major themes of the manually coded data were:

1. Relationships
2. Goals
3. Collaboration
4. Experiences
5. Advocacy

The research question connects each theme. All themes were most closely related to the educators' perceptions about professional development and funding. Their lived experiences in the classroom led to mixed opinions about attending professional

development and its usefulness. Themes 1 and 5 specifically linked perceptions and art education.

Interpretation of Findings

Relationships

As mentioned previously in the literature review, quality relationships are built by treating students as individuals and listening to their needs. Students' relationships with their teachers are a probable resource for enhancing developmental and academic outcomes (Chen et al., 2021). The effects of positive or negative teacher-student relationships can be harmful to their emotions, behaviors, and progress (Chen et al., 2021). Relationships between students and their peers can impact their performance in the classroom. Where art education is concerned, positive teacher-student and student-student relationships heavily influence productivity and effort in the school from both the teacher and students.

The participants in this study had varying viewpoints about relationships in their classrooms. The participants derived their responses from social interactions with their students. I sought to find out how those lived experiences could be connected to class size. All the participants presented pros and cons for small and large class sizes. Even though they all had different viewpoints about class size, they all agreed that relationships played a vital role in the classroom. Agyekum (2019) states:

The intent of education is to produce researchers, scientists, engineers and many other experts to solve global problems. Students' academic outcomes cannot be

achieved if the foundation that holds or bond them is broken. Social relationships define students' intellectual functioning.

Agyekum is affirming the participants' ideas about relationships. The notion is that teacher-student relationships and student-student relationships help students succeed and shape the classroom environment. The environment of the classroom contributes to the overall classroom community.

Goals

This theme emerged from data analysis and is not endorsed directly by the literature review themes. I was surprised by some participants' desire to leave the classroom. I also did not predict other participants' recent transition into K-12.

During this study, I made a calculated effort not to think of my future as an art educator. Many teachers are constantly taking on different roles and reevaluating where they see themselves in education.

The vastly different backgrounds of each participant shaped their ideas for the future. All the participants are currently teaching art and have been doing so for a minimum of two years. Three participants received their art certification through an alternative certification program. Two participants plan to transition out of the classroom as soon as possible. And one is retiring at the end of the upcoming school year. The remaining participants are content and will continue to develop exciting projects for their students for years to come. The participants in the art classroom have goals for their students with their learning and competitions.

Collaboration

Information from the literature review reminds us that the grouping of teachers can be by grade level or junior high or high school teachers during district professional development meetings. Grouping teachers in this manner allows for collaboration between like-minded individuals.

Education is a profession that requires working with many stakeholders. In the classroom, the administration expects educators to collaborate with parents and teammates, among other people. During the focus group interview, the participants were asked, “How would you describe collaboration when it comes to electives? What more could your school or district do to enhance your collaboration experience?” The responses from the first round of individual interviews led to the development of this question.

Each participant contributed a unique perspective based on situations they were involved in at their campus. Many participants admitted that their respective districts provided enough professional development to collaborate with their colleagues. One participant came from a larger campus with three art educators and noted that it made more sense for him and his colleagues to work together than separately for the benefit of the students in the art program. Another mentioned how their campus valued internal collaboration higher than district-wide collaboration.

Experiences

The theoretical framework for this research is fixed in the social constructivist theoretical framework. The learner finds meaning in their experiences and social

interactions with others. Students in each participant's class construct their own experiences based on interactions within the classroom.

Participants Jason, Tracey, and Floyd shared information about the environments they develop throughout the school year. These environments allow students to feel safe to discuss their culture and incorporate it into their artwork. Students gain a sense of individualism when encouraged to add personal touches to their artwork. Personal touches used in artwork often come from cultural influences. As mentioned in the Culturally Responsive Pedagogy section in the literature review, teachers maintain cultural competence when reassuring students to use their culture for creating understanding in the classroom. It appears that these participants go out of their way to ensure that their students know they are valued.

Participants Almost Retired and Robin contributed information about pressure or lack thereof from their building. Almost Retired feels like her students put pressure on themselves to succeed in various art competitions. She encourages her students to do their best and reminds them there are plenty of competitions if they do not place well throughout the school year. Students create art for a purpose beyond the classroom when they participate in contests. Robin receives pressure from his building administration to participate in things outside of the regular competitions. He handles the pressure well and can accommodate the requests from the administration. Both participants can adapt to the stress in their buildings.

Advocacy

The research around advocating for programs and students is extensive. Advocacy as a theme is explained using participant responses that immediately connect to students whose first language is not English and teachers advocating for themselves for the benefit of the students. Unfortunately, the literature review themes do not support the advocacy theme during data analysis.

Only two participants Robin and Floyd responded with answers about advocacy. Robin revealed that he was involved in two situations during his short stint in the classroom where he needed to reach out for help for his ELL students. In addition to reaching out for help, Robin also assigns a buddy student to his students that may need help translating directions or assignments. Robin also provides power points for his class in both English and Spanish. Providing slides in multiple languages and reaching out for additional help seems like Robin is challenging the curriculum in a good way. Floyd also recognized moments when his students needed accommodations. Once he and his colleagues, consisting of elective teachers, spoke out against overcrowded classrooms and the need for an additional art educator, they decided on minimum grade students needed to move up to a higher-level art class. Floyd did recognize that his ELL students might not meet the overall grade they need in the class to show their art portfolio instead.

Both participants were successful in advocating in their situations. Floyd, who has been teaching longer than Robin, recognized that his colleagues were also experiencing overcrowded classrooms, and it would be wiser to work together to reduce them. His years in the school could have influenced his drive. With Robin being so new to the classroom, he is still learning to reach out to in different situations.

Implications

There are a couple of potential implications for the data and results generated from this study. Pre-service teachers can use the findings to gain insight into educators' experiences. Regardless of the grade level they teach, the expectation is for educators to be flexible. The weight of adjusting to a new normal in the education field and taking on a researcher role created an exciting experience. Additionally, the data may help aspiring teachers build relationships with students and collaborate with peers.

Now that my research is complete there are groups of people, I think will benefit from it. Pre-service teachers need to know what they're getting into when they get into the classroom. My pre-service program provided me with information but didn't prepare me for teachers constantly asking for supplies or last-minute changes to the schedule.

As previously mentioned, teacher-student relationships are vital in the classroom. Agyekum (2019) reminds us that lasting peace comes from positive teacher-student relationships and negative relationships create a hostile environment for all parties involved.

Another implication of the study is its potential use by school districts. The findings can encourage district-level coordinators to change their approach to professional development and funding for the teachers at their schools. "However, in the name of time, cost and efficiency, many professional development opportunities for teachers are too broad and not relevant to most, or even many, of the teachers attending" (Kampen, 2019).

Art coordinators need to read this. I think it will give them some insight into the lives of their teachers and help shape the types of professional development they receive throughout the school year.

Too often, educators find themselves in situations where they are attending redundant professional development sessions or professional development that does not apply to them. School systems recognize that teachers need appropriate professional development to continue to refine pedagogies and practices for evolving populations of students.

Effects on Art Education

As far as art education is concerned, the emergent themes lead us to question the future of the art education field. The Goals theme sheds light on educators interested in opportunities outside of the classroom. There is no doubt that the two out of five participants actively seeking opportunities outside of the classroom are doing so because of the additional pressures of the school year. According to Hess (2021), teachers have addressed severe social implications of the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020.

Examples were given in the Advocacy theme about art educators constantly advocating for themselves and their programs. The Center for Educator Development in Fine Arts (2021) explains,

Fine arts educators experience the long-and short-term benefits of a quality fine arts education. They see their students succeed in the arts, and in other areas.

However, others may not immediately understand the connection between fine arts learning and student success. As a result, fine arts often must justify their

programs by showing how students develop and demonstrate fine arts knowledge and skills...

Art educators provide incomparable experiences in the art classroom with various techniques and materials. As art students mature, they start independently producing meaningful artwork. Their ability to experience, observe, and express themselves in innovative ways develops (Center for Educator Development Fine Arts, 2021). “Teachers encourage exploration and experimentation and consciously individualize instruction to meet the needs of all students” (Center for Educator Development Fine Arts, 2021).

Collaboration increased, especially this school year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Art educators were in the middle of a technology shift where they had to figure out how to execute lessons that would traditionally be taught face-to-face. They leaned on their colleagues, and they figured out how to embrace technology whether they liked it or not. “To support students’ education through remote learning, teachers have to deal with the fact that they didn’t receive the proper training nor the time to prepare for such a transition in their practice” (Guillard, 2020).

Art educators can build bonds with students to help them excel in art and beyond. “Teachers convey the excitement of creation and innovation in the fine arts. Quality teaching connects artistic processes and the history of the fine arts to rigorous skills of critical thinking and problem solving” (Center for Educator Development Fine Arts, 2021).

“While it is too early to have extensive data on how COVID-19 will affect public school arts education, many districts have already seen programs eliminated and arts educators laid off due to budget constraints” (Blender & Cohen, 2020).

Limitations of Study

Schedules and sampling methods only allowed five participants from three different school districts. Ideally, an increase in participants would yield more variety in ages, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience.

Due to my lived experiences as an art educator, stopping myself from sympathizing with the participants during the interviews was not possible. These personal feelings were not a factor when interpreting the data. I kept note of these thoughts in my journal.

I had a personal relationship with participants Almost Retired and Jason before their interviews. Specifically, I worked in the same building as Almost Retired. I collaborated with Jason at district art events and professional development before leaving the district. The interviews were conducted during my time in a different school district. During my time in another school district, I conducted the interviews.

Recommendations for Future Research

Repeating the same study with an increase of junior high art educators from different school districts would be an ideal next step. Repeating the study with a rise in art educators from more communities would explore more lived experiences of junior high art educators in the area. Each district would function as an individual case study, and I would compare each district to one another. Yin (2018) notes that a multiple-case

study consists of single-case studies. An additional section or chapter for cross-case analysis must exist (Yin, 2018).

Additionally, repeating this study and incorporating interviews from fine arts coordinators from each district would yield even richer data. “Supervisors are a district’s organizing and motivating force for coherent, conceptually based fine arts programs” (Center for Educator Development Fine Arts, 2021). They would be able to speak to the support they provide art educators.

While this study provided insight into a unique population of educators, the research community must be aware that this group needs to be represented more in studies. In grades 6-8, students go through many changes that can impact their behavior inside and outside the classroom. “Students’ appreciation of art deepens in middle school. Teachers provide many opportunities for students to experience contemporary art, works from the past, and artwork from other cultures” (Center for Educator Development Fine Arts, 2021). Future research should also focus on elective teachers. Elective teachers work closely with one another and work with different grade levels of students, often in the same class period.

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Appendix A

Protocol for Interviews

Note: Demographic information establishes trust between the researcher and participant.

Also, the research did use questions not listed.

Demographic Information

Pseudonym Name:

How old are you?

What is your ethnicity?

Do you identify as male or female?

What is your highest degree earned?

How did you get into education?

What led you to art education?

How long have you been teaching?

Research Specific Questions

- 1) Educators are a great support system for their students everyday both inside and outside of the classroom. How would you describe support for educators?
- 2) How do you as an art educator describe support in your classroom? For example:
Do you have all of the resources needed for students to effectively execute projects and for you to continue your own learning?
 - Does the art educators' description include something monetary? (Some participants it does)

- 3) Tell me about a specific time you did not feel supported by your campus or district. What did you do? What was the end result of the situation?
- 4) How do you seek support outside of your building? (email, phone calls, research)
- 5) What specific differences do you see with art department support at your school versus other schools in your area?
 - Do divergent themes emerge from the questions depending on art educator experience or campus?

Focus group interview questions

- 1) Think about the last time you attended a professional development. How did you use the information you learned to better yourself or your students?
- 2) What would be your ideal class size? Why is this the perfect size? What does it allow you and your students to accomplish?

Collaboration with colleagues (electives)

- 3) How would you describe collaboration when it comes to electives? What more could your school or district do to enhance your collaboration experience?

Resources

- 4) How has technology helped your classroom?

Education

- 5) How does your school or school district support you if you are trying to further your education?
- 6) What type of opportunities are offered at a state level for you to grow your craft?

District expectations

- 7) A lot of expectations can be placed on art educators to participate in and place at various shows throughout the school year. Which type of resources do you feel would increase the odds of your students being successful in these events?

Final Individual Interview Questions with Tracey Jones

- 1) In our first interview, I asked you about support for art educators. You mentioned that people in the lives of the art educator support them as well as their coworkers. How would you describe the type of support that coworkers offer?
- 2) You mentioned you lived out of town when I asked about using the community here in Houston and how it is different. Can you elaborate more on the differences between teaching in Texas and teaching out of state?
- 3) Houston is a very diverse city. What type of adaptations do you make in the classroom to help ELL students be successful?
- 4) How do you make your content relevant to your students?
- 5) Tell me about a specific situation where you felt overwhelmed in the classroom. What did you do? How did the students react?
- 6) Describe the most successful lesson you've ever taught. What made it successful?

Final Individual Interview Questions

- 1) How does your school or school district support you if you are trying to further your education?
- 2) What type of opportunities are offered at a state level for you to grow your craft?
- 3) Houston is a very diverse city. What type of adaptations do you make in the classroom to help ELL students be successful?

- 4) How do you make your content relevant to your students?
- 5) Tell me about a specific situation where you felt overwhelmed in the classroom.
What did you do? How did the students react?
- 6) Describe the most successful lesson you've ever taught. What made it successful?

Appendix B
Informed Consent



Consent to Take Part in a Human Research Study

Title of research study: An interpretive study of junior high art educators' perceptions of support

Investigator: The principal investigator is Aisha Smith and this project is part of a dissertation being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Cameron White.

Key Information:

The following focused information is being presented to assist you in understanding the key elements of this study, as well as the basic reasons why you may or may not wish to consider taking part. This section is only a summary; more detailed information, including how to contact the research team for additional information or questions, follows within the remainder of this document under the "Detailed Information" heading.

What should I know about a research study?

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Taking part in the research is voluntary; whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide, and can ask questions at any time during the study.

We invite you to take part in a research study about junior high art educators because you meet the following criteria: you are a white male between the ages of 22-40, a white woman between the ages of 41-60, a non-white woman between the ages of 41-60 and a non-white male between the ages of 22-40. For the purpose of this study, non-white includes: African-American, Hispanic, Asian or other ethnicity.

In general, your participation in the research involves devoting two hours of your time to answering open-ended questions that will provide your perspective about the junior high art educator experience. This two-hour amount of time will be divided into three separate

meetings. The first meeting is an individual interview and will last 30 minutes. The second is the focus group interview and will last for one hour. The third and final meeting is an individual one and will last for 30 minutes. You will confirm with the researcher which video platform will work best for you between Skype, Zoom or Microsoft Teams. You will let the researcher know before the interview begins a name you would like to use. The name you pick will be seen in the write up portion of the study. The researcher will ask you a series of questions. There are no right or wrong answers. Once both of your individual interviews and focus group interview have concluded, the researcher will begin analyzing the data.

There are no known risks to you in taking part of this study. There are no personal benefits however, the possible benefit to society is initiating a conversation about junior high art educator's worldviews and how they contribute to art education as a whole. You will not receive compensation for participating in this study.

Detailed Information:

The following is more detailed information about this study, in addition to the information listed above.

Why is this research being done?

Background of the research problem explain potential benefits to others. The researcher has encountered different levels of support throughout her teaching career. Colleagues the researcher had conversations with over the years, expressed how they felt about their teaching circumstances and support. The researcher is interested in interviewing a diverse sample of junior high art educators about their idea of support because of the complexity of the age group.

How long will the research last?

We expect that you will be in this research study for two months. Each participant is expected to commit to two individual interviews and one focus group interview. Each individual interview will last 30 minutes, and the focus group interview will last one hour.

How many people will be studied?

We expect to enroll about 4 people in this research study.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?

If you agree to participate you will review and sign the consent form before any interviews take place. The first individual interview will take place on an agreed date between you and the researcher using Zoom or Microsoft Teams. The interview will be recorded, and the researcher will ask you a series of questions. At the end of the interview, the researcher will ask you if you have any questions and the interview will end. The next interview you participate in will take place with other participants 2-3 weeks after your first interview and utilize the same platform. This is the focus group interview. It will last an hour and again a series of questions will be asked. At the end of this interview, the researcher again will ask if there are any questions. The final interview

you participate in will be another individual interview. This interview will last 30 minutes. A series of questions will be asked. The researcher will ask if you have any questions before the interview ends. You can expect to hear from the researcher 4-6 weeks later to verify what you said in each interview.

This research study includes the following component(s) where we plan to audio record you as the research subject:

- I agree to be audio recorded during the research study.
 - I agree that audio recordings can be used in publication/presentations.
 - I do not agree that the audio recordings can be used in publication/presentations.
- I do not agree to be audio recorded during the research study.

You may not participate if you do not agree to be audio recorded.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research?

You can choose not to take part in the research and it will not be held against you. Choosing not to take part will involve no penalty or loss of benefit to which you are otherwise entitled.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?

You can leave the research at any time and it will not be held against you. Data collected up to the point of exit will still be used for analysis. If you stop being in the research, already collected data will not be removed from the study record.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?

There are no foreseeable risks related to the procedures conducted as part of this study. If you choose to take part and undergo a negative event you feel is related to the study, please inform your study team.

Will I get anything for being in this study?

There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Will being in this study help me in any way?

There are no known benefits to you from your taking part in this research.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study and medical records, to people who have a need to review this information. Each subject's name will be paired with a code number, which will appear

on all written study materials. The list pairing the subject's name to the assigned code number will be kept separate from these materials. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other representatives of this organization, as well as collaborating institutions and federal agencies that oversee human subjects research. The sponsor of the research Dr. Cameron White may also review research records upon request.

We may publish the results of this research. However, unless otherwise detailed in this document, we will keep your name and other identifying information confidential.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, you should talk to Cameron White at cwhite@central.uh.edu or Aisha Smith at aybarnes@uh.edu the research team at

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Houston Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may also talk to them at (713) 743-9204 or cphs@central.uh.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Signature Block for Capable Adult

Your signature documents your consent to take part in this research.

Signature of subject

Date

Printed name of subject

Signature of person obtaining consent

Date

Printed name of person obtaining consent