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Graffiti-Inspired Curriculum: Enhancing Student Understanding of Artistic Conventions, Symbolism, and Metaphor

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GRAFFITI-INSPIRED CURRICULUM: ENHANCING STUDENT UNDERSTANDING OF 
ARTISTIC CONVENTIONS, SYMBOLISM AND METAPHOR 

By 

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ABSTRACT

Graffiti is an art form that has been largely ignored by institutions of art education. This art-based, classroom study explores the student learning that can occur through the implementation of a graffiti-inspired unit. The content assessed for student growth in understanding was artistic conventions, symbolism, and visual metaphor. This study describes how the data on student learning was accumulated through the use of questionnaires, individual interviews, and written artist statements. The graffiti-inspired curriculum of this study, that included three major assignments based on a common theme of personal identity, showed that students were able to significantly increase their understanding of artistic conventions, symbolism, and metaphor almost universally. The final results of this study were applied to a graffiti-inspired unit plan for art educators to use and adjust in order to engage and increase the knowledge of their individual student populations.

Keywords: graffiti-inspired, artistic conventions, visual culture, visual metaphor
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Graffiti art can be found in most cities around the globe. Daichendt (2010) describes graffiti as a text-based art form that led to the concept of street art (p. 7). Inner-city students can relate to graffiti art because it surrounds them and captures their interests. Graffiti art is a significant source of student visual culture that can keep students engaged and motivated. Art educators can captivate and inspire students when using exemplars from student neighborhoods, cities and personal interests. Even though art educators often strive to implement relevant and engaging curriculum, Eldridge (2013) explains that graffiti artists are rarely heard by researchers, the art community or art education (p.22).

Units inspired by graffiti art can provide relevance, intrinsic motivation, and the investigation of self-identity themes. In urban settings, the use of graffiti from student neighborhoods can help capture student interests. Simpson (1998) references that neighborhoods can be strong themes in unit plans (p. 297). Art educators can use graffiti art to ask: What specific skills and understandings can a graffiti-inspired curriculum develop? High school students are often interested, comfortable, and knowledgeable in graffiti exploration. How does the use of graffiti-inspired units impact student understanding of larger concepts, such as symbolism or metaphor?

The proposed study will examine the ways that a graffiti-inspired unit does or does not promote the understanding of symbolism, visual metaphor, and identity. The focus of this study will be action based as defined by McNiff (2009) and investigates the 10th grade students at City Arts and Technology High School in San Francisco, CA. City Arts and Tech, also called CAT,
is a public charter school that mandates every student in 10th grade take visual arts class. The researcher has been the Visual Arts teacher there for eight years.

San Francisco is a city filled with graffiti art and graffiti artists in every neighborhood. Since becoming an art educator in 2006, the students of the researcher have mostly exhibited engagement and excitement while creating and discussing graffiti-based work. The wealth of prior knowledge and experience that students bring to graffiti exploration is deep and powerful. Aguiliar (2013) encourages art educators to learn from their students, as he learns how his students see graffiti and street art, enabling a more holistic view of art education (p. 37). The philosophy of the researcher is that an art educator must develop a partnership with the students, bringing assignments and topics for study that are exciting, engaging and fun for them.

Graffiti-inspired art units keep students intrinsically motivated. Jaquith (2011) describes intrinsic motivators as “content with personal relevancy and preference for the media or art form” (p.14). By studying graffiti, the theme of self-identity becomes natural and apparent as each individual artist is expressing something deeply personal about him or herself. There is something dynamic about combining text and image to express personal meaning, especially for adolescents. The purpose of this research was to investigate how a graffiti-inspired curriculum might deepen student understanding of concepts such as artistic conventions, symbolism, metaphor, and identity.

Research Goals

The research goals of this study were to assess the influence that graffiti-inspired work had on student understanding. The study has implications for the implementation of graffiti-inspired units. Through the investigation, the goal of the research was to gain knowledge of what deeper abilities and understandings students achieved through the study of graffiti. Rahn
(2002) writes that there is virtually no written material about graffiti from an educational point of view (p. xi). Another goal of the study was to evaluate the data in order to help art educators determine the areas of focus for incorporating graffiti-inspired units into their curriculum.

**Research Questions**

The research in this study examined the question: How might a graffiti-inspired unit impact 10th grade City Arts and Technology High School students' understanding of artistic conventions, symbolism, and metaphor as they relate to personal identity? The researcher assessed the influence that graffiti-inspired work had on student understanding. The researcher used a survey and interviews to gather data on prior knowledge of artistic conventions, symbolism, metaphor, and identity in every student before the graffiti-inspired unit began. In this unit, the five artistic conventions studied were: complementary colors, the use of warm, cool, and neutral colors, value shifting (also called gradation or shading), overlapping, and perspective. The data was compared with surveys, interviews, and finished art pieces and artist statements after the unit to determine levels of growth. Furthermore, the research attempted to ask: Which methods and teaching strategies are successful when used within a graffiti-inspired unit, and can be implemented by other art educators?

Graffiti-inspiration means that students will be creating code names that are designed in complex, dynamic ways that use multiple artistic conventions. The graffiti-inspired work in this study also required students to create and design images that are symbolic as well as metaphoric to be included within their work. Lacktman (2013) expresses that it is time for art educators to dissolve the divide between fine art, graffiti art, street art and design art, and simply call it “art” (p. 18). A graffiti-inspired unit is meant to analyze graffiti murals to study the artistic
conventions, imagery, symbolism, and metaphor used, as they relate to identity, and give students a chance to create works inspired by that investigation.

**Conceptual Framework**

The grounding of this study lies in the high engagement that graffiti art can bring to a student population, and the cognitive importance of developing metaphor. Rahn (2002) explains that graffiti involves learning through praxis, which involves doing, watching, and naming through dialogue (p. 193). Furthermore, using the alphabet can provide a formal structure for students while imposing a discipline that can be developed through individual style with differentiation and increasing complexity (Rahn, 2002, p. 204). Marshall (2008) writes that the creation of a metaphor is powerful because it often creates connections that were unseen previously (p. 40).

**Methods of Data Collection**

The research consisted of developing surveys to determine students’ prior knowledge in the area of artistic conventions, symbolism, metaphor, and their views of personal identity. Data will be collected using what Maxwell (2013) calls a mixed-methods approach, as the student responses were processed into quantitative amounts of how many students already had a clear sense of this knowledge and how many students did not. Lesson plans were developed to implement graffiti-inspired art in several stages. The first stage focused on word and image design. The second stage focused on creating a code name that symbolically represents some aspect of the students’ identity while creating a symbolic image to enhance that meaning. The third stage asked students to continue to design their code names into a finished piece that also incorporated a visual metaphor about their identity. The last stages of this study asked students to complete a typed artist statement that explained the meaning and choices made in the work, as
well as their understanding of the various concepts implemented. Additional data was collected through student interviews that happen in the beginning, middle and at the end of the unit, to see if the levels of understanding of symbolism, metaphor, and identity had changed.

**Methods of Analysis**

In order to accurately analyze the data, the 12th grade art teacher at City Arts and Tech High School and the researcher reviewed the surveys used to gather information with and help assess student work for understanding of concepts. With her help, the results remained as objective and accurate as possible. To ensure that student responses on the initial survey were accurate representations of what they really knew, the researcher followed up with them immediately after the survey to ask them the same questions in person to compare with their written answers. After each stage of the graffiti-inspired unit, the researcher interviewed each student asking them the same questions in order to tally their responses to see how their responses changed throughout the unit. Once each interview was completed, the 12th grade art teacher and the researcher assessed the finished artwork and compared it to the written artist statement.

**Theoretical Framework**

Randazzo & Javedic (2013) write of the potential for graffiti-inspired projects to allow students to examine elements and principles of design, as well as debate social aspects through messages conveyed (p. 44). Adding the element of the metaphor to the graffiti inspiration unit and self-identity theme can enhance student learning and understanding in multiple subject areas. Simpson (1998) identifies the metaphor as the basis of design for units that can be applied to any age or skill level (p. 301). Metaphor study can deepen student understanding, Simpson states, as imagery that contains metaphorical reference is often the best catalyst for meaningful, personal,
visual expression for secondary students (1998, p. 301). Marshall (2007) believes that art education should study how art images convey and construct meaning through metaphor while linking subjects like science and literature to art (p. 38). Serig (2006) also comments on the importance of being able to make visual metaphors, as it allows students to think like artists (p. 232). Teaching graffiti through a structured target of symbol and metaphor alludes to what Feldman (1996) writes, “being an artist means having a creative strategy, requires technique and regular habits of work” (p. 85).

**Significance of the Study**

Graffiti art can be a controversial art form and many art educators are reluctant to incorporate it into their curricula. Research is needed to provide data that determines the extent that a graffiti-inspired unit might develop artistic and academic skills in students. This study allowed the researcher to gather data that can answer questions in the minds of art educators as to what a graffiti-inspired curriculum can do for student thinking and learning. Marshall (2013) believes that the most important purpose of art education in public schools is to catalyze thinking skills. The arts, according to Marshall, have the power to ignite critical and creative thinking that develops the cognitive process. Through the arts, students should be challenged to think about what they believe, what they are interested in and what they have to say to the world. Students should develop a curiosity for the world through artistic investigation, and spark a desire to become life-long learners (Marshall, 2013).

Data from the research can help to see whether there are interdisciplinary implications using what Newland (2013) calls “parallel disciplines” as a way to develop understanding in Language Arts content as well (p. 47). Both Visual and Language Arts contain the concepts of
symbolism and metaphor in their content, and graffiti was studied as an attempt to build an understanding of these concepts in students.

**Limitations of the Study**

Limitations of the study varied. Methodological constraints limited the study as the primary sources of data came from cycles of interview questions, along with teacher assessment of understanding. Time constraints limited data collection solely to the graffiti-inspired unit, and did not gather data from the following unit to see what understandings have potential for transfer. Individual student data was not taken into consideration as to how it may impact the results, such as Individualized Education Plans (IEP) or absences.

**Conclusion**

Educators and researchers often avoid a focus on graffiti-inspired art curricula. In the world of many students, especially those in urban areas, graffiti arts represent a significant aspect of visual culture and artistic interests. The goals of the research for this study were to gather data on an entire grade level of sophomore students to determine the extent that a graffiti-inspired unit can increase understanding of artistic conventions, symbolism, and metaphor through self-identity work. The following chapter reviews the literature on graffiti-inspired curricula in schools, as well as the importance of using metaphor as a focus in art education.

**Definition of Terms**

Artistic Conventions- methods of conveying or portraying something artistically that are widely used and recognized. The artistic conventions in this study are: value shifting (gradation), complementary colors, perspective, overlap, and the use of warm, cool, and neutral colors.
Graffiti-inspired- an art education that studies the artistic conventions and elements in graffiti art. The materials used in graffiti-inspired curricula can vary, from paint to colored pencils and markers. Graffiti-inspired art education combines the design of text with the creation of imagery to communicate about various issues and topics.

Visual Culture- everyday cultural experiences, texts, and images that are considered important for engagement and analysis, including television programs, computer games, Internet sites, and advertisements.

Visual Metaphor- the representation of a person, place, thing, or idea by way of a visual image that suggests an association or point of similarity.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Graffiti-inspired curricula can be used to engage, motivate, and develop student investment in the arts. While art educators can use graffiti to capture student interests, the research of this study aimed to uncover the extent that students might acquire new understandings of artistic and academic content through their graffiti-inspired investigations. The research examined the question: How might a graffiti-inspired unit impact 10th grade City Arts and Technology High School students' understanding of artistic conventions, symbolism, and metaphor as they relate to personal identity?

Conceptual Framework

The grounding of this study lies in the high engagement that graffiti art can bring to a student population, the possible development of recognizing and using artistic conventions, and the cognitive importance of developing symbolism and metaphor. The researcher has had several years of prior experience implementing, revising, and expanding a graffiti-inspired curriculum, and was focused on determining whether or not the curriculum led to student growth and understanding.

The researcher used survey questions, both written and in interview form, to track the amount of learning of academic and artistic concepts throughout the unit. The conceptual framework was organized into four related categories that propelled the study: prior knowledge, areas of research, research strategy, and connections (see figure 1).
Figure 2.1. Conceptual Framework

How might a graffiti-inspired unit impact 10th grade City Arts and Technology High School students’ understanding of artistic conventions, symbolism, and metaphor as they relate to personal identity?

Prior Knowledge:
- Eight years of teaching graffiti-inspired art to students
- Extensive personal photographs taken of San Francisco graffiti art
- Work for a school that holds a “social justice” stance toward curriculum

Areas of Research:
- Graffiti as an art form for understanding of convention, symbol and metaphor
- Graffiti as an art form for understanding of identity
- Student opinions, reactions and outcomes after graffiti unit

Research Strategy:
- Introductory survey
- One on one interview of all students
- Completed student art pieces and artist statements
- Repeating all above steps throughout the study

Connections:
- Understanding the pitfalls to comprehension and use of conventions, symbolism and metaphor
- Creating integrative and powerful methodologies in the arts curriculum
- Document the influence graffiti units have on urban art students
Review of the Literature

The literature used to propel the graffiti-inspired research was organized into three areas of importance: graffiti as curriculum, student impact, and academic impact. Each of these areas includes various subtopics for discussion.

Graffiti as Curriculum

Graffiti can be an engaging, controversial, or a disregarded art form in the educational arena. Hampton (2013) understands graffiti to be creations by artists without formal training and often admired as “authentic” expressions that are not regulated by disciplines of art education (p. 53). The authenticity that Hampton speaks of may be found in the relationship graffiti has with the public. Any person with the desire to create can become a graffiti artist, which naturally promotes a sense of artistic inclusivity. Students can be drawn in by that quality, as people of any situation, background or status can engage in dynamic graffiti work. Kan (2001) believes that graffiti is the form of art that is most favored by youth (p. 21).

When art education focuses solely on works of “high art” that come from cultures and contexts that are disconnected from students, a lack of investment into artistic engagement and learning can occur. Smith (2005) points to Shusterman (1992, 1997) who recommends blending aesthetic experiences provided by works of high culture as well as popular culture (p. 29). Graffiti, being seen in commercials, movies, magazines, documentaries, and as enhancement to products, can be considered a part of popular and visual culture. Students have been exposed to dynamic graffiti art that cover public and private surfaces regardless of their location. Eldridge (2013) quotes Tavin (2003) to express that a graffiti-inspired unit “aligns with values proclaimed by visual culture education: make connections to students’ lived experiences, and ask them to think about popular culture through multiple perspectives and meaningful production” (p. 27).
**Graffiti as controversial.**

The origins of graffiti art are rooted in illegal activities of vandalism of public and private property. While this is still true for a large amount of graffiti art today, graffiti art is also legal in the form of murals, commissioned pieces and works in galleries. Eldridge (2013) cites the artist Sentrock who distinguishes “graffiti” as illegal and “graffiti art” as legal works for public view (p. 24). Part of the controversy for art educators who consider implementing graffiti art into the curriculum is the issue of legality. Kan (2001) reinforces that concern by writing that most youth cannot distinguish the difference between graffiti art and vandalism (p. 22). Graffiti has such powerful possibilities for student interest, engagement, and learning that not incorporating it into the art curriculum due to issues of legality is missing significant opportunities for critical, relevant lessons. Explicit teaching about legal and illegal issues such as obtaining permission from property owners, or using one’s own personal property to create graffiti on, must be a mandatory aspect of a graffiti-inspired curriculum.

Student age is another consideration that the art educator must evaluate. Hampton (2013) writes of the Canadian graffiti crew “FUNK” who stresses their belief that art teachers should not teach graffiti to students under sixteen years old (p. 54). Randazzo & Javedic (2013) encourage art educators to explore aspects of graffiti with students as a way to recognize the importance of artwork to express and raise awareness of social issues (p. 43). Rahn (2002) asserts that the emphasis in art education needs to be for teachers to focus on what affects the daily lives of students (p. 183).

**Student Impact**

A graffiti-inspired curriculum has the potential to benefit a student population in numerous ways. Graffiti art provides students a significant opportunity to draw upon their prior
knowledge and experiences. Eldridge (2013) explains that many students have prior exposure to graffiti in their lives (p. 26). For many students, graffiti arts are associated with their conception of culture or environment in some ways. Brown, Benedett & Armistead (2010) write, “visual art assignments can allow for the opportunity of students to engage and incorporate their own cultural knowledge, traditions, languages and experiences that are devalued by mainstream education into their academic work” (p.114). By incorporating graffiti into art education curricula, art educators add value to students who identify with marginalized communities. Students from low-income and racial/ethnic minority families often experience disconnect between home and school and arts education can provide a bridge (Brown et al., 2010, p. 116).

Rahn (2002) speaks of the way that graffiti art can help students become more visually literate of their environment.

Like the graffiti writer, a student can become more aware of the images and objects in the day-to-day environment, learning to manipulate as well as absorb. Students can learn to “read” the world rather than accept what is presented as important. (p. 209)

By incorporating graffiti-inspired units into the visual arts curriculum, art educators provide students with alternative ways to view and create art from the mainstream. Daichendt (2013) warns that institutionalized art education can be constrictive, and it is important to expand the vision to include untraditional methods (p.12). Graffiti can be considered one of those untraditional methods that encourage student investment. Eldridge (2013) believes that teaching graffiti enriches student lives, encouraging them to think critically, while developing voice and identity (p. 26).
Relevance.

Graffiti-inspired curricula are relevant to students’ lives and interests. Hampton (2013) notes that many adults fail to notice graffiti writers in their neighborhood, but students have a completely different relationship with the streets (p. 53). Many students know about peers or contemporary graffiti artists in their area and have some interest in that art form. When the art curriculum focuses on issues and concepts that are meaningful and relevant, the personal investment and engagement of students will increase. Johnson (1998) explains that school instruction is most effective when it builds on what students have learned outside of school and makes connections to real-life situations (p. 170). Educators can select exemplars from local or current artists that are captivating and relevant to student lives or neighborhoods. Randazzo & Javedic (2013) encourage educators to incorporate contemporary art into their classes, as contemporary art gives themes prevalent in the everyday life of the students (p. 44).

Academic Impact

Graffiti-inspired curricula have the potential to enhance a variety of skill sets and build knowledge across academic disciplines. Simpson (1995) reveals the nature of our urban student population and how the educational system, for the most part, does not reach most of our children. A graffiti-inspired unit can promote the integration of subject areas and important skill building that is necessary in all aspects of life.

Integration.

Graffiti art is a combination of image and text. Graffiti artists are often called “writers.” The symbolism, metaphor and meaning communicated through the textual design of a graffiti piece create an immediate connection to Language Arts. Newland (2013) calls this concept “parallel disciplines,” where students study a concept or theme in multiple classes (p. 47). Many
educators refer to this overlap and collaboration between content areas as integration. Marshall (2005) notes Freedman (2003) and Efland (2002) to explain that knowledge is no longer thought of as divided into discrete domains, but is seen in terms of an integrated system (p. 227). A graffiti-inspired unit can ask students to contemplate difficult concepts, such as symbolism and metaphor, and integrate them into the creation of a graffiti-inspired art piece. Marshall explains, “integrated curriculum highlights and promotes learning for understanding and transfer, as well as catalyzes” (2005, p. 231). The incorporation of language arts into the visual arts curriculum makes a more meaningful experience for students in both classes (Newland, 2013, p. 51).

**Academic skill sets.**

Marshall (personal communication, February 17, 2013) believes that the thinking, curiosity, investigation, inquiry, development, and resilience that an art class can develop are far more important than the technical skills of art. The skills of inquiry, brainstorming, drafting, critique, revision, reflection, speaking, and writing should all be embedded within the process of the art curriculum to enhance the levels of understanding. Within a graffiti-inspired unit, students must question how they choose to represent themselves, focusing on some particular aspect of their identity. By selecting a code name, symbolic images, and visual metaphors to illustrate their own characteristics, students must inquire, think critically, brainstorm, draft, revise, and reflect in order to reach their desired outcome. Graffiti art can inspire and engage students who have not yet found academic success, and lead them to deep investigations of self while building strong senses of resiliency for completing work that they are satisfied with. Through graffiti-inspired work, students can search for deeper meaning to use symbolism and metaphor to represent who they are while they are developing their technical artistic abilities.
Marshall (2008) asserts that students can make meaning before they master materials or techniques, as the capacities develop simultaneously (p. 45).

**Identity.**

Graffiti-inspired art has the power to grasp student interest and engagement because it is a way for students to reflect upon and study themselves. Eldridge (2013) urges educators that graffiti is an important way for youth to find their voices and identities (p. 25). Students, especially adolescents, are constantly seeking to find and present who they are in countless ways. Graffiti-inspired art can provide a safe, academic structure for students to inquire about and express their identities as they see them. Through graffiti art, students can also invent the identities that they hope to have or are striving to achieve, making them as part of their goals to obtain. Rahn (2002) explains that graffiti writers can assume identities other than the one they have grown up with. Graffiti-inspired work can give students an opportunity to find something about themselves that they know is there inside and make it visually manifest into a form of reality. Rahn also writes that graffiti can open imagination, giving voice and the feeling of empowerment to those who may otherwise feel or identify with being self-destructive (2002, p. 196).

**Metaphor.**

The imagery that can be incorporated into a graffiti-inspired art piece can be symbolic or metaphorical. Educators can intentionally develop these concepts through a graffiti-inspired unit and have students create imagery that reflects this content. Marshall (2008) explains that a metaphor describes one thing, the primary subject, in terms of another, the subsidiary subject, because of something they both have in common (p. 40). The visual metaphor can be one way
that students use this concept of metaphor for what Wiggins & McTigue (2005) call “transfer,” gaining a new and deeper understanding of it.

When the use of visual metaphor is incorporated into graffiti-inspired work, students are being asked to engage in higher-level thinking. Serig (2006) believes that making metaphor essential in art education fulfills the goal of getting students to learn how to think like artists (p. 232). The creation of visual metaphor through art enables the artist to “dialogue with the self through a medium, to come to know the self, and better understand the self’s relationship to the world and the relationships within the world” (Serig, 2006, p. 244). By developing the concept of visual metaphor through graffiti, students may also be better able to understand literary metaphor content presented in Language Arts classes.

**Conclusion**

The literature review conducted to inform this study has shown that graffiti art has many aspects that can be highly beneficial for art education. Graffiti art itself, as well as the implications it has for art education, is still considered to be controversial for reasons of illegality and vandalism. The approach that art educators take to developing a graffiti-inspired curriculum can address the controversial aspects of graffiti art directly when it is intentionally examined. The positive impacts that graffiti-inspired art can have on art students and curriculum can significantly outweigh the negative impacts, begging for art educators to ask themselves where they stand in regards to incorporating it into their classroom. Graffiti arts are engaging and relevant, can encourage integration of disciplines, enhance academic skills, and focus on intriguing content.

The researcher has implemented a graffiti-inspired curriculum for eight years to his high school students. Through this experience, there has been significant noteworthy development in
student engagement, resilience, confidence, and creativity. The researcher has never been a graffiti artist or been involved in graffiti making. The drive of this study comes directly from the amount of obvious investment noticed in a large majority of students who have participated in the graffiti-inspired units. Further examination of the methodology of data collection and analysis of the study is discussed in Chapter Three.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

An explanation of the methodology of this research is the focus of this chapter. The primary method of data collection in this study was based on a hermeneutic, classroom-based practice. The research embraced a mixed-methods approach that combined qualitative and quantitative data. Data collection was intended to provide insight into the extents that a graffiti-inspired art unit did or did not enhance student understanding of artistic conventions, symbolism, and metaphor as they related to identity. The following chapter will convey the methods that were used, the sources of data, the ways that the data was gathered, the time frames for the collection of data, and the context in which the data collection took place.

Design of the Study

In order to determine the ways that a graffiti-inspired unit would or would not impact student understanding, the researcher created a series of surveys and interview questions to generate data. The survey and interview questions were aimed to measure what students knew and understood before, during, and after their studies in a graffiti-inspired unit. Student art and artist statements were used to assess the levels of understanding acquired throughout the process.

Research Methods

Several methods of research and data collection were needed in order to answer the guiding research question: How might a graffiti-inspired unit impact 10th grade City Arts and Technology High School students' understanding of artistic conventions, symbolism, and metaphor as they relate to personal identity? The research for this study was conducted using surveys, interviews, art pieces, and artist statements to gather data.
Surveys and Interviews

Students began by taking a survey prior to the unit on graffiti. The survey asked students to define symbol, define metaphor, and list as many artistic conventions as they could. The artistic conventions for this unit were: complementary colors; the use of warm, cool, and neutral colors; overlap; value shifting (gradation); and perspective. The survey provided numerical data to show what students knew and did not know about each specific topic. Each student was given this survey during art class and had ten minutes to complete it.

An interview was conducted within one week after the original survey. The interview was one on one between student and researcher. Students were interviewed for about five minutes each, and this happened while there was a project in progress. The process to interview each student took three or four days. The same questions from the survey were asked in the interview, with the exception that students had to identify the artistic conventions that they saw instead of listing them. It is useful to follow up with students after they take their initial survey to accurately gauge if their surveys show what they do or do not know.

During the interview, there was a visual example of each artistic convention on a sheet of paper and students named as many as they could. The numerical data of how many conventions were accurately identified, and how many students could define symbol and metaphor, were recorded. The same interview happened once immediately after the initial questionnaire, then an additional three different times throughout the unit. The first interview was after an introductory assignment that asked students to create a design using text and image. The second interview was conducted after the first major graffiti art piece was completed in a project that asked students to represent some aspect of their personalities using a code name of their choosing and a symbolic image to help represent their identities. The third interview happened after the final graffiti art
piece was completed that asked students to use code names and a visual metaphor to compare some part of who they are with something else.

**Art Pieces and Artist Statements**

After creating two different Code Name art pieces, each student then created a written artist statement to explain the symbolism, metaphor, and artistic conventions used in the artwork. In order to gather the data, the researcher used analytic induction and observation to see whether the art pieces were displaying evidence of the understanding of convention, symbolism, and metaphor. The artist statement was used to provide data about what the artist truly knows about each concept, as the artist explained the meaning and choices used in the work. To collect the data from these sources, a rubric was used to determine clarity in the artistic work, and a spreadsheet was used to record the data from the artist statement. The spreadsheet has categories of advanced, proficient, and developing to assess the understanding, use, and explanation of each concept. The researcher and the 12th grade art teacher read the artist statements using the same spreadsheet system to assess and record whether a clear and knowledgeable use of convention, symbolism, and metaphor were used in the project. Having another art teacher assess the student work helped to serve as a means of validity to the results. The final numbers generated from the introductory survey, each interview, and assessment provided the results of the research.

The final results of the survey, interviews, and art pieces were compared to determine how many students, if any, were able to gain understanding of these concepts in question through a graffiti-inspired unit. The time frame needed for this study was two full months, from August through October of 2013. Data collection happened every two or three weeks in the forms of interviews, and the data from the final project and artist statement provided the last data for the research.
Data Collection

To collect data for the research, a series of structured interview methods was established. Each interview asked students the same questions and the results of their responses were organized into categories. Maxwell (2013) emphasizes that for interviewing to be useful, the researcher must ask about specifics, rather than posing questions that elicit generalizations or opinions (p. 103). The researcher had a spreadsheet with rows and columns that corresponded to each specific question being asked of the students. The first row was about the artistic conventions. Once students saw the visual representation of each artistic convention, they were asked to identify what they saw. The number of correct responses was recorded, ranging from zero to five.

The remaining rows were established to determine whether or not a student could define and explain the concept of symbolism and visual metaphor. There were only two categories for each of these responses: correct and incorrect. When a student gave a response that could be considered somewhere between correct and incorrect, the researcher asked the students to rephrase the answer. If there was any uncertainty or ambiguity after that, the student is marked down as having an incorrect answer. Each category used a tally system to generate numerical data that determined the amount of students that could define each concept in the interview process. Maxwell (2013) calls this combination of qualitative and quantitative methods as mixed-methods research (p. 102).

Methods for Data Collection

In order to gather data from students, the researcher used a spreadsheet to tally up responses. The researcher asked students to identify artistic conventions from a sheet (see Figure 3.1). The number of artistic conventions accurately identified was recorded on a table out of a
total of five (see Figure 3.2). Following the identification of artistic conventions, the students
were asked to define the terms symbol and metaphor. If students defined the term correctly, the
researcher put a mark in the appropriate column (see Figure 3.2). The researcher and 12th grade
art teacher used a table to gather data from artist statements (see Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.1. Examples of Artistic Conventions students identified during interviews.
Figure 3.2. Table used to record student responses during interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No (2)</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes (1)</td>
<td>Artistic Conventions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.3. Table used by researchers to determine understanding from artist statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES (Clear evidence of Understanding)</th>
<th>NO (Unclear or no evidence of understanding)</th>
<th>UNSURE/NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARTISTIC CONVENTIONS: Each artistic convention is described in terms of name, definition, and effect on the piece.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SYMBOLIC IMAGE: Is there a description of symbolism used in the piece that shows clear understanding of what the symbol represents?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VISUAL METAPHOR: Is the visual metaphor in the piece described and different aspects being compared by the metaphor discussed?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Demographics**

The students of City Arts and Technology High School, or CAT, are demographically diverse. Socioeconomically, 70% of students qualify for free and reduced lunch. At CAT, 40% of students are Latinos, 25% are African-American, 25% are Caucasian and 10% are of Asian decent. Over 40% of the student body has an IEP, or Individualized Education Plan. Each student comes from a family that has not had any previous member attend college by design and mission of the charter. Many students feel a sense of pride for San Francisco and the Bay Area, adding to the relevance of these lessons and units that use a majority of exemplars from their own city. Students that attend City Arts and Technology High School have vastly different characteristics. General characteristics range from energetic, dedicated, talented, and creative to low skilled, apathetic, disengaged, and disrespectful. Visual Art has historically been the one class that numerous students feel genuine academic success and growth in, and many students develop dynamic artistic, creative talents throughout the school year.

**Description of the Classroom**

The classroom provided substantial space for supplies, work areas, and storage for every art piece. Each class contained roughly thirty students, and there are four different classes that used the classroom space each day. There were fourteen rectangular tables put together in pairs to form large, square work clusters for between four to six students. The side of the classroom had enough shelves to fit the work of over 140 students and provided ample space for the storage of assignments. Materials used were mostly pencils, colored pencils, and sharpie markers, with a few advanced students who used paint, paintbrushes, palettes, palette knives, and rags. Most students were building artistic skills with colored pencils and markers for the entirety of the unit.
There were seven plastic bins, one for each table set, that held colored pencils and seven bins that hold sharpie variety packs.

**Materials.**

The assignments allowed for student choice of paper size. Standard printer paper, 11” x 17,” and 18” x 24” paper were the student choices and also allowed for a form of differentiated instruction. Students chose the size that they felt could provide the right amount of challenge. Sharpie markers came in three sizes of ultra fine, fine, and chisel tip varieties. These markers provided clean, bold colors and gave students the types of bright, powerful effects that can boost confidence and provide artistic access for students who may have never experienced art making before. Snin & Regev (2013) write that markers can be used to create attractive, colorful, ornamental results and the work process is enjoyable (p. 94). Sharpie markers were not a must for this unit, but highly recommended to provide an extra stimulus and sense of significance that can encourage deeper investment by students. There was an LCD projector to show daily exemplars. An LCD projector is something that benefits the instructor to reach all styles of learners effectively. LCD projectors display works of art in large scales that can be seen by every student in the classroom simultaneously, and offers a form of visual learning that is difficult to match in a classroom setting.

**Data Analysis**

The classroom-based research used methods of comparison to note patterns and draw conclusions about student growth. The researcher and another art teacher compared finished art pieces with written explanations of artistic conventions to determine the amount of understanding of each concept. Each table used to record student data from interviews, art pieces, and artist statements were compared to determine the amounts of change over time in the
understanding of each concept. Maxwell (2013) defines this comparison of data over time and space as contiguity-based relations. The results were compared to attempt to find any patterns or relationships.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has described the construction and methodologies of this classroom-based study. The design of this study allowed the researcher to collect data from student interviews and artwork. An ongoing method of recording student data throughout the interviewing process was used to record and track changes in student knowledge over the course of the unit. Visual art and written artist statements served as another means for the researcher to gather data from the application of student knowledge. An analysis of the data and a consideration of the process will be discussed in Chapter Four.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS OF THE STUDY

This chapter will present the data collected in written and interview forms to determine the extent that a graffiti-inspired unit can increase student understanding and use of artistic conventions, symbolism, and metaphor. The researcher was also the instructor of the graffiti-inspired unit, and gathered data from students in five different phases. The first four phases included one written questionnaire and three individual interviews between researcher and student. Phase Five was a written artist statement that provided a student explanation of each concept. The process of the study and the findings of the research are further explained in this chapter.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study was to uncover the extent of student learning and understanding of artistic conventions, symbolism, and metaphor that could happen through the implementation of a graffiti-inspired unit. Students undertook two months of interviews, development of art pieces, and a final written artist statement to demonstrate their knowledge of content. The data from student interviews and written artist statements provided clear evidence that the overwhelming majority of students were able to understand, explain, and use the concepts of artistic conventions, symbolism, and metaphor in discussion, writing, and in an art piece. With such dramatic increases of student comprehension and application, the study revealed that graffiti-inspired units have an important, if not vital, role to play for the academic and artistic needs of urban adolescents.

The results of the study were consistent with the opinion of Kahn (2001) who expresses that “graffiti art provides novelty in both language and visual representation, with a unique and holistic aesthetic naturally favored by youth” (p. 21). Student learning of conceptual content also
supported the view of Rahn (2002) who urges educators that studying graffiti is a visual learning experience for students (p. 206). Not only did this study confirm the research of Kahn and Rahn, it also is a call for art educators everywhere to consider the implementation of graffiti-inspired curricula. Rahn observes that written material on graffiti from an educational point of view is scarce and difficult to find (2002, p. xi). The significance of this study offers educators in all levels of implementation and study of art education a focal point for conducting further research into the use of graffiti-inspired work in the arts curricula.

**Bias and Validity**

The researcher based his initial assessment of the level of student prior knowledge in the realms of artistic conventions, symbolism, and metaphor on the results of a written questionnaire. The questionnaire was informal and included written responses. There was no way to be certain if students were answering questions genuinely or with their best effort. The number of students that took the initial questionnaire was 90, which meant that 14 students did not complete the questionnaire during that one day of class. As students interviewed with the researcher throughout each various phase, a certain amount of bias was observable. Some students who were on Individualized Education Plans (IEP) were given extra time to try and define and explain concepts. Every student was given two chances to correctly identify or answer a question. If a student responded in a way that needed rethinking, the researcher redirected the question and gave the student a second opportunity to rephrase a response. For example, one student explained that a symbol “is an image that has deeper meaning.” To address that response, the researcher held up a simple line drawing of a heart symbol and asked, “What makes this a symbol?” The student talked through his thinking and responded, “That is a heart and a heart represents love. A symbol represents some other thing or idea.”
Data was recorded using tables. The Vice Principal and a staff member on the school Literacy Team observed several interviews to determine the validity of the data gathered. One interview was filmed as a tool to use for the professional development of the staff at the school. Student responses were organized and determined to be correct or incorrect immediately after they were given. Written artist statements had to leave no doubt in the researcher’s mind of whether or not each concept was understood and articulated by describing the use within the work of art. The researcher provided feedback for revision on artist statements that asked students for more evidence of understanding, and if the students were unsuccessful at further attempts to provide that evidence, then they were recorded as such.

Interviews took place over an entire school week. Most students took part in the interviews that totaled 104 participants. Numerous circumstances arose that prevented a few students from participating in each phase of research, and this can be seen in the fluctuation of student participants in each phase. Prolonged sickness, travel, and surgeries prevented a small percentage of the total student population from consistently participating in generating data during each phase.

**Analysis of the Data**

The data of this classroom-based study was gathered over five phases. Each phase belonged to the same graffiti-inspired unit that used text, image, symbolism, metaphor, and artistic conventions as the means for determining student learning. The first phase of collecting data included a written student response to a questionnaire to determine prior knowledge of artistic conventions, symbolism, and metaphor. The next three phases were one-on-one interviews between researcher and student to record the amount of student growth, or lack of
growth, in understanding of the previous concepts. The fifth phase was a written artist statement by each student to explain what each concept was and how it was used in their artwork.

**Phase One**

The questionnaire used to collect student data was passed out during class and students had ten minutes to answer every question. The questions asked students to identify as many of the five artistic conventions that we were studying as they could (which included: warm/cool/neutral colors, complementary colors, overlap, value shift, and perspective), define symbol, and define metaphor. The data from the questionnaire was organized into a table chart with sections to record the amount of artistic conventions each student could identify, and sections to record the amount of students that could define symbol and metaphor.

The questionnaire served as a tool of formative assessment to determine the amount of learning and prior knowledge students had at that point. The questionnaire was given to students on September 3, 2013. Previous to questionnaire, the class had only recently begun school, and minimal assignments had been given to use the artistic conventions of the study, and no assignments had been given for the use of symbolism or metaphor. The following chart (Table 4.1) displays the content areas of artistic conventions, symbol, and metaphor and provides the data gathered from the questionnaire.
Table 4.1. Student Questionnaire Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>0 Correct</th>
<th>1 Correct</th>
<th>2 Correct</th>
<th>3 Correct</th>
<th>4 Correct</th>
<th>5 Correct</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which artistic conventions (warm/cool/neutral colors, complementary colors, overlap, value shift, and perspective) can you identify?</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Correct Responses</th>
<th>Incorrect Responses</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is a symbol?</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is a metaphor?</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phase Two

The researcher held individual interviews with each student in order to gather data in Phase Two. Students were asked the same questions by the researcher to identify artistic conventions, and define symbol and metaphor. The interviews took up to four days to interview each student from every class. Phase Two interviews began on September 24, 2013.

When students began the interview process, the class assignment being worked on was the “Word and Image” project. Students were asked to complete an introductory assignment that enabled them to brainstorm numerous words about aspects of their identity. After choosing one word, students created a composition using that word and at least one image of their choosing to represent that word in some way. The application of at least three out of five artistic conventions was a requirement in this assignment. A critique was held after the completion of the assignment to discuss the artistic conventions used and the impacts and effects that they had in the work. Students were then interviewed after that project was complete. The following chart (Table 4.2) shows the content areas of the study and data on the amount of student knowledge at the time of
the interview. The amount of total students interviewed increased due to a number of factors, including that the interviewing process took place over one school week, as opposed to the questionnaire that took place only on one school day.

**Table 4.2. Phase Two Interview Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>0 Correct</th>
<th>1 Correct</th>
<th>2 Correct</th>
<th>3 Correct</th>
<th>4 Correct</th>
<th>5 Correct</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which artistic conventions (warm/cool/neutral colors, complementary colors, overlap, value shift, and perspective) can you identify?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Phase Three**

The third phase of the study introduced the concept of symbolism and a symbolic image into the student art assignments. Students created a “code name” to represent themselves and some aspect of their identities. Along with creating and designing their code names, students were also required to use at least one symbolic image to represent some aspect of their identities. The concept of symbolism was investigated prior to the assignment, as the class spent three days doing various individual and small group activities where they deconstructed and created symbols for various concepts. The student code name project also required the use of at least three of the five artistic conventions as well. A critique was conducted after the art pieces were
completed, and the critique focused on analyzing the artistic conventions and symbolic imagery used in the works.

The interview process took place after the critique was finished. The researcher asked each student the same questions as in Phase Two, and used an identical chart to record data (see Table 4.3). The interview for Phase Three took place for four days, starting on October 15, 2013.

Table 4.3. Phase Three Interview Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>0 Correct</th>
<th>1 Correct</th>
<th>2 Correct</th>
<th>3 Correct</th>
<th>4 Correct</th>
<th>5 Correct</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which artistic conventions (warm/cool/neutral colors, complementary colors, overlap, value shift, and perspective) can you identify?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Correct Responses</th>
<th>Incorrect Responses</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is a symbol?</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is a metaphor?</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phase Four

The fourth phase of the research included the introduction to the concept of a visual metaphor. Before students continued with their second code name project, small group and individual activities and assignments were given to enhance student knowledge of metaphor.
Students deconstructed visual metaphors that they viewed, as well as created potential visual metaphors to help explain a concept or subject. The second code name project asked students to keep the same code name that was used in the previous work but redesign it in a different way. Students were also required to incorporate a different symbolic image in their work, as well as at least one visual metaphor to help describe some aspect of their individual identity or personality. The student second code name project also required the use of at least three of the five artistic conventions as well. A critique was conducted after the art pieces were completed, and the critique focused on analyzing the artistic conventions, symbolic imagery, and incorporation of visual metaphor used in the works.

The interview process took place after the critique was finished. The researcher asked each student the same questions as in Phases Two and Three, and used an identical chart to record data (see Table 4.4). The interview for Phase Four took place for four days, starting on November 4, 2013.

Table 4.4. Phase Four Interview Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>0 Correct</th>
<th>1 Correct</th>
<th>2 Correct</th>
<th>3 Correct</th>
<th>4 Correct</th>
<th>5 Correct</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which artistic conventions (warm/cool/neutral colors, complementary colors, overlap, value shift, and perspective) can you identify?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Correct Responses</th>
<th>Incorrect Responses</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is a symbol?</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is a metaphor?</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Phase Five

The fifth phase of the study was based on a typed artist statement. Each student explained how each artistic convention, symbolic image, and visual metaphor was used within the work. The artist statements included a minimum of four paragraphs, and some students wrote beyond that requirement. The first paragraph was about the meaning of the code name used and how it related to the individual artist. The second paragraph was about the individual artist’s opinion about graffiti in both legal and illegal works. The third paragraph was for students to explain the artistic conventions, symbolism, and metaphor used in the work. One final paragraph was for reflection upon the process, strengths, areas of improvement, and feedback that was helpful for the student.

The artist statement process took two weeks. The first draft began on November 1, 2013 and was concluded November 13, 2013. Students used Google Documents to share their drafts with the researcher, which were given feedback and returned digitally for each student to make revisions. When students did not have a complete thought about the content in question, the researcher provided feedback that probed for students to elaborate further in their revisions.

Three students had circumstances arise during the fifth phase that kept them from completing a finished draft of an artist statement.

The researcher used a chart to collect data on the student responses in artist statements. All students were asked to revise up to three times. After the third revision, the artist statement was recorded as it was to determine the level of understanding of artistic conventions, symbolism, and metaphor. The following table was used to collect the data (see Table 4.5). The data was organized into whether there was clear evidence that students understood the concepts of artistic conventions, symbolism, and metaphor as they applied to their individual work or not.
Students who were determined to lack evidence of clear understanding did so after being prompted to elaborate throughout a process of revision.

**Table 4.5. Phase Five Artist Statement Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YES (Clear evidence of Understanding)</th>
<th>NO (Unclear or no evidence of understanding)</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARTISTIC CONVENTIONS: Each artistic convention is described in terms of name, definition, and effect on the piece.</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SYMBOLIC IMAGE: Is there a description of symbolism used in the piece that shows clear understanding of what the symbol represents?</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VISUAL METAPHOR: Is the visual metaphor in the piece described and different aspects being compared by the metaphor discussed?</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Results**

As previously mentioned, the findings of this study were to determine if a graffiti-inspired unit can enhance student learning and understanding in the concepts of artistic conventions, symbolism, and metaphor. The results of this study looked at each concept individually and organized the findings of the research according to each. The interview results showed that student learning and understanding of artistic conventions, symbolism, and metaphor significantly increased throughout the graffiti-inspired unit. The results from student artist statements also confirmed that same conclusion.
Data Results from Interviews on Artistic Conventions

The results from the data confirmed that a large majority of students were able to identify all five artistic conventions throughout the course of the graffiti-inspired unit. The data from Phase One revealed that only 10% of the students in the study were able to identify all five artistic conventions. After Phase Two, 56% of students identified all five; Phase Three yielded 75% of students able to identify all five; and after Phase Four 90% of all students interviewed were able to identify every artistic convention. The data results from student interviews uncovered an 80% increase of students who were able to identify all five artistic conventions from the beginning through the end of the graffiti-inspiration unit.

There were noteworthy secondary findings from the results of the data on artistic conventions. In Phase One, 66% of students were unable to identify more than three artistic conventions. Once the first graffiti-inspired art assignment happened in Phase Two, the data revealed that 13% were able to identify only three or less artistic conventions. After Phase Three, 8% of students were unable to identify more than three conventions, and by Phase Four 0% of students were only able to identify three or less conventions.

Data Results from Interviews on Symbolism

The results from the data on interviews affirmed that a significant growth in learning the concept of symbolism took place throughout the graffiti-inspiration unit. Data from Phase One showed that 63% of all students in the study were able to define and explain what a symbol was. Interviews that took place after the first graffiti-inspired project in Phase Two produced data that 90% of students could accurately define and explain a symbol. Phase Three results had 93%, while Phase Four had 97% of students able to define and explain symbolism.
A secondary finding from the results on symbolism exposed that more students were able to define and explain symbolism than metaphor and artistic conventions. Students also had the most amount of prior knowledge in the realms of symbolism, as their Phase One questionnaire data showed that 63% of students could already accurately define what a symbol was. Compared with prior knowledge of artistic convention and metaphor, over 50% and 23% more students respectively had prior knowledge on symbolism.

**Data Results from Interviews on Metaphor**

Data results from interviews on student abilities to define and explain a metaphor illuminate another significant amount of growth in learning. Phase One data showed that 40% of students were able to accurately define the concept of a metaphor in written form. Once Phase Two begun, the concept of metaphor was not yet studied through the graffiti-inspired unit. However, the data results from the interviews in Phase Two showed a decrease in student ability to define and explain metaphor, as only 34% of students were able to do so. Phase Three began the introduction to metaphor and visual metaphor as an artistic concept, and results increased to 81% of students able to accurately define and explain metaphor. After Phase Four, 95% of all students in the study defined and explained the concept of a metaphor. The graffiti-inspired unit produced a 55% increase in student knowledge of the definition and explanation of metaphor.

**Data Results from Artist Statements**

The data results from the artist statements were concluded after using the modified rubric to record student responses (see Table 4.5). The data from the student artist statement confirmed that the graffiti-inspired unit was able to increase student knowledge on the concepts of artistic conventions, symbolism, and metaphor. After reading each artist statement draft and revision, 91% of students were able to clearly articulate each artistic convention that was used in
the art piece in terms of definition and effect for the work. The remaining 9% did not convincingly articulate each definition and/or the impact the conventions produced for the work. The data presented that 93% of students were able to successfully identify, define, and explain the use of symbolism in their art pieces. The remaining 7% lacked one or more of those criteria after a process of revision. Data showed that 87% of students could clearly articulate what a visual metaphor was, how they used it in their piece, and what exactly were the components of comparison through the use of a metaphor. Out of the 13% of students that did not meet the criteria for the metaphor section of the artist statement, most of them seemed able to grasp the concept of a metaphor, but were not able to clearly articulate it through a written format.

The results of the data from the artist statement revealed a secondary finding that students were more likely to show their learning through a verbal process of an interview as opposed to a written process of an artist statement. The percentage of students increase for artistic conventions contradicts this finding, as 91% of students wrote successfully about their artistic conventions. However, the project requirements only asked for students to use three out of five artistic conventions, and not every student used more than three to write about. The amount of students that accurately defined and explained symbolism in Phase Four of the interview process dropped from 97% to 93% through the Phase Five artist statement. Students that successfully defined and explained metaphor in Phase Four interviews also dropped from 95% to 87% through the Phase Five artist statement. The variance between these two forms of assessment reveals an additional need to supplement writing skills.

Conclusion

Chapter Four has examined data collection results from student responses in the forms of writing and interviewing. The findings of the study have demonstrated that a
significant majority of all students that were given a unit in graffiti-inspiration gained knowledge and understanding in the concepts of artistic conventions, symbolism, and metaphor. The intrinsic motivation that graffiti-inspired units can provide students is one reason why this art form must be considered in a visual arts curriculum. The amount of student learning that took place over time through engaging in a graffiti-inspired unit provides even stronger evidence to validate the importance bringing graffiti-inspired themes into the classroom. Chapter Five discusses the impact of this study, making further suggestions for application into curricula, and providing a unit of study that informs educators about how to implement such studies.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Chapter Five discusses the personal and classroom impact of this art-based study in order to determine how a graffiti-inspired curriculum can enhance student learning of artistic conventions, symbolism, and metaphor. The discussion will include an evaluation of the overall impact that this study had on the researcher, as well as a set of related questions that could be of significance to gathering supplemental data for further studies on this topic. This chapter also briefly examines the unit plan that was used to conduct this study as a means for other art educators to implement graffiti-inspired curriculum. The chapter concludes with some insight for art education and a summary of the research.

Discussion

This classroom-based art study was created to obtain data that showed the extents that the implementation of a graffiti-inspired unit can enhance student understanding of artistic conventions, symbolism, and metaphor. After conducting the study and analyzing the results, this process has had a significant personal impact on the researcher and has led the researcher to new insight for classroom practice.

Personal Impact of the Study

This study has shown that a graffiti-inspired unit can significantly increase student understanding of artistic conventions, symbolism, and metaphor. Data showed that 10% of students were able to identify all five artistic conventions in the study before the graffiti-inspired work began, and 90% of students were able to identify all five after. The student data revealed that 66% of students could define and explain symbolism before the unit, and 97% were able to successfully define and explain it after. The data also communicated that 40% of students had prior knowledge of what a metaphor was before the unit, and after the graffiti-inspired work was
finished 95% of students could define and explain the concept of a metaphor. The results from the data generated by this study confirmed what the researcher had previously believed about implementing a graffiti-inspired unit in an urban visual arts classroom. Graffiti-based artwork enhances student learning of artistic concepts. Graffiti-inspired art curriculum engages students, providing outlets for intrinsic motivation for creativity and understanding.

The literature used in this study proclaimed that graffiti-inspired art has not been studied in the field of art education nearly enough. While the literature consistently supported the development and implementation of graffiti arts into the classroom, it was also pointed out that finding concrete studies and literature about graffiti-based research is scarce and difficult to find. This study emphasizes the value for art educators, and more importantly for art students, to promote a curriculum that includes the study of graffiti-inspired art. Graffiti arts come from the world that students have access to and experience with. This study provided strong evidence to show that not only is graffiti an engaging art form for students, it is an art form that encourages students to immerse themselves in the creative and learning processes. Students in this study exhibited academic and artistic skill levels of a vast spectrum, yet the overwhelming majority of students showed growth in the understanding of concepts as well as artistic output throughout the graffiti-inspired unit.

**Impact on Practice**

The importance of this study indicates that art educators can develop a curriculum that includes graffiti-inspired work as a means to enhance student learning. A graffiti-inspired art curriculum is not solely a means for student engagement, rather it is a tool for teachers to use to captivate students while developing their understanding of artistic conventions, symbolism, metaphor, and personal identity. When art educators feel comfortable enough to implement
graffiti-inspired work, the process must be thoughtful and purposeful in order to achieve the end goal of student growth and learning. This study was conducted over a two-month period of time, including multiple graffiti-inspired assignments, each one with a different area of focus for student growth. Within that two-month time, students remained entirely engaged, providing the researcher and educator with ample time to reteach concepts as well as genuinely develop student understanding in new areas. The researcher will continue to implement a graffiti-inspired curriculum to begin each school year and develop artistic skill and knowledge. This study has encouraged the researcher to share his findings, practice and curriculum with a broader population in the field of education. Consequently, a unit plan was developed from revising the unit plan used in this study in order to share with art educators interested in implementing graffiti-inspired work (Appendix A1).

**Recommendations**

The outcome of this study provides useful data for the art classroom as well as the field of art education. After considering the outcomes of this study, further research opportunities are also discussed.

**Recommendation for Classroom Application**

There are numerous positive factors that this study has revealed for the use of graffiti-inspired curricula. Any art educator, especially at a high school level, is able to implement the unit or any subsequent lesson plans that this study was derived from (see Appendix A). The description provided in Chapter Four offers concrete data about the amounts of growth and learning that students undertook through the process of graffiti-inspired work. Because the nature of graffiti art is controversial, the researcher recommends that educators who implement this unit of study focus on the difference between legal and illegal graffiti practices consistently.
and frequently with students. Parents should also be proactively informed of the unit so that misconceptions of the educator’s intentions do not arise. Furthermore, the researcher recommends that educators create an exemplar model of graffiti-inspired assignments. When the educator engages in the assignment with the students, the potentials develop to open new opportunities for documentation of the process, dialogue between educator and students about personal opinions and expressions, and the educator can have a better idea of where students may get stuck in their creative process in order to better address these areas. The concepts used in this study align with content from other academic disciplines. By using symbolism and metaphor in the artistic investigation, dialogue between English Language Arts and Social Studies curricula can become collaborative and create opportunities for interdisciplinary work. One final recommendation offered is for art educators to focus equally on the development of ideas and discovery of personal identity as much as the investigation into artistic design. Individual interviews between educator and student that generate ideas and explanations of the content are valuable to incorporate into the unit.

**Recommendations for Continuing Study**

The data from this study clearly showed that a graffiti-inspired art unit has the potential to significantly increase student understanding of concepts of artistic conventions, symbolism, and metaphor. The student population of this study was urban, with students from diverse neighborhoods in the city of San Francisco, CA. The majority of the artistic examples of graffiti murals shown to the students came from neighborhoods that the students either lived in or were familiar with. Additional study may be needed to gather data on the impact that a graffiti-inspired unit would have on suburban and rural student populations that lack the same exposure to graffiti pieces in daily life. Further studies could be conducted within different school sites in
San Francisco as well to determine if the phenomenon of the increase in student learning was specific to the school population of the study. The researcher believes that graffiti art education in public schools needs to be investigated and hopes that this study can act as a pilot for the kind of study that can be conducted in diverse school settings. If data from urban, suburban, and rural populations reveal a trend of student engagement and understanding of concepts through a graffiti-inspired curriculum, there would be serious implications for incorporating the art form in art educational institutions everywhere.

**Conclusion to the Research**

After conducting this study, gathering and analyzing the data, and witnessing the results, the researcher has drawn a few conclusions regarding the implementation of a graffiti-inspired unit. The researcher has advice for the field of art education as well as for art educators as individuals.

**Advice to the Field of Art Education**

This study has demonstrated that graffiti-inspired art can spark student engagement that leads to significant learning of artistic concepts. It is essential that the institutions that are responsible for training the art educators that implement art curricula with public school students remember that they are teaching students, not subjects. LaPorte, Spiers & Young (2008) state, “many educational researchers have recommended the use of curriculum that is relevant to students and reflects the cultural diversity of the students’ community” (p. 358). By providing the study of graffiti to a student population, the art educator validates the lives of young people who typically favor and relate to the aesthetic of graffiti art. It is more important that a student with no prior interest in art finds something new, engaging, and exciting about him or herself through an art class than making sure that the student is exposed to what has been repeatedly
called “master” artwork. By implementing graffiti-inspired work, students find intrinsic motivation through thinking and the creative process about their personal identities and lived experiences. Jaquith (2011) explains, “intrinsic motivation and student interest are central to creative problem finding and solving” (p. 14). Graffiti inspiration in art class can promote critical thinking, development of self and social perspective, and validation of personal experience. These are concepts and qualities that art curricula in the 21st Century need to embrace and embellish.

**Advice to Art Educators**

Graffiti-inspired art essentially consists of an artist choosing a word that contains personal meaning, designing it in a way that is challenging and unique, and incorporating imagery that reflects the deeper thinking and communicating skills that artists exhibit. The researcher had no prior experience with graffiti art before conducting this study or before becoming an art educator. The researcher grew up in a rural town north of San Francisco, and was rarely exposed to urban culture or graffiti art in general. While art educators can often feel that there is a need to fully understand and explain the entire history, context, and cultural circumstances that led to an artistic movement, the researcher believes that public school students can easily get lost in that discussion and do not necessarily benefit from it. When an art educator analyzes the murals of graffiti art with students, it is possible to deconstruct the artistic conventions used in the work, as well as the symbolism and metaphor that artists use to communicate a message, and frame the study of graffiti art around the artistic expression alone. If educators feel that they do not understand the world of graffiti art and the artists that create it, the researcher recommends that educators create a code name for themselves, design it on paper with pencils and inks, and incorporate imagery that reveals some deeper meaning of the code
name that was chosen. In essence, that work is graffiti-inspired art. Students given that same assignment would most likely become heavily engaged in it and create works of stunning diversity and creativity.
References


## Unit Plans for the Implementation of “Graffiti-Inspiration”

### Unit 1: Graffiti Inspiration and Personal Traits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>Matt Christenson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive title for the unit:</td>
<td>Graffiti Inspiration and Personal Traits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goals:</td>
<td>Students should…</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Understand:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ways that different graffiti artists communicate aspects of their personal traits (CA VA Standards: 1 and 3)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Know:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How to use artistic conventions such as warm/cool/neutral color schemes, complementary colors, overlapping, value shifting, and one-point perspective to create visual affect. (CA VA Standard: 1)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The artistic process of brainstorming, sketching, critique, giving and receiving feedback, and revising. (CA VA Standard: 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be Able To:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify and design a word that reflects an aspect of their individual traits (CA VA Standard: 2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Use colored pencils and markers to produce a composition that communicates meaning (CA VA Standard: 2)
• Apply artistic conventions into a composition (CA VA Standard: 1)

Instructional Concepts:

Graffiti is a dynamic art form that captivates the minds and intrigue of adolescents. Kan (2001) finds that in the United States today, most graffiti artists are between the ages of twelve and eighteen years old (p. 20). By bringing the most vivid, accomplished and elaborate graffiti pieces to the art curriculum, students will become engaged and willing to dedicate themselves to their creative thinking and process.

Artists break down their challenges into smaller steps, create sketches, ask for feedback from peers and practice technical and conventional applications frequently. Feldman (1996) writes, “being an artist means having a creative strategy, requires technique and regular habits of work” (p. 85). Students of all developmental stages can be successful in the graffiti inspiration unit if the instructor develops the proper scaffolding stages that allow students to complete their projects effectively. Kay (1998) urges to use assessments “frequently with a focus on progress,” as mistakes are an opportunity to grow (p. 265). This unit will introduce students to the concept of a critique and encourage them to give and receive feedback with intentions to make all students improve collectively.

Lessons:

• Lesson One: Building upon previous exercises, students design a graffiti alphabet on a gridded sheet of paper. There are six rows of letters, and each row asks for the application of a specific artistic convention in the letters. The rows ask for demonstration of warm, cool, neutral, and complimentary colors, value shifting, and one-point perspective.
• Lesson Two: An introduction to critique is
established using the finished graffiti alphabet assignments. Each alphabet is displayed on the front board for all to see at once, and two teams are created to “battle” each other by providing feedback to the other team about what is working well and what can be improved using the artistic conventions as a lens.

• Lesson Three: Classes focus on brainstorming personal traits. An assignment is given called “Reaction and Response” using various categories to generate unique traits and aspects of identity in each individual student.

• Lesson Four: The *Reaction and Response* assignment commences. Students choose one word from their previous brainstorm of their various traits to represent an aspect of identity, design the word in a composition and incorporate three artistic conventions into the design. Sketches are the first step in the process.

• Lesson Five: One-on-one conversations happen before and after each sketch is finished. Students explain the trait that was chosen, how it represents some aspect of identity, and how each artistic convention will be used.

• Lesson Six: Assignments are displayed and there is a class critique.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources and Materials:</th>
<th>• Materials:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- #2 Pencils</td>
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<td>- Erasers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Colored Pencils</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Markers (Crayola and Sharpies)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Graffiti Alphabet assignment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- 8” x 11” white drawing paper</td>
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<td>- LCD Projector</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Laptop</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Exemplars:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Numerous San Francisco graffiti mural images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Images by artist Barry McGee, or Twist,</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| from illegal graffiti to work exhibited at *Life on Mars* exhibition at Carnegie International, 2008. -Teacher’s finished Personal Trait Design product
| •Teacher’s process and product visuals:
| -Keynote slideshow depicting stages of development in *Reaction and Response* assignment
| -Work of former students shared through digital images and works posted on walls of classroom
| Assessment: A formative assessment is used to evaluate the applications of the artistic conventions into the graffiti alphabet exercise. An analytic rubric is uses to assess the criteria of the *Reaction and Response* assignment. Three different opportunities are designed for students to view peer work in order to give and receive feedback. Individual conferences with teacher are also part of a summative assessment plan.

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**Lesson One: Reaction and Response**

**Teacher’s Name:** Matt Christenson  **Dates of Lesson:** September, 2013

**School:** City Arts and Technology High School  **Grade:** 10th  **Length of Lesson:** One Period

**Title of Lesson:** Reaction and Response

**Relationship to the Unit:** Graffiti Inspiration and Personal Traits. The lesson guides students to choosing a word that has individual significance to design in a composition.

**Relationship to Life:** All students living in San Francisco have graffiti art embedded within their visual landscapes. The unit allows for students to have access into that world and guides them through the process of selecting a word to represent them and using artistic conventions that graffiti artists use to make their work appealing.
I. **PROBLEM/ACTIVITY**

The *Reaction and Response* worksheet is distributed to students. The worksheet is a list of categories that students write as many reactions and responses to as possible. The words written have a connection to aspects of their individual identities. Students will choose one word from their lists to design a composition with.

II. **GOALS**

Students will…

**Understand:**
- Ways that different graffiti artists communicate aspects of their personal traits (CA VA Standards: 1 and 3)

**Know:**
- How to identify artistic conventions such as warm/cool/neutral color schemes, complementary colors, overlapping, value shifting, and one-point perspective. (CA VA Standard: 4)

**Be Able To:**
- Identify and design a word that reflects an aspect of their individual traits (CA VA Standard: 2)

III. **OBJECTIVES**

Students will:

**Understand that there are strategies to beginning an artistic process that involve thinking, brainstorming and writing.**

**Demonstrate the ability to choose a word that represents some part of who they are.**

**Create loose sketches to experiment and determine what word to use for their art piece.**

IV. **RESOURCES AND MATERIALS**

- Digital images of San Francisco graffiti art murals
- Laptop and LCD projector
- *Reaction and Response* assignment
- 8.5” x 11” paper
- Pencils and erasers
- Colored pencils
- Sharpie markers

V. **MOTIVATION**

**TOPIC QUESTION AND/OR DISCUSSION OF RELATED VISUALS**
How do graffiti artists choose their code names? While presenting a slideshow of San Francisco graffiti art murals, follow up questions are: What is this code name? Why do you think this artist would choose this word to design? What other kinds of meaning are associated with this word?

ASSOCIATION QUESTIONS
What other graffiti art that you have seen that you liked? What was the code name being used? What other code names do you think could be used to describe the area surrounding these pieces?

VISUALIZATION QUESTIONS
What are the artistic conventions being used in these graffiti pieces? What kinds of impact does each artistic convention have in the composition? Which artistic conventions help give the piece some sort of extra meaning or help it tell a story about the artist? If my code name was “Icy,” what kinds of design elements could I use to help communicate that?

TRANSITION QUESTIONS
Which techniques, styles or artistic conventions seem like they can be used in your art? What symbols can represent you? Keep in mind what it is that interests you in each of these examples as they can help guide your own experiments in the work you are about to create.

VI. PROCEDURES

DEMONSTRATION
Students view a slideshow of various graffiti art pieces from numerous San Francisco neighborhoods. The class is asked a variety of questions surrounding these pieces, including: What is the word (or code name) being designed? What does that word say about the artist? What kinds of ways, using symbols, artistic conventions and design tactics, does the artist communicate meaning beyond the word itself?

DISTRIBUTION
Each student receives the Reaction and Response assignment. The assignment is a list of categories designed to give students a personal connection that they can write words as a reaction or response to each category. Some examples of these categories are: religion, personal interests, goals in life, things you want to change, things you love, etc.

WORK PERIOD
After completing the assignment worksheet, students choose their top three words that they would want to design. The remainder of the period is for students to make quick thumbnail sketches using each word so that by the end of the period they can choose one word that they would want to practice designing into a composition.

CLEAN UP
Each material has a specific location in the room. Colored pencils go into one plastic bin at each table, and markers go into another plastic bin at each table. Each student
has a “shelf” where they can store their work overnight, and so they all leave their work on their shelves. Any student who has not completed the assignment is instructed to take it home as homework.

CLOSURE: TEACHER/STUDENT SUMMATION

Any student who has not chosen one word to use for their Reaction and Response art piece will need to choose one as homework. The class is instructed that the following day will be spent beginning the project, as the requirements will be given and the colored sketches will begin. A last reminder to the class is to look around the walls of the city and see which graffiti pieces stand out. What is it about those pieces that are appealing? Is it the lettering? The colors? The imagery? Take mental note so that those elements can inform future work.

VII. EVALUATION

DID STUDENTS ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES?

Students who completed a brainstorm sheet of the Reaction and Response assignment will have generated possible words to use for their next art piece. In this process of listing and selecting ideas to create sketches with, students will see that art does not always begin with visualization in the mind, but with words on a page.

HOW WILL EVALUATION BE DETERMINED?

A quick formative assessment is given as the teacher revolves around the room, helping students generate lists and sketches. Students submit their completed brainstorm sheet for further assessment. If a significant majority of students begin work on loose thumbnail sketches, the class will be moving forward with the next steps in the assignment the following day. If students are struggling to complete the list of words and choose three to sketch with, the following day will be structured to spend times in small groups analyzing personality traits and creating words together in peer teams.

Lesson 2: Reaction and Response Critique

Teacher’s Name: Matt Christenson  Dates of Lesson: September, 2013

School: City Arts and Technology High School  Grade: 10th  Length of Lesson: One class

Title of Lesson: Reaction and Response Critique

Relationship to Unit: Graffiti Inspiration and Personal Traits. At the end of the Reaction and Response art piece assignment, the critique allows for students to view each other’s work, gain new insight into interpreting graffiti assignments and receive feedback on individual work.
Relationship to Life: Peer review and performance review are aspects of the academic and adult world. Whether students are in other classes and giving each other reviews, or working for a boss who is giving them a performance review, receiving feedback and criticism are important components to advancement in life.

I. PROBLEM/ACTIVITY
   Each student is on a critique team, or “crew.” In order to make the critique process more engaging, there are two crews that are “battling” each other by giving constructive feedback to members on the other team. Each team has smaller sets of partners that work together to find and critique various works from the other team.

II. GOALS
   Students should…
   
   Understand:
   Giving and receiving feedback is a way to improve personal abilities and is an important element of school and life (CA VA Standard: 4).
   
   Know:
   The artistic process of critique, giving and receiving feedback (CA VA Standard: 4).
   
   Be able to:
   Apply their knowledge of artistic conventions to the content of the critique (CA VA Standard: 1).

III. OBJECTIVES
   Students will:
   
   Understand that the critique process is meant to provide opportunities for all students to learn and grow from analyzing everyone’s work. Critique is meant to help all students improve, not to attack or hurt.
   
   Demonstrate knowledge of artistic conventions, components of art pieces that are visually stimulating, and areas of work that can use improvement.
   
   Present warm and cool feedback for multiple different peer art pieces in front of the class.

IV. RESOURCES AND MATERIALS
   Piece by Piece documentary segment discussing the importance of critique
   Laptop computer and LCD Projector
   Slideshow with student and teacher work from previous years
   Blue tape
   Reaction and Response rubric
   A deck of cards (only cards that correlate with table numbers are used)
Critique Sheet assignment
Writing utensils

V. MOTIVATION

TOPIC QUESTION AND/OR DISCUSSION OF RELATED VISUALS
Why is it important to get feedback on our work?

ASSOCIATION QUESTIONS
What kinds of feelings do you have about other people seeing your work and giving you feedback about it? Why do you think this can be an uncomfortable process? How can we all ensure that people feel respected and comfortable when we give our feedback?

VISUALIZATION QUESTIONS
What are the different ways and words we can use to describe these art pieces from previous years (while showing visual examples of past student work)? What are the types of words we can associate with effective use of value shifting? Complementary colors? One-point perspective? Overlap?

TRANSITION QUESTIONS
What feedback would you give this artist (using the exemplars from the slideshow)? What are the positive aspects that are working well for the piece? What is one way that this artist can improve their work? Think of the artistic conventions to guide your responses.

VI. PROCEDURES

DEMONSTRATION
Students choose cards at the door that correspond with a specific table to sit at. The class then watches a segment from the documentary Piece by Piece that is of San Francisco graffiti artists discussing the ways they give feedback to each other. After the documentary, students view a slideshow of past Reaction and Response assignment work to practice the kinds of ways to describe the art and artistic conventions.

DISTRIBUTION
Every student gets out their Reaction and Response rubric, and those who lost it receive a new one. Students assess their work using the rubric, paying careful attention to the scoring around the use of the artistic conventions. Each student receives a Critique Sheet. The Critique Sheet is a structured set of questions that students will fill out to critique four different art pieces. The sheet asks students to identify one aspect of the art that is working well, one area that can be improved, and one suggestion for how to improve it. The Critique Sheet is aligned closely with the rubric and is asking for students to use the rubric scoring criteria as a basis to determine what feedback is given.

WORK PERIOD
All art pieces are taped up onto the front white board according to which side of the room their team is on. Each table then splits up into smaller groups. The smaller
groups go up to the other team’s work, and discuss the four different art pieces that they are going to critique. After writing down their feedback, each table team comes up to present their feedback to the class.

**CLEAN UP**

After all the tables present, students come up and take their art pieces off of the board. The tape on the back is removed and the art piece itself is taken back to their desk. Each student keeps the rubric that was given with the assignment requirements to assess their work on their shelves and turn in their artwork.

**CLOSURE: TEACHER/STUDENT SUMMATION**

Students are reminded that the process of critique is meant to make everyone improve. It is not intended to attack or hurt any feelings, although sometimes it takes practice to be able to receive feedback without feeling offended. Tomorrow the class will begin a new assignment and each student will be called over to discuss their personal assessments of their work individually to determine a final score.

**VII. EVALUATION**

**DID STUDENTS ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES?**

Students received participation points for writing down critique information and verbally presenting it to the class. If they were able to do both of those actions, then they have met the objectives of the lesson. Students will use the summative assessment tool of the analytic rubric for the project to assess their own work and then discuss their score and application of knowledge with the instructor using the rubric the following day. The rubric is used by both student and teacher for summative assessment.

**HOW WILL EVALUATION BE DETERMINED?**

Students will be scored as they present based on the quality of information that they give. The Critique Sheets are also turned in for additional class points. The rubric for the Reaction and Response assignment is discussed with students to form the summative assessment. The rubric is key as it guides the discussion that students have around the art pieces.

Image 11: Finished student 2 On 1 Code Name piece

**Assessment and Teacher Exemplars**

The formative assessment is based on the graffiti alphabet assignment to measure comprehension and application of the artistic conventions. The summative assessment uses the rubric for the Reaction and Response piece. The teacher exemplar uses the word “Universe” as it relates to topics of study that interest me from the brainstorming assignment.
REQUIREMENTS FOR GRAFFITI ALPHABET

**EACH ROW OF LETTERS MUST CONTAIN 4 LETTERS**
*You can experiment however you like with the remaining letters*

1. The **FIRST ROW** use all the **WARM COLORS**
   (Red, Orange, Yellow)

2. The **SECOND ROW** use all the **COOL COLORS**
   (Green, Blue, Purple)

3. The **THIRD ROW** use all the **NEUTRAL COLORS**
   (Black, White, Gray, Brown)

4. The **FOURTH ROW** use all sets of **COMPLIMENTARY COLORS**
   (Red/Green, Orange/Blue, Yellow/Purple)

5. The **FIFTH ROW** use colored pencils to make **VALUE SHIFTS** (at least 3)
   (Any color you want, but at least 3 letters value shift)

6. The **SIXTH ROW** use one-point perspective to show the dimension of **WIDTH** in your letters. (This is the third dimension, as 3-D refers to height, length and width).
REACTION AND RESPONSE

Read each word or phrase below and write at least 3 words that come to your mind afterwards. These categories help to shape personal identity.

GOD

SOMETHING INTERESTING

THINGS YOU LIKE TO DO

SOMETHING YOU WANT TO CHANGE

RELIGION

GOALS FOR YOUR LIFE

SOMETHING YOU FEEL PASSIONATE ABOUT

SOMETHING YOU HOPE FOR

SOMETHING THAT ANGERS YOU

TOPICS OF STUDY THAT FASCINATE YOU

CULTURAL AFFILIATIONS

MUSIC YOU LISTEN TO

WORDS THAT DESCRIBE YOU

WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT OFTEN

REACTION AND RESPONSE ART RUBRIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>DEVELOPING (2)</th>
<th>PROFICIENT (3)</th>
<th>ADVANCED (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word Design. Is there a word chosen? Is it designed well? Does it represent some aspect of identity?</td>
<td>Word is there, not completely finished, not designed with care, unclear whether the word connects to identity</td>
<td>Word is there, mostly designed well, there is a clear connection to identity</td>
<td>Word is there, designed well and with utmost care, clear connection to identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic Conventions. Were three or more artistic conventions were used? Were</td>
<td>Less than three artistic conventions were applied, or they are not applied in a way</td>
<td>Three artistic conventions applied, mostly used well, one convention not showing complete</td>
<td>Three artistic conventions applied, all of them show care, completion and comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they executed well?</td>
<td>that shows comprehension</td>
<td>comprehension</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort. Did the student use time wisely to complete project?</td>
<td>Time was not spent as well as it should have been. Project not fully complete.</td>
<td>Project complete, but time was not used as effectively as possible. Improvements needed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Time was used quite well, student put in maximum effort and pushed level of engagement each day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher Exemplar for *Reaction and Response* piece:
## Unit Two: Graffiti Inspiration and Symbolic Images

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>Matt Christenson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive title for the unit:</td>
<td>Graffiti Inspiration and Symbolic Imagery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals:</td>
<td>Students should…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understand:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ways that symbolic images are used to enhance meaning and communication in art. (CA VA Standard: 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Relationships between artistic convention use in graffiti and how they define works as tags, throws or pieces. (CA VA Standards: 1 and 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Know:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The difference between graffiti forms and styles. (CA VA Standards 1 and 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The purpose for symbolic images in a work of art. (CA VA Standard: 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The artistic conventions of negative space and analogous colors, as well as the others from the previous unit. (CA VA Standard: 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be Able To:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Brainstorm ideas to create symbolic representations about aspects of their identities (CA VA Standard: 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use artistic conventions to enhance meaning and create visually stimulating work. (CA VA Standards: 2 and 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Implement the artistic process of brainstorming, sketching, critique, giving and receiving feedback, and revising. (CA VA Standard: 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Concepts:</td>
<td>Graffiti is an art form that is largely about identity. Graffiti artists, also called writers, create alternative names for themselves, or code names, that they design and create on public and private surfaces. Using exemplars from different neighborhoods of a city can create relevance for students as they can recognize pieces that they have seen, and feel a sense of validation from their world experiences. Simpson (1998)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
believes that neighborhoods can be strong themes in unit plans (p. 297). Combining both a favored art form among adolescents and art pieces that come from their own neighborhoods contributes to a high level of intrinsic motivation to immerse in the work. Jaquith (2011) describes intrinsic motivators as content with personal relevancy and preference for the media or art form (p.14). By studying graffiti, the theme of self-identity becomes natural and apparent as each individual artist is expressing something deeply personal about him or herself. The beginning of this process is choosing a code name to represent the artist, and that is an intimate, intentional choice of genuine significance. The code name used must reflect some aspect of the artist in ways that have the potential to make the artist feel vulnerable. Generating symbolic images can further illustrate the meaning and thought process that the artist has given to the work, and continues to develop the theme of self-identity. The unit incorporates critique and opportunities for feedback in multiple areas of the creative process. The critique will be in the form of a game, as Wiggins & McTighe (2005) urge educators to make learning game-like (p. 221). Students will continue to use colored pencils and Sharpie markers in their work. Snin & Regev (2013) write that markers can be used to create attractive, colorful, ornamental results and the work process is enjoyable (p. 94). In order to create works of deeper meaning, markers and colored pencils allow for artistic entry in students of all skill ranges, making them ideal for development of conceptual components in their investigations.

Lessons:

• Lesson One: An overview of different code names used by local San Francisco graffiti artists, such as Twist, Joker, and Reminisce, are examined. In small groups,
Lesson One: Students create a ten second story as to why that artist chose that name. Students then complete a brainstorming assignment to help generate a personal code name.

• Lesson 2: The class analyzes the symbolic images that accompany various local and national graffiti pieces. Small groups are formed to create ideas for possible symbolic images that could enhance various code names that I present to them. All students write down their individual code names that they want to use for their projects.

• Lesson Three: After viewing numerous local exemplars of code names that use symbolic imagery, students develop rough sketches of their own code name with one image incorporated.

• Lesson Four: Students create refined, colored sketches of their code name designs with symbolic imagery and three artistic conventions of their choice.

• Lesson Five: The class engages in a critique of the code name sketches. Feedback is given and received in written note form.

• Lesson Six: The “Code Name 2 on 1” assignment is given. Students design their code name two different times on the same piece of paper and incorporate at least one symbolic image into their work.

• Lesson Seven: Final critique on the “Code Name 2 on 1” pieces.

Resources and Materials:

• Materials:

- #2 Pencils
- Erasers
- Colored Pencils
- Markers (Crayola and Sharpies)
- Code Name 2 on 1 Assignment and rubric
- 8” x 11” white drawing paper
- Dry Erase boards and markers
- LCD Projector
- Laptop

• Exemplars:
Lesson One: Symbolic Imagery

**Teacher’s Name:** Matt Christenson  **Dates of Lesson:** September, 2013

**School:** City Arts and Technology High School  **Grade:** 10th  **Length of Lesson:** One Period

**Title of Lesson:** Symbolic Imagery

**Relationship to Unit:** Graffiti Inspiration and Symbolic Images. The lesson here is designed to ignite student thought about how to use images to represent ideas and concepts.

**Relationship to Life:** The visual culture of the students’ neighborhoods, city and world is bombarding them with images. Images are more powerful than words, and can manipulate the thought, opinions and emotions of people. Students will experiment with this form of power by incorporating symbolism into their work.

**I. PROBLEM/ACTIVITY**
Students have now chosen a “code name” that represents some aspect of their personal identity. Their code name will be used for several projects, as students will design compositions using their code name and imagery. Before students can determine which symbols will enhance meaning in their work, they must explore the concept of symbolic imagery in small groups first.

II. GOALS
Students should…

Understand:
Ways that symbolic images are used to enhance meaning and communication in art (CA VA Standard: 1).

Know:
The purpose for symbolic images in a work of art (CA VA Standard: 1).

Be Able To:
Brainstorm ideas to create symbolic representations about aspects of their identities (CA VA Standard: 4).

III. OBJECTIVES
Students will:

Understand that symbols used in art and visual advertisement can have multiple meanings and can communicate various messages.

Demonstrate knowledge of symbolic imagery by decoding visual symbolism, creating symbolic images to represent concepts and choosing one symbolic image to represent one aspect of individual student identity.

Create simple visual symbols to present to the class on dry erase boards.

IV. RESOURCES AND MATERIALS
30 dry erase boards
45 Expo dry erase board markers
30 rags
Laptop and LCD projector
Exemplar slideshow
Class binder
Writing utensil

V. MOTIVATION

TOPIC QUESTION AND/OR DISCUSSION OF RELATED VISUALS
What is a symbol? What is a symbolic image? Where are symbolic images found? What do you think is the purpose of using symbolic imagery in art?
ASSOCIATION QUESTIONS
When looking at each of these graffiti code name examples, what do the symbolic images tell us about the artist? What personality traits do you think the artist is representing through these symbolic images? What do these symbolic images help communicate in the piece?

VISUALIZATION QUESTIONS
Look at these code name pieces without symbolic images…what is one symbolic image that could enhance this piece? What is one symbolic image that communicates what the code name means to you? What is one symbolic image that would communicate that this artist is young? Old? Mean? Happy? Intelligent?

TRANSITION QUESTIONS
What symbols can be used to represent your code name? What are some symbols that can represent some part, or parts, of your individual identity? Which aspect(s) of your identity do you feel are the most important to illustrate symbolically?

VI. PROCEDURES

DEMONSTRATION
The class defines symbol and writes it in their note section of their class binder. Students begin by viewing the works of numerous graffiti images, works of art and advertisements that all use symbolism. Questions are posed that ask students to identify the symbolism being used, followed by the meaning that the symbolism has in the work. The class is arranged into small groups within table clusters, and a further challenge is given. Various graffiti compositions are shown that have no symbolic imagery, just a code name design. Based on the various connotations of the word used, students brainstorm in pairs and groups of three to come up with one symbolic image idea to enhance the piece. These are shared aloud with the class.

DISTRIBUTION
Each student receives a dry erase board, Expo marker and rag. In the same small groups, the symbolic image game show begins. Students also receive back their Reaction and Response brainstorm handout that summarizes the various categories and aspects that lead to personal identity for the last part of the class.

WORK PERIOD
The slideshow on the board continues to show graffiti code names that have no images accompanying the design, words, and phrases. For each slide, individual students will have five minutes to brainstorm and create an illustration of a symbolic image that can help communicate meaning in the work shown. After the time is up, each table group comes to the front of the room to explain the choices they made, what the symbolic image represents, and how it will add meaning to the piece. Each student has the same challenge for the final question, but students must create one symbolic image about their own code name. Using the handout for support, students have ten minutes to create a symbolic image and then present what it represents with the entire table group before the end of the period. The teacher takes notes in
the grade book on how many students are grasping and applying knowledge of symbolic imagery.

CLEAN UP
All dry erase boards are put back on the side of the room. The teacher comes around to make sure markers are returned to their bucket. Rags are placed beside the dry erase boards in a box.

CLOSURE: TEACHER/STUDENT SUMMATION
The class is told that the next phases of artistic work will be on designing sketches of their code names. An overview of the requirements is explained, with a focus on the artistic conventions and the use of symbolic imagery. The class is given a small piece of paper for an “Exit Ticket.” Students write down their code name, one symbolic image they are thinking of using, and what the symbolic image represents to hand to the teacher on their way out of the room.

VII. EVALUATION
DID STUDENTS ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES?
Formative assessment is taken through the presentation of images on dry erase boards. The teacher is taking note of which students are using the symbolism correctly, and which students need support. The checklist used for teacher and student is written on the board. Symbolism in this stage of development is student ability to represent a concept, idea or object using an image. Students who are able to perform this and present their symbolism to the class will meet the requirements.

HOW WILL EVALUATION BE DETERMINED?
In order to focus on the students who need closer assistance, the exit tickets serve as a formative assessment about the code name symbol and will help put students into groupings for the following class. Students that have a clear sense of their code name, a symbolic image and the meaning behind that image will begin sketches independently. Students needing further coaching will be prioritized for individual, one-on-one help.

Lesson Two: 2 On 1 Critique

Teacher’s Name: Matt Christenson  Dates of Lesson: September, 2013

School: City Arts and Technology High School  Grade: 10th  Length of Lesson: Two Periods

Title of Lesson: 2 On 1 Critique

Relationship to Unit: Graffiti Inspiration and Symbolic Images. After working on developing their first code name assignment called the 2 On 1 piece, students assess their work and receive feedback before diving into their final code name task.
**Relationship to Life:** Graffiti imagery is everywhere in San Francisco. Students are overwhelmingly attracted to it, and many of them would like to be able to have some skill in being able to replicate graffiti styles legally on their own property. The critique process is important for every subject and every area of life as a means to improve. People who seek feedback with the intention of improving will generally improve and become more successful.

**I. PROBLEM/ACTIVITY**
Students have completed their first major project using graffiti inspiration, a code name and symbolic imagery to communicate personal identity. It is now the point when students assess their work using the original 2 on 1 project rubric they received with the project requirements and develop a question or focus for feedback from peers.

**II. GOALS**
Students should…

Understand:
- Giving and receiving feedback is a way to improve personal abilities and is an important element of school and life (CA VA Standard: 4).

Know:
- The artistic process of critique, giving and receiving feedback (CA VA Standard: 4).

Be able to:
- Apply their knowledge of artistic conventions to the content of the critique (CA VA Standard: 1).

**III. OBJECTIVES**
Students will:

Understand that the critique process is meant to provide opportunities for all students to learn and grow from analyzing everyone’s work. Critique is meant to help all students improve, not to attack or hurt.

Demonstrate knowledge of artistic conventions, components of art pieces that are visually stimulating, symbolic imagery and areas of work that can use improvement.

Present warm and cool feedback for multiple different peer art pieces in a written format.

**IV. RESOURCES AND MATERIALS**
- 2 On 1 analytic rubric
- Index cards
Binder paper
Blue tape
Writing utensils
Laptop
LCD projector
Slideshow with past student exemplars

V. MOTIVATION

TOPIC QUESTION AND/OR DISCUSSION OF RELATED VISUALS
Why is it important to give and receive feedback about our work and the work of our peers?

ASSOCIATION QUESTIONS
What kinds of feelings do you have about other people seeing your work and giving you feedback about it? Why do you think this can be an uncomfortable process? How can we all ensure that people feel respected and comfortable when we give our feedback?

VISUALIZATION QUESTIONS
What kinds of feedback would you like to receive about your work? In order to improve as an artist, what are the areas of improvement you think you need to grow in? What are your areas of strength?

TRANSITION QUESTIONS
What specific question or questions can you write to your peers that they can answer for you about your work? What specific aspect of your work would you like feedback about? How can the criteria of the rubric help you generate questions you would like feedback about?

VI. PROCEDURES

DEMONSTRATION
The class looks at the 2 on 1 rubric and assesses the work of two previous students. Each art piece is projected on the front board and assessed as a whole group. Next students then assess their own art pieces using the same rubric.

DISTRIBUTION
While students assess their work, the teacher distributes index cards and blank binder paper. Strips of blue tape are placed on the front board. All students grab one piece of blue tape and rip it into two pieces to connect their index card to the top of their artwork and the binder paper to the bottom.

WORK PERIOD
Students write their essential feedback questions on the index cards. The questions are about specific aspects of their work that they want peer feedback about. One
question is mandatory, but some students may pose more than that. The binder paper is at the bottom of the piece for feedback. Students have 15 minutes to get up and walk around to each individual art piece and give feedback to the artist. The questions are there for students to answer, but if other suggestions and/or comments come up that are meant to help improve student work, they are welcomed.

CLEAN UP

Students return to their seats and review their feedback. A few students are chosen to share any helpful remarks or suggestions made for their work. The feedback forms are kept in students’ class folders, as the comments are to be quoted later on in artist statements. The individual art pieces and rubrics are kept on the shelves until an individual assessment can take place the following day between students and teacher.

CLOSURE: TEACHER/STUDENT SUMMATION

The 2 on 1 piece is only the first part of the graffiti code name assignment. The next part of the process is revealed, exploring the realm of metaphor. The teacher explains that while students begin work on their sketches, the individual conversations and assessment between student and teacher on the 2 on 1 piece will be happening. Students are reminded that they will not always receive the feedback that they were hoping for, and if they would like more feedback then they will receive more from the teacher during the individual assessment.

VII. EVALUATION

DID STUDENTS ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES?

By circulating the room during critique, reading the feedback given and writing additional feedback for each piece, the teacher is able to use that formative assessment to determine whether the feedback was useful or off task. This method of critique will be the first time used during the school year, and the main priority of objectives revolves around participation.

HOW WILL EVALUATION BE DETERMINED?

When assessing student work the following day, students will share their own summative assessments using the 2 on 1 rubric and the feedback notes that they received from the critique. The teacher can use the summative assessment of the 2 on 1 analytic rubric to determine the knowledge gained around the requirements of the artistic assignment and the feedback forms to determine how effective the critique activity was. The 2 On 1 rubric is used for each step of the 2 on 1 process and is the only rubric for this project.

Assessment and Teacher Exemplar

The formative assessment in this unit is based on the brainstorming activities to generate ideas for symbolic imagery. The instructor uses activities along with exit tickets to assess the level of student understanding. Summative assessment includes the analytic rubric that comes with the requirements of the 2 On 1 Code Name piece. The teacher exemplar uses the word “Vivid” as the Code Name, representing a passion for life and the use of bold, bright colors in artwork.
THE CODE NAME SERIES PROJECT (part 1): 2 ON 1

This project is PART ONE of a TWO PART SERIES

FIRST: Draw a frame on a piece of paper LESS THAN 1/2 an inch

SECOND: Draw ONE LINE (any style) to create TWO SHAPES

THIRD: Sketch out some drawings of your code name on SCRATCH PAPER

FOURTH: Create 2 CODE NAME PIECES on 1 sheet of paper

ALL CODE NAME PIECES MUST:
1. Use BOTH colored pencil and markers
2. Be COMPLETELY colored in
3. Use 3 colors or more in each piece
4. Use as much SPACE as possible
5. Incorporate 3 or more ARTISTIC CONVENTIONS in each piece: warm/cool/neutral colors, complementary colors, value shift (3 or more gradations), overlap, one-point perspective.
6. Use at least ONE SYMBOLIC IMAGE to represent some aspect of personal identity.

CODE NAME PIECE 2 ON 1 RUBRIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Developing (2)</th>
<th>Proficient (3)</th>
<th>Advanced (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artistic Conventions?</td>
<td>1 or no conventions appear to be used in the pieces, conventions are unclear</td>
<td>Each piece uses 2 conventions, mostly clear, mostly well executed</td>
<td>All pieces use 3 or more conventions clearly and they are executed nearly flawlessly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there 3 or more used in each piece?</td>
<td>A symbolie image is attempted to be incorporated into the work. It is not complete, or it is unclear if it is a symbolic image, or it is handled carelessly.</td>
<td>A symbolie image is incorporated into the piec e, it is complete or mostly complete, and contributes to the personal identity of the artist.</td>
<td>One or more symbolic images are used, executed well, completely finished, and add a new level of meaning and significance to the identity of the artist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic Image(s)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is at least one symbolic image used? Does it represent your identity?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shape/Space Use</td>
<td>Shapes don’t work well with names, lots of negative space, words and images don’t flow with shapes or space</td>
<td>Words and images fit well in shapes; most the space is used well in one or all pieces.</td>
<td>Words and images use the shape and space to benefit the composition in each piece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the CODE NAME pieces designed to work well with the shapes?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Only one material was used</td>
<td>Two materials were used</td>
<td>Two materials were used with a wide variety of variation in terms of effects, marks, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were both markers and colored pencils used?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colors</td>
<td>Words and images are</td>
<td>Words and images are</td>
<td>All words and images are</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Are both shapes completely colored in? Are they colored well?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>colored in sloppily, not completed, little attention to lines and quality</th>
<th>mostly colored in well, attention to details were made in one piece</th>
<th>colored in well and completely.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>Some effort was made, but not nearly as much as potentially could have been</td>
<td>Mostly strong effort was made, but it appears that in some areas more effort could have been made</td>
<td>Solid effort made throughout project and each piece. No doubt about it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher exemplar of 2 On 1 Code Name piece:
### Unit Three: Graffiti Inspiration and Visual Metaphor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>Matt Christenson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive title for the unit:</td>
<td>Graffiti Inspiration and Visual Metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals:</td>
<td>Students should…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Understand:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ways that metaphors are used to enhance meaning and communication in art. (CA VA Standard: 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Relationships between artistic convention use in graffiti and how they define and enhance pieces. (CA VA Standards: 1 and 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Know:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What is a symbolic image and a visual metaphor. (CA VA Standard: 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How to identify the different types of graffiti forms of tag, throw, and piece. (CA VA Standard: 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Definitions of all the artistic conventions that they are choosing from in their assignments. (CA VA Standards: 1 and 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Be Able To:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Solve a visual arts problem that involves effective use of conventions and composition. (CA VA Standard: 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Brainstorm ideas to create representations about aspects of their identities using symbols and metaphors (CA VA Standard: 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use artistic conventions to enhance meaning and create visually stimulating work. (CA VA Standards: 2 and 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Implement the artistic process of brainstorming, sketching, critique, giving and receiving feedback, and revising. (CA VA Standard: 4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Instructional Concepts:    | Simpson (1998) writes, “imagery that contains metaphorical reference is often the best catalyst for meaningful, personal, visual expression for secondary students” (p. 301). The class will study visual
metaphors using various murals from Mexico, San Francisco and New York, as well as playing a game in small groups using dry-erase boards to generate ideas around the creation of a visual metaphor. The “Plus One” assignment is what Kay (1998) refers to as an open problem. Open problems require discovery, as students must identify the problem and choose methods to arrive at solutions to satisfy the situation (Kay, p. 271). By presenting them with a choice on every aspect of the project, students have a variety of ways to go about identifying which aspect of the problem to solve first, whether it is compositional design of the code name, choice of symbolic image, or concept of visual metaphor. Kay explains, “by designing problems that invite flexibility, fluency, elaboration, and originality or responses, you engage learners in the creative process” (p. 283).

Local graffiti artist “Joker” will be a guest artist to explain the consequences of illegal graffiti art and his process of getting legally obtained spaces to practice his art. He will also help students generate ideas for visual metaphors in their work. Kan (2001) urges educators to try and involve a decent graffiti writer or artist who may already be known in the neighborhood (p. 23). Images from various neighborhoods also serve as a major resource for student interest and understanding.

Lessons:

•Lesson One: An introduction of metaphor is made by using images of graffiti murals from San Francisco, New York City and Mexico City. Students are challenged to decode the visual metaphors used to determine what comparison is being made and what that metaphor says about the artist or society.

•Lesson Two: Individual students complete exercises in generating metaphors. First, the class participates in an activity to practice creating metaphors to compare a
concept or object to something else. Then students repeat the process using their own characteristics.

- **Lesson Three**: The introduction to the final project the “Plus One” piece is given. Rough sketches are made to create a composition using a code name, symbolic image and visual metaphor. Local artist “Joker” comes in to help students with their ideas and share his creative process.

- **Lesson Four**: Colored sketches are designed and completed to show conceptual and compositional ideas.

- **Lesson Five**: The class has a critique on their sketches. Each student proposes a specific question or area of feedback that they would like for their work. Feedback is given in a written format.

- **Lesson Six**: Work begins on the final drafts of the “Plus One” code name piece. Stages of the artist statement are incorporated in paragraph chunks to be hand-written at the beginning of designated periods.

- **Lesson Seven**: Final critique of the “Plus One” and formative assessment begins. The artist statement rough draft is complete.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources and Materials:</th>
<th>• Materials:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- #2 Pencils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Erasers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Colored Pencils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Markers (Crayola and Sharpies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- “Plus One” assignment sheet and rubric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Dry Erase boards and markers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- 8” x 11,” 12” x 18” and “18” x 24” white drawing paper</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Paint</td>
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<td>- Palette Knives</td>
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<td>- Palettes</td>
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<td>- Paintbrushes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Water cans</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Rags</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- LCD Projector</td>
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<td>- Laptop</td>
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</tbody>
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Lesson One: Visual Metaphor

Teacher’s Name: Matt Christenson  Dates of Lesson: October, 2013

School: City Arts and Technology High School  Grade: 10th  Length of Lesson: One Period

Title of Lesson: Visual Metaphor

Relationship to Unit: Graffiti Inspiration and Metaphor. As students approach their final graffiti code name investigations, the aspect of incorporating a visual metaphor is a new requirement. Students must first grasp the idea of using a metaphor in a work of art.

Relationship to Life: The metaphor is an important component to art, storytelling, and understanding in general. Metaphors are essential concepts in language classes and in reading stories. Many people use metaphors to help communicate with other people to get their point across. Being able to use and read metaphor can help students communicate on deeper levels.
I. **PROBLEM/ACTIVITY**

The final art piece in the Graffiti Inspiration unit asks students to incorporate a visual metaphor. In order to comprehend how to use a metaphor in an art piece, students will spend the lesson investigating how to generate metaphors by making a list of characteristics and choosing a symbol to make a comparison with.

II. **GOALS**

Students should…

Understand:
Ways that metaphors are used to enhance meaning and communication in art (CA VA Standard: 1).

Know:
Purposes for metaphor in a work of art (CA VA Standard: 1).

Be Able To:
Brainstorm ideas to create metaphors about aspects of their identities (CA VA Standard: 4).

III. **OBJECTIVES**

Students will:

Understand that metaphors used in art and visual advertisement can have multiple meanings and can communicate various messages.

Demonstrate knowledge of metaphor by decoding visual symbolism, creating symbolic images to represent concepts and choosing a metaphor to represent one aspect of individual student identity.

Create simple visual metaphors to present to the class on dry erase boards.

IV. **RESOURCES AND MATERIALS**

- 30 dry erase boards
- 45 Expo dry erase board markers
- 30 rags
- Laptop and LCD projector
- Exemplar slideshow
- Class binder
- Writing utensil
V. MOTIVATION

TOPIC QUESTION AND/OR DISCUSSION OF RELATED VISUALS
What is a metaphor? What is a visual metaphor? Where are visual metaphors found? What do you think is the purpose of using metaphor in art?

ASSOCIATION QUESTIONS
When looking at each of these graffiti code name examples, what does the metaphor tell us? What personality traits do you think the artist is representing through these metaphors? What are the differences and similarities between a symbolic image and a visual metaphor?

VISUALIZATION QUESTIONS
Look at these code name pieces without a visual metaphor...what is one visual metaphor that could enhance this piece? What is one metaphor that communicates what the code name means to you? What is one metaphor that would communicate that this artist is strong? Smart? Upset? Athletic?

TRANSITION QUESTIONS
What metaphors can be used to represent your code name? What are some metaphors that can represent some part, or parts, of your individual identity? Which aspect(s) of your identity do you feel are the most important to illustrate metaphorically?

VI. PROCEDURES

DEMONSTRATION
The class defines metaphor and writes it in their note section of their class binder. A distinction is made between a symbol, which is a representation of something else, and a metaphor, which is a representation by using symbols with significant similarities. The example given is that letters are symbols that represent sounds in language. The letters themselves tell us that there are sounds associated with that letter, but there is no similarity between the letter and the sound. The letter just represents the sound. Using the image of a fire burning in someone’s eyes is a metaphor. A fire can be associated with heat, or a burning desire, inside of someone that is driving them to do a particular thing or feel a certain way. Students begin by viewing the works of numerous graffiti images, works of art and advertisements that all contain some aspect of metaphor. Questions are posed that ask students to identify the metaphor being used, followed by what is being compared through the use of a metaphor, and finally the meaning that the metaphor has in the work. The class is arranged into small groups within table clusters, and a further challenge is given. Various graffiti compositions are shown that have no visual metaphor, just a code name design. Based on the various connotations of the word used, students brainstorm in pairs and groups of three to come up with one visual metaphor idea to enhance the piece. These are shared aloud with the class.
Each student receives a dry erase board, Expo marker and rag. In the same small groups, the visual metaphor game show begins. Students also use their Reaction and Response handout that includes various categories and aspects that lead to personal identity for the last part of the class.

The slideshow on the board continues to show graffiti code names that have no images accompanying the design, words, and phrases. Students make the first two examples of creating a visual metaphor with the instructor. The strategy given is to first write down the code name. Then write down all the different meanings that come to mind when you think of that word. The next step is to generate a list of traits, adjectives, associations or examples of that word. When the code name “fierce” is reviewed, students begin to make lists that can include their ideas that go along with the word, such as: lions, celebrities, lack of food, or police officers. Once the list is as complete as possible, one image is chosen as the visual metaphor if it can be directly compared to the code name due to specific similarities. After the example exercises, students in small groups will have five minutes to brainstorm and create an illustration of a visual metaphor that can help communicate meaning in the work shown. After the time is up, each table group comes to the front of the room to explain the choices they made, what the metaphor represents, and what the similarities are between the metaphor and what it code name. Each student has the same challenge for the final question, but students must create one visual metaphor about their own code name. Using the handout for support, students have ten minutes to create a metaphor and present the explanation of it in front of the class along with the entire table group before the end of the period. The teacher takes notes in the grade book on how many students are grasping and applying knowledge of how to create visual metaphors.

All dry erase boards are put back on the side of the room. The teacher comes around to make sure markers are returned to their bucket. Rags are placed beside the dry erase boards in a box.

The class is told that the next phases of artistic work will be on designing sketches of their final code name pieces. An overview of the requirements is explained, with a focus on the artistic conventions and the use of symbolic imagery and a visual metaphor. The class is given a small piece of paper for an “Exit Ticket.” Students write down their code name, one visual metaphor they are thinking of using, and what the metaphor represents to hand to the teacher on their way out of the room.

Formative assessment is taken through the presentation of images on dry erase boards. There is a checklist on the front board that students use to show their comprehension. The checklist includes: name of concept, idea or object being represented, visual metaphor used to represent that concept, idea or object, and description of the similarities
that create a metaphoric connection between the two. The teacher is taking note of which students are using visual metaphor correctly, and which students need support.

HOW WILL EVALUATION BE DETERMINED?

In order to focus on the students who need closer assistance, the exit tickets given about the code name metaphor serves as a formative assessment that will help put students into groupings for the following class. Students that have a clear sense of their code name, a metaphor and the meaning behind the metaphor will begin sketches independently. Students needing further coaching will be prioritized for individual, one-on-one help.

Lesson Two: Plus One Critique

Teacher’s Name: Matt Christenson  Dates of Lesson: October, 2013

School: City Arts and Technology High School  Grade: 10th  Length of Lesson: Two Periods

Title of Lesson: Plus One Critique

Relationship to Unit: Graffiti Inspiration and Metaphor. After completing the Plus One code name assignment, students share their work and have a critique on the outcomes.

Relationship to Life: The critique process is important for every subject and every area of life as a means to improve. People who seek feedback with the intention of improving will generally improve and become more successful. The critique process is one that, if embraced by students, will be beneficial throughout every stage of life.

I. PROBLEM/ACTIVITY

The Plus One final code name art piece is completed and students are going to show their work. This art piece is one that will lead to an artist statement, and students are required to analyze peer and teacher feedback to determine what areas need to improve for future works in write about that in their artist statement essays. The critique process in this lesson is one of both celebration and critical assessment, as the works are viewed and receive feedback in two different ways.

II. GOALS

Students should…

Understand:

Giving and receiving feedback is a way to improve personal abilities and is an important element of school and life (CA VA Standard: 4).

Know:

The artistic process of critique, giving and receiving feedback (CA VA Standard: 4).
Be able to:
   Apply their knowledge of artistic conventions, symbolism and metaphor to the content of the critique (CA VA Standard: 1).

III. OBJECTIVES
Students will:

   Understand that the critique process is meant to provide opportunities for all students to learn and grow from analyzing everyone’s work. Critique is meant to help all students improve, not to attack or hurt.

   Demonstrate knowledge of artistic conventions, components of art pieces that are visually stimulating, symbolic imagery, visual metaphor and areas of work that can use improvement.

   Present warm and cool feedback for multiple different peer art pieces in a verbal and written format.

IV. RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

   Plus One finished art piece
   Plus One analytic rubric
   Index cards
   Binder paper
   Blue tape
   Writing utensils
   Laptop
   LCD projector
   Slideshow with past student exemplars

V. MOTIVATION

   TOPIC QUESTION AND/OR DISCUSSION OF RELATED VISUALS
   Why is it important to give and receive feedback about our work and the work of our peers? How can we give feedback that is meaningful and meant to improve everyone’s abilities?

   ASSOCIATION QUESTIONS
   What kinds of feelings do you have about other people seeing your work and giving you feedback about it? How can we all ensure that people feel respected and comfortable when we give our feedback? What are the kinds of feedback that we should not give or that will not be useful or helpful for the artist?
VISUALIZATION QUESTIONS
What kinds of feedback would you like to receive about your work? In order to improve as an artist, what are the areas of improvement you think you need to grow in? What are your areas of strength?

TRANSITION QUESTIONS
What specific question or questions can you write to your peers that they can answer for you about your work? What specific aspect of your work would you like feedback about? How can the criteria of the rubric help you generate questions you would like feedback about?

VI. PROCEDURES

DEMONSTRATION
The class looks at the Plus One rubric and assesses the work of two previous students. Each art piece is projected on the front board and assessed as a whole group. Next students assess their own art pieces using the same rubric. The various domains and criteria from the rubric are read aloud and used to assess the work.

DISTRIBUTION
While using the summative rubric assessment to score their own work, the instructor passes out index cards and binder paper to students. Strips of blue tape are up on the front board for students to grab and use to attach their index cards and the binder paper to their art pieces.

WORK PERIOD
Students write down a question on the index card to guide the feedback for their art piece. There can be one or more questions, but this question is the focus that the artist wants for the work in order to improve it. After each focus question has been written, the students have 15 minutes to visit each art piece and give their insight for feedback addressing the focus question. Once the 15 minutes is up, students return to their seats and read over the feedback that they received. After detaching the index cards and binder paper from their art pieces, students use the same blue tape to post their works up on the front board together. Once each student has his or her work up on display, students view the work as a whole. A number is written beside each piece, and a discussion begins around selected works. The questions come from the instructor, as one piece is chosen and described using the criteria of the rubric and the personal techniques and symbolism applied in the work. Students begin to guess which piece is being described, based on the clues that the instructor gives. Once the art piece is guessed correctly, the artist reads their feedback question to the class and the top one or two suggestions that were made in the critique process. The feedback is then analyzed as a group to see why it may or may not work for the piece.
CLEAN UP

The feedback forms are kept in students’ class folders, as the comments are to be quoted later on in artist statements. The individual art pieces and rubrics are kept on the shelves until an individual assessment can take place the following day between students and teacher. All blue tape is thrown away, along with index cards.

CLOSURE: TEACHER/STUDENT SUMMATION

The class is reminded of how far they have come in the previous units. Students began by designing letters and creating a graffiti alphabet, evolved into creating words that expressed meaning and used artistic conventions, elaborated on meaning by adding symbolic images, and developing pieces that incorporate dynamic combinations of artistic conventions, symbolism, metaphor and layers of meaning to communicate aspects of individual identity. All of those steps are connected to the artistic process and how each art piece goes through stages of brainstorming, sketching, generating feedback, and revision before a completed piece emerges. The final step in the process is writing an artist statement to fully communicate the choices, meaning and messages in the art piece so that the audience can understand everything in the work.

VII. EVALUATION

DID STUDENTS ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES?

By circulating the room during critique, reading the feedback given and writing additional feedback for each piece, the teacher is able to use that formative assessment to determine whether the feedback was useful or off task. A further bit of formative assessment is used through the second part of the critique, when the artist chooses some feedback that was useful and that feedback is analyzed as a whole group. The summative assessment of the rubric for the art piece is helpful to guide the focus of the feedback and for students to score their work before the critique.

HOW WILL EVALUATION BE DETERMINED?

When assessing student work the following day, students will share their own summative assessments using the rubric and the feedback notes that they received from the critique. The teacher can use the summative assessment of the analytic rubric to determine the knowledge gained around the requirements of the artistic assignment and the feedback forms to determine how effective the critique activity was

Assessment and Teacher Exemplar

Formative assessments are made throughout the process of the Plus One Code Name piece. Students generate visual metaphors in small groups, and turn in exit tickets to inform the instructor of the level of student understanding around visual metaphor use. The sketches also serve as formative assessment. Summative assessment is embedded in the analytical rubric that accompanies the project requirements. The teacher exemplar uses painting to show a self-portrait. The code name “Vivid” is still designed into the composition, however it is quite small and written in red across the chest.
CODE NAME SERIES: THE + 1 PIECE

This piece is using your Code Name only **ONE TIME** on any size paper and ANY MATERIALS YOU LIKE (if you want to use paint, that is an option).

**ALL CODE NAME + 1 PIECES MUST INCORPORATE THE FOLLOWING:**

**1. YOUR CODE NAME.** (Any style you like. Only once this time).

**2. 3 (OR MORE) ARTISTIC CONVENTIONS.** (Warm/Cool/Neutral Colors, Complementary colors, analogous colors, overlap, value shift, one-point perspective, two-point perspective).

**3. ONE (OR MORE) SYMBOLIC IMAGE.** (This must represent some definable aspect of your identity. You must be able to describe how it reflects you in some way).

**4. ONE VISUAL METAPHOR.** (This must represent some definable aspect of your identity because of SIMILARITIES between you and the metaphor).

**5. LESS THAN 25% OF NEGATIVE SPACE.** (Your design must incorporate 75% of the paper into your composition).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>DEVELOPING (2)</th>
<th>PROFICIENT (3)</th>
<th>ADVANCED (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual Metaphor</td>
<td>Visual metaphor is there, it is not designed well. Care is not quite apparent.</td>
<td>Visual metaphor is there, designed well, care is apparent in the design.</td>
<td>Visual metaphor is there, designed outstandingly well, absolute care was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unclear what the metaphor is.</td>
<td>Interpretations can be made.</td>
<td>taken in all areas. Contributes to piece.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic Conventions</td>
<td>2 conventions are used, mostly clear and appear to be thoughtful</td>
<td>3 conventions are used, mostly clear and appear to be thoughtful</td>
<td>3 (or more) conventions are used, quite clear and very thoughtfully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic Image</td>
<td>An attempt at a symbolic image is used, unclear meaning and purpose.</td>
<td>A symbolic image is used, it is clear, the meaning is up for interpretation, it</td>
<td>A symbolic image (or more) is used, it is clear, the meaning is adds visual</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>helps the piece</td>
<td>depth and artistic intelligence to</td>
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### Negative Space

Is there less than 25% of negative space? Is the composition using space well?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>visually</th>
<th>the piece</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is between 25% to 50% negative space. Composition is not arranged that well to use the space.</td>
<td>There is 25% or less of negative space. The composition arranges its design elements to use the space well.</td>
</tr>
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### Effort

Did the student use their time well? Did they work as hard as they could have?

| Time was used mostly well. Rushing had to occur to finish or not enough attempts at multiple designs. | Time was used well. A few areas were rushed or there was potential to experiment with sketches or designs | Every aspect of time was used well. Student didn’t ever stop working. Time was completely maximized. |

Teacher exemplar of the *Plus One* Code Name piece
APPENDIX B

FINISHED STUDENT GRAFFITI-INSPIRED ARTWORK FROM THE STUDY

The following images were taken by the researcher to depict the various final art pieces made by students that express artistic conventions, symbolism, metaphor and aspects of identity.


Image 8: *Goofy*. Student code name piece, 2013.