Developing an Integrated High School Art Curriculum

Laura Owen

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DEVELOPING AN INTEGRATED HIGH SCHOOL ART CURRICULUM

by

LAURA OWEN

Under the Direction of Melody Milbrandt, PhD

ABSTRACT

This study discusses the benefits of interdisciplinary instruction in high schools. Interdisciplinary instruction is mainly seen at the primary level. There is also some interdisciplinary instruction in the core subjects at the high school level, but not within the visual arts. To fill this void I developed an integrated literacy curriculum unit for the high school visual arts classroom. This curriculum will follow current Common Core standards as well as ELA and visual arts standards.

INDEX WORDS: interdisciplinary, literacy, visual arts, thematic, higher level thinking, deeper cognitive learning, Common Core
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by

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Art Education

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2015
DEVELOPING AN INTEGRATED HIGH SCHOOL ART CURRICULUM

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July 2015
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my grandfather who was the most inspiring man I ever knew. I would also like to dedicate this to my mother for always giving me encouraging words, helping me when I need her, and being my hero. Finally, I dedicate this to my daughter, Harper. May you always strive to accomplish anything you wish.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Milbrandt for her constant encouragement throughout my thesis process. I would also like to thank Dr. Hsieh and Dr. Davenport for their assistance during my program experience. It was a complicated yet connected journey of reflective discovery and possibility in which I approached, grappled, and finally wrote this thesis.
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study

The purpose in creating this interdisciplinary curriculum was to explore and plan how visual art can be integrated with other disciplines and hopefully enhance student learning. Maute (1989) explains how the "intertwining of subject matter not only reinforces what is taught, but also more closely resembles life outside the classroom where the subjects we teach are not found in isolation, but, rather, are constantly interacting with and overlapping each other" (p. 20). I developed a unit of three lessons that will engage students in higher-level thinking. This curriculum unit focuses on the integration of high school language arts into the visual arts classroom. This interdisciplinary approach is based on John Dewey's work, which argued that much knowledge is interrelated (Kelly, 2012). Being that knowledge is interrelated, it only makes sense to help students make cross-disciplinary connections through interdisciplinary instruction to further that knowledge. Visual literacy and visual culture will be further discussed in the Review of Literature. In the creation of my high school interdisciplinary unit, I created concise lessons that incorporate visual art and language arts standards.

Fry (2011) emphasizes the idea that "our brains are designed to make meaning through making connections, and medical science has proven such in the 21st century" (p.9). Interdisciplinary education helps students make connections in their learning, thus making learning more relevant (Fry, 2011). Most interdisciplinary or thematic models have been executed at the primary level or only in core subjects at the high school level. Visual art can be used to integrate other disciplines as well.
1.1.1 Need for Study

There is a need for interdisciplinary instruction in the high school visual arts classroom. This is an important area for investigation because according to research interdisciplinary learning can benefit student's overall knowledge in different subject areas and on a deeper cognitive level by accessing higher-order thinking skills (Johnson, 2013). In this study on integrating literacy standards into the visual arts classroom, I explore my own interest in literacy integration. In my opinion, the visual arts can be forgotten much of the time or simply brushed into the corner as an extracurricular activity. On the contrary, Ballengee-Morris (2006) states, “there are many art and artmaking skills and ways of knowing that can be catalysts for learning across the disciplinary boundaries in high school” (p. 2).

In my experience, public schools compartmentalize subjects into strict categories in which the teacher can only cover their subject of expertise. I believe I would have benefitted greatly from interdisciplinary instruction, especially to develop a more holistic learning experience. In interdisciplinary instruction, teachers can utilize each other's expertise in different subject areas to be able to integrate content in their classrooms. Team building does not have to occur in an interdisciplinary learning setting, although there are benefits such as deeper learning for students (Johnson, 2013). Interdisciplinary teams usually start from the top down, although teachers may certainly start cooperating on thematic ideas on their own (Johnson, 2013). I will discuss interdisciplinary teams, however, this study does not incorporate team building techniques.

Definitions: Interdisciplinary, Thematic, and Cross-curricular

In many studies and research, interdisciplinary learning is also referred to as thematic, cross-curricular, or cross-discipline learning. Thematic learning is a pedagogical model based on
the selection of a theme or topic of study; it is based on integrating various concepts which all have the theme in common. This is seen as a holistic way of learning instead of a more traditional way in which subjects are fragmented and isolated (Lake, 1994). Using a theme is a great way to begin creating an interdisciplinary curriculum. Art educators can begin with a theme that encompasses two subjects, something the teacher feels strongly about and the students can relate to, in order to create an interdisciplinary unit. The term *interdisciplinary* is defined as involving two or more academic, scientific, or artistic disciplines. Because of this definition, mentioning the word artistic, we will be using the term interdisciplinary to discuss the literacy integrated arts curriculum. Cross-discipline is defined as, of, relating to, or involving two or more disciplines. This is interchangeable with the word interdisciplinary. Savage (2011) explains that “a cross-curricular approach to teaching is characterized by a sensitivity towards, and a synthesis of, knowledge, skills and understandings from various subject areas that inform an enriched pedagogy that promotes an approach to learning which embraces and explores this wider sensitivity through various methods" (p. 8-9). All of these definitions are similar, but for the purposes of this artistic study we will use the term *interdisciplinary* to include both thematic and cross-disciplinary learning as the structure for the visual art curriculum.

Savage (2011) discusses the role of interdisciplinary curriculums at the primary level. To understand what needs to be done at a high school level, it is important to understand interdisciplinary instruction at the primary level. Savage (2011) explains the difference between a generalist elementary classroom teacher and the lack of it in secondary school. Primary school may seem like the ideal interdisciplinary learning space from a generalist perspective, but in reality, primary school teachers only cover the surface of each subject, rarely do they delve deeper. So while interdisciplinary connections may be made, there is rarely a deep investigation
of individual disciplines (Savage, 2011). At the high school level, students should be able to reach a deeper level of learning through interdisciplinary instruction. Problems with implementing interdisciplinary instruction at the high school level have to do with courses. In teams, there is an instructor from each core subject, English, math, social studies, and the sciences, but some courses have multiple levels (regular, honors, advanced placement). Fry (2011) explains, "Each team has a teacher from each discipline, and ideally, each team should have a common group of students, but this becomes tricky in practice since one student may be a regular math student, but an honors or above, history student" (p.6). This is how interdisciplinary teams can become complicated. This is why I believe high school art teachers should take initiative in creating their own interdisciplinary units, using other disciplinary content and collaborating with others if they wish, but without the necessity of teaching teams.

By developing an interdisciplinary art curriculum unit, my goal is that student learning will be less compartmentalized and better connected. The art room can integrate disciplines for better overall student learning. Researchers such as Savage (2011), Kelly (2012), and Maute (1989) explain how integrating a subject into another helps students connect the information at a deeper level. Savage (2011) found:

Cross-curricular parameters are unifying areas of learning that span the curriculum and help young people make sense of the world; are not subjects, but are crucial aspects of learning that should permeate the curriculum and the life of a school; add a richness and relevance to the curriculum experience of young people; provide a focus for work within and between subjects; are interdependent and mutually supportive. (p. 13)

English Language Arts (ELA) integration has been encouraged since Georgia adopted the Common Core curriculum in 2008 (Bidwell, 2014). Common Core directly focuses on the
integration of ELA standards into subjects such as science, math, and history. Although Common Core focuses on ELA standards, I have not found any lessons in visual arts geared toward literacy integration. Common Core focuses on core classes and does not have direct standards for the arts. Because I cannot find an in depth interdisciplinary or literacy-integrated curriculum for the high school visual arts classroom, I am planning to develop a curriculum unit including three lessons for high school visual arts students. The curriculum unit will specifically focus on the use of higher level thinking by integrating literacy standards (ELA) into the visual arts class.

1.1.2 Glossary of Terms

**Cross-discipline:** of, relating to, or involving two or more disciplines.

**Cross-curricular:** denoting or relating to an approach to a topic that includes contributions from several different disciplines and viewpoints.

**Interdisciplinary:** involving two or more academic, scientific, or artistic disciplines.

**Visual literacy:** the ability to interpret, negotiate, and make meaning from information presented in the form of an image, extending the meaning of literacy, which commonly signifies interpretation of a written or printed text.

**Visual culture:** the aspect of culture expressed in visual images.

**Thematic curriculum:** emphasis is given on choosing a specific theme for teaching one or many concepts. It is based on integrating various information and uses it to demonstrate the topic.

**Deeper-cognitive learning:** an approach and an attitude to learning, where the learner uses higher-order cognitive skills such as the ability to analyse, synthesize, solve problems, and thinks meta-cognitively in order to construct long-term understanding.

**Higher-order thinking:** a concept of education reform based on learning taxonomies. In Bloom's Taxonomy analyzing, evaluating, and creating are considered higher-order thinking skills.
Example of higher level thinking in Bloom's Taxonomy: Design and create a painting based on the genre paintings of 17th century that relates to your life today. Creating is the highest level in Bloom’s Taxonomy. The idea is that some types of learning require more cognitive processing than others.

**ELA:** English Language Arts

**CCSS:** Common Core State Standards
2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

What is the connection between literacy and visual art? First, I will explore the definitions of both subjects. Literacy is how you read and write, but specifically visual literacy is how you obtain meaning from images you see. The visual arts include art forms such as drawing, painting, sculpture, ceramics, printmaking, photography, crafts, filmmaking, performance, or any type of design including graphic, interior, and fashion. How is literacy in the arts already evident? The New South Wales (NSW) K12 (2011) curriculum suggests literacy is already evident in how students talk, and read and write about works of art, and also how students use images. The NSW K12 has connections throughout their curriculum between literacy and the visual arts. This is significant to my Review of Literature because I believe interdisciplinary structure has a great impact on student learning, especially within higher order thinking and deeper cognitive learning. I have chosen four of their points to focus on:

Through learning in the creative arts, students develop literacy skills by:

- comparing works or performances (looking for similarities and differences, describing, analyzing, evaluating and interpreting)
- asking questions (clarifying or obtaining information)
- reading, interpreting and discussing a range of written texts
- reading, interpreting and discussing a range of visual texts such as symbols, charts, diagrams, scores and pictures (NSW K12, 2011).

I chose to focus on these four points because they connect specifically to the standards in the unit I have created. These standards in turn, connect directly to higher order thinking skills in Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (2000). These skills include: creating, evaluating, and analyzing. Creating being the highest level. In the art room, students use higher level thinking when they
create original pieces of artwork, critique and evaluate their own and each other’s work, and analyze the qualities of an artwork.

**Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy**

Benjamin Bloom, an educational psychologist, created the original Bloom’s Taxonomy in 1956. The taxonomy focuses on the cognitive domain of learning which helps organize thinking skills and objectives (Churches, 2015). The original taxonomy provided definitions for six categories of intellectual activity: *Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation* (Krathwohl, 2002). They are listed from lower order to higher order thinking skills; the first three being lower, and the last three are higher. The hierarchy of these categories shows “mastery of each simpler category was prerequisite to mastery of the next more complex one” (Krathwohl, 2002, p.213). In 1990, David Krathwohl and Lorin Anderson, a former student of Bloom, revised Bloom’s taxonomy (Church, 2015). Changes were made such as noun to verb transitions to form the Cognitive Process dimension in the revised taxonomy (Krathwohl, 2002). There are still six categories, and they are still listed hierarchical from lower order thinking skills to higher order thinking skills. In the revised taxonomy, the six categories are *Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, and Creating* (Krathwohl, 2002). Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy is made up of two dimensions: Knowledge and Cognitive Process. Krathwohl (2002) refers to these as the *noun* and the *verb* categories. The *noun* is the basis for the Knowledge dimension and the *verb* is for the Cognitive Process dimension (Krathwohl, 2002).
The NSW K12 curriculum has adopted an interdisciplinary structure, which they believe assists students with connective learning. Maute (1989) explains interdisciplinary subject matter “not only reinforces what is taught, but also more closely resembles life outside the classroom where the subjects we teach are not found in isolation, but, rather, are constantly interacting with and overlapping each other” (p. 20). This is especially true in context of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IB). The purpose of this program is to provide a curriculum that creates globally conscious students. Also, one of the main goals of IB is “to foster an understanding of the epistemological links across the different subject domains through its Theory of Knowledge (TOK) course” (Pound, 2006, p. xi). This directly relates to an interdisciplinary system. Many school systems around the world fail to promote academic breadth, and this is where the IB program fills in the gaps (Pound, 2006). The IB visual arts program, specifically, includes a sketchbook or journal that students fill with information (drawings, notes, references) throughout the school year. This journal becomes a way for teachers to assess students' progress. It also helps students reflect on their train of thought and is
used as a reference to look back on ideas or thought processes. It is also meant to be utilized as a tool for future work. In these sketchbooks, students can connect ideas from other classes as well.

**Deeper Cognitive Learning**

Before assessing deeper cognitive learning, we must first discuss introductory knowledge. According to Efland (1995), “In introductory learning the primary educational goal is often exposure to large areas of curricular content ("coverage" of content), without much emphasis on conceptual mastery of knowledge” (p. 139). Mostly, this occurs because it is assumed that a deeper level of learning will happen in secondary education. Efland (1995) discussed the concepts of the spiral curriculum that American education is based on, “a representation of cognitive structures based on the notion of hierarchy in which early learning provides the foundation for later learning” (p. 139). In order to access deeper cognitive learning teachers must go a step beyond memorization. Efland gives a scenario of an art educator teaching introductory knowledge. The middle school art educator teaches her students to recognize four stylistic characteristics of French Impressionist artists:

- (a) the fact that these painters loved the effects of vibrant color; (b) that they sought to create the effects of outdoor lighting (plein-air); (c) that they painted with expressive brushstrokes rather than produced the slick finished surfaces of traditional academic painting; and (d) that they frequently painted subjects in which groups of mainly middle class people are enjoying their leisure in outdoor settings like garden restaurants and boating scenes. (Efland, 1995, p.144)

The issue here is that the lesson mainly focuses on recognition skills. This, in turn, is introductory knowledge. To hone in on deeper knowledge about this topic, the teacher begins a second lesson that goes a step further. She introduces the students to other artworks from the
same time period that do not fit into the typical four stylistic characteristics. The students are prompted with questions such as "How can we explain the appearance of subjects reflecting misery and unhappiness at a time when the average Impressionist picture reflected happier circumstances?" (Efland, 1995, p. 145). This additional lesson accesses higher-order understanding because students identify and interpret aspects of the work (Efland, 1995). This is indicated by the students showing more understanding than mere recognition of Impressionism. This example explains how high-order thinking can be taught in the art classroom, and in order for deeper-cognitive learning to take place, students must be engaged at a high level of understanding.

**Interdisciplinary Learning**

The Virginia Department of Education (2012) explains that when an interdisciplinary model is used students can better connect and interrelate subjects, rather than see them as isolated and fragmented. Interdisciplinary learning allows students to connect knowledge they already have to new knowledge they are learning; this promotes skills needed for lifelong success (VDOE, 2012). Cohen-Evron and Krug (2000) quote Britzman (1991) who further this argument stating that "curriculum organization is fragmented into instructional activities reduced to discrete blocks of time, thereby isolating subject areas and teachers, abstracting knowledge from its socio-cultural roots and political consequences, and decontextualizing knowledge and skills from their practical existences" (p. 260). Over the last decade, issues in schools regarding “teaching for understanding and knowledge fragmentation have influenced teachers, including art teachers, to work across curriculum divisions” (Cohen-Evron & Krug, 2000, p. 258). By using interdisciplinary instruction, students fill this gap and achieve higher-level thinking, or deeper cognitive learning through interdisciplinary learning. Silverstein (2014) from ArtsEdge at
The Kennedy Center explains, “Through arts integration, students develop dual content knowledge (in both an art form and another area of the curriculum) as well as develop skills in the 4Cs [communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity]” (Learning and Innovation Skills/4cs section, para. 1). Interdisciplinary programs are looked at as an antidote for curricular fragmentation (Cohen-Evron & Krug, 2000). By implementing literacy standards into the art classroom, this bridges the gap between art and English-Language Arts.

My study focuses on the integration of literacy into visual arts courses. This literature directly relates to the reasons for integration of subjects, specifically as ELA or language and the visual arts including visual literacy. The reason being “both art and alphabetization [language or literacy] can be linked to nurture each other” (Camnitzer, 2009, p. 1). Arts integration is also important in the fast paced and vastly changing 21st century. Silverstein (2011) discusses the importance of arts integration in life and career skills; students should be able to “solve problems having more than one right answer, develop initiative and self-direction, work collaboratively, be both productive and accountable, and take on leadership roles” (Life and Career Skills section, para. 2). Through interdisciplinary studies, students have the opportunity to develop these dispositions.
3 CURRICULUM CONSTRUCTION

The newly disseminated National Core Arts Standards have specific grade-level standards as well as a set of eleven anchor standards that apply to all arts disciplines (dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts) at all grade levels. These anchor standards are divided into four categories: standards associated with creating, with performing/presenting/producing, with responding, and with skills of connecting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artistic Processes and Anchor Standards</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Artistic Processes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Creating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition: Conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performing/Presenting/Producing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing: Realizing artistic ideas and work through interpretation and presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenting: Interpreting and sharing artistic work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producing: Realizing and presenting artistic ideas and work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition: Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition: Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Anchor Standards</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students will:</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Refine and complete artistic work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students will:</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students will:</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Perceive and analyze artistic work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students will:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The curriculum I have created is based around a theme of genre painting. To connect to ELA standards and CCSS, one lesson is focused on literary narratives. Students will analyze a specific genre painting, and explore the work's historical and social context. Analyzing is considered a higher-order thinking skill according to Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy. This also relates to the NSW K12 (2011) concept of comparing works or performances (looking for similarities and differences, describing, analyzing, evaluating and interpreting). Students will read, interpret and discuss a range of narratives (NSW K12, 2011); this directly relates the four concepts we discussed in the review of literature section. Students will then create original narratives based on the genre painting and their findings. Creating is considered the top level of higher-order thinking in Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy. In a second lesson, students will focus on the art criticism of a genre painting. Asking questions (clarifying or obtaining information) is important in this lesson and also connects to the NSW K12 (2011) concepts. Critiquing can be categorized under the evaluating section of Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy, also a higher-order thinking skill. Art criticisms in particular are a prime example of how to integrate visual arts with language arts. For example, Feldman’s (1994) Model of Art Criticism enhances critical thinking skills. Critical thinking or analyzing is a higher-level thinking skill in Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy. Using Feldman’s model helps students understand how to properly critique a work and engage in critical thinking. In Feldman’s model, students write down the description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment of a work of art. Analysis is considered a higher-level thinking skill in Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy. In my third lesson, students will create their own genre painting. From an everyday scene in their life or the life of others around them, students will paint a work inspired by the genre style. Viewing other works of genre art relates to the concept of “reading, interpreting and discussing a range of visual texts such as symbols, charts,
diagrams, scores and pictures” (NSW K12, 2011). Again, creating is the top level in Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy. Figure 2 shows a flowchart of how the curriculum was created. It includes my thought processes in relation to the curriculum including what interests high school students and what theme I think would fit best to these interests. Figure 3 shows the connection between the four focus points and ELA and visual arts standards. Figure 4 helps explain that meeting the standards in visual art and ELA will build students’ higher level thinking abilities.
Figure 2 Curriculum Flowchart
Figure 3 New South Wales K12 (2011) focus points connection to standards

ELA Standards
• LESSON 1:ELACC9‐10W7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self‐generate question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
• LESSON 2:ELACC9‐10W3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well‐chosen details, and well‐structured event sequences.
• LESSON 3:ELACC9‐10W2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Visual Arts Standards
• LESSON 1: VAHSVAA.R.3 Develops multiple strategies for responding to and reflecting on artworks.
• LESSON 2:VA8C.2 Develops fluency in visual communication.
• LESSON 3:VAHSPAPR.1 Incorporates elements and principles of design to solve specific visual arts problems and to communicate ideas and emotions, culminating in a finished work of art.

Bloom's Higher Order Thinking Skills:
Creating, Evaluating, Analyzing

Figure 4 Standards connection to higher order thinking skills
Importance of Curriculum Development

Curriculum development is very critical in the everyday life of teaching. Art education is for the students, so they will be well rounded, persistent, observing, expressive, envisioning, innovative, young people now and in the future. The arts teach children to realize that problems can have more than one solution and questions can have more than one answer (NAEA, 2014). Art education is for the communities. High concentration of the arts in a city leads to higher civic engagement, more social cohesion, higher child welfare, and lower poverty rates (Americans for the Arts, 2011).

Advocacy

I advocate for interdisciplinary studies. I believe that arts are a catalyst for cross-curricular instruction. At any level, primary or secondary, teachers should collaborate across subjects to make sure students are relating information across these subjects whenever possible. As an art educator, I incorporate other subjects into my classroom almost every day. It is impossible not to speak of the science involved in the materials and chemicals used in the art room. It is impossible not to speak of the math and symmetry that occurs in art history and current artworks. It is the teacher’s job to communicate with their colleagues about cross-curricular opportunities in every classroom (some schools require this). But even if this is not an option in their setting, the art educator can always bring in other disciplines to their teaching. It is also the art educator’s responsibility to encourage other teachers to incorporate the arts into their learning environment. Art teachers can use these approaches at either the elementary or secondary level.
4 Methodology

4.1 Research Questions

How can interdisciplinary instruction access deeper cognitive learning: How might I construct a unit of lessons that could potentially engage high school students in interdisciplinary learning and higher level thinking in the art classroom?

4.2 Methods

Using academic research articles, I composed an original unit of three lessons consisting of interdisciplinary standards and objectives specifically geared toward a high school visual arts class with an integration of ELA standards with specific attention to higher level thinking as defined by Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (2001). I have supported the development of my original curriculum by using Georgia Performance Standards, IB standards, Common Core Arts Standards for ELA and interdisciplinary theory.

4.3 Timeline

The study occurred during the 2014-2015 school year. I began creating this study in May of 2014 and finished in July of 2015. My anticipated personal outcome was a better understanding of interdisciplinary instruction in high schools today. I constructed a unit of lessons that will involve students in creating visual art while integrating literacy knowledge into the process and into their everyday lives. I hope for interdisciplinary instruction to better reach students’ interests and help them connect different subjects reaching a deeper level of understanding through higher-level thinking.
4.4 Limitations

Since I did not have an opportunity to implement my lessons, my curriculum is based on my research about interdisciplinary theory and current art education practice.

4.5 Unit of Lessons

My thematic and interdisciplinary unit is based on genre painting geared toward high school level visual art students, ages approximately 15-18, for approximately four weeks. The three lessons focus on literary narratives, art criticism & art history, and the creation of an original genre painting. The unit will align with ELA, visual art, and CCSS standards.
Before the introduction of this unit, students should already have a concept of drawing and painting techniques. In Lesson 1 students will learn about the history of genre painting and what type of painting came before that. Genre painting was a response to the royal lifestyles usually depicted in paintings. Genre painting, in many cultures, was meant to show the everyday lives of the working class. In Lesson 1, students will also discuss how to critique a work of art. Feldman’s Model of Art Criticism will be used as a guide in the critiques and to engage students in higher-level thinking. This will eventually help in the critique of student work. In Lesson 2, students will write a narrative based on a genre painting. In this lesson, paragraph structure and formatting is very important. Writing is prevalent for an artist through their statements for the artwork, and is also a connection to ELA standards and supports students continued use of higher-level cognition.
5.1 Art History & Critique

GPS Standards or District:

VAHSVAMC.3 Cultivates critical thinking and logical argumentation in aesthetics.

e. Researches and analyzes the work of an artist and writes about how the artist’s style contributes to the meaning of the work.

VAHHSVACU.1 Articulates ideas and universal themes from diverse cultures of the past and present.

a. Identifies how the issues of time, place, and culture are reflected in selected art works.

b. Discusses how understanding the original context of an artwork affects a viewer’s connection with and interpretation of the artwork.

VAHSSVAAR.3 Develops multiple strategies for responding to and reflecting on artworks.

c. Interprets and evaluates artworks through thoughtful discussion and speculation about the mood, theme, processes, and intentions of those who created the works, such as using —Visual Thinking Skills or Feldman’s Art Criticism process.

ELACC9-10W7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generate question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Common Core Connection:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
**Lesson Theme:**
Students will learn about historical genre painting, why it is important, and what came before.

The lesson will then connect to current artists, such as Kehinde Wiley, who recontextualize art historical paintings to discuss what could be called current day genre painting. Students will critique such artworks using Feldman’s Model of Art Criticism.

**Objectives:**
Investigate a current artist that creates work in response to genre painting (DOK-Strategic Thinking).

Analyze the relevance of historical context and how this affects the viewer (DOK-Extended Thinking).

Interpret and evaluate artworks using Feldman’s Model of Art Criticism (Bloom-Evaluating).

**Resources:**
Genre paintings historically

**Introduction/Motivation:**
Teacher will have a rotating slideshow of Kehinde Wiley’s artwork while students enter classroom. Begin a discussion with students about Wiley’s work. Do Wiley’s works relate to your life or a friend’s? How does Wiley reappropriate historical artwork? What was it a response to?

**Content Paper or PowerPoint:**
[http://prezi.com/aoxdcl1rkevf/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share](http://prezi.com/aoxdcl1rkevf/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share)
[http://prezi.com/7_0yjoewtrve/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share](http://prezi.com/7_0yjoewtrve/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share)
Instructor’s Procedures:

1. Begin class rotating through Kehinde Wiley’s artwork on a PowerPoint. Begin a discussion with students about Wiley’s work. Do Wiley’s works relate to your life or a friend’s? How does Wiley reappropriate historical artwork? What was it a response to?

2. Show historical works of art that Wiley has taken inspiration from. Explain genre art as a way of depicting situations and scenes of everyday life. Subjects typically include domestic settings, interiors, mealtimes, celebrations, tavern or peasant scenes, markets and other street scenes. Analyze the relevance of historical context and how this affects the viewer.

3. Investigate a current artist that creates work in response to genre painting (someone other than Wiley).

4. Interpret and evaluate artworks using Feldman’s Model of Art Criticism (multiple to practice, then final), critique a historical genre painting as well as a modern day take on genre painting (Kehinde Wiley and other artists that students have discovered).

Materials and Materials Management:

Feldman’s handout

Computers and/or cell phones to research artists

Pencils

Student Procedures:

1. Begin class rotating through Kehinde Wiley’s artwork on a PowerPoint. Begin a discussion with students about Wiley’s work. Do Wiley’s works relate to your life or a friend’s? How does Wiley reappropriate historical artwork? What was it a response to?
2. Show historical works of art that Wiley has taken inspiration from. Explain genre art as a way of depicting situations and scenes of everyday life. Subjects typically include domestic settings, interiors, mealtimes, celebrations, tavern or peasant scenes, markets and other street scenes. Analyze the relevance of historical context and how this affects the viewer.

3. Investigate a current artist that creates work in response to genre painting (someone other than Wiley).

4. Interpret and evaluate artworks using Feldman’s model of art criticism (multiple to practice, then final), critique a historical genre painting as well as a modern day take on genre painting (Kehinde Wiley and other artists that students have discovered).

Feldman’s 4-step model

*DESCRIPTION:
What do you see? Name the objects (if any in the artwork) you see. Name and describe the kinds of elements you see (wavy lines, rough texture, etc.)

Elements include: line, shape (or form, color texture, value, space).

*ANALYSIS
How is the work organized? Analyze the artwork then describe how the principles of design are sued to organize the elements of design and objects in the composition.

How is unity created? Where is the center of interest?

*INTERPRETATION
Contextual information: Where is the work from? In what time period was this work created? Why do you think the artist created this work? What do you think was the artist
intention? Was this work considered highly original or unique in the time in which it was produced?

Meaning: What does this work mean to you? Is there a major theme in this work? Does it evoke strong feeling in you? Can you think of a metaphor that might describe the work?

*EVALUATION

Do you think the artist was successful in communicating his/her intention through this work? Is craftsmanship critical to this work? Provide evidence for your judgment based on your observations and research. Is originality critical to this work?

**Closure/Review:**

Ticket out the door: How can current artists respond to historical artworks? What are some strategies to critique an artwork? Name one thing new you learned today and one thing that you might still have questions about.

**Assessment Questions:**

How well did the student investigate a current artist that creates work in response to genre painting? (DOK-Strategic Thinking).

How well did the student analyze the relevance of historical context and how this affects the viewer? (DOK-Extended Thinking).

How well did the student interpret and evaluate artworks using Feldman’s Model of Art Criticism? (Bloom-Evaluating).
## Assessment Instrument:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Objective 1. Investigate a current artist that creates work in response to genre painting.</th>
<th>Objective 2. Analyze the relevance of historical context and how this affects the viewer.</th>
<th>Objective 3. Interpret and evaluate artworks using Feldman’s Model of Art Criticism.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Researches and analyzes the work of an artist and writes about how the artist’s style contributes to the meaning of the work.</td>
<td>Participates in discussion. Contributes additional questions and insights.</td>
<td>Responds to artworks in a well-thought out eloquent manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Somewhat analyzes the work of an artist and writes about how the artist’s style contributes to the meaning of the work.</td>
<td>Participates in discussion.</td>
<td>Responds to artworks in a somewhat well-thought out manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Writes about an artist’s work with no analysis present.</td>
<td>Somewhat participates in discussion.</td>
<td>Responds to artworks in short answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Investigation is written poorly.</td>
<td>Does not participate in discussion.</td>
<td>Responds poorly in broken sentences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Does not research the work of an artist or write anything.</td>
<td>Does not participate.</td>
<td>Does not respond to artworks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXTENSION/ Differentiation or Adaptation

A gifted student will also be held to a higher standard regarding their writing composition, vocabulary usage, and syntax.

A student with a physical disability may use a computer for the writing portion or a peer student could assist in writing. Adaptive tools may be provided for the student as well as additional time to complete their assignment.

A student with emotional or behavioral disabilities can also use additional time to complete the assignment. This student will also be allowed a short break halfway through the writing process if necessary.
5.2 Narrative of a Genre Painting

Laura Owen

GPS Standards or District:

ELACC9-10W3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

a. Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.

b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

c. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.

d. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

VA8C.2 Develops fluency in visual communication.

a. Reads about, writes, listens to, responds to, speaks about and views information related to art. (Reading Across the Curriculum).

b. Integrates information and skills from art into other subject areas to support personal learning.

c. Identifies and describes trends in the visual arts and communicates how the issues of time, place and culture are reflected in selected works.
d. Interprets visual message of images found in various works of art and/or communication media (e.g., video, advertisements, book covers, CD/DVD covers, posters) and produces a visual and/or verbal response.

e. Utilizes informational text (online journals, periodicals and other visual/text sources) to communicate art ideas.

**Common Core Connection:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.8

Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the specific task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

**Lesson Theme:**

Write a narrative based on a genre artwork.

**Objectives:**

Interpret visual meaning from a genre painting or work of art and produce a written response (Bloom-Understanding).

Construct a narrative based on a genre painting or work of art using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences (Bloom-Creating).

**Sample:**

See 5.2.1 for narrative sample.
Resources:

http://www.cmoa.org/uploadedFiles/Warhol_Site/Warhol/Content/collection/aboutandy/FAQ/App
pearance/narrative%20writing(1).pdf

Introduction/Motivation:

Building on Lesson 1, use artists the students researched to discuss narratives through their artwork. Show these artworks on the board and have students create original stories or concepts on what the artwork could be about. What’s going on in this painting? What do you see that makes you say that? What are the characters doing? What time of year do you think it is? Continue prompts specific to each artwork. Discuss characterization, setting, theme, and plot.

Content Paper or PowerPoint:

http://prezi.com/zytgs19rwsgq/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share
http://prezi.com/aoxdcl1rkeyf/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share

Instructor’s Procedures:

1. Building on Lesson 1, use artists the students researched to discuss narratives through their artwork. Show these artworks on the board and have students create original stories or concepts on what the artwork could be about. What’s going on in this painting? What do you see that makes you say that? What are the characters doing? What time of year do you think it is? Continue prompts specific to each artwork.

2. Discuss characterization, setting, theme, and plot (what makes up a narrative).

3. Have student interpret visual meaning from a genre painting or work of art and produce a short written response for practice.

4. Assist students in choosing a work of genre art to write about. Can be a historical work of art or from a current artist.
5. Have students construct a narrative based on a genre painting or work of art using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

**Materials and Materials Management:**

Pencil

Paper

Artwork to draw inspiration from for writing

**Student Procedures:**

1. Looking at the art the teacher has put on the board, create original stories or concepts on what the artwork could be about. What’s going on in this painting? What do you see that makes you say that? What are the characters doing? What time of year do you think it is? Continue prompts specific to each artwork.

2. Discuss characterization, setting, theme, and plot (what makes up a narrative).

3. Interpret visual meaning from a genre painting or work of art and produce a short written response for practice.

4. Choose a work of genre art to write about. Can be a historical work of art or from a current artist.

5. Construct a narrative based on a genre painting or work of art using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

**Closure/Review:**

Ticket out the door: What 4 things make up a narrative? How can a viewer interpret visual meaning? Name one thing new you learned today and one thing that you might still have questions about.
### Assessment Questions:

How well did the student interpret visual meaning from a genre painting or work of art and produce a written response? (Bloom-Understanding).

How well did the student construct a narrative based on a genre painting or work of art using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences? (Bloom-Creating).

### Assessment Instrument:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 1. Interpret visual meaning from a genre painting or work of art and produce a written response.</th>
<th>Objective 2. Construct a narrative based on a genre painting or work of art using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td>Response is well written.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td>Response is well written but missing some key elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
<td>Response is somewhat well written but missing many key elements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### EXTENSION/ Differentiation or Adaptation

A gifted student will also be held to a higher standard regarding their writing composition, vocabulary usage, and syntax.

A student with a physical disability may use a computer for the writing portion or a peer student could assist in writing. Adaptive tools may be provided for the student as well as additional time to complete their assignment.

A student with emotional or behavioral disabilities can also use additional time to complete the assignment. This student will also be allowed a short break halfway through the writing process if necessary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D</th>
<th>Response is poorly written.</th>
<th>Narrative is poorly written.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>No response written.</td>
<td>No narrative written.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3 Genre Painting  

9-12  Laura Owen

GPS Standards or District:

VAHSPACU.2 Demonstrates an understanding of how art history impacts the creative process of art making.

c. Creates artwork that explores ideas, issues, and events from current and past cultures.

VAHSPAPR.1 Incorporates elements and principles of design to solve specific visual arts problems and to communicate ideas and emotions, culminating in a finished work of art.

a. Uses multiple strategies, such as thumbnail sketches, visual/verbal notes and viewfinders, to develop concept and composition for paintings.

b. Discusses and applies concepts, such as surface quality, activating negative space, visual weight, paths of movement, non-centered focal point, dominance and subordination of design elements, and variety within repetition.

c. Applies compositional principles to create successful representational and nonobjective art work.

ELACC9-10W2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Common Core Connection:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.1.D

Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

Lesson Theme:

Create original genre painting about student’s personal life or the life of others.
Objectives:
Find, organize, and compare ideas in sketchbook with thumbnail sketches and notes to develop concept and composition for paintings. (Bloom-Analyzing).
Create artwork that explores past and current genre art using student voice (Bloom-Creating).
Explain concept in a written artist’s statement. (Bloom-Understanding).

Sample:
by: Laura Owen, acrylic, 11in x 12in
Inspiration from: “An Evening School” by Gerrit Dou, early 1660s.

Resources:
http://kehindewiley.com/

Introduction/Motivation:
Connecting to Lesson 1 and 2, recap genre painting historically and currently. Have students brainstorm in an open discussion about ideas for a personal genre painting. Encourage students to create ideas about themselves or of others whom they might be interested in depicting. Keep in mind that genre painting depicts aspects of everyday life by portraying ordinary people engaged in common activities. Connect to YOUR (student) interest… what are you interested in?
Content Paper or PowerPoint:

http://prezi.com/aoxdcl1rkevf/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share

http://prezi.com/7_0yjoewtrve/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share

Instructor’s Procedures:

1. Connecting to Lesson 1 and 2, recap genre painting historically and currently. Have students brainstorm in an open discussion about ideas for a personal genre painting. Encourage students to create ideas about themselves or of others whom they might be interested in depicting. Keep in mind that genre painting depicts aspects of everyday life by portraying ordinary people engaged in common activities. Connect to YOUR (student) interest… what are you interested in?

2. Have students find, organize, and compare ideas in sketchbook with 10 thumbnail sketches and notes to develop concept and composition for paintings. Review “project plan” for approval.

3. Students will then create an artwork using a medium of their choice that explores past and current genre art using student voice.

4. Finally, students will write an informative/explanatory artist statement to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

5. Give students additional option to create a short narrative (1-2 pages) about their own work.

Materials and Materials Management:

Tempera paints

Paintbrushes
Canvas, Paper, etc.

Any additional medium if chosen to use

Sketchbook

Pencil

Paper (for artist’s statement)

**Student Procedures:**

1. Brainstorm in an open discussion about ideas for a personal genre painting. Create ideas about student life or others who might be interesting to depict. Keep in mind that genre painting depicts aspects of everyday life by portraying ordinary people engaged in common activities. Connect to YOUR (student) interest… what are you interested in?

2. Find, organize, and compare ideas in sketchbook with 10 thumbnail sketches and notes to develop concept and composition for paintings. Create a “project plan” for instructor approval including size, medium, concept, and composition (can be in sketchbook).

3. Create an artwork using a medium of your choice that explores past and current genre art using student voice within a two-week timetable.

4. Explain concept and process in a written artist’s statement (at least one paragraph).

5. Additional option to create a short narrative (1-2 pages) about own work.

**Closure/Review:**

Ticket out the door: What type of artworks have we been studying and creating? How can an artist statement expound on an artwork? What makes research (relation to history, sketches) so important in creating an artwork? Name one thing new you learned today and one thing that you might still have questions about.
Assessment Questions:

How well did the student find, organize, and compare ideas in sketchbook with thumbnail sketches and notes to develop concept and composition for paintings?

How well did the student create artwork that explores past and current genre art using student voice?

How well did the student explain their concept in a written artist’s statement?

Assessment Instrument:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 1. Find, organize, and compare ideas in sketchbook with thumbnail sketches and notes to develop concept and composition for paintings.</th>
<th>Objective 2. Create artwork that explores past and current genre art using student voice</th>
<th>Objective 3. Explain concept in a written artist’s statement.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Creates 10 exceptional thumbnail sketches.</td>
<td>Creates an exceptionally well thought out and researched artwork.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Creates 10 thumbnail sketches.</td>
<td>Creates a well thought out and researched artwork.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Creates less than 10 thumbnail sketches that are not well thought out.</td>
<td>Creates an artwork that is lacking in research and student voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Creates less than 10 poor thumbnail sketches.</td>
<td>Creates a poorly thought out artwork.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Does not create thumbnail sketches.</td>
<td>Does not create an artwork.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXTENSION/ Differentiation or Adaptation

Gifted students will be challenged to create a narrative about their own work of art.

Students with physical disabilities will be given adaptive paintbrushes and pencils. The student will be allowed additional time to complete the sketches and painting.

Students with behavioral disabilities will be assigned a peer mentor to help them stay focus on their tasks. The student will be allowed a small amount of additional time to complete the sketches and painting.
6 CONCLUSION

This unit addresses the connection between literacy and visual art. The interdisciplinary approach to creating these lessons reinforces that connection. During my research process, I hoped to answer the questions: How might I construct a unit of lessons that could potentially engage high school students in interdisciplinary learning and higher level thinking in the art classroom? How can interdisciplinary instruction access deeper cognitive learning? To answer question one, I began by researching curricular models such as interdisciplinary, thematic, the IB Programme, and Common Core. Then, I created a theoretical framework based on my findings on how to meet my goals of creating an interdisciplinary curriculum that accesses higher order thinking skills based on Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (2001). Finally, I looked at ELA and visual arts standards and connected this to my theoretical framework.

To answer the second question, by using higher-order thinking skills in the objectives of each lesson, I sought to reach those skills of analyzing, evaluating, and creating outlined in Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (2001). Finding a theme or topic that resonates with high school students is key in constructing a unit of lessons and finding a theme or topic that can be taught across discipline. With the integration of ELA standards into a visual arts lesson based on genre art and writing principles, along with visual arts standards, these needs are met.

Engaging students in higher-level thinking is important not only to meet standards but because it is relevant in the 21st century. P21’s Framework for 21st Century Learning identifies four Student Outcomes for 21st century learning: “(1) The core Subjects and 21st Century Themes, (2) Learning and Innovation Skills (also known as the 4Cs – communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity), (3) Information, Media, and Technology Skills and (4) Life and Career Skills” (Silverstein, 2014, para. 3). The arts are uniquely positioned to
help develop 21st century skills “including curiosity, imagination, creativity, and evaluation skills” (Silverstein, 2014, para. 4).

My lessons are meant to show the possibilities of interdisciplinary instruction. These lessons are specific to literacy and the visual arts. Through these lessons, students can find the connections between genre art in the 17th century and narrative writing. They can also find connections to literacy in reading, writing, and research and current artists making art inspired by or in response to genre art.

Through my experience teaching high school, I believe this unit is appropriate for that age because of the higher order thinking skills that are addressed. Students are writing narratives in high school language arts classes; my unit takes narrative writing a step further by connecting the visual arts. Writing a narrative is another way of creating. Creation happens much of the time in the art room with drawing, painting, and sculpture etc. Teachers can use interdisciplinary instruction to create in different ways such as writing. Creating is the highest level in Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy.

The process of writing my own curriculum has brought me to a higher level of learning than I ever expected. It made me analyze standards and write more clearly, as well as create projects for student success. Researching interdisciplinary instruction and learning has backed up beliefs I already had about the positive effects and reachable goals of interdisciplinary curriculums. I thoroughly enjoyed learning about a cause that I genuinely care about and believe in. The creation of my own curriculum from my thoughts and research has been a very rewarding experience. It has also taught me what it means to be a lifelong learner. To be learning so much about learning really goes to show what a lifelong learner is. I believe that a person is never truly done learning. There is always a new perspective to see, concept to understand, creation to be
made, and skill to be learned. I enjoyed the journey of creating an original unit of lessons that I plan to use in my future endeavors as a high school visual arts instructor.
REFERENCES


The College Board. (2014). The arts and the common core: A comparison of the national