

Blended-art At The Kindergarten Level **1**

Blended-art at the Kindergarten Level

Jessica E. Sill

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science in Education

School of Education  
Dominican University of California

San Rafael, CA

May 2009

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my Dominican University professors for all their guidance. Thank you to the research librarians at Dominican University for all their help and knowledge. Thank you to Karey Gauthier, who has always responded to my frantic emails quickly and rationally. Thank you to my parents for their patience and for their support. Thank you especially to my dad, for helping me to remain positive during tougher times. I love you, Dad. Thank you Marisa for homework parties and for late night lit review chats. Thank you to my little dog, Pedro, who never leaves my side and who helps me procrastinate on my projects. Thank you to 7-11 for always being open when I need study snacks. Lastly, thank you to all past, present, and future kindergarteners.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE .....	1
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	3
ABSTRACT .....	5
CHAPTER 1:INTRODUCTION .....	6
STATEMENT OF PROBLEM.....	7
PURPOSE STATEMENT .....	7
RESEARCH QUESTION.....	8
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL RATIONALE.....	9
ASSUMPTIONS.....	13
PERCEPTION .....	14
LANGUAGE .....	15
PHYSICAL.....	15
COGNITIVE.....	15
CREATIVE.....	16
CULTURAL .....	16
PSYCHOLOGICAL/EMOTIONAL .....	16
AESTHETIC.....	17
PROBLEM SOLVING .....	17
SOCIAL SKILLS.....	17
BACKGROUND AND NEED .....	18
CHAPTER 3: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	19
NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND.....	19
NEUROIMAGING .....	20
MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES .....	21
WHY KINDERGARTENERS ENGAGE IN ART.....	22
PERCEPTION .....	23
LANGUAGE .....	23
PHYSICAL.....	24
COGNITIVE.....	24
CREATIVE.....	26
CULTURAL .....	26
PSYCHOLOGICAL/EMOTIONAL .....	26
AESTHETIC.....	27
PROBLEM SOLVING .....	27
SOCIAL SKILLS.....	28
OPEN-ENDED-ART .....	28
COGNITIVE.....	29
EMOTIONALLY/PSYCHOLOGICALLY.....	30
PROBLEM SOLVING .....	32
AESTHETIC.....	32
SOCIALLY.....	32

LANGUAGE .....	33
PHYSICALLY.....	33
PERCEPTUAL .....	33
STRUCTURED-ART .....	34
COGNITIVE.....	35
PHYSICALLY.....	35
DISCUSSION OF LITERATURE .....	35
SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS .....	35
LIMITATIONS/GAPS IN THE LITERATURE.....	36
IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	36
CHAPTER 4: METHODS AND PROCEDURES .....	37
SAMPLE AND SITE.....	37
ACCESS AND PERMISSIONS.....	37
DATA GATHERING STRATEGIES .....	37
DATA ANALYSIS APPROACH .....	38
ETHICAL STANDARDS .....	38
CHAPTER 5: RESULTS OR FINDINGS.....	39
DESCRIPTION OF SITE, INDIVIDUALS, DATA.....	39
ANALYSIS OF THEMES AND/OR INFERENTIAL ANALYSIS.....	39
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION.....	40
SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS OR RESULTS.....	40
COMPARISON OF FINDINGS/RESULTS WITH EXISTING STUDIES.....	46
LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	47
IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	47
OVERALL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY .....	47
REFERENCES .....	48

ABSTRACT

A foundational research assumption for this project is that the combination of open-ended-art and structured-art will enhance the development of the kindergartener. In today's standards driven classroom environment, art is often overlooked in place of text based curriculum. The idea of this project is to blend two approaches to teaching art and intertwine this approach into the rigorous daily curriculum. The deficits in each approach will be covered by the other, thereby providing opportunity for all students to reap the benefits. The purpose of this endeavor is to determine the positive and negative effects of blended-art, a combination of open-ended-art and structured-art, at the kindergarten level.

The purpose of this study is to determine the best way to incorporate art into the kindergarten classroom. Intertwining art into kindergarten curriculum is crucial, but what is the best approach? The literature and surveys researched for this study suggests that there is room for improvement in the best practice approach for integrating art with curriculum in kindergarten, establishes why art is important in the classroom, what methods are currently used to incorporate art in the kindergarten classroom, and why the blended method is the best practice.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

My two greatest joys in the world of education are kindergarteners and art. When I first thought of putting the two together to craft my research project, I initially thought of researching the positive and negative effects of open-ended-art. Open-ended-art is students centered and allows students to freely create art in a safe environment with freedom to use a variety of materials. Structured-art is teacher directed and students use project specific materials. After spending time researching, I realized that a combination of open-ended-art and structured-art was imperative in the development of the kindergartener. I believe that the best practice for effective teaching in the kindergarten classroom is to combine curriculum with open-ended-art and structured-art. For the purpose of this paper, I have termed the combination of open-ended-art and structured-art as, “blended-art”. Through research and study, I plan to determine the best practice for creating a creative environment, rich in aesthetic experiences, for kindergartener’s using blended-art.

In today’s standards driven classroom environment, art is often overlooked in place of text based curriculum. This project explores why art is important in the classroom. It will answer the questions:

1. What kind of method should be used to incorporate art with curriculum? Open-ended-art or structured-art?
2. What is “open-ended-art”? What is “structured-art”?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of these methods of incorporation?
4. What is “blended-art” and why is it the best practice for kindergarten?

Today's schools tend to employ text based teaching practices and are standards driven. This is mainly due to No Child Left Behind (Hunt, 2008). Because of this trend, students are not engaging in art regularly or at all. Students need the opportunity to engage in art for development in many areas. Because No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has narrowed curriculum, student's opportunities to engage in art has been reduced, failing to give students the opportunities they need to develop positively (Hunt, 2008).

There are many reasons why elementary age students must be engaged in art on a regular basis. The reasons for art engagement are presented in the Theoretical Rationale section and investigated in the Literature Review.

### Statement of Problem

The purpose of this endeavor is to determine the positive and negative effects of blended-art, a combination of open-ended-art and structured-art, at the kindergarten level. In today's standards driven classrooms, art is often overlooked in place of text based curriculum. Students need to engage in art regularly and blended-art is the best practice, specifically in kindergarten.

### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to determine the best way to incorporate art into the kindergarten classroom. Intertwining art into kindergarten curriculum is crucial, but what is the best approach? Do students retain more information when they are involved in structured-art? Do students develop physically in a classroom that only uses structured-art practices? How does open-ended-art encourage positive emotional growth? What are the advantages and disadvantages of blended-art at the kindergarten level? What is blended-art? These questions, and more, will be researched and studied in this project.

## Blended-art At The Kindergarten Level **8**

### Research Question

What is the best practice for incorporating art into the general kindergarten classroom in conjunction with standards based lessons? What are the advantages and disadvantages of using a blended-art program in a kindergarten classroom? Why do kindergarten teachers need to intertwine art into standards based curriculum? Why is blended-art the best practice in kindergarten?

## CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL RATIONALE

According to the National Art Education Association (NAEA), art is the most revealing of all human activities and provides understanding for different cultures (Edwards, 2002). Piaget (1969), a leading theorist in the realm of education, described intellectual development in a series of stages in which children make qualitative changes as they gain new knowledge. This series of stages presents a guide for understanding how children acquire and combine knowledge (Edwards, 2002).

It is important to remember that human beings are individual beings and it is difficult to lump them together because of the vast array variables that occur. Keeping these variables in mind, this series is used as a guide for understanding how children build and amalgamate knowledge. The three stages are the Sensorimotor Stage, the Preoperational Stage, and the Concrete Operational Stage (Edwards, 2002).

The Preoperational Stage includes children ages 2-7. In this stage children build skills like language, mental imagery, symbolic play, and imagery. This stage is characterized by the child's ability to represent ideas, objects, and events through drawing, imitation, mental imagery, symbolic play, and spoken word. In the phases of drawing, they begin to recognize form in their scribbling. Through drawing, children represent objects or experiences that have meaning to them. The Preoperational Stage is also characterized by the child's onset of language, in which children begin to understand that they can use words to represent objects and actions (Edwards, 2002).

Piaget's constructivist theory describes children as active agents in their own development in that they construct knowledge based on their actions and interactions.

Children must actively construct knowledge (Schirrmacher, 2002). Students need to build blocks of knowledge from which future learning can be based on.

Like Piaget, Vygotsky felt that children actively construct knowledge. Vygotsky theorized that children's learning occurs in the 'zone of proximal development'; the zone in which the child is comfortable and confident in exploring a task or activity because a child's learning is optimal when functioning at this level. When children master tasks in this zone, they are more inclined to continue and are motivated to learn (Edwards, 2002).

Erikson (1963) is a theoretical leader in the area of children's emotional and social development. He presented a hierarchy of conflicts that each person must resolve in order to develop personality. The outcome of the conflict directly effects the ego's development (Edwards, 2002). Erikson also felt that because young children are highly imaginative, and because imagination and creativity are linked; that children sense of autonomy and initiative should be rewarded to enhance creative functioning (Schirrmacher, 2002).

Froebel (1837) is known as the founder of kindergarten. His philosophy embraced the idea that children need to be active learners. He applied a hands-on learning approach with students. Prior to founding kindergarten in 1837, children under the age of 7 did not attend school. He believed that students should be led by their own interests and be allowed free exploration. Therefore, the teacher's role is to be a guide to the student, rather than a lecturer (Schirrmacher, 2002).

Gardner studied multiple intelligences and felt that an 'intelligence' was an ability to solve problems or create a product that has value in cultural settings. He defined 8 intelligences: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical,

interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. The intelligences clarify the varied manners through which children become problem solvers, how they learn, and how they develop (Edwards, 2002). Spatial intelligence occurs in the right hemisphere of the brain and where spatial information is stored; fine motor skills also lie in the right hemisphere. He felt that spatial intelligence can be supported by offering children a variety of media, opportunities to manipulate materials, and by creating a vivid, colorful environment in which to create (Schirmacher, 2002).

A psychologically safe environment is imperative for open-ended-art to occur. According to Maslow (1970), creative experiences are obtainable by all, if conditions are psychologically safe. In kindergarten, students need to have freedom to think, to think creatively, and to take intellectual risks. This can only happen if Maslow's hierarchy of needs has been met (Isbell & Raines, 2003).

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the first need that must be met is of survival, which includes food, water, shelter, and clothing. Second on the hierarchy is the need to be physically and psychologically safe. Kindergarten classrooms must create an environment in which this need can be met. The classroom must meet kindergartener's basic needs, support ideas, and respect individuality and differences. In the classroom, the kindergartener must feel at ease to take risks and explore without fear without ridicule. Kindergarteners, whose basic needs have not been met, if they are worried about not having enough to eat, are unable to open themselves to the creative process (Isbell & Raines, 2003).

Self-actualization is the highest tier of Maslow's hierarchy. According to humanistic theory, a creative person is a self-actualized person. The humanistic theory

provides insight into appropriate learning conditions for the kindergartener. The theory points to the need for safe environments that are supportive of individual kindergarteners. The theory also identifies the need to experiment and participate in hands-on activities. These conditions are necessary for self-actualization and support the development of a psychologically healthy kindergartener (Isbell & Raines, 2003).

Bressler (1993) described three approaches to the arts curriculum: the little-intervention orientation, the product-oriented orientation, and the guided-exploration orientation. The little-intervention orientation approach says that the teacher provides the materials and time for artistic expression and that students engage in this process with little teacher intervention. In this approach, creativity is emphasized and students explore materials, self-expression, and independence. Artistic products from the little-intervention orientation are highly individualized. The product-oriented orientation approach occurs in the majority of classrooms and often results in uniformity, little self expression, and little student independence. Under the product-oriented approach, students receive copied and pre-cut materials. Students are expected to perform with little creativity or self-expression. The focus is on the product in this approach and the student's products are usually the same. The guided-exploration orientation approach is similar to the little intervention orientation approach because they both offer a variety of materials to students. Under the guided-exploration orientation approach, the teacher guides students through explorations of art forms, associated symbols, and the development of concepts and skills in art. While student's products are individual, the focus is the study of arts (Isbell & Raines, 2003).

Schirmmacher (2002) describes three approaches to the arts curriculum: the teacher-directed approach, the child-directed approach, the teacher-guided approach (Isbell & Raines, 2003). Structured-art is the teacher directed approach. The teacher has an idea of what to make and how to make it. Students receive specific instructions to ensure a recognizable product. There is little input from students. The product of students are nearly identical to peer's. Having students complete structured-art undermines the children's sense of physiological safety. Having students copy adult made models of art demonstrates disrespect for student's ideas, abilities, and creativity. Students who consistently receive patterned art are being told that they, their creativity, and their art are inadequate.

In the child-directed approach, lessons are child-directed and unstructured. Children have input and choice with little structure. While some students may have a bank of creative ideas, others may not (Schirmmacher, 2002).

In the teacher-guided approach, a teacher supplies the theme and a variety of materials are available. The teacher suggests new techniques, problems, and extends art into other curricular areas. This is an open-ended approach to art because there is structure within a student-centered program (Schirmmacher, 2002).

#### Assumptions

In kindergarten, blended-art makes lessons memorable because students are able to create teacher directed projects that cement lessons and are able to explore lessons at their own creative level in an open-setting. In kindergarten, blended-art refines and develops motor skills because students experience materials in a hands-on setting and are give opportunity to practice and develop skills.

Blended-art builds student's confidence in kindergarten because students receive positive feedback for work that comes from their imagination and are not told that their creative efforts are against the model. In kindergarten blended-art, cultivates positive emotional growth because students have opportunity to explore their feelings, thoughts, and emotions through art. When students are given the opportunity to engage in blended-art, they are given opportunity to strengthen physical development.

Students who engage in blended-art activities promote perceptual development and refine their problem solving abilities. Blended-art fosters positive social development because students share materials, discuss, and act in a creative environment. Blended-art matures cognitive development because students are engaged, thinking in a creative manner, and work in an individualized environment. Blended-art incorporates all cultures through examples, studies, and cross-cultural usage of art and materials.

Blended-art can be used as a communication device by students in that they can express thoughts and feelings freely through artistic expression. Students practice ability to think for themselves and to follow step-by-step directions. Blended-art can be used to emphasize any curriculum; it builds background knowledge for future lessons, and enhances and extends lessons. Finally, when blended-art is employed an environment that is conducive to all levels of positive development is fostered.

The following assumptions have been made regarding blended-art and the early childhood development of the kindergartener:

*Perception*

By engaging in blended-art, students would engage in a cognitive process that gives meaning to images within a sensually rich environment that encourages

understanding of spatial concepts. Engaging in blended-art would allow students to experiment with spatial concepts and connect to prior knowledge based on developed perceptions.

### *Language*

The act of drawing and labeling, children's vocabulary development is advanced in blended-art experiences. Works of art created in a blended-art curriculum would reflect how children's minds are forming a concept of the world before they are able to put words to it. Students who engage in blended-art activities language is strengthened when following directions yet. Children draw pictures and write words to organize ideas and meaning from their personal experiences in a blended-art practice.

### *Physical*

Using a variety of art materials would help kindergarteners develop fine-motor skills. Physical knowledge would be constructed when kindergarteners experiment with art materials in a blended-art activity. Fine motor skills and coordination would be positively impacted in a blended-art curriculum because students are exercising and strengthening their large and small muscles.

### *Cognitive*

In blended-art, kindergarteners would learn that about different materials and properties, about combining colors, about different tools, etc. By engaging in blended-art, kindergarteners would grow in their cognitive development because of these experiences. In a blended-art curriculum, students would learn from real-life cause and effect situations through hands on experiences. Kindergarteners who engage in blended-art would develop critical thinking skills and problem solving skills. Kindergarteners

involved in the blended-art programs would have opportunities to expand basic concepts, memory, problem-solving skills, and language. Creative activities in a blended-art curriculum would foster the mental development of a kindergartener because it involves a range of higher-level thinking, observation, problem solving, and discovery, analysis, hypothesizing, predicting, testing, and communicating. Engaging in blended-art would afford students opportunity to learn to follow step-by-step directions.

*Creative*

Blended-art would foster creativity in kindergarteners because they are able to create artistic pieces that represent their own experiences and imagination. Students who engaged in blended-art would be presented with challenges where they would need to find creative solutions.

*Cultural*

Blended-art encourages cultural understanding in kindergarten because of the immediate cultural connection that can be made through art. This connection would allow kindergarteners to understand similarities across cultures. There is a wide variety of materials used in blended-art activities and because art materials vary across cultures, children would be able to see a connection to cultural differences through all types of materials. Human diversity would also be encouraged in a blended-art scenario because imagination and individuality are highly regarded in blended-art.

*Psychological/Emotional*

A blended-art program in kindergarten would provide an emotional release because students would be able to express difficult and complex feelings. Blended-art would encourage self-confidence through successes. Engaging in blended-art would allow

students to practice expressing feelings in a socially acceptable way. When kindergarten students are engaged in the blended-art they can learn to use judgment without criticism. In blended-art self-direction, initiative, motivation, and independent thinking would be practiced.

#### *Aesthetic*

While working in a blended-art setting, kindergarteners would learn how to appreciate art as learn to look carefully at their environment and artful representations. Students who engage in blended-art would rearrange and alter materials according to their ideals Judgment is a part of responding to art and students would learn to make appraisals about something's value in a blended-art situation.

#### *Problem Solving*

Blended-art would encourage kindergarteners to be creative. In the arts, problems have many solutions. While participating in blended-art, students would have the opportunity to deal with problems and multiple solutions. Blended-art would help students develop life skills like, decision making, problem solving, problem definition, resourcefulness, and flexibility.

#### *Social Skills*

Social skills would be practiced in blended-art because students would share and take turns. Students in a blended-art curriculum would learn to make behavior choices and consider the needs of others when they share an art space. They would also learn to make behavior choices that would contribute to a peaceful and productive group climate. Group blended-art projects would allow students to work together for a common goal. In

a blended-art scenario, students would learn to respect each others rights, feelings, and opinions.

#### Background and Need

NCLB is forcing many schools to minimize drop their art programs because of budgeting and strong focus on standards based achievement. Students are not receiving art education necessary for positive early childhood development. The focus on achievement under NCLB has forced many schools to remove or minimize art because art is not a subject that appears on standardized tests (Sternberg, 2008).

Because art is being eliminated or minimized in schools, there is a growing importance for teachers to incorporate art into daily curriculum. There are several ways to engage students in art that is intertwined in curriculum. Teachers need to use blended-art as the best practice for kindergarteners because of the importance role art plays in early childhood development.

### CHAPTER 3: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Today's classrooms are standards driven and text focused. Students engage in art once a week. The review of the literature covers NCLB, Neuroimaging, and multiple intelligences and discusses their relevance to art in kindergarten. Reasons why kindergarteners engage in art are revealed in the literature review. Open-ended-art and structured-art are explored in depth in this review.

#### No Child Left Behind

NCLB has narrowed curriculum and mandated standardized tests, thus reducing opportunity for student-centered learning. Student-centered learning is imperative in keeping the curious child alive. Teachers are under pressure to prepare students for rote memory output as measured by standardized tests. Student centered classrooms are being replaced by lecture and memorization. Cognitive skills are not being developed by students because the trend in standards driven curriculum does not allow for hands-on, creative exploration (Hunt, 2008).

Under NCLB, there are several movements. One of these, the excellence movement, shows that more attention is paid to student assessment rather than student's personal development. The standards movement has redirected attention from the activities of teachers to the achievement of students. When President Bush signed NCLB in 2002, school improvement efforts narrowed significantly and efforts focused on student training for standardized tests. NCLB has brought focus to mathematics and language arts, leaving other curricular areas behind. A major study on the effects of NCLB was released by the Center on Education Policy in March 2006. The study showed 71% of elementary schools included in the study had decreased time devoted to subjects

other than mathematics and language arts. Some schools included in the study had even eliminated curricular areas all together. Elimination or decrease in time takes away opportunity for students to develop cognitive and personal skill (Hunt, 2008).

### Neuroimaging

Willis (2007), is a neurologist and credentialed education specialist who spent over 15 years practicing child neurology. Neuroimaging brain research shows that effective learning takes place when students have an active voice in the classroom. When curriculum is relevant to student's lives, interests, and experiences their brain metabolism is positively impacted. When curriculum is relevant to students, the conduction of brain nerve impulses through the memory filters, and neurotransmitters are released which increases attention and executive function. When students feel alienated from their academic experiences they feel anxious about their lack of understanding. When anxiety occurs, learning stops. Neuroimaging shows what happens to the brain during emotional states of anxiety, etc. When students are in an emotional state of raised affective filters, sensory input is blocked from entering cortical areas of memory storage. When students are in a positive emotional state, the amygdala in the brain is activated, thus showing better working memory, improved verbal fluency, increased episodic memory, creative problem solving, focus, better decision making abilities, and higher order executive function. Through her research, Willis has concluded that the right balance of activity comes from instruction that promotes challenges and stimulates student's authentic curiosity and commitment in lessons (Willis, 2007).

### Multiple Intelligences

Gardner (1981) is most known for his work on the multiple intelligences. He was an observer of children's creative development. He felt that creativity has different forms and needs during three different stages which extend from childhood to adulthood. He felt that around age 7, the pattern shifts and children's imagination appears to halt as they stop engaging in creative processes. Graphic expression is replaced by a preoccupation with language and social activity. Free graphic expression is replaced by a determination to active realism in drawing (Schirmacher, 2002).

The Reggio Emilia School approaches early childhood education under a variation of Vygotskian social constructivism and Deweyan progressive education. The curriculum emphasizes the arts in a healthy and love-filled environment. It uses projects focusing on children's expressive capabilities. Reggio Emilia believes that painting is more than an art activity and uses abundant materials for painting (more than 20 colors, a variety of brushes, and student collected materials from nature). In Reggio Emilia, painting generally goes along with an in-depth study project over an extended period of time through which students can develop higher symbolic languages. Under the Vygotskian theory, the Reggio approach believes that children have an opportunity to advance if the children have opportunities to practice newly acquired skills. Reggio believes that when children are given an abundance of materials, they are able to develop the complex artistic skills that are necessary for higher symbolic thinking, encouraging higher level thinking (Lim, 2004).

Another artful approach to early childhood education is the Waldorf approach. Established by educator and mystic, Rudolf Steiner, the Waldorf approach seeks to connect the student to the ongoing cultural and spiritual evolution of human-kind through

emphasis on a sense of beauty and wholeness of knowledge that can be achieved through an art based aesthetic education. The Waldorf approach emphasizes an exploration of colors as being independent identities under which each color has living characteristics. To inspire feelings and imagination, students at Waldorf schools are encouraged to enjoy colors, rhythm, movement, and to engage in dialogue with colors, rather than drawing realistic figures in a structured-art setting (Lim, 2004).

#### Why Kindergarteners Engage in Art

For kindergarteners, engaging in art's primary purpose is to communicate. They engage in art to take personal experiences, ideas, and feelings and express them in a way that someone else could understand. Kindergarteners construct knowledge from their own experiences when they participate in art. Often, kindergarteners engage in art because they lack the abilities to express their thoughts and feelings in other manners. Art is a nonverbal language. Kindergarteners engage in art to experiment with new ways of doing things and properties of materials. Art allows kindergarteners to feel, touch, hear, and see their world in a way that is a direct extension of their mind. Art is also an immediate satisfaction for the student because of the simple fun and joy of art, itself (Edwards, 2002).

According to the National Standards for Arts Education, the arts are worth studying. The reasons being: The impact of art cannot be denied through history, the arts are used to achieve human purposes, the arts are vital to daily life, the arts offer unique sources of enjoyment, evidence shows that arts help students develop attitudes, characteristics, and intellectual skills necessary to participate positively in society, and art is beneficial to students because it cultivates the whole child (Schirmacher, 2002).

When people can truly see what visual art is, we understand how deeply it affects people. Homes, clothing, media, furniture, cars, and textiles are just a few examples of visual art in daily life. Art surrounds us constantly (Koster, 2001).

Art positively impacts kindergarten development in the following ways:

### *Perception*

Art is a tool for exploration and expression for Kindergarteners. It helps put perceptions in their world into context (Hieronymus & Moomaw, 1999). Art helps children develop perceptually because students use their senses to develop ideas about objects, actions, and events. Children use by using their senses. By engaging in art, students engage in a cognitive process that gives meaning to images. Students engaging in sensually rich experiences heighten their perception skills by using their senses. Art also spurs growth in student's perceptual skills by teaching them spatial concepts. Engaging in art allows students to experiment with spatial concepts such as small and big, long and short, etc. (Koster, 2001).

### *Language*

Art is one of the early symbolic systems that kindergarteners use to express complex ideas and emotions at a manageable level. In kindergarten, art assists language development because the students socialize as they utilize the materials. Through peer discussion, they describe to each other what is happening in their work, they comment on each other's work. Kindergarteners also create elaborate stories to go along with their art. Kindergarteners are also often influenced by peers and will add aspect of peer's language to their own descriptions (Hieronymus & Moomaw, 1999). Through the act of drawing and labeling, children's vocabulary development is advanced (Unsworth, 2001) Art is a

child's first language and through it children are able to record an experience and their inner thoughts about the experience. Art reflects how children's minds are forming a concept of the world before they are able to put words to it (Koster, 2001).

### *Physical*

Using art materials helps kindergartener develop fine-motor skills. The variety of materials utilizes different muscle groups in different ways and contributes to the overall strength and dexterity of fine motor skills. Physical knowledge is constructed when kindergarteners experiment with art materials (Hieronymus & Moomaw, 1999). Hand-eye coordination is an essential life skill and one way to develop this skill is through cutting (Unsworth, 2001). Art helps children grow physically through practice the ability to control large and small muscles and by refining hand-eye coordination. Dough and clay improves finger strength and dexterity. Use of paint brushes at an easel develops wrist and arm control. When children pick up small art materials they are challenging their large and small muscles to exercise (Koster, 2001).

### *Cognitive*

Kindergarteners learn that different materials have different properties, that colors can be combined, and that some have adhesion properties, they learn that different tools affect the paper in different manners, and much more. By engaging in art, kindergarteners grow in their cognitive development. When they experience different aspects of art materials and the process of art, they develop more complex reasoning. They learn from real-life cause and effect situations. They are able to use the symbolic properties of art to further their thinking and cognitive reasoning (Hieronymus & Moomaw, 1999).

(Hieronymus & Moomaw, 1999)

The arts provide an understanding across disciplines and connect ideas (Isbell & Raines, 2003). Drawing the human figure, not stick figures, helps children understand the structure and proportion of the human body (Unsworth, 2001). Children naturally quantify art materials, equipment, and supplies. They are naturally inclined to count materials in front of them. They are naturally inclined to notice differences and similarities in materials and supplies. Students are able to quantify as they create. Students also use and understand shapes through creative arts (Schirmacher, 2002).

Cognitive growth occurs in a creative environment because students practice numeration skills. Cognitive growth occurs as students count the number of items they have drawn or graph items in their drawings (Koster, 2001).

Art gives students opportunities to practice skills in planning and sequencing. When engaging in art, students make their own decisions and order their behavior to reach a goal. Art provides a first-hand experience on how properties change and cause and effect relationships (Koster, 2001).

By experimenting with different materials, students observe changes in physical properties and can form questions which stimulate discussion. Student's cognitive abilities are boosted through art when students learn ways to describe and discuss materials, processes, art forms, and pieces of art. When students observe and describe the objects in their immediate environment using art, cognitive growth occurs. By providing students with opportunity to connect the spoken language to artful symbols in a creative setting, cognitive growth within the student can occur. Students engaged in art develop cognitively through the development of an individual graphic symbol system that records

their own observations. Students learn that they can communicate these observations in their art (Koster, 2001).

### *Creative*

Art fosters creativity in kindergarteners. As they acquire information about the properties of materials, they are able to create artistic pieces that represent their own experiences and imagination (Hieronymus & Moomaw, 1999). When engaging in art, students are presented with challenges in which they find their own creative solutions (Koster, 2001).

### *Cultural*

In kindergarten, art encourages cultural understanding. Most, if not all, cultures participate in some form of art. This is an immediate cultural connection. This connection allows kindergarteners to understand similarities across cultures. Because art materials vary across cultures, children can easily understand differences when they explore cultural aspects of art (Hieronymus & Moomaw, 1999). The arts provide a way for children to connect cross-culturally (Isbell & Raines, 2003). Imagination and individuality are highly regarded therefore teaching human diversity (Jalongo & Stamp, 1997).

### *Psychological/Emotional*

In kindergarten, art provides an emotional release as students are able to express difficult and complex feelings (Hieronymus & Moomaw, 1999). The arts provide a way for children to connect with each other and understand people who came before them (Isbell & Raines, 2003). Emotionally, art encourages self-confidence. Positive art experiences allow students to feel successful, to feel pride, and to become self-confident.

Engaging in art teaches students to express feelings in a socially acceptable way. Art allows students to communicate meaning to others and can bring positive attention to the student (Koster, 2001).

Students can learn to redirect inappropriate actions into art. Engaging in art can help children deal with the stress of their lives (Koster, 2001). In the arts, details are important. Children gain the knowledge through experience that craftsmanship matters. Through experience, children learn to pay close attention to detail and feel the prideful when they identify with their work (Jalongo & Stamp, 1997).

#### *Aesthetic*

By experiencing art, kindergarteners learn how to appreciate art. Art appreciation is fostered as kindergarteners learn to look carefully at their environment and artful representations (Hieronymus & Moomaw, 1999). Because judgment is a part of responding to art, students learn to make appraisals about something's value, a higher-level thinking skill (Jalongo & Stamp, 1997).

#### *Problem Solving*

Teachers who encourage creative thinking in children are helping them become lifelong problem solvers (Isbell & Raines, 2003). In the arts, problems have many solutions. Most real world problems do not have clear solutions. By participating in art, students have the opportunity to deal with problems that have multiple solutions. Engaging in art helps students garner important life skills including, make decisions, solve problems, and make choices about things with ambiguous solutions. (Jalongo & Stamp, 1997)

### *Social Skills*

Social skills are practiced in creative activities because students share and take turns. (Schirmacher, 2002) Social development occurs when children engage in art. Students learn to make behavior choices and consider the needs of others when they share an art space. They learn to choose behavior that contributes to a harmonious group climate. Engaging in art also allows students to work together for a common goal. By sharing spaces, materials, and discussion in a creative environment, students learn to cooperate and empathize with others. (Koster, 2001) When students engage in art, the creative processes and the products spur dialogue and social interaction between peers (Jalongo & Stamp, 1997).

### Open-ended-art

By listening and observing, rather than telling and demonstrating, teachers allow students to interact in an open-ended-art program. Students are not shown models or given step by step directions for projects, rather they engage in their own artistic ventures and explorations. One of the arguments against open-ended-art is the use of time that could be spent teaching to curriculum standards. To engage fully in open-ended-art, students need freedom of time. They need to be uninterrupted while they investigate and discuss. The student determines completion of the project, not the teacher (Jalongo & Stamp, 1997).

The Reggio Emilia approach to open-ended-art uses the term ‘emerging curriculum’ to differentiate lessons that are structured and preplanned from lessons that literally emerge from the student’s interests and explorations. Children are more engaged when the lessons are student determined. The ideas for lessons emerge from student’s desire for knowledge, rather than what standard curriculum states. Under the Reggio

Emilia approach, teachers listen carefully to students and finds ways to support their curiosity (Isbell & Raines, 2003).

In open-ended-art, art is valued as a way of learning that connects sensing, knowing, and feeling. Children are given time, choices, and materials in a safe environment so that they can experiment, invent, and discover rather than working on teacher assigned tasks. The emphasis in open-ended-art is on the process and the self-evaluation done by students (Jalongo & Stamp, 1997). An emphasis in open-ended-art is uncertainty as a regular part of education and creativity. In open-ended-art, students use their inner resources to express themselves clearly and directly. Students create art without preconceived notions. Using open-ended materials is effective because they have no-predetermined use. In open-ended-art, teachers support authentic expression because there is no one way to do something, just space to create (Drew & Rankin, 2004).

Open-ended-art impacts kindergarten development in the following ways:

#### *Cognitive*

Children engaging in open-ended-art extend and expand their understandings through experiences with hands-on materials. Young children's brains develop rapidly. Rich and stimulating experiences in a safe environment construct the best conditions for positive brain development. Recognition and creation of patterns and relationships during the early childhood years is critical to positive brain development (Drew & Rankin, 2004). (Drew & Rankin, 2004)

Direct, hands-on experiences inspire children to observe carefully and draw what they see. Children who engage in open-ended-art are feel ownership of their work and become deeply involved in projects. By being deeply involved in a project, students

experience growth in their critical thinking and creative problem solving skills. Using open-ended materials allows students to make choices and act independently (Drew & Rankin, 2004).

When children are involved in the open-ended-arts process they have opportunities to expand basic concepts, memory, problem-solving skills, and language. Children's level of understanding is linked to the arts. Through open-ended-art, children can express what they see, feel, think, and want to communicate. Children can experiment with sound, texture, color, and creating when they are engaged in open-ended-art. They can strengthen their ability to imagine, create, and observe. Open-ended are helps increase attending skills because students are interested in doing their individually designed work (Edwards, 2002).

Creative activities involve solitary thinking. Engaging in open-ended-art fosters mental development because it involves a range of higher-level thinking, observation, problem solving, and discovery, analysis, hypothesizing, predicting, testing, and communicating. Children can only draw what they know. Detailed drawings will expose student's cognitive status (Schirmacher, 2002). When engaging in open-ended-art, children are in a state of mind in which unlearned forms are freely expressed. Students garner the ability to focus and act with purpose, even though the outcome may be unknown to them (Drew & Rankin, 2004).

#### *Emotionally/Psychologically*

Students can express ideas and feelings about themselves, their environments, and the world around them through open-ended-art. When children are engaged in the open-ended-art process they can learn to use judgment without criticism. Students engaging in

open-ended-art gain self-confidence and confidence in their ability to express themselves. They gain a sense of self-direction, initiative, motivations, and independent thinking when engaged in open-ended-art. They respect themselves through their accomplishments. They share personal concerns, feelings, and positive regard for one another (Edwards, 2002).

Open-ended-art provides ample opportunity for students to express emotion. Students feel as though they have influence and build self-esteem when they participate in open-ended-art. Students involved in open-ended-art feel comfortable to express deeply personal thoughts and feelings that may be otherwise unacceptable. In the processes of open-ended-art, students identify fears and learn to manage them (Edwards, 2002).

Children engaging in open-ended-art are able to excel in a particular area and feel recognized. Students feel that their efforts are worthwhile and feel valued by others (Edwards, 2002). Engaging in art fosters emotional development and positive mental health because student's uniqueness is validated. Practicing art fosters success and mastery because there is not a right-way to do things. Emotionally, the art created by students in open-ended-art programs is indicative of their emotional status, personality, temperament, and affective state. Objects, emotions, people, and events are emphasized with significance in student's art when they participate in open-ended-art (Schirrmacher, 2002). Children's impulsive, creative self expression increases their sense of competence. When students are presented with situations that are interesting and utilize a variety of materials, students will come up with their own ideas. The more they practice and grow,

the more ideas they will come up with. The more the student practices and builds a mental portfolio of ideas; they will feel a sense of competence (Drew & Rankin, 2004).

### *Problem Solving*

Students engaging in open-ended-art make decisions, define problems, seek solutions, and can use a variety of materials to solve problems. They practice resourcefulness and alternatives when they work on open-ended-art (Edwards, 2002).

### *Aesthetic*

Research on open-ended-art does not offer much insight in regards to the aesthetic development in kindergarteners. Students who engage in open-ended-art rearrange and alter materials according to their ideals (Edwards, 2002).

### *Socially*

When children are involved in open-ended-art they have opportunities to grow emotionally and socially. They can work as individuals and as members of a cooperative group. Students learn to take turns, share materials, equipment and space. They respect each others rights, feelings, and opinions. They develop group leadership and follower qualities. They share personal concerns, feelings, and positive regard for one another. Students discuss, explore, and inquire about different experiences in the arts. They plan, problem solve, and maintain an environment of positive support for themselves and other students. Social support is developed by sharing and asking questions during open-ended-art. They gain a sense of acceptance in a group and develop communication skills (Edwards, 2002),

Engaging in art can spur social growth within the student. By participating in art, children can come to terms with themselves and others. Social skills are practiced as students entertain other points of view (Schirrmacher, 2002).

### *Language*

Free drawing, in an open-ended environment, provides students opportunity to draw figures that need labels which motivates the student to learn vocabulary with which to write. Drawing also serves as a prompt for story creation and writing. There is a clear partnership between drawing and writing. Children draw pictures and write words to organize ideas and meaning from their personal experiences (Baghban, 2007).

Additionally, students do have opportunity to develop a mature vocabulary to use in discussing, exploring, and inquiring about experiences when deeply engaged in open-ended-art (Edwards, 2002).

### *Physically*

Physically, young students are limited in skills. Providing them with opportunities to practice physical skills is important. Their coordination, fine motor skill, manual dexterity, small muscle development, and visual acuity can be practiced and encouraged through art (Schirrmacher, 2002).

### *Perceptual*

Perception is influenced by the neurophysiologic structure, personality, and prior learning. The task of art is to create based on perception. Perceptual growth can be seen in student's open-ended-art endeavors (Schirrmacher, 2002).

### Structured-art

In structured-art, the arts are regarded as fundamental to the total curriculum, rather than superfluous. In structured-art, links between the arts and other curriculum are emphasized (Jalongo & Stamp, 1997). Structured-art is product oriented. Students are asked to copy teacher-made models. The purpose is to create a product that casts a lesson into student's memory (Szyba, 1999).

By working on structured-art, students recall lessons because they remember making the craft. Structured-art uses specific materials and processes. Students do not experiment in structured-art, they follow directions. The art or craft created by students is predetermined by the teacher. The activity and the outcome are controlled. Teachers do not have to rely on their own creativity; structured-art projects are easily located in books and on the web. The teacher provides a model so that students can see the goal that they are working towards. The model provides structure to the activity. Any lesson can be followed by a structured-art activity to cement the ideas learned (Szyba, 1999).

Structured-art impacts kindergarten development in the following ways:

*Socially*

They can work as initials and as members of a cooperative group. Students learn to take turns, share materials, equipment and space. Students working on structured-art garner respect for each others rights, feelings, and opinions. They gain a sense of acceptance in a group and develop group leadership and follower qualities (Edwards, 2002). Children often share materials during structured-art, prompting turn taking, sharing, cooperation, and communication. Structured-art reinforces lessons by asking students to create models that they can use as reference. The results of the student created product are often uniform; they may feel part of a group effort (Szyba, 1999).

*Cognitive*

Research on structured-art offers little in the way of support of cognitive development. Engaging in structured-art would help students learn to follow step-by-step directions.

*Physically*

Research on structured-art offers little in the way of support of physical development. Engaging in structured-art would help students develop fine motor skills.

Discussion of Literature

*Summary of Major Findings*

Review of research provides a basis for the importance of art at the Kindergarten level. Howard Gardener's research shows that creativity comes to almost a standstill at age 7. Reports on No Child Left Behind show that art is being removed from curriculum and replaced with standards based, text driven content. Educational theorists provide basis for importance of implementing art at the elementary level. Structured-art and open-

ended-art are important aspects of early childhood education that need to be resurrected. Research of open-ended-art provides basis for the overall importance of art in the classroom and provides information on the importance of employing this tactic, especially in Kindergarten. Research of open-ended-art also provides insight into deficits in the practice and shows why this practice needs to be blended with structured-art.

*Limitations/Gaps in the Literature*

There is little information available on structured-art. This makes the comparison difficult to make without making assumptions. The study and treatment segments will provide more information about the benefits and deficits of structured-art. There is no research available on the ideas behind blended-art. A combination of research on structured-art and open-ended-art was used to develop the ideas behind blended-art as a best practice for kindergarteners.

*Implications for Future Research*

Future research may provide more information on structured-art and open-ended-art. Future research may show why art is important for students, and that the trend in removing art from schools, as influenced by No Child Left Behind, has to be reversed. Finally, future research may also provide information on why blended-art is the best practice for kindergarten.

## CHAPTER 4: METHODS AND PROCEDURES

### Sample and Site

The participants are all teachers within the Mill Valley, California school district. 5 of the 9 surveys were returned. All survey participants are San Francisco Bay Area residents.

### Access and Permissions

The teachers surveyed for this project are all acquaintances within the Mill Valley School District. All participants were given a copy of the research participant consent form, which was reviewed with them before signing. After selecting and contacting several Kindergarten and Kindergarten art teachers, 10 surveys and release forms were sent to those who agreed to participate in the study, along with release forms to principals of corresponding schools. A hard copy of each survey was hand-delivered to all participants, as well as a digital version via email. Surveys were sent to Kindergarten teachers at Waldorf and a Montessori school, but consent was not granted.

### Data Gathering Strategies

Data gathering began with a search for possible interview candidates. For the purpose of this study, the candidates needed to be kindergarten teachers from public and private schools and kindergarten art teachers from both public and private schools. Participants were then contacted to gauge interest level prior to sending permission forms and the survey. The interview included fourteen questions regarding perceptions of blended-art, employment of blended-art, and questioning the best practice for incorporating art at the Kindergarten level. Surveys were returned via mail or email.

#### Data Analysis Approach

Once the survey results were obtained, they were sorted by question. Names were removed from surveys and surveys were printed using the same font so that the teacher's identity would remain anonymous. Answers to survey questions were compared and reported.

#### Ethical Standards

This study adheres to Ethical Standards in human Subjects Research of the American Psychological Association. (American Psychological Association, 2007). Additionally, the project was reviewed and approved by the Dominican University of California Institutional Review Board, number 7026. The names of participants have been omitted to protect participants' anonymity. School names and specific locations have been omitted.

## CHAPTER 5: RESULTS OR FINDINGS

### Description of Site, Individuals, Data

For the purpose of this study names and locations have been omitted. Teacher's names will be replaced by "teacher 1", "teacher 2", etc. The teachers surveyed in this study were all women employed in the Mill Valley school district. Three of the respondents are kindergarten teachers in Mill Valley, CA public schools. One of the respondents is a kindergarten art teacher at a Mill Valley public school. Teacher 1 and teacher 2 have been teaching for 6-9 years. Teacher 3 has been teaching for 26 years. Teacher 1 and teacher 2 have been teaching kindergarten for 3-5 years. Teacher 3 has taught kindergarten for 13 years and kindergarten art for 3 years. Teacher 4 has been teaching for 19 years, specifically in kindergarten for 5 years. She has been implementing art in conjunction with general curriculum for 2 years.

### Analysis of Themes and/or Inferential Analysis

All of the teachers surveyed felt that blended-art was a positive strategy that is the best practice for using art in conjunction with kindergarten curriculum. All respondents agreed that art is an essential tool that must be used in juxtaposition with kindergarten curriculum based on state-standards. None of the general education kindergarten teachers had one particular strategy they used to incorporate art into the classroom. None had heard of a practice like blended-art before, yet all agreed that it was an appropriate blend of structured-art and open-ended-art.

## CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

### Summary of Major Findings or Results

When asked to briefly comment on initial thoughts to the ideology of blended-art as being the best practice for kindergarten the surveyed teachers agreed that kindergarteners need a blended approach to art. Teacher 1 noted that the blend is crucial because while the structured-art teaches them how to do something, the open-ended part encourages creativity. Teacher 2 noted that kindergarteners need to engage in blended-art because they are more interested in the process than the end result. She felt that the completed work of art is often forgotten by the end of the lesson and that the high-light of the class session for students is the process.

The kindergarten art teacher, teacher 3, stated that children need the avenue for self-expression via open-ended-art because it provides a chance for exploration of materials which broadens their knowledge of what each material can do. She noted that the debate over the best practice for kindergarten art in the general education classroom reminded her of the debate on Whole Language vs. Phonics Reading because each child has their own learning style, and both strategies are important. She felt that the key is in knowing students and employing a balance of structured-art and open-ended-art thru the vehicle of blended-art. Teacher 4 felt that art is an important component for the kindergarten level. She believes that art is an excellent way for young learners to express their thoughts and that at the same time, art allows for practice developing fine motor muscles as they cut and draw, glue and fold, etc. She says that art provides a window into a child's development and maturity as pictures go from "blobs" to drawings of a person with a head, body, arms and legs. She believes that she employs a strategy similar to what has been described as blended-art in a student journal program. Each weekend her

students are asked to draw and then write about something that happened over the weekend. Because of the combination of structured-art strategy found within the journals guidelines, students are asked to engage in open-ended-art as they freely create artistic visions of their own personal experience. Teacher 4 believes that the blended-art approach is valuable because it provides parameters, but allows for individual expression.

Teachers surveyed were asked if they used structured or open-ended tactics in their art instruction. Although none were versed on tactics used in teaching art in the general kindergarten classroom, they all felt that they employed a combination of open-ended-art and structured-art.

Teacher 1 described a station available to students during the choice learning segment of the day she calls “creation station”. The students are able to use any materials they choose provided that they know what they have created.

Teacher 2 noted that she uses a combination of open-ended-art and structured-art depending on the goal of the project. She believes that art in kindergarten is about playful exploration and that pre-designed, all-alike projects with an expected end result do not allow for playful exploration.

Teacher 4 feels she uses structured-art more regularly because she believes a step-by-step listening and following directions art activity is important to practice. Further, she feels that sometimes students do need the opportunity for open-ended expression.

When asked to respond to the negative and positive effects of art in the kindergarten classroom, teachers did not feel that there were negative effects because art teaches creativity, self-expression, problem solving, appreciation, fine motor skills, observations, perceptive abilities, visual and spatial awareness, etc.

The kindergarten art teacher said that art positively effects ability to express, comfort with expression, and provides a kinesthetic path to learning. Teacher 2 felt that besides being great fun for students, quality art experiences are essential to healthy creative and mental growth. She said that when presented properly, kindergarten art experiences provide multiple opportunities to explore art processes and manipulate media, all while having fun. Further, she felt that freely investigating both new and familiar materials should be encouraged. Teacher 4 could only see positive effects of art in kindergarten because she says that it is the medium with which kindergarteners are most comfortable and it doesn't feel like work to them.

The general education kindergarten teachers responded to a question asking if they used art in the classroom in conjunction with standards based lessons. Teacher 1 incorporates art into all curricular areas. She thinks it is important for kids to see the interconnectedness of all learning. She thinks that art, just as music and physical education, is important to use in all disciplines to help all students develop their different learning modalities and to access their strengths or strengthen weaknesses. Teacher 4 uses art for many standards-based lessons because she believes that the art pulls students in and makes the lesson fun rather than filling in a worksheet.

The teachers surveyed were asked what their philosophy on teaching art in the class room was and what kind of tactics they employed. Teacher 1 said that art is invaluable to kids. She said that art teaches creativity, self-expression, problem solving, appreciation, fine motor skills, observational skills, perceptive abilities, visual and spatial awareness, organization, follow-through, etc. She finds value in what has been deemed "blended-art".

Teacher 2 tries to give her students opportunities for open ended problem solving using a variety of art techniques. She feels it is important to have instructions and that praise and encourage children to be successful. She also gives opportunities for students to be recognized through displays of their end products. Sometimes she uses modeling techniques. She tries to make connections to other curriculum areas and technology while focusing on creative thinking and problem solving. Mostly, she tries to build success in all her students. She feels that art is a wonderful way to do this.

Teacher 3 teaches students to listen to their art and say what the art wants after they have done what they want and that it might not be what they expect. She also believes in teaching them proper care for materials and how they are best used.

Teacher 4's philosophy on art is that it is a natural expression for young learners in their early development. She says that it is an essential component in any program and feels that it is an empowering process because students are proud of their art and happy to show their parents all of the projects displayed in the classroom. She thinks that art needs to be structured at times so that the students can learn techniques and then apply them on their own, just as she teaches writing techniques/skills to students so that they can then become more fluent and expressive in their writing.

Teachers surveyed were asked to respond to advantages and disadvantages of using open-ended-art strategies in the classroom. Teacher 1 felt that open-ended-art encourages creativity, self-expression, and creating a plan and following it through. She felt that disadvantages are that some students don't know how to follow through on a plan, that they may not have the skill set, they may need help monitoring time and materials, and that some may feel overwhelmed not knowing where/how to begin, etc.

Teacher 2 felt that open-ended-art gives children the opportunity to freely investigate both new and familiar materials using their own creative process. She said that because students may be uncomfortable taking risks, open-ended-art could be challenging.

Teacher 3, the kindergarten art teacher, said that open-ended-art is important in fulfilling the need for early self-expression. Teacher 4 sees structured-art as beneficial because students are listening to directions and specific skills can be worked on. She believes that there are negative aspects in structured-art in that, students apply little creativity and all projects look roughly the same.

The teachers were also asked to respond to the positive and negative effects of structured-art in the general kindergarten classroom. The teachers surveyed responded together in saying that structured-art inhibits creativity and that motivation may be challenging for some students.

Teacher 2 uses structured-art when assessing a particular skill or when concentrating on a specific outcome. Teacher 3 feels that structured-art is important because children benefit greatly from being taught proper use of materials and techniques for creating certain effects. She feels that as in any other subject area, specific skills need to be acquired and developed; a result of structured-art.

Teacher 1 argued that structured-art is good for teaching kids a particular skill set, having them follow step-by-step directions, observations, beginning a task and seeing it through to the end, etc. In regard to the effects of open-ended-art, teacher 4 feels that because this is the truest form of art, students are free to create. She sees disadvantages in

that some students might not be as motivated and therefore with no parameters, hurriedly putting something on paper and then saying, “Done”.

The teachers surveyed were also asked to respond to potential advantages and disadvantages of blended-art. Teacher 1 felt that blended-art affords kindergarteners the opportunity to learn how to do something and then make a choice to complete it in such a way or to take a different route to find their way. She said that blended-art would give students a guide that they can then add to and express their individuality in.

Teacher 2 thought that blended-art would be the best approach to incorporating art into the general education kindergarten classroom because it lends itself to creativity and to specific directions that would be followed. The teachers surveyed were then asked if they would consider employing a blended-art approach to art in the kindergarten classroom. All agreed that blended-art would be the best practice for teaching art in conjunction with general education in kindergarten.

Teacher 4 felt that blended-art offers the best of both structured-art and open-ended-art because it allows for parameters and slight structure with lots of room for student interpretation. She did not see negative effects in a blended-art program.

The teachers surveyed were also asked if they could foresee difficulties in employing blended-art practices in kindergarten. Teacher 1 and 3 did not see possible difficulties. Teacher 2 felt that because there was less “telling” on her part, the students could be confused without strict guidance. She felt that as a teacher, sometimes it is difficult for activities to unfurl organically. She also admitted that sometimes she forgets that the experience/the process is what the children are benefiting from, not necessarily

the product. Teacher 4 felt concerned about having the time to fit everything into a lesson.

To put the study into perspective with current climate in education, as of 2009, teachers surveyed were asked if they had seen NCLB affecting kindergarten art education or effects on opportunities to engage in art. Teacher 1 believes that NCLB is affecting the importance of teachers, parents, and administrators place on art. She felt that there is a great weight on testing and that because art is not tested, importance is removed. She says that she is fortunate to be employed in Mill Valley, CA because there is a parent funded program that brings the arts into her school. Her students receive art, dance, and music once per week and they also do a lot of art in the classroom.

Teacher 2 is aware that many districts have cut the arts in order to put their money into students who are struggling with standardized tests. She feels that there is a challenge for art teachers to demonstrate that the arts are still an important part of the educational processes. She said that because of this challenge, it is more important now than ever to incorporate art into the general education classroom. Again, employed in Mill Valley, CA, teacher 4 had not seen difficulties presented by NCLB personally because her school has rich resources and receives support from a school foundation.

#### Comparison of Findings/Results with Existing Studies

Because of the limitations in research, it is difficult to compare the blended-art study with an existing study. Research studies on structured-art, open-ended-art, or studies similar to the blended-art ideology were not found at the time of this study.

### Limitations of the Study

This study was limited by the inability to interview teachers of Montessori or Waldorf schools who teach using open-ended-art strategies. This study was limited to teacher interviews because of the incapacity to employ experiments with actual kindergarten students in a classroom setting.

### Implications for Future Research

Future research could certainly include experimental classrooms in which art is taught to Kindergarteners via the three different strategies discussed in this study: open-ended-art, structured-art, and blended-art. Future research could also include data gathered from schools that employ open-ended-art strategies and structured-art strategies.

### Overall Significance of the Study

This study has shown the significance of blended-art as the best practice for kindergarten students. Research and survey results show that art is imperative in early childhood development and that the best way is to blend open-ended-art and structured-art into a curriculum that allows for free expression and experimentation in an environment with structure and parameters.

Today's schools tend to employ text based teaching practices and are standards driven. This is mainly due to NCLB. Because of this trend, students are not engaging in art regularly or at all. Students need the opportunity to engage in art for development in many areas. There are several techniques for bringing art to the classroom. Blended-art is the best practice for kindergarten.

REFERENCES

- American Psychological Association (Ed.). (2007). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Baghban, M. (2007). Scribbles, labels, and stories: The role of drawing in the development of writing. *Young Children*, 62(1), 20--26.
- Drew, W., & Rankin, B. (2004). Promoting creativity for life using: Open-ended materials. *Young Children*, 59(4), 38--45.
- Edwards, L. C. (2002). *The creative arts: A process approach for teachers and children* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Hieronymus, B., & Moomaw, S. (1999). *More than painting: Exploring the wonders of art in preschool and kindergarten*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.
- Hunt, J. (2008). A nation at risk and no child left behind: DÉJÀ VU FOR ADMINISTRATORS? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 89, 580--585.
- Isbell, R. T., & Raines, S. C. (2003). *Creativity and the arts with young children*. Clifton Park, NY: Delmar Thomson Learning.
- Jalongo, M. R., & Stamp, L. N. (1997). *The arts in Children's lives: Aesthetic education in early childhood*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Koster, J. B. (2001). *Growing artists: Teaching art to young children* (2nd ed.). Albany, NY: Delmar Thomson Learning.

Lim, B. (2004). The magic of the brush and the power of color: Integrating theory into practice of painting in early childhood settings. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 32(2), 113--119.

Schirmacher, R. (2002). *Art and creative development for young children* (4th ed.). Albany, NY: Delmar Thomson Learning.

Sternberg, R. J. (2008). Excellence for all. *Educational Leadership*, 66(2), 14--19.

Szyba, C. (1999). Why do some teachers resist offering appropriate, open-ended-art activities for young children? *Young Children*, 54(1), 16--20.

Unsworth, J. M. (2001). *Kindergarten: Drawing is basic: Drawing and writing to learn*. Parsippany, NJ: Dale Seymour Publications.

Willis, J. (2007). Preserve the child in every learner. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 44(1), 33.