Engaging Young Children in the Art Museum: An Educational Criticism of an Art Museum Summer Class

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Engaging Young Children in the Art Museum: 
An Educational Criticism of an Art Museum Summer Class

A Thesis
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by
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ABSTRACT

This research project serves to identify a set of conditions leading to engagement for four- and five-year-old students in an art museum summer class. Utilizing Eisner’s theory on qualitative research, educational criticism and connoisseurship (1998), the researcher interviewed, observed, and received responses to a questionnaire in order to describe, interpret, and analyze the educational event of the summer class. By identifying the intentions of the class, the report describes a set of three objectives acting as a foundation for the classes’ implementation - comfort, empowerment, and connection to collection. Based on analysis of the implementation of these aims, as seen in the classes’ structure, curriculum, and pedagogy, a set of themes related to the conditions of a class that led to engagement emerged including relevance and connection, risk-taking, imaginative thinking, multi-sensory engagement, and active participation. The themes align with Uhrmacher and Moroye's (2010) aesthetic themes of education therefore identifying their application to the art museum summer class context. This study contributes to a greater discussion in the field of developing programming for early learners in informal learning environments, and demands further research of the use of this set of intentions and the application of Uhrmacher and Moroye's (2010) perceptual teaching framework to additional museum program models for young children.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Tiny feet pad across the carpeted gallery floor to a painting that stretches floor to ceiling. Holt, a young boy whose name fools one into thinking him to be three times the age and size than his actual four-year-old self, bends down hovering closer to the canvas. His eyes are lit with a sense of discovery and success, as he tilts his head, his ear primed to listen attentively to the bottom quarter of the painting. “I think this looks like sand,” another child, Anabel, chimes in. These two four-year-olds confirm that indeed they have matched the sound of sand shifting inside a plastic bottle shaker to the sand under the feet of a Navajo woman depicted in a painting. The apparent sense of ownership and comfort of these young children with crossing disciplines supports the nature of inquiry and discovery available to them in the heart of an art museum.

Children interacting with objects in museums such as science, history, and children museums are not a new phenomenon (Hirzy, 1996; Munley, 2012). However, with a growing understanding of the role of early learning experiences in the development of the young child, which has reached national attention in the past twenty-five years, all cultural institutions - museums and libraries - have considered their role in the bigger picture of providing for this age group. As stated by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (2013) in the Growing Young Minds report, a call to action for
libraries and museums, cultural institutions are uniquely positioned, due to their nature of providing “self-directed, experiential, content-rich” learning experiences to young children and supporting the skills leading to their success in school and life (p.4). While art museums have begun to realize their place in this picture by providing family programming targeting families with young children (Bowers, 2012), seriously considering the needs of early audiences has potential benefit for both museums and their visitors.

Early experiences in the museum can influence the museum-going behaviors of these young visitors for their entire lives, according to the research of visitation across the different life stages (Wilkening & Chung, 2009). Both the possibility for children to grow accustomed and comfortable in the museum environment, as well as the potential for seminal experiences that lead to a life led as what Wilkening and Chung (2009) term, a “Museum Advocate,” can result from these early visits. This advocacy distinction is characterized as having greater engagement, commitment, and trust in museums, therefore, these visitors will support the museum through membership, attendance, and financial donations (p.36-37).

The experiences and accompanying memories of early museum visits, especially when occurring between the ages of five and nine, contribute to the lasting effects that live on into adulthood, as identified by a group of Museum Advocates. These “sticky” experiences leave an impression that allowed the visitors “imagination to soar” (p.44). Therefore, the cognitive gains, as well as the potential life-long impacts of the early museum visit have significance that cannot be overlooked. This experience must be
further researched in order to better identify the conditions that enhance the museum visit through child engagement, for despite the strong memories associated with these early experiences, many people still do not view art museums as age-appropriate for young children (p.45).

The importance of learning experiences and environment in early childhood education have been a focus of national attention, due to research identifying their role in contributing to school readiness and success (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Healy, 2004). The nature of this research has looked at a community-based approach to preparing young children for school, including families, school, community centers, and cultural institutions, predominately including libraries, children's museums, and science museums (Zukoski & Luluquisen, 2006; Deerr, Fienberg, Gordon, & Schull, 2006; Institute of Museum and Library Services [IMLS], 2013). In order to contribute to this dialogue and support the youngest members of the community, museums must further consider their impact on this audience. Research has specifically studied the role of museums in providing programming and installed experiences to young children related to the museum’s content (i.e. science, art, natural history) (Bowers 2012; Shaffer 2012; Krakowski 2012; Danko-McGhee 2004; Henderson & Atencio 2007). Models for this programming in art museums span from traditional tour formats to multi-sensory experiences (Dodek, 2012; MacRae, 2007) to integrated preschool-museum school models (Trimis & Savva, 2004; Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center, n.d.).

However, summer classes developed by museum educators taking place in the art museum setting have not been fully mined for their characteristics and approach to early
learning. As the conditions established in these classes could inform the development of programming for preschool-age children’s visits to the museum, there is a need to explore how these classes intend to engage young children and how they operationally do so. By utilizing summer classes, the context of a classroom and class group, rather than that of a family group, can be observed and critiqued for the ways in which students engage with the museum’s objects, lesson activities, teachers, and other students.

Further, with government-supported programs such as Race to the Top, young children's success in school and long-term development is a national priority - one in which museums can support educators and community-based programs in the pursuit of providing for this age-group (Bowers, 2012; Shaffer, 2012). Shaffer (2012) stresses the importance of museums learning how to provide educational experiences for young children to support their development. Cultural institutions must take on a role in supporting young children's school readiness (IMLS, 2013). The characteristics of museum experiences represent how these institutions are well positioned to support brain development and school readiness of young children (IMLS, 2013).

**Research Problem**

Given the research of educational and environmental components for promoting successful and developmentally-appropriate engagement of young children in traditional learning settings, museums must now determine how to best utilize this knowledge in informal learning environments (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2009). Art museums have experimented with different models for school experiences and for children within the family context, yet there is a lack of
information on the ways in which summer camp or class instruction engages this audience (Bowers, 2012). Understanding the ways in which informal learning environments can support young children's engagement in the museum setting will contribute to the literature for school, family, and summer camp programming in art museums targeting children between the ages of three and five.

Both early childhood and museum educators would benefit from further research on this topic, which could potentially influence and inform all members of the early childhood education community, including policy makers, families, and young students. While research has identified characteristics and developmental nature of this age group, best practices in their learning environments, and current museum experiences available for this age group, there lacks an articulation of the types of experiences that support engagement for young children within a group of their peers in an art museum.

In order to address this gap in the literature, this study seeks to address the question: \textbf{What conditions for an art museum summer camp experience lead to engagement for young children?} To best articulate this question, I will also attend to the following questions: What are the intentions and goals of summer class programming for four- and five-year-old children? What conditions were implemented in order to engage children in the art museum for young children? What observed behaviors show alignment or misalignment of teacher intentions and students reception? What experiences have a lasting impression on children (therefore indicating engagement)? Do the children's observed or reported engagement align with teachers’ intentions?
The nature of educating young children in an educational setting requires consideration of cognitive and physical development, guidelines for educational instruction, and the multi-faceted nature of the child's learning across home, school, and other environments (National Association for Educating Young Children [NAEYC], 2009). By considering how the art museum can be a place for education, all these factors must be taken into account while creating programming for young children. What interests preschool students during and following their experiences at the museum? What objects, qualities of the museum setting, and teaching techniques lead to high levels of student engagement? How can best educational pedagogy be utilized within this informal learning environment, without losing the unique assets and qualities of the museum environment?

By addressing the nature of the young child’s engagement when in summer classes at an art museum, this study will support a growing understanding of how to best develop and refine programming for the early childhood audience.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In order to investigate the nature of potential in early childhood educational experiences within the art museum context, I have explored the fields of developmental psychology, neuroscience, education, and museum education. Understanding both the pedagogical models available and the research behind those theoretical ideologies is essential in understanding early childhood educational environments and curriculum. Given an abundance of research about brain development and early learning characteristics of young children, I have addressed key literature relevant to the growth and development in all settings that takes place between the ages of three to five years. I have also attended to literature concerning museum education that looks at both the nature of the museum environment as an informal educational setting and the research surrounding specific art museum programming for this growing audience within the field.

I have organized this review into two major parts in order to establish the developmental characteristics of the early childhood audience, specifically looking at three- to five-year-old children, and the qualities of developmentally-appropriate educational strategies for this age group. The later addresses both formal and informal learning environments and the ways in which curriculum and pedagogy is being utilized.
in these settings. Through a look at how current programs identified in the research align with recognized best practices, I aim to highlight questions and illuminate key ideas about their application to working with this audience in the art museum setting. However, as discussed in my conclusion, the current research illuminates a gap in the field's knowledge indicating a need for further exploration to articulate how experiences during summer classes in art museums can foster a set of conditions that lead to young children’s engagement.

**Early Childhood Development**

In a watershed report on the neuroscience of the young child's brain, Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) changed the public discourse on and perception of the topic of early childhood education. This report not only defined the focus of early childhood initiatives at the time, but its current relevance has also been reaffirmed through a recent revisit of the content (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2012). *From Neurons to Neighborhoods* (2000) focused on the importance of encouraging experiences, maintaining positive relationships, developing social skills, and providing high-quality interventions in early childhood, and therefore led to research and programming efforts to explore these ideas (Shonkoff & Phillips). This report championed the idea that every child is born ready to learn, thus centering the field's attention on the importance of interpreting research from neuroscience to better understand the characteristics of the early childhood brain and its development (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

The attention on brain development brought to light the rapid growth during a child’s first five years and thus, the importance of this time in the overall healthy maturation of the brain (Center for Developing Child [CFDC], 2011, Eliot, 1999, Healy,
Within the first years of life, "700 new neural connections are formed every second," initially contributing to sensory development, and then to early language and cognitive skills (CFDC, 2011, p. 1). The importance of these early experiences and their rate of occurrence is paramount, in fact, "for children's brains to become highly developed for learning, repeated experiences are essential" (Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, 2007, p. 1).

In brain development, cerebral neurons act as "information-processing circuits" and their tree-like shape allows for growth and interaction between different parts of the brain (Eliot, 1999, p. 25). Neurons develop in the brain from birth, but rely on experience in order to grow and mature (Eliot, 1999). The communication between cells takes place across a synapse. With external stimuli - responses to sights, sounds, feelings, smells, and tastes - comes activation of synapses serving to strengthen these paths of communication through use. The more active engagement and repetition, the more these connections will be reinforced, and increase efficiency and strength to the structures upon which learning build. This research further supports the role of repeated, multi-sensory exposure to experiences to strengthen connections. Without this stimulation some synapses wither allowing for better organization of the brain's neural pathways. This is both a positive and potential negative, as pruning creates more direct and concise lines of communication between cells as people mature, but the level of brain's plasticity, or ability to change and adapt, decreases over time, thus limiting new synapse development later in life (Eliot, 1999; Healey, 2004). The neuroscience of this age group illustrates the
great potential for influential developmental opportunities and a need to support this
growth in young children.

Due to this natural maturation of the brain, children tend to follow a
developmental trajectory enabling them to refine their physical and cognitive abilities and
define characteristics of development which include an acknowledgement that both
biology and experience, such as that of family and culture, impact an ever-evolving
development. Given the healthy growth of a child, his development proceeds on a course
often defined by the accomplishments and behaviors exhibited. While developmental
growth can be illustrated through an refinement and change in physical, social and
emotional, and cognitive ability development (NAEYC, 2009), I will present these
developmental domains through the topics of self-regulation, play, and relationships.
These three topics contribute to a look at development through a child’s sense of self,
engagement with external stimuli, and relationships with others.

*Self-regulation*

Imbedded in several of the developmental domains exists an emphasis on impulse
control, planning, and focus, which can be identified as executive function. A focus of
brain research and topic emphasized in early childhood education, executive function
refers to "a group of skills that helps us to focus on multiple streams of information at the
same time, monitor errors, make decisions in light of available information, revise plans
as necessary, and resist the urge to let frustration lead to hasty actions," which are likened
to the brain's "air traffic control mechanism" (CFDC, 2011, p.1). Centered on working
memory, inhibitory control, and cognitive flexibility, these skills support solving problems, self-regulation, and having a sense of social awareness to an ever-changing environment (CFDC, 2011). Executive function contributes to the social-emotional and cognitive abilities required in school settings, thus, while distinct from school readiness and academic success, it "supports the process of learning" and have demonstrated aiding gains in early learning assessments during preschool (CFDC, 2011, p.5).

Scaffolding and modeling, as well as providing children with frameworks of routines and consistency, support these growing skills in young children (CFDC, 2011).

Play

Play has been defined in a variety of ways for its perceived role in the cognitive and social development of children. Piaget (1962) acknowledges how phases of play, which align with his stages of development, serve to illustrate the formalization of understanding and mastery through practice. Referencing the role that play has within this formalization process, Dewey (1933) acknowledges the work of play as a place where inquiry occurs. Vygotsky (1966) views play as a means for cognitive development and children's method of making sense of the world and their role in it. When reaching the age of three, Vygotsky (1966) argues that children develop a new stage of imaginary play contributing to their engagement in abstract thought. Child's play transitions into an imaginative practice that breaks from reality and allows the child to take on roles with certain rules and constraints specific to their imagined situation. All objects and people can break from their known meanings to take on new functions, as is permitted by the "divergence between the fields of meaning and vision," a new capability in this
developmental stage (Vygotsky, 1966, p.12). Both the functional aspects of early play and the imaginative or make-believe play contribute to these theories and have implications on understanding the impact of play in developmental growth.

Many types of play in this age group stimulate neural pathways and strengthen connections, therefore acting to build the brain (Healy, 2004). Learning can be enjoyable and playful, and this 'work' by children contributes to the healthy growth of their brains. In order to stimulate the brain and develop higher levels of cognition, the child needs to be at the center of the play, through active interest and involvement in the process. Essential to the natural maturation of these developmental stages, in and out of play scenarios, is the introduction of appropriate challenge, a construct referred to as the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), which is needed to access motivation and propel growth in these different domains. Activities such as nesting, stacking, dumping, pouring, stringing, sorting, ordering, and experimenting with art materials, support hands-on experiences that stimulate the brain, and act as functional aspects of play. Opportunities to engage with a variety of sensory stimulation through manipulation, exploration, and discovery contribute to the development of fine motor skills and self-regulation (i.e. hand-writing, visual arts, etc.). Repetition acts to reinforce neural pathways through practice, thus does not bore children, but engages them. Interests of the child specifically contribute to their attention and motivation; therefore it is important to follow the child's lead. Opportunities for children to play in ways that don't limit experimentation and discovery, such as using real tools and cooking utensils, encourages problem-solving and the use of imagination. These experiences thus lead to the
Development of language and thought-processing by gradually articulating this play.
(Healy, 2004; Klugman & Smilansky, 1990)

*Relationships*

Play during early childhood relies heavily on the relationships surrounding the child and their work, both for supportive modeling and scaffolding and for emotional comfort and the feeling of safety (Healy, 2004). Comfort is an essential part of experimentation and discovery; children who feel that they can rely on adults have a sense of safety that permits exploring new experiences (Healy, 2004). An environment of responsive relationships helps to promote a child from dependence to independence (CFDC, 2011). Even when playing in imaginary scenarios, the collaboration that comes when building the pretend is supported by a foundation of relationships (Howes, Unger, & Matheson, 1992). Within these relationships, adults must support the child through connecting appropriate language to the cognitive process of a situation or choice to enable the child to eventually take on independence (Healy, 2002; CFDC, 2011; DeVries & Zan, 1994). There is a duality to the role of adults as they create a “sociomoral atmosphere,” requiring boundaries to sustain morality and cooperation to promote mutual respect (DeVries & Zan, 1994).

Contributing to feelings about learning, self-concept, and social interaction, the quality of relationships in a child's life significantly influence their development (CFDC, 2011). Children are said to learn best through interaction with trusted adults, again stressing the crucial nature of relationships (CFDC, 2011). Within the maturation of play, the role of adult intervention supports the appropriate level of challenge within the child’s
zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), and acknowledges the adult’s responsibility to act in the way of a tutor (Bondioli, 2001, p.108). In order to support organization of the brain, consistency of environment and relationships is important, thus providing appropriate routines pertaining to health, learning, and emotional factors is essential.

The behaviors and milestones exhibited at this age suggest critical implications for supporting this audience. It is vital for considerations to be made with the awareness that 1) children in this age group have varying levels of gross and fine motor skills, thus impacting their abilities to do certain activities and encouraging the use of other activities to build on their learning (Healey, 2004; Eliot, 1999); 2) there is an evolving nature to the types of play they engage in (Vygotsky, 1966; Piaget, 1962); 3) their growing language abilities and sense of self influence their ability and interest in communicating personal ideas, experiences, and emotions (CFDC, 2011); and 4) the role of facilitator/adult in early childhood is essential, as providing conditions for experience and the comfort that accompanies with routine and consistency supports development (CFDC, 2011).

**Developmentally Appropriate Educational Strategies**

In an attempt to define the act of learning, Narey (2009) presents it as the “process of making sense or creating meaning from experience” (p. 2). With this understanding, experience becomes the driver of education (Dewey, 1938). As active agents in their own learning, Dewey (1934) refers to children’s four basic impulses, which include 1) communicative, 2) constructive, 3) expressive, and 4) inquiry. These four urges lead an impulse to make meaning from experiences in the world. Due to the opportunity for
experience in many environments, education does not stem from school and family alone, but grows out of exploration and discovery in these moments (Piaget, 1967; Dewey, 1934).

This notion is supported through constructivist theory and its acknowledgment of the active role that children play in building their understanding through experience with time to learn and reflect (Hein, 1998; Piaget, 1945; Vygotsky 1966; Dewey 1913). Constructivist theory’s concept of schematic hooks is further substantiated in neuroscience research that supports the concept of strengthening of neural pathways with repetition, which in turn becomes a foundation on which all subsequent stimuli can influence development (Healey 2004). The element of interest in children’s learning also transfers to the acknowledgement of their ideas, as is supported by recognizing their abilities to have “wonderful ideas” (Duckworth, 1989, p.13). Duckworth (1989) stresses the importance of giving children opportunity for experiences providing stimulation worthy of their intellectual curiosity and creativity.

Aligned with constructivist ideas, NAEYC (2009) defines strategies to be used with young children. These concepts are considered a standard for delivering developmentally appropriate instruction in educational and care settings for young children, and include: 1) acknowledging the importance of early experiences, 2) building on child’s current knowledge and present attainable challenge within this understanding, 3) approaching learning within an interconnected series of domains and awareness of the context of learning, 4) integrating play into instruction, 5) stressing the process of learning and executive function, and 6) utilizing multi-modal, multi-sensory pedagogy
that honors children’s maturing sense of abstract thought (NAEYC, 2009). When attending to research on both formal and informal learning environments, these practices are apparent in the examples included below.

Formal Learning Environments

Formal preschool models mean to create meaningful, long-term impacts on the life of a child starting with some of their earliest learning experiences. Research from neuroscience and developmental psychology has contributed to the development of these models. The attributes of the learning theory and developmental characteristics of young children, such as those identified above, can further inform the development of museum programming that utilizes best practices in supporting this audience. Early learning programs apply this theory in actual settings and in schools’ ideologies, thus emphasizing the importance of formalizing the image of a child, the role of play and environment in the classroom, and the essential nature of relationships in learning (Malaguzzi, 2000; DeVries, et al., 2002; Montessori, 1949; Steiner, 1919).

The image of a child has been considered in the development of different preschool models, as both their developmental abilities and characteristics contribute to teachers and administrators’ curricular, pedagogical, and structural ideas. Malaguzzi remarks, “children show us that they know how to walk along the path to understanding,” making clear a perspective of children as able-minded explorers and learners, as adopted into the Reggio Emilia philosophy (as cited in Gandini, 2000, p.44). This sentiment is reverberated in Montessori’s (1949) view of children being able to soak in their environment as a “scrupulous teacher” (p.5). Furthermore, Steiner (1919) viewed
children as confident and capable, solely in need of an environment to support his personal discovery. Therefore, defining the image of a child must be a priority of the museum to develop a sense of this age group and what their role could be in the museum.

Although the nature of play in child development and as an age-appropriate educational strategy has been described in previous sections, it is important to acknowledge how play is approached in early childhood classrooms. DeVries (2002) identifies, while the support for play-based curricula has become wide-spread, the actual inclusion of play in the classroom can take many forms, some more appropriate than others. Although some classes integrate play as disguise for academic work or as a free-time opportunity, the use of play integrated with multiple forms of development (social, emotional, moral, and intellectual) most closely aligns with constructivist theory (DeVries, 2002). This type of play is directed by students with the support of conversation and collaborative interaction with adults and peers (DeVries, 2002; Dewey, 1933; Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1966; Healy, 2004; Klugman & Smilansky, 1990; Riukin, 1986).

Learning cannot be conceived of without considering environment. Feeney and Moravcik (1987) give voice to the need for beauty in the environment surrounding children in order to develop their aesthetic sense, thus arguing for introduction of visual arts into learning settings and therefore conversations with adults and peers. The environment not only serves as the setting for learning, but also contributes to the act of learning by providing stimuli for a child to explore (Montessori, 1949; Gandini, 2000). In preschool ideologies there is a notion of supporting students’ discovery through
intentional construction of environment to support growth and development. The concept of the environment acting as an additionally teacher, equal to the child and the classroom teacher, supports the museum taking on a role in supporting learning experiences, which could then be further extended in the classroom setting (Gandini, 2000).

The importance of student-centered engagement that takes on a problem-based or critical thinking approach also emerges from these preschool profiles. Based on both student interest and appropriate challenge, school settings tend to put young students in the lead, which align with the development-level of this age group (Healey, 2004; Eliot, 1999). This positioning of students requires the active participation of adults in a cooperative interaction with the child, which allows for both authority over the child and the allowance of freedom (DeVries, et. al., 2002; Piaget, 1932). Adults must support students by providing conditions for experiences and guide the formalization of ideas through inquiry and articulation of ideas (Piaget, 1932; DeVries, et. al., 2002; Duckworth 1989). In classrooms this manifests in many different ways, but relies heavily on following students’ lead to discover their interests, questions, challenges, and reasoning (DeVries, et. al, 2002).

Informal Learning Environments - Art Museums

The theory grounding formal educational settings translates into informal learning environments, as we have seen in the museum education field of research. Although the role of the art museum as a learning environment has taken on different distinctions over time (Hein, 1998; Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2011), when learning is defined as experience to support meaning making (Dewey, 1938; Piaget, 1962; Narey, 2009) its place in the
museum seems undeniable. In fact, Eisner (2002) goes so far to posit that all education has a lot to learn from the arts, in terms of its ability to engage the imagination and represent various forms for communicating ideas. When imagining learning in museums from a constructivist perspective, personal experience, appropriate challenge to access understanding, and construction of knowledge demands physical or sensory involvement with objects and environments (Hein, 1998). Experiences must have a hands-on, minds-on quality to engage young learners in accessing cognitive schemas and expanding their understandings. Further, the social context within which children experience stimuli cannot be ignored for its impact on learning (Falk & Dierking, 2002). Supporting sensory experience with dialogue and personal reflection are pivotal to museum experiences and must be considered in providing for all visitors, including its youngest ones.

Art museums have been aware of the shifting focus on early childhood education and in recent years have developed programming to address a growing audience and their caregivers. In an exploratory survey, 88% of the 69 responding U.S. museums (history and art) provide programming for children who have not entered Kindergarten (Bowers, 2012). These findings suggest a growing comfort level among museums in engaging young children. This shift has come from a developing sense of ways to approach presenting objects to this audience and desire to support their life-long learning trajectories (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). While family-based models (i.e. programs for children and caregivers) appear to be most prevalent, this report calls attention to the lack of available information on current museum programs for preschool groups (Bowers, 2012).
While researching I have found information on various models of learning experiences in art museums for young children, but as I aim to learn more about offerings provided for preschool students (not in the family context), I focused on research for this audience in particular. In doing so, I have represented examples of current models for three- to five-year-old children, while also expanding my scope to include some studies that discuss the experience of early elementary students.

The models currently in use provide examples from the literature of current offerings in the field of early childhood education at art museums or the use of art museum materials in the classroom, as related to school audiences. The characteristics of these models include the importance of 1) extending museum experience with pre- and post-visit components (Lind, 2011; Krakowski, 2012), 2) relevance and student-centered experiences (Krakowski, 2012; Gibson & McAllister, 2005), 3) active engagement during the experience (i.e. engaging in imagination, creative problem-solving, slowing down, close looking, investigation and exploration) (MacRae, 2007; Shaffer, 2011; Trimis & Savva, 2004; Gibson & McAllister, 2005), and 4) inquiry-based conversation throughout the museum experience (Trimis & Savva, 2004; Gibson & McAllister, 2005). Also of note, the literature is dominated by programs that involve museum collaborations with universities and community groups, as well as partnerships between museums and preschools. This finding could be based on the fact that research predominately emerges from university settings, however it is important to note that these have been successful collaborations, therefore could suggest potential models for future programming. In addition to these consistencies among art museum programming, several themes in
program curriculum topics emerged, including: 1) exploration of materials and tools (Shaffer, 2011; Gibson & McAllister, 2005; Trimis & Savva, 2004), 2) investigation of foundational elements of art (Trimis & Savva, 2004), 3) thematic emphasis (Shaffer, 2011), 4) student-inspired or student-led topics (Trimis & Savva, 2004; Gibson & McAllister; 2005), and 6) sensory or play-emphasis (MacRae, 2007; Krakowski, 2012).

Based on the foundation of an early childhood education center housed in the Smithsonian Museums of Washington, D.C., Shaffer’s (2011) model for young children to construct meaning from their looking experiences includes the elements of looking, connecting, reflecting, and imagining. This process puts early learners in control of their understanding of art objects in the museum setting, by experiencing and extending the conversation through engagement. This model provides a launching point for formalizing a framework to be utilized in program development and instruction in summer classes that could provide the conditions for engaging experiences and a further consideration of creating the conditions for an aesthetic experience.

Engagement of Young Children in Art Museum Summer Classes

Quite obviously, there is significant research on the developmental stages and needs of young children contributing to clear direction for supporting early learning in all environments. Additionally, this research has influenced the development of exhibitions and programs in informal learning environments, especially science, history, and children’s museums (Bowers, 2012; Shaffer, 2011; Munley, 2012). In recent years, this information has also been translated into art museum experiences for young children (Bowers, 2012; Eckhoff, 2008; Munley, 2012), but this has come from individual, non-
repeated museum experiences for students (Danko-McGhee & Slutsky, 2007a; McRae, 2007; Lind, 2011; Shaffer, 2011; Trimis & Savva, 2004; Krakowski, 2012; Gibson & McAllister, 2005), or from schools with a museum-based curriculum (SEEC, n.d.). The field therefore lacks a formalization of curriculum development and pedagogical framework for summer classes that engage four- and five-year-old children. This study will describe and evaluate summer class programming for four- and five-year-olds in order to present a set of environmental and instructional conditions that can provide an engaging experience for students, when in the art museum setting with a group of peers.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship

As addressed in the review of the literature, my study is framed within educational and developmental theory to address an educational event and understand the conditions that could lead to supporting student engagement. In order to interpret and evaluate the events occurring within an environment, Eisner (1998) presents a methodology for seeing an event unfold and then unpacking its elements in order to deeply appreciate and perceive of the happening. With this high level of appreciation, the event can then be interpreted and evaluated in order to reach a new understanding and inform practice. Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship allows for this appreciation of an educational event and will guide my study.

Connoisseurship, though typically introduced in the context of the arts, has a place in the realm of education, as it permits an observer to take on a role of “[perceiving] what is subtle, complex, and important” in an educational event and provide a description to relay this experience (Eisner, 1998, p.215). A highly sensory construction of this event can be recorded to reflect the piecing together of all elements at play, thus building a complete image of what is occurring in a classroom or educational setting. This image cannot exist without a frame that guides the compilation of all its parts and distinguishes the significant from the insignificant, thus requiring a conceptual framework to support
the observation. Theory and an observer’s background and experience contribute to and refine one’s ability to decipher, appreciate, and record an educational event (Eisner, 1998).

Paired with this “private act” of connoisseurship is the “art of disclosure,” or criticism (Eisner, 1998, p.215). Criticism takes the events fully appreciated through connoisseurship and exposes the nuance and minutia to create a rendering of the occurrence, in order to make what was observed by one accessible to many. The criticism will allow for the identification of what is significant within this observed event and begin to articulate emerging concept or theme surrounding the significance of situations.

Further, the use of Educational Criticism allows for deep analysis and description in order to articulate, interpret, analyze, and evaluate educational environments and experiences (Eisner, 1998). As constructed through description of the learning event, which includes curricular aims, observed implementation, interviews, and other qualitative data collection methods, Educational Criticism contributes to learning about educational experiences for the benefit of those involved, as well as application of these lessons to other environments (Eisner, 1998). To achieve an understanding of the ways in which young children's learning can be influenced by aesthetic and teacher-planned experiences in the art museum, Educational Criticism can provide an in-depth look at these experiences through the lens of a particular setting and the concurrent conditions (Eisner, 1998).

My background in elementary school teaching and classroom observation as well as my experience in museum education both contribute to my ability to observe, notice,
and describe the characteristics of environment and interaction to relay a vicarious experience of the educational event. Through this connoisseurship, I am able to provide criticism with a curricular focus and concentrate on “the quality of the curriculum’s content and goals and the activities employed to engage students in it” (Eisner, 1998, p.75). My research questions look at the conditions for engagement, therefore my criticism asks the level to which activities and instructional techniques engage students, and in what ways students’ engagement influences the fulfillment of goals and lasting effects of the experience. Teaching will be one element to be observed for criticism, but I attended to all elements of the experience, potentially “satisfying specific education aim or illuminating the educational state of affairs in general” (p.71).

By including rich description of the environment, interactions, and activities, I provide a vicarious experience of my observations to the reader, including a general feel for the events and teacher and student behaviors. The description is accompanied by my interpretation identifying both environmental and interpersonal factors contributing to the events and “to unwrap, to explicate” the meaning of each to access the full scope of the experience (Eisner, 1998, p.97). Based on my interpretation, I evaluated the educational environments and experiences by including value judgments founded on my knowledge of the audience, environment, and interaction, as they apply to my observations (p. 100).

Research Question

The purpose of this study is to describe and evaluate the experiences of young children in an art museum summer class using Educational Criticism and resulted in a discussion of the conditions during a summer class to which students demonstrated
engagement with the activities, environment, and/or interactions with others. Thus, this study specifically explores the central question: **What conditions for art museum summer class experience lead to engagement for young children?** In addressing this question, I also examined: What are the intentions and goals of summer class programming for 4-5 year olds? What conditions were implemented in order to engage children in the art museum for young children? What observed behaviors show alignment or misalignment of teacher intentions and students’ reception? What experiences have a lasting impression on children (therefore indicating engagement)? Does the child's observed or reported engagement align with teachers’ intentions?

Interpreting Eisner’s (1998) conceptual framework surrounding the ecology of schooling, I center my research of the museum class around the intentional, curricular, pedagogical, and structural dimensions of the class experience. Although, Eisner also defines the evaluative dimension, I have not included this within my analysis, as the absence of class assessment of students makes this component less relevant to the study. This framework will be positioned within the context of child development theory in order to provide a basis for evaluation of appropriateness of the intentions, curriculum, pedagogy, and structure of the class.

With the utilization of a conceptual framework that looks at four dimensions of the educational experience, including intentional, curricular, pedagogical, and structural components, several value-laden terms within my central question can be further defined. In order to identify conclusions about the potential for the educational experiences that students could have within an art museum summer class, I have chosen to look at the
“conditions” of the class. Conditions, in this case, will be identified in each of the four dimensions that I will address. As elements of aims and objectives (intentions), environments (structure), class activities (curriculum), teaching methods (pedagogy), and classroom organization (structure) can contribute to the experience had by a student, all must be considered to develop a clear representation of what was observed and how it could lead to a child’s interpretation of the event. The characteristics of these conditions are essential to the analysis to determine how they can be translated to other environments or program development.

Eisner (1998) articulates “experience” as “our consciousness of some aspect of the world,” which requires cognitive process to integrate the sensory elements into a reflection (p.17). Dewey (1934) identifies an active engagement in this process of attention and perception requiring acute awareness of all features of an event and the internalization of their role or importance. With this awareness comes a need to transfer into meaning and understanding through interpretation (Dewey, 1910). Experience has an effect that is based in both the immediacy of what is experienced and its influence on those events or future experiences to follow (Dewey, 1938).

In order to be grounded in contemporary theory around behaviors demonstrating active involvement in an experience, I have chosen to look at children’s engagement. Researching conditions leading to engagement has been supported as a significant area for study, for with engagement comes excitement and satisfaction that instills an internal desire to participate in the work of school (Eisner, 1998). Current standards and curricular models utilize the term “engage,” in relation to active play, listening,
conversing and talking, problem solving, forming relationships, attending to tasks, and participating through movement (Teaching Strategies, 2010). Eisner (1998) defines engagement as “voluntary activity” (p.181). Although, this composite definition guides my observation, the interviews conducted also contribute to an overall sense of the meaning of this term.

Likewise, it is essential to define the dimensions of Eisner’s (1998) ecology of schooling, as they are each covered within my analysis. With the view of schooling, it is important to consider the difference between this idea and that of education and learning, as every educational or schooling event may not be educative, but possibly miseducative (Eisner, 1998; Dewey, 1938). Each dimension involved in this ecology of schooling must be interpreted for their educative value, as well as their ability to support engagement, due to the focus of this study. The intentions, or the intentional dimension, articulate the goals of the schooling experience that can be overtly defined or what is actually occurring in the educational environment - the intended and operationalized aims (Eisner, 1998). The achievement of these goals can be considered within analysis.

The curricular dimension is more concrete, as it relies on a plan or program for achieving the identified aims (Eisner, 1998). This dimension intends to “have educational consequences for one or more students” (Eisner, 2002, p. 31), however judgment of its success in achieving these goals relies on many factors that can be attended to through a connoisseur’s observation. Both intended curriculum and operational curriculum, or that which is planned and the “unique set of events that transpired” (p. 33), must be taken into consideration when looking at the individualized experience of each person involved.
The curricular dimension is reliant on the ways in which the plans are carried out through an educator, or the pedagogical dimension of schooling. This dimension lends the most subtle differences, as even with identical aims and curricular plans, the manner of instruction and implementation varies dependent on the teacher (Eisner, 1998). Inherently, the operational and received curriculum rely on the instruction and pedagogical choices of the teacher, therefore it is a relevant dimension to attend to within Educational Criticism. With my research, I observed in three different classrooms with three different teachers viewing the pedagogy in relation to the curricular aims and in identifying the most engaging implementation, rather than looking to the differences between each teacher’s personality.

Finally, the experience of schooling is also dependent on the vehicle of the environment and construction of time within this event, thus the structural dimension must be attended to, in order to identify its conditions that contribute to student engagement. The structural dimension looks to the organization of the school day, its division of time, and relation between different educational components (Eisner, 1998). This dimension is considered within my analysis, however it could also present a limitation of my research, as I view classes that only took place in the morning with some students attending full-day programs, while others only attended for half-day sessions. Therefore, I address the construction of the class experience across all three classrooms.

Research Design

My study took place on-site at an art museum in Denver, Colorado. The museum is mid-sized in comparison to other nationally recognized art museums and has an
encyclopedic collection of art objects from a variety of cultures and art movements, including American Indian, Architecture, Design, and Graphics, Asian, European & American, modern and contemporary, Oceanic, Pre-Columbian, Spanish Colonial, and Western American Art. For this study, I utilized three summer classes targeting four and five-year-old children created by museum educators at an art museum.

Interviews, observations, and questionnaires supported exploring the intentions, structure, curriculum, and pedagogy of gallery and complimentary classroom experiences, based on Eisner's (1998) Educational Criticism model. These qualitative methods give a breadth of opportunity to access the description of this particular setting and set of experiences. The data sources provide an articulation of how students, administrators, teachers, and parents reflected on the class experience, as well as indicate what conditions lead to prolonged interest and engagement. By collecting data in this way, I confirm my belief, due to my professional background in elementary and museum education, in the inherent value of understanding the perspectives of students and visitors to best provide for an engaging experience in the art museum.

Through the methods of interview, observation, and questionnaire, I provide descriptions, interpretations, evaluations, and thematics (Eisner, 1998). These different forms of data collection add to the understanding of all components of the educational event and participants’ perception of them. For all qualitative data collection, I received teachers’, administrators’, parents' and students' consent for participation and use of data (Appendices A, B, C). Due to the age and writing capabilities of students involved, parents, guardians, or families were my main source for follow-up questionnaire, which
asked for narrative responses regarding their child's conversation about and reflection on their time in the museum, during or following the summer class. The use of these multiple forms of data supports the credibility of my conclusions by acting as “structural corroboration” (Eisner, 1998, p.110). Multiple sources for and types of data were collected, thus contributing to a better understanding of the educational event and perspectives of many involved. The themes that will be presented in the conclusions reflect the ideas emerging from the study’s various sources.

*Interviews (Teachers and Administrators)*

Three teachers with a range of teaching backgrounds and experiences with young children were involved in my study. The pedagogical styles and interpersonal characteristics of each of these teachers will be specifically addressed in the Data Presentation, whereas in this section I will discuss how their demographics and previous experience aligned with my conceptual framework. The names Amelia, Catherine, and Elise will be used to identify these three teachers, as their names and identities are protected through the use of pseudonyms.

Amelia is a parent of two and the business owner of a children’s art class company. She has developed summer classes for students at the art museum previously, but has minimal training for working with children in this context. Catherine interned at the museum during her undergraduate years, and then began working as a program facilitator within the Community & Family programs division. In her role as a program facilitator, she was trained to talk to families about art objects and then prompt them to create a take-away art project related to the object, its story, or the artist’s creative
process. Elise has worked in the field of museum education since her undergraduate studies and completed her Masters of the Arts in Museum Studies. She has been directly instructed in teaching children and adults in art museums. Elise also has a young daughter, who at the time of observation was two and a half years old. More information about these teachers is included in Table 1.

The interviews from these teachers allowed me to access their intentions for structural, curricular, and pedagogical dimensions of the class, and provide a foundation for several of my questions regarding the alignment or misalignment of intended and received curriculum. The interviews also inquired into teachers’ perceptions of the class’s instruction following their implementation, thus will contribute to the data on how the operational curriculum met or did not align with the intentions or goals. (See Appendix D for interview guide)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Taught 4 &amp; 5-year-old students in summer classes previously?</th>
<th>Years working with the museum (including internships)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amelia</td>
<td>Summer Class Teacher</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>Summer Class Teacher</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elise</td>
<td>Teacher; Coordinator of School &amp; Teacher Programs</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>Associate Director of Education (Administrator)</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>13 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Coordinator of Community &amp; Family Programs (Administrator)</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to including summer class teachers in my study, I chose to include administrative staff members at the museum, who are responsible for overseeing the summer camp and class programs. The Associate Director of Education at the museum, Holly, contributed a perspective of the program’s role within the Community & Family division’s mission and the overall goals for this program. The Community & Family Program Coordinator, Laura, directly supervises all the summer camp and class teachers and communicates any overarching goals to these teachers. She is also the main contact for families participating in summer camps or classes at the museum. The names Holly and Laura are also pseudonyms to protect their identities. These two participants were chosen in order to look directly at the goals and intentions of the program. Similar to the interviews with teachers, these interviews accessed the intentional dimensions of the summer classes, and gave insight into the reasoning behind the curricular dimension. (See Appendix D for interview guide)

Interviews of teachers took place in a variety of spaces, including in their classroom, in a cafe near the museum, and at a cafe in a local science museum. The two interviews of Education staff members (administrators) took place in these participants’ work spaces in the museum staff office building. To record the interviews, I took running records of the conversation.

I developed my questions for the interviews by identifying how talking to teachers and administrators will help to expand upon my observation and contribute to answering my research problem. With this goal, I crafted my questions to touch upon general ideas and aims and highlight specific events in which they have been involved to better
understand a full picture of the classroom experience and motivations. Each set of questions opens with several questions that help place this person in context of their role and set a personal and comfortable tone (Eisner, 1998).

*Observation (Children and Teachers)*

The student participants involved in the study were chosen based on convenience and criterion sampling, as their election to attend and acceptance into a summer class at the art museum was required for their participation in the study. Each child was between four and five years of age. Although the scope of my research did not include access to students’ demographic information, during my observations I was able to ascertain that the group was predominately Caucasian, with a few students of Asian descent. Each class had a different breakdown of student gender; however, the overall students observed included 24 girls and 25 boys to total 49 students. Children’s verbal or behavioral contributions in my observation notes were coded with two initials - the first was directly related to their first names, and the second being “C” to indicate it was a child, rather than a teacher (i.e. a child names “Sam” would have the initials “SC” recorded in the observation field notes).

The study was bound by time and setting with data gathered for three weeks of the summer during morning classes (three or four days each week). Each summer class was comprised of four, three-hour sessions over the course of four days. Although classes are offered in both the morning and afternoon, I only observed classes taking place in the morning, running from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. each day.
Observations were conducted within a classroom setting, museum art galleries, hallway, and outdoor space directly adjacent to the hallway space, and predominately focused on interactive experiences and conversation during in-gallery time in order to capture different conditions that led to engagement. The instruction in two of the three classes was primarily focused on the whole group, whereas in the other class it alternated between whole-group and small groups of five or six students working with one teacher or assistant teacher. As an observer of the class, I was introduced to the students in the classroom as a teacher, interested in learning more about teaching children in an art museum. I observed and recorded field notes during class time or immediately following, noting preliminary impressions of the degree of student engagement. In order to best describe the events and environment, including the activities, setting, and interactions between people, I recorded my observations with a form of field notes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). By keeping a “written record of…perceptions in the field” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.174), I was able to include both a running record of the situation and observer comments, which included my initial thoughts on why activities or interactions were engaging to students and other thoughts on the overall experience. This form provided me with the opportunity to record all my observations in a descriptive manner, which led to experiencing the situation anew when revisiting these accounts.

Questionnaire (Parents/Guardians)

Each child was registered for the class with a family member’s email address, which was then used to administer the online questionnaire following the end of the class. This email address predominately belonged to the child’s parent or guardian, but in
several cases the email was forwarded on to the child’s parent or guardian by an aunt, uncle, step-parent, or grandparent, to the child’s biological parent or legal guardian to be completed. Of the 39 emails sent with online questionnaire link, seventeen were completed and submitted. As with the student participants, the adults involved in the online questionnaire were chosen through convenience and criterion sampling, based on their and their child’s election into the summer classes offered at the museum.

I sent this follow-up questionnaire via email to student participants' contacts ten days following the final session of each class (see Appendix D for questionnaire), in order to gauge students' responses to direct instruction and any indications of lasting impressions. Questions were crafted to be open-ended and access responses to what each parent’s intentions, aims, and interests were in sending his or her child to summer classes, as well as invite the retelling of observations of or conversations with their child that help articulate the child’s perspective of the experience. All questionnaires received were included in the data analysis and coded for emerging indicators of engagement during or following the camp.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, I interpreted and evaluated the learning experiences to address "the kind of learning fostered by the social context" and developed an evaluation of the alignment or misalignment between instructional goals and educational experience, and its value for students (Eisner, 1998, p.96). Further, by identifying patterns of engagement, language, and behavior in response to specific experiences, I formulated emerging themes that act as "essential features" of these experiences and serve to
illustrate recurring qualities of the environment and interactions (p.104). My analysis took on an emergent quality that allowed for incorporating student and parent language and perspective to develop any themes that helped characterize the art museum experience.

Following a process of analyzing data, I proceeded from cleaning and organizing the data to developing meaningful connections and patterns, which was corroborated through repetition across the three classes (Eisner, 1998). These patterns then were assembled and presented to bring light to their relation the overarching research problem. Within this concentrated look at the data, I acknowledge that subjectivity occurs, both within the initial data collection methods and in the analysis. I aimed to be cognizant of bias throughout the process and considered how my previous experiences and personal beliefs affected my selection of what to attend to and which themes to address to the greatest degree within my presentation and analysis. It should be kept in mind, however, that in this form of qualitative research, subjectivity is seen as both positive and negative, or a potential liability. That is, given the form of analysis, my subjectivity brings descriptions and interpretations (Eisner, 1998).

In my presentation of data, I also have introduced Uhrmacher and Moroye’s (2010; Moroye & Uhrmacher, 2010; Uhrmacher, 2009) conceptual theory of aesthetic themes of education to act as a framework for interpreting the data. This framework positions the summer class to identify conditions for student engagement and possibility for having aesthetic experiences. I chose to place this theory within my data presentation,
as its relevance to my study only emerged through my interpretation of the data, especially when considering the curricular dimension of the educational event.

**Limitations**

Although I attempted to provide the most complete view of early learning in an art museum during a summer class, this study inherently has limitations, both in the specific study and future applications for its findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). First, as this study required approval from a University Institutional Review Board and included young children in the study, there are limitations due to the protection of identity and prevention from harm. One of these limitations includes the lack of demographic information that I was able to address. I have provided my basic assumptions of some of this information based on my observations in the classes; however I did not include obtaining any additional information from the participating children’s guardians in respect of their privacy. This fact could potentially limit the application of the conclusions to other populations in the future.

Second, the sample population of the study was constricted to those children voluntarily attending summer classes at the museum, there could be additional limitations in the application of the findings due to the implications of socioeconomic standing or access to resources. These classes are available for scholarship, but marketing of the classes is predominately distributed to current members of the museum, thus not being representative of the population of the city overall. Additionally, although this environment and structure of classes, which does not involve parents attending the class,
the application of these concepts and themes to other programs including school-based ones is limited, due to the different contextual variable and the nature of the populations.

Third, my observations were limited to the time students spent with the whole group in the classroom or galleries, typically between two and three hours each day of class. Interactions outside of class, either during snack time, breaks, or immediately before or after class were not included in my scope, therefore did not inform my understanding of student and teachers’ engagement. The comments and conversations during these times might have provided insight into the conditions that were engaging to students. Additionally, the summer classes for four- and five-year-old children are available both in morning and afternoon sessions. As I observed these three classes, all of which took place in the morning, the conditions that led to engagement in the morning may have been influenced by this structure. However, I am not able to determine this potential difference, because I only observed in the morning, thus limiting the implications for transferring the findings to other times of day.
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION

Introduction

In presenting an analysis of the collected data, this chapter serves to articulate the environment and the summer class participants’ collective experience, by discussing my interpretation of interviews, observations, and questionnaires. To address the structural, intentional, curricular, and pedagogical components of the educational event (Eisner, 1998), I present description and interpretation of environmental structure, teacher and administrator intentions, five scenes of implemented lessons, and parent perceptions of child experience. The data sources for each of these descriptions and interpretations are presented in Figure 1. I have also included a set of teacher profile descriptions to provide context for the classroom/studio and gallery scenes. Through these data I aim to portray the conditions of the summer class that led to engagement for young children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 1</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Description and Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dimension of Schooling (Eisner, 1998)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural</td>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>Environment; Class Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentional</td>
<td>Interviews; Questionnaires</td>
<td>Teacher and Administrator Intentions; Parent Interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curricular</td>
<td>Observations; Interviews; Questionnaires</td>
<td>Implemented Lessons; Teacher Perception of Engagement; Parent Perceptions of Child’s Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical</td>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>Implemented Lessons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Below I have presented description and interpretation of data to illustrate occasions of high engagement and identify conditions that led to engaging experiences for students within the context of an art museum program. To add to the depth of the observed scenes’ narratives and depict the summer class structure, I have begun my portrayal with description of the environment and teacher profiles. Teacher and administrator interviews and questionnaire responses from parents support an understanding of the intentions behind all conditions for the class, and will be drawn upon in order to establish the level of alignment with the received curriculum. Five scenes from my observations are presented to chronicle the characteristics of curricular and pedagogical conditions that led to student engagement within this summer class setting. An alignment between these characteristics of curricular conditions and Uhrmacher & Moroye’s (2010; Moroye & Uhrmacher, 2010; Uhrmacher, 2009) aesthetic themes of education emerged in my analysis; therefore, the relationship is explained in the curricular dimension section and I use language from the framework to articulate this association in my interpretation. Finally, I have included data from teacher interviews and parent questionnaires to recognize the perceived lasting effects of the class as reported by students’ families ten days following its completion, and compare these perceptions to the initial intentions to determine the degree to which they were achieved.

Environment and Class Structure

One would assume that an art studio tucked in the basement of an institution dedicated to the creative process of artists and cultures, ancient and contemporary, would be a space that inherently spoke to creative clutter with inspiring design and decoration.
However, in the museum, this assumption is incorrect, as the classroom hosting summer camps and classes was an artificially-lit square room lacking windows or natural light. The room had several doors, two connecting the room to the entrance hall and atrium area and a third connected to the other classroom. One adult sink area was in the southwest corner of the room with a small step stool sitting directly in front. A number of rectangular tables covered in white butcher paper each with several clunky chairs, were arranged throughout the room. The adult-sized chairs were a combination of plastic and metal that made a rumbling on the laminate floor with each instance of pulling or pushing. These chairs left exposed space between the plastic seats and backs, creating rectangular holes with just enough room for small legs and feet to slip through.

Although I am familiar with these classrooms due to my previous experience teaching in them, I saw this one anew when seated on a small wooden stool in the corner, waiting to jot down dialogue, events, and my overall observations. While two of the three teachers I observed hung handmade signs reading, “Welcome Artists,” and the other posted key terms on notecards and chart paper sheets with the class pledge and museum manners on the closet doors, I am struck by the initial starkness and cleanliness to the space. Each class had a front table with books propped up similar to a library display and materials organized in small red pales and plastic containers. At times these materials changed based on lessons, whereas in other classes, the materials on this “teacher table” remained the same throughout the week. In Elise’s classroom, a red circular carpet sat speckled with a growing layer of yarn and sequins in the middle of the arranged tables,
orienting the classroom to the west wall. This carpet sat outside the classroom for the other two classes.

The tone of the class quickly shifted my attention away from this lackluster environment, as the teachers welcomed students into the room, often with adults still in tow. Markers, stickers, and paper were quickly distributed to all tables and students grabbed for the tools to embellish their bags, abandoning their initial apprehension and focusing on the task of decorating. To my surprise the room then began to take on a new sense of warmth, as chatter, hugs goodbye, and laughter filled the space during the summer class sessions.

Outside the classroom and museum building, a small courtyard of pebble paths, ivy, rocks, trees, and three bronze horse sculptures provided a place for children to wander and explore, all while chomping on cheese crackers, sipping juice boxes, and sharing stories with each other and their teachers during snack and break times. Ladybugs acted as stimuli for searching and conversation, while in the courtyard. This area was utilized by all teachers for a snack or break from the classroom, and one uses this space for an occasional storybook reading and an impromptu concert.

Finally, walls painted in saturated colors shape the spaces into which the kids filed to see art hung on the walls or objects presented in cases or on platforms positioned throughout the galleries. Organized in lines or organic masses of students, the groups navigated these galleries. Two or three supporting teachers helped to guide and herd students with security officers hovering nearby. The officers’ presence vacillated between anxious and protective to childlike, smiling and, on one occasion, goofily pretending to
join along their line. A constant air of caution exists, as all teachers were cognizant of keep students’ hands and bodies away from touching or bumping artworks, cases, or platforms.

The physical environment remained constant throughout the three classrooms, with the only difference in setting being the variety of galleries visited due to artwork choice. Each class started at 9:30 a.m., with students arriving up to thirty minutes earlier and playing with toys in the hallway adjacent to the classroom. Varying between classes and on different days, the class session began between 9:30 and 10:00 a.m. Teachers led instruction and activities until noon each day, with the completion of projects or free play occupying the final thirty minutes. Parents or caregivers arrived between 12:00 and 12:30 p.m. to pick up their children and were asked to sign them out with a teaching assistant. The teachers chose different times to take a break in instruction for a snack, which was typically taken out to the small garden outside the museum.

Teacher Profiles

My observations spanned three separate weeks, thus following the teaching of three different teachers. Each of these teachers had a unique style characterized by tone and demeanor, physical energy and movement. Their choice of teaching aides and construction of instructional activities varied greatly despite the shared content of the museum collection, as illustrated by the scenes below.

Elise

“Listening ears, listening ears,” Elise’s singsong, tenor voice wafted across the room, as she continued to repeat this phrase attempting to get her students’ attention.
Slowly students began to shift their focus and, with verbal prompts from Elise and other assistant teachers, markers were returned to the bins and students followed her direction to meet on the carpet.

Elise, a museum staff member working with school and teacher programs, has worked in the field of museum education for over ten years. She is in her 30s and is enthusiastic and energized, with extremely planned and structured lessons, each with goals for students and for her own professional growth (personal communication, July 2014). With the support of four teaching assistants, her class’s activities were a well-oiled machine, with few children waiting for response or support for their every need or question. She implemented many management techniques including call-and-response prompts, routines, and props to support expectations. Her class had step-by-step organization, but also had a sense of freedom and experimentation especially when the children got to play instruments and dance.

Amelia

Amelia is a mother of two children and in her forties, with a monotone voice and even demeanor. She started an after-school and summer art class business after her friends expressed interest in more art opportunities for their children. These classes are predominately visual art instruction and exposure to art mediums. She enjoys young children’s willingness to try anything. Although her business offers summer camps, she prioritizes teaching classes at the museum each summer, as she loves being in this setting. Amelia does identify that there is somewhat of a love-hate relationship with these classes, as she “[loves] the diversity and getting to know [the students],” but the number of kids
and management make it less enjoyable (Amelia, personal communication, July 2014). This sentiment is further expressed by her concerns of disturbing other visitors in the museum, and not wanting to linger in places with hands-on activities, as she worries about “[taking] over.”

Not outwardly flustered by any situations, she is in a continual stage of student behavior correction, rather than anticipated prevention. When giving instructions, she often has trouble giving concrete examples and demonstrations, airing on the side of question over directed statement. While students are not out of physical control, the students frequently demonstrate their control over the classroom through their social interactions and comments that challenge the teachers’ authority. There is little follow-through with consequences or assertion of authority over students’ behaviors. Although her plans have purpose, her instruction fails to make the thematic connections she intends due to students losing attention and becoming distracted by various stimuli.

*Catherine*

Nearly six feet tall, Catherine’s height commands attention, but when combine with her sweet and kid-directed voice and language choice, she is more gentle than dominant. She is soft-spoken and has eyes that grow large when listening and responding to students, indicating a focus on their needs and ideas. The use of a quiet bell pulls the group back together, with the significant help of two assistant teachers regaining students’ attention. Her choice of activities and additional supports in the classroom indicate her feeling that small group interaction and active hands translate into engaged children (Catherine, personal communication, August 2014). Catherine is the youngest of
the three teachers in her twenties and a recent college graduate with experience facilitating programs for families at the museum. She recently spent a year living abroad in Europe teaching English to elementary school children. Throughout the week, she mentioned how it was probably different for me to observe her in contrast to other teachers, as she does not have a formal museum education background of teaching students in the galleries.

As the profiles suggest, the teachers’ personalities did vary in each of the classes, however I will look primarily at the teaching strategies that contribute to engagement.

Administrators, Teachers, and Parents Explain Intentions

To best align my research with Eisner’s (1998) conceptual framework, I aimed to understand the intentions of the summer class experience to justify the alignment or misalignment between these intentions and the curriculum and pedagogy, as well as the observed and reported received curriculum. The intended goals to be achieved through curriculum and pedagogy were articulated by the administrators and summer class teachers. Both administrators and teachers answered questions about goals, intentions, and expectations about the conditions for the summer class, including curriculum and the role of different environments and activity components. The data from the interviews with administrators is presented first and then leads into the responses collected from teachers. I then introduce responses from parent questionnaires expressing their interest in their children attending a summer class at the museum.
Administrator Interviews

In discussing the intentions and goals guiding the summer classes for young children (four- & five-year-old children), Holly, the Associate Director of Education at the museum, articulated that the intentions for this program relate to, “our goals…what we want for families with 3-5s - connections to daily life, etc.” Holly prioritized the summer class’s ability to support students, “gaining comfort,” in the museum setting. She saw this idea of comfort as encouraging students to feel, “comfortable being creative in the gallery itself.” A sentiment carried over from her previous professional experience at another art museum, in which young visitors, “always sketched in the galleries then used these things to create,” Holly defended this new sense of comfort in the museum setting as a main intention for summer classes.

In addition to comfort, Holly spoke of providing students with new opportunities to engage in the museum. She discussed her concept of children in the museum from an example of how she was able to “[teach] four-year olds Semiotics - intense ideas, not just finger paintings,” referencing her belief that these children, “got it so much better than [she] did.” Acknowledging the museum’s role in empowering young children and honoring their contributions, she indicated that this program is part of a larger initiative around this audience, “A lot happening for this age group. We want to be an institution that values them. [With them] practicing talking skills, practicing recognition and analysis, practicing process.”

Specifically responding to her goals for the condition of curriculum in the summer classes, she expressed a desire for it to be, “grounded in collections,” which requires
teachers to “[unpack] richness of collection…and [mine] the collection.” Her responses indicated both personal and professional experiences with young children, as well as museum programming initiatives, having influence over her beliefs about summer class goals and views of young children and their place in the museum.

Laura, Coordinator of Community & Family Programs, had similar ideas on the goals of the summer class experience, stemming from her beliefs about educating young children and their place in the museum. She expressed that summer classes should aim to achieve, “kids [feeling] welcome in a museum” (personal communication, July 2014). This idea has developed from her desire to change a public assumption - “Museums have a general reputation of a white box - not a place for children, but [I] want to break this stereotype.” Laura articulated that this comfort comes from “not shushing [students]…[and] not telling them not what to do.” She then referred to the idea of empowerment and builds the intention to, “create an atmosphere [where students are] free to discuss and have opinions in the museum, not feel inhibited that it’s only adults.”

When I inquired about intentions for the curriculum and introduced this term, Laura explained that her understanding of this term “[relates] to school, less related to lesson plans.” Laura acknowledged that she had many thoughts on this idea, but having curriculum rooted in art objects was paramount to all other components. She felt that the curriculum, “…hands-down, should connect to collection in whatever [the] teacher feels confident to do. This will look different. Sometimes themes [and] broad number of artworks, or one floor [going] deep in a collection. Teachers do what they are passionate about.
From these two interviews, administrators’ intentions for the summer classes relate to providing for students to acknowledge their comfort in the museum setting, feel empowered to discuss and engage in the museum, and understand the meaningful connections between curriculum components and art objects.

Teacher Interviews

The sentiments expressed by the administrative staff align with many of the intentions articulated by the teachers, as seen in their interviews. During Elise’s interview, she considered certain specific aspects and activities when identifying the objectives of her summer class (personal communication, July 2014). She spoke about children needing to be comfortable looking closely and imagining in the museum in order to “have fun” in the galleries and in art making activities. Elise also articulated that students would “express ideas and feelings” using art and movement in her class, illustrating a desire to support this creative discovery and empowerment. Elise also talked about students’ engagement with artworks, therefore making strong connection to the objects in the collection, through sensory experiences, and discovering, “stories from around the world.” As her class explicitly addressed sound in artwork - art objects that make sound, leads to movement through sound, or engages your imagination to envision the sounds represented - she discussed how students build an, “[understanding] that some art is meant to make sounds and artists use materials in special ways to make different sounds.”

Catherine set out a series of goals for her class, which related to time in the gallery, time in the classroom studio, and the overall student experience. Comfort again
was addressed, as she expressed an intention for students to feel “like they belong” (Catherine, personal communication, August 2014). She aimed to “start a foundation of how to act and how to use a museum,” and supports her ideas that children should feel comfortable in this setting. Catherine wanted her students to gain new understandings of “how to act in the galleries.”

This was reiterated in her intentions for the studio time to support “[gaining] experience using different types of materials” and give students “confidence in their own creativity.” She stressed that she wanted to convey to students, “that there is not a ‘right’ way to make art,” in order to further empower students’ creativity. It was her aim to “create a dialogue between parents [and] guardians and their kids about art,” by creating a set of conditions. Giving students an opportunity to try new things and practice talking about art, she supported the idea of empowering students to engage with art and art making.

Amelia had many intentions for her curriculum and the student experience of the summer class. First and foremost, she articulated her desire for students to have fun and learn about being in the museum. Secondly, she stressed an aim to expose students to different mediums. Finally, Amelia’s goals related to the setting of the museum and its ability to support “[developing] observation skills [and] make art right away,” which is a quality unique to an art museum. She spoke of “[using] the museum to teach around” and how her intentions stemmed from this opportunity. As displayed in her curriculum, she intentionally focused on, “[bridging] between museum and making, [appreciating] artists
making, [relating] how things are created and importance of inspiration, [and taking] time to make observations (personal communication, July 2014).

Branching from these three intentions, Amelia also indicated several factors that influenced her aims for the class, which articulated some of her discomfort with working with this audience. She mentioned the group size being “too large to be able to do some of the things [she wants];” including “[learning] what happens behind the scenes.” Amelia also discussed certain factors that are “tricky with this age” due to students “[wanting] to touch everything, only [being able to] sit for 8 minutes, [and how the] public feels awkward with a whole class,” at the installed museum activities. She also talked about how the “classrooms are not set up for this age group,” and how she “[needed] stools, tools to make better for their size,” both of which occupied some required much of her attention.

*Summary of Intentions: Administrators and Teachers*

Based on the interview responses, three main goals for the summer classes can be defined, while several others are also present. The three main goals were for students to 1) feel comfortable in the museum, 2) feel empowered through conversation and personal creativity, and 3) understand connections between camp lessons and the museum’s collections. The desire for children to feel comfort in the museum stems from an interest to dispel the notion that young children do not have place in the art museum, as well as instill in these young visitors that they should feel welcome to revisit frequently. Relating to the second goal, Laura describes, “I have the most intelligent conversations with three- and five-year olds about art, they are able to access their imaginations in a way that
is…not stuck,” therefore demonstrating the belief that young children should feel confident about conversing about art from an early age. The forum and prompting of this free engagement in dialogue and providing opportunity for being creative in the galleries is seen by administrators as an additional method for the museum to communicate its welcoming and comfortable presence for young children. This goal was expanded by Amelia and Catherine in their intention for students to feel empowered to try new things and be exposed to a variety of art mediums. Finally, it was critical for the lessons to be based on collection objects in order to introduce looking and analyzing processes in the museum setting. The unique environment of the art museum and its ability to support students seeing art in new ways through activities emerged in all teachers’ responses, as well.

**Parent Questionnaires**

Included in the parent questionnaire (Appendix E) were two questions: 1) Why were you or your child interested in participating in [museum] summer classes? 2) Has your child shared anything about his or her experience at summer class, positive or negative? [Yes/No], 2a) If yes, please cite the characteristics of your child's expression of his or her experience (i.e. What did your child share about? What prompted your child's sharing of his or her experience? Describe how your child shared?). Therefore, the first inquired into parents’ interest in having their child participate in summer classes at the museum. This question provides insight into the motivations and intentions behind the choice of summer classes in this environment therefore will be presented to articulate an additional set of data regarding goals for the class. Obviously, these data from the parents
or caregivers provide a different perspective on intentions, as they were not involved in the planning of the educational event, nor were these ideas communicated to teachers. These contributions, however, serve to broaden the discussion on the alignment and/or misalignment of intentions and outcomes, as parents also shared their perception of their child’s experience during the summer class. Parent comments, from 17 participants, have been arranged according to emerging themes in Table 2.
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<td><strong>Emerging Theme</strong></td>
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| Museum’s good reputation; positive previous museum experience | - Good reputation, trusted environment (02.1)  
- We LOVE the Create Playdates & Totspots…the [museum] did a fabulous job on programs for kids! (03.1)  
- My son took a summer camp last year and it really improved his art, interest in the art museum. Really positive camp experience. (10.1)  
- He did summer camp last year. He was looking forward to doing it this year. (15.1)  
- My child loves the museum (13.1)  
- My mother in law is training to be a docent and highly recommended the programs. (12.1) |
| Parent/Child interest in making art | - To give my child an opportunity to make art (04.1)  
- My granddaughter loves drawing and other art genres. (07.1)  
- To learn more about…how to make it. To be able to use quality materials to make the art (08.1)  
- My child loves…craft projects (13.1)  
- [She] loves anything to do with art! |
| Learn more about art | - To give my child an opportunity to…learn more about art (04.1)  
- I also wanted to broaden her horizons as she is not exposed to art education at daycare (05.1)  
- To learn more about art (08.1)  
- Art exposure (17.1)  
- Wanted our daughter to explore her artistic side during her summer downtime (01.1) |
| Have fun | - I thought it would be fun for her (05.1)  
- Fun (17.1) |
| Want to explore the museum | - Recently she has been exploring the museum and enjoy it (07.1)  
- She loves art and I thought it would be nice for her to see some of the museum and have a class (09.1)  
- She enjoys art and we thought the art museum would be great (11.1)  
- Wanted to have them involved in an art environment (14.1) |
Rationale for sending children to the museum for summer classes ranged based on each parent or caregiver’s response, but all fell within six emerging themes. The participants expressed interest based on: 1) museum summer classes being “different,” 2) the museum’s good reputation or a positive previous experience at the museum, 3) interest in creating art or crafts, 4) interest in learning about art, 5) having fun, and 6) interest in exploring the museum.

Parents’ responses indicated that parents were interested in sending their child to a summer class at the museum due to their child’s passions and their desire to have their child spend time in the museum setting. As one parent commented, he was interested in the class, “To give my child an opportunity to…learn more about art” (04.1). This sentiment was shared in a desire for “art exposure” (17.1) and “broaden […] horizons” (05.1), which was believed available at the art museum. Children’s interests also drove parents’ decisions, as some parents described their child as loving “craft projects” (13.1), “drawing and other genres” (07.1), and “art” (09.1), for which they felt the museum could support.

There were also a few other responses that indicate that parents wanted their child to have fun or do something different. Similar to the intentions presented by administrators and teachers, parents mentioned their desire for their child to enjoy her summer class, and “thought [the museum class] would be fun for her” (05.1). One response that stood alone was a parent’s response indicating that an art museum summer class was “something different” (02.1), which may illustrate the interest in the unique
environment of the art museum for this program, a component administrators and teachers stressed.

**Summary of Intentions: Parents**

While not an aspect of the classes’ planning process, the question from the parent questionnaire addressing the parent and child’s interest in participating in camp supported sharing of their interests in having their children attend summer classes at the art museum, thus indicating their intentions for their child’s experience. Their thoughts emphasized objectives predominately stemming from an interest in exposing their children to art and art making experiences. They stressed the unique quality of the class being held in the museum and how this transferred to the experience they expected for their child. These desires came out of their child’s previous interest in art projects, the museum, and art. Parents also tended to have chosen the art museum class by way of the museum’s good reputation or impression from a previous experience at the museum. Several of these responses, namely comfort in the museum and acknowledgement of the unique opportunity of attending a summer class in an art museum setting, aligned with those of the teachers and administrators, however parents also indicated other reasoning fueling their decisions.

Based on intentions collected from all teachers and administrators, and to some degree parents, the three most prominent goals for the summer classes were 1) supporting children’s comfort in exploring the museum and experimenting with different materials, 2) empowering young class students to share their ideas about the museum and art, and 3)
creating a connection between the museum’s art collections and all summer class activities.

**Classroom Observations**

Given the similarities in environmental conditions and classroom organization, the classes did diverge in their curriculum and pedagogy, providing a variety of conditions leading to student experience. Despite these differences, each class did include certain activities and teacher presentation that lead to engagement for students. Through observation, teacher reflection, and parent questionnaire, I identified the times when student engagement was most present, as indicated by voluntary active behavior.

**Aesthetic Themes of Education**

As I analyzed my field notes from observing to identify emerging ideas and themes, several threads became apparent. The scenarios when students were most engaged, according to the level of student participation, verbally and non-verbally, in interpersonal exchanges or self-directed creating or play, can be categorized into several categories relating to sharing and imagining with elements of playfulness and relevant themes. When these characteristics emerged, I began to consider the relation of these qualities to Uhrmacher & Moroye’s (2010; Moroye & Uhrmacher, 2010; Uhrmacher, 2009) conceptual framework for perceptual curricular design. Utilizing six dimensions that can contribute to an aesthetic experience, this framework acts as a springboard for teachers in their lesson design and implementation of curriculum, and promotes “heightened experiences that lead to important learning outcomes” (Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2012, p.65). The six attributes to curricula identified include: connections, active
engagement, risk-taking, imagination, sensory experience, and perceptivity (Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2010).

These themes can occur simultaneously or separately, but have implications for both student and teacher experience. Connections stem from students’ personal attachment to an idea or topic, which can be seen through self-identification intellectually, emotionally, sensorially, or communicatively. Active engagement puts students in a position of ownership, in which they are acting physically or intellectually in choice making and in their learning. Risk-taking calls upon students to do something novel or pushes them beyond their comfort zone. Within this dimension, the importance of building environments that welcome and support risk taking is paramount. Although considered in many different ways, imagination is an internal processing of the possible or impossible through ideas or concepts. Sensory experience is considering an object or topic using the senses. Finally, perceptivity builds on sensory experience to a heightened level of sensitivity to the sensory components of an object. (Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2010)

Although the teachers did not identify the use of Uhrmacher & Moroye’s (2010; Moroye & Uhrmacher, 2010; Uhrmacher, 2009) strategies in the planning of lessons, I began to see where universal themes, art objects, and art making inherently led them to create conditions upon which students had high levels of engagement in their experience of the class; therefore, their curriculum aligned with five of the six dimensions. Experiences with universal topics and relevant ideas prompted moments of spontaneous sharing. Where I saw imagining in art making, pretend play, and fantastic ideas related to artworks, the conditions of open-ended construction or making were encouraged. When I
observed expression in multiple artistic forms, I saw a comfortable classroom culture and the art museum setting as a place honoring all forms of creativity. Students were looking closely, touching objects, and listening when the condition of building upon a continuous theme existed and supported accessing schematic hooks through multiple senses. These observations contributed to the emergence of several characteristics of curricular conditions, which included 1) connection and relevance, 2) imaginative prompts for making and play, 3) comfort providing for risk-taking, 4) active engagement, and 5) sensory stimulation.

*Five Classroom Scenes*

The following five scenes depict the conditions that led to engagement for students through narrative description and analysis. Through explanation and student and teacher dialogue, I aim to present exemplary moments from instruction and class interaction. Each of these scenes is followed by a brief interpretation and instances of connection to the themes of aesthetic education (Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2010).

*Scene 1: Elise’s Class*

With all students sitting on the carpet, Elise sat in a chair in front and explained that she needed them to listen closely and guess the contents of the bottle based on the noise they create. She pulled a set of five opaque bottles out of a bag and lined them up on the table. Each bottle had a different material inside and decorations on the exterior. As she shook the first bottle, students excitedly yelled out, listing ideas - “salt, beads, crushed up rocks, bean bag beans, cinnamon, Cheerios, sand.” Elise revealed the contents by pouring some of the sand into her hand. One child, KC, who had guessed correctly
spoke, “Sand, it was sand.” At the same time, another child QC smiled and leaned to an assistant teacher saying, “I was guessing sand.”

Elise then shook the second bottle and the kids erupted into blurting out their ideas - “paint, sand, medium rocks, one pieces [sic] of crushed up rocks, crushes rocks, water, little beads, metal” - all of which contradict the quiet sound of raffia shifting in the bottle. When Elise revealed the raffia from the bottle, one child, JC, with a deflated voice said, “None of us were right.” The contents were then passed around the group for all students to feel the material. When Elise shook the third bottle, all the students replied, “Water!” She then shook a fourth bottle, asking students, “Loud or soft?” All students covered their ears indicating the loud sound of the shaker, laughing and making sounds of surprise and delight.

Later in the class, the group gathered on the floor around a gallery bench in the Western American Art collection. Kids looked around to see what is in the room - both pausing to look at artworks and the people walking through the gallery. Elise had divided the class into four groups, each with different bottles, and in her small groups she passed around their bottle filled with sand, so they can each shake and listen to their bottle.

With this prompt, she challenged the students to “find a good match” between the sound and those they imagine in artworks. One girl (AC) pointed a finger close to a painting where she saw sand. A boy (HC) stood next to a painting with his head faced so that his ear is close to the artwork, primed to listen to the art. The girl commented, “I think this looks like sand,” as she pointed to the painting, and the boy followed pointing
alongside her. Elise reminded these students to “keep [their] arms back,” and the girl motioned towards the painting saying, “dirt inside the painting.”

The conversation then shifted direction, as another student asked, “Is that a princess? I think it’s Elsa,” indicating that she saw a resemblance between a woman in an artwork and the main character in a popular animated movie. This prompted two other children to respond. “For sure, it’s not Elsa,” a boy retorts, while another girl says, “Looks like a little lady.”

After a few more minutes spent exploring, Elise reunited the four groups in the center of the gallery. She asked, “Did you have fun? Were you able to hear sounds?” One child, QC, quickly raised her hand and when called on, shared, “Metal things like horse shoes,” referencing a bronze sculpture. Two children, who had been in the same small group talk about a whooshing sound, “like the branches.” Another shared how the “sand looked like grain,” which was “in the mountains,” a response that was confirmed by another child.

Following these responses, a child, JC, talks about his connection between a shaker filled with water, pointing and sharing, “I hear two waters - that painting - rain and river.” This comment spurred reactions and stories from two boys. KC mentioned, “Like a river near the cabin. We threw rocks there.” His example indicates his retelling of a story from his experience, illustrating how this prompt supported connection building. Similarly, DC proceeded to tell a story of how he went fishing in a river. These stories demonstrate a high level of personal connection and relevance to the subject, which was prompted through a sensory experience. Growing out of a sound, students were able to
experience art in a different way through their sense of hearing. This then led to considering how the river in a painting related to their personal experiences. By supporting this bridge between their daily life and their experience in the museum, the activity leads to the possibility of students having an aesthetic experience (Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2010) and could support connections beyond their immediate interaction in the gallery.

Following a break for snack and time for students to create their own shakers, Elise invited the group to sit on the carpet with their shakers and asked students to share their favorite sound from the day. Both JC and HC shared that they prefer the noisemakers out of all the sounds from the day. Whereas, QC shared that “the metal things with the horse shoes” were her favorite. This comment references the time she spent in the gallery when she connected the sound of metal washers in a shaker to the horse shoes she saw on a bronze sculpture of a cowboy on a bucking horse. Although within the same day, her recall indicates a lasting impression that helped her continue to connect the sound of the shakers back to the time spent in the galleries and the content introduced.

Scene 1 Interpretation

This scene illustrates the engagement that emerges through the use of sensory stimuli. By supporting students’ exploration of art through the conduit of sound—very familiar natural sounds—Elise was able to provide a platform for students to make connections between prior knowledge of a sound and images represented in artworks. Perceptual teaching includes “sensory experiences” as one of the six components that can
potentially lead to aesthetic experiences and meaningful learning (Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2010). These conditions also led to students recalling personal experiences that contribute to rich conversation and access to a work of art. The use of sounds like water, sand, and metal clinking in a bottle were all relevant and brought to mind prior experience of this sound. With these shakers serving as an auditory cue, students were empowered to contribute their personal narratives relating to the art, as prompted by their previous exposure to these sounds.

Additionally, this activity introduces an element of mystery, as the shakers were opaque, therefore required close listening and conceptual thinking to uncover what object or substance was in each shaker. This sense of the unknown contributed to a heightened sense of excitement and enthusiasm, as demonstrated with the increasingly louder responses shouted out, students eventually sitting up on their heels, and the dramatic covering of ears or laughter that came as more contents were revealed. Although this element is not referenced in the ideas of aesthetic education, mystery, surprise, and unexpected discoveries were seen to lead to energetic responses from students, therefore contributing to their engagement with curriculum and content.

Scene 2: Catherine’s Class

As the children entered the room on the first morning of Catherine’s class, they were invited to join the group sitting on the floor. Catherine directly acknowledged each child, “We are using clay to make our favorite animal. What’s your favorite?” Immediately a conversation erupted in this highly verbal group. One child held up his clay creation - a snail - and Catherine asked, “Snails, do they go fast or slow?” This
question prompted a few children to talk about snails, both real and those represented in an animated movie. Children discussed their abilities to make animals out of clay and where they have previously experienced these animals.

The class had been divided into three groups of students and they transitioned between three small-group activities: reading aloud a book, *Wild Things*, decorating of grocery bags with stickers, which held their artworks throughout the week, and a kinesthetic movement exercise mimicking the movements of animals. In the later of these activities, the teaching assistant prompted the students to “be [their] favorite animal.” Each child immediately started moving; arms glided through the air and several students stood to begin their mimicry. The teaching assistant directed the students, “We are going to start with air...birds!” Following her lead, the students moved their arms slowly running around and making cawing noises.

“Let’s turn into ducks. We need to line up,” she said.

All the children formed a line, one behind the next. They flapped their arms following the teacher’s motions. The line snaked back and forth in the hallway, moving in rhythm with each other. Smiles donned each of their faces. Following a series of other animal motions, the group was called back into the classroom. The teacher prompted them to act like ducks again and the group quickly lined up and flew back into the classroom.

In an elevator packed with 21 bodies - 17, of which tiny - Catherine announced that the class would be going to the fourth floor, where they would search for a pot that looks like a bird. Her message was reiterated as kids exited the elevator, “A pot that looks
like a bird. What do you do with a pot?” One child (LC) pointed across the gallery, “There!” Others responded, “You put food in it,” “Then you cook it,” and “Some of them are flat and curved.”

As they journeyed farther into the gallery, the conversation grew. Catherine divided the students up into three small groups and talked with her group:

Pointing, EC said, “I see a pot that looks like a bird.”

BC agreed, “I saw this that looks like a bird.”

YC asked, “Are those are his arms?”

Catherine continued this line of questioning, “So, not a bird?”

Answering, YC said, “It doesn’t have wings, but maybe it’s dressed up like a bird.”

EC added, “I think it’s a girl…”

“Because, it has hair,” YC contributed his reasoning.

Looking slightly perplexed, BC touched his hair, and said, “Boys have hair.” Therefore, he determined that because he is a boy and has hair, this proposed theory did not make sense.

The group then had kids moving quickly from one case to another. Catherine looked at me with a concerned look on her face, as the kids ran and called out. The discussion stayed related to looking at objects in the cases with students identifying different animals that they saw. Then Catherine, seemingly overwhelmed, gathered the group to head downstairs.
Back in the classroom, Catherine had congregated the group on the carpet. Asking what they had observed in the gallery, students began listing their ideas. Throughout the conversation, there were many hands in the air and students called out their answers, while some children jumped around on the carpet. When asked what animals they encountered in the galleries, students shared, “lots of birds, crocodile, eagle, bird with two heads and one body, and a dog.” With one response, Catherine prompted a student to consider how she knew that an object represented an eagle, to which the child responded, “Because it looked like one. They are really big.”

With these ideas still floating in the air, Catherine introduced the idea of the art making to the group. She explained that they were going to make a plastic cup into a bird. This introduction immediately sparked a child, EC, to share, “I saw one with heads in front and back.” And, Catherine acknowledged this notion, by encouraging, “You could put two heads.” Before sending the group of students to get started with their projects, she included an additional instruction with demonstration, “I chose to make mine like this,” showing her project, but then she flipped the cup upside down and adds, “but, you could have it like this.” With this demonstration, the kids chuckled, and turned to each other to laugh. They then began their projects.

The room became a whirlwind of construction paper, scissor, markers, and glue, as kids constructed shapes and animal parts around their cups. Some children created birds, while others made anything from Frankenstein to a butterfly. Amidst Catherine’s questioning of children about their creation, she came across KC. His cup had a variety of different pieces of cut construction paper glued to the cup in a seemingly random
arrangement of black and grey shapes and scraps. Catherine asked, “Are you going to add any feet?”

As KC responded without consideration, “No, he just jumps,” he bounced the cup up and down along the table and in the air, demonstrating the way he imagined the bird to move. Catherine then followed up, “What kind of bird?” To which, Kyle replied, “It’s an owl…because of…” His voice trailed off as he points to the middle of the cup. He then ran over to a different table grabbing a colored pencil and drawing two dots for the eyes on the construction paper. “See,” he then said. Just as this exchange was made, another child, AC exhaled saying, “I’m so happy I made this!” A few moments later, Kyle came over to where I was seated on a stool in the corner and bounced and flew his art around me and onto my notepad page. He did not say a word, but had a slight smile on his face.

*Interpretation of Scene 2*

Catherine’s lessons, as illustrated in this instance and the other scene portrayed below have an arch to their flow, which includes an introductory set of activities around a topic, an experience in the galleries looking at and searching for artwork, and an art making project in the studio reiterating or drawing from their gallery time. In this scene, students explore a topic through visuals and active movement, with a children’s book and mimicking animal movements, prior to entering the galleries to explore. With these activities, students call up an awareness and understanding of animals and their characteristics before entering the galleries to explore. In this way, these experiences tap into both the notions of connection and active engagement, as presented by perceptual teaching, and lead to students’ engagement (Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2010).
Following these shared experiences, the class’s opportunity to translate their ideas of animals and those that they discovered in the galleries into an art making opportunity invites students’ use of their imaginations. Students create somewhat indistinguishable creatures. Yet, despite the abstract nature of these art projects, students fully engage their imaginations and can articulate appropriate and fully conceived of rationale for their creative and artistic choices in their art, which they are able to verbalize and follow through with their actively play. Additionally, Catherine’s dialogue with students about art making projects, which asked specific questions to prompt students to consider their decisions and articulate their ideas, supported risk-taking and encouraged the engagement of imagination.

_Scene 3: Amelia’s Class_

The elevator doors opened to the European & American Art collection and the children walked out, faces craning to see where they would go. Amelia led the group, saying, “We’ve been to this floor to see people and families.” GC pointed to a painting on their walk. As they reached the Discovery Library, Amelia asked what the kids noticed and the students piled onto the floor in front of two portraits by the artist Arcimboldo, _Autumn_ and _Summer_. Time was spent to get the group into two lines sitting in front of these paintings to prevent kids from disrupting each other. “Let’s start,” Amelia directed.

Immediately, six little hands soared into the air. Kids then instantly began to speak while Amelia intermittently called on students and they spoke out. She interjected a
question, but mainly relied on the constant stream of conversation that each child provided. As the conversation started, students began to offer ideas:

JPC said, “They are mangoes.”

Amelia probed, “When you say they are mangoes, what do you mean?”

Failing to answer her question, JPC said, “They are people…they look like people.”

Looking at the painting as he spoke, HC mentioned, “That’s the eyes, the nose, and ears.”

Amelia, again, questioned, “Tell me why you think that’s a nose?”

“They look like people but they are made of fruit, vegetables,” HC said.

Other children then chimed in, sharing their observations -

“carrots,” “apples,” “peaches,” and “strawberries.”

Talking over other children, IC loudly added, “That guy is made out of a barrel.”

MC mentioned, “Made out of cherries, too.”

SC shared her observation, “That looks like a bucket.”

“That [indistinguishable] looks like a pumpkin,” JPC continued.

Responding to his comment, Amelia asked, “His teeth?”

He corrected, “CHEEK!”

Then, QC said, “That mushroom looks like an ear.”
Looking for rationale, Amelia asked, “Why?”

She explained, “Same shape as our ear, but it’s a mushroom.”

JPC shared, “That guy is tied together with string…that’s tied around.”

“I think he has cucumber nose. His teeth look like cherries. It’s kind of like lost and find to find [things],” IC said.

The student comments began to dwindle, as kids were looking up at the paintings, looking around the room, or playing with a neighbor. One child (FC) attempted to have a personal conversation with another child. Amelia then mentioned, “Something that I appreciate…that the artists thought about shapes of veggies to [make parts of face].”

Students did not respond to this comment, instead focused on other things, such as hitting their shoes to make them light up or talking to a neighbor. They then started to talk more about the painting:

VC said, “It’s like a puzzle.”

Sharing from personal experience, QC added, “I’ve done a space puzzle.”

VC then added, “I have a Barbie puzzle.”

MC shared, “I see celery on this one.”

With these responses, Amelia asked, “Have you noticed the more we look, the more we noticed?”

MC mentioned, “I see corn in his hair.”
“I think that they are meeting, maybe they are having a wedding,”
HC offered to the group.
SC shared his thoughts, “Looks like two people stuck
together…one eye closed and one is open, two noses. There’s one
with a mushroom and another.”
Amelia explained to the group, “The artist made 4 of these
paintings. All have to do with different seasons. He chooses fruits
and veggies like the seasons. This one is Summer, one is fall.”
One child shared, “fall is my birthday.”
Another said, “September is my birthday.”
Continuing her comment, Amelia asked, “What are the seasons?”
And, students listed off the names of the four seasons.
Amelia then said, “In Summer - summer fruits and veggies. In
Autumn - these are the ones from fall.” Few children seemed to
connect to her comments and strayed back to identifying the pieces
in the artwork.
One child shared, “This is an artichoke.”
“I love these,” PC said.
Unprompted, HC asked the teacher, “Did you know I’m growing a
garden?”
Back in the classroom, children were in their seats waiting instruction, talking to
neighbors and fidgeting in their seats. Amelia and her teaching assistants handed out
pieces of paper. She showed how to cut or tear pieces of tissue paper and glue them down. As kids started to glue, there was little connection between what has been instructed and what they are doing, yet students were actively attaching big and small pieces of tissue to their paper. I noticed one child (IC) apply glue directly to her face rather than the sheet of paper.

Some kids finished quickly, whereas others took longer to complete this step. Then, Amelia handed out magazines and children started to rifle through immediately, not knowing what they were looking for or doing. As they flipped through, Amelia demonstrated how she found a picture that she wanted and cut out. She then glued this little piece to her tissue-papered head shape. Students paid little attention and cut haphazardly. Seeing that the children lacked direction, Amelia made an effort to guide the activity, cutting out a soccer ball, “I’m going to make my nose out of a soccer ball.” This immediately sent two children sitting side-by-side into giggles. JPC leaned over laughing and said, “A soccer ball!” And, IC responded, “This is hilarious.”

This table of children chatted as they cut out different magazine images. One child used a picture of a cracker as a mouth and another placed a strawberry where the nose should be on their illustrations. This table worked longer than the other three tables, as the children at each of these tables showed less focus on the task, using the materials to create without constructing faces.

*Interpretation of Scene 3*

This scene exhibits the significant role that art object choice plays in students’ ability to make connections and have meaningful interactions with art. The use of
Arcimboldo’s *Summer* and *Autumn* with their identifiable fruits and vegetables provides conditions that support connection and relevance for students. Students were able to easily identify and label these objects, as they are a common part of their everyday life. Equally important, these works possess an element of humor challenging typical perceptions due to their portrayal of non-traditional objects - fruits and vegetables - composing a portrait. The unexpected quality of these artworks piques students’ interests, as they find this to be unusual and funny. Students extended this experience in their own art making and found substitutions of facial features with other objects “hilarious;” therefore, humor and activation of imagination here contribute to engagement with the subject.

Students’ comments about both pedagogy and content emerge, as references to “lost and find” and a “puzzle” support the relevant activity of identifying objects within a mixture and labeling these objects. Additionally, HC asks, “Did you know I’m growing a garden?” following this lesson. This interest and translation from an artwork to the relevant life event he was currently involved in indicates transference to a different setting or aspect of his life. By opening up the conversation to allow for personal sharing and the thoughtful use of a universal topic, such as fruits and vegetables, the conditions for making connections naturally exist. Unfortunately, I found this to be a missed opportunity for a teacher’s interjection of further questioning about these personal connections and conversation. While opening the discussion to allow for spontaneous sharing was present, there was a failure to expand upon this student interest. The elements of connection and imagination emerge in this lesson, thus illustrating the
integration of aesthetic education themes at play and leading to student engagement (Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2010).

**Scene 4: Catherine’s Class**

After dividing into three separate groups and being paired with Catherine or an assistant teacher, children rotated around three activities: creating treasure maps, singing songs, and reading a storybook. One group of six children sat in front of an assistant teacher, Noelle, on a small, red circular carpet. They started, but quickly dissolved into lying down or lounging back on their hands. Noelle introduced a wordless book about visiting a museum. With each turning page, she explained what is happening in the pictures and asked questions related to the book and their personal experiences. The group of children also offered their own ideas about the pictures. She flipped to a page with the book’s characters loading the school bus, and one child (LTC) offered, “I’ve never rode on a school bus. I’ve ridden on a shuttle bus.” Later, he interjected, “You know what, whenever I come to the museum, I always hold my mom’s hand.” The mentioning of these thoughts did not have any need for response, rather just acted to inform others of her experience. Several other children then relayed their own experiences with school buses or the museum.

The story then changed as the main character was separated from his group and found a secret door, thus relating to the class’s detective theme. Noelle guided the conversation around this new development. “Look! He finds a secret door. What’s in there?” she asked. SC immediately responded, “Treasure!”
The students looked on intently as the main character entered a map in the book and found himself in a maze. With Noelle’s prompting, they realized they must complete a maze to help this character. Several students in the group completed different mazes, tracing their fingers on the illustrations of the book. Some completed the mazes quickly, while others took more time to figure out the challenge. All children, whether sitting or lying on their stomachs on the carpet, watched closely as each child participated.

Later in the elevator, Catherine prompted students’ exploration of the gallery. She asked them to look for an object, where they could hide things; “Something you could put treasure in,” she added. The teachers guided the group to the Spanish Colonial gallery. As they turned the corner into the gallery, the kids started to notice a wooden chest on a platform in the center of the gallery, and they erupted into “Oooos,” as their excitement about recognizing a treasure chest was palpable. Catherine directed the students to sit with their groups, as the kids swarmed the platform. In her group she led a discussion about the object. She inquired, “What would you put in there?” Students shared all their ideas — “Treasure, secret stuff, diamonds, golden, pizza, picture, golden sword, armor, diamond sword, painting, something special.” These responses iterated or built off of each other’s ideas, all staying within a reasonable notion of precious objects. Digging deeper, Catherine asked, “Who owned it?” To which, students replied - “kings and pirates.” The idea of pirates owning this chest was challenged by one student (TC), as he shared, “They don’t take chests, they just get treasure. They would want more.”

After spending more time with this object and wandering around the gallery, the group started to become a large mass with kids looking and meandering all over the
room. They commented on different things they are seeing and I struggled to not interject with some guidance on managing the students. Once Catherine regained some structure to the group with her assistants taking small groups of children, again, they arrived at another object in a case. This object was a box in the collection of Mexican Art.

Catherine asked her group, “What kinds of things would you put in there?” One child responded, “Little things.” And, Catherine probed further, “Why are there so many doors? What would you put in there?” Several children in the small group then offered the answers, “Tiaras, treasure, mazes.” Remaining close to the group, one child stood, arm held in the air with one finger pointing out towards the box’s case. His eyes looked intently and his mouth moved slightly, as he motioned his finger. “There are 10 drawers.” Another child stood and then counted from afar. Whispering to a teacher, “There are 11.” Relating to the book from earlier that morning due to the shape of a door on the box, one child (OC) exclaimed, “That’s a secret door right there!” Catherine followed this line of thought, “What shape is the door?” He then hoisted his hand and traced the shape of the door in the air. Two other children then stood and start counting the number of doors on the box.

In the classroom, Catherine introduced the art project of making treasure chests out of small boxes. The students sat or kneeled on the carpet with all eyes directed towards Catherine:

She explained, “I made mine look like wood, but we could make it look like a book, so that it’s sneaky…”

And, a child (AC) interjected, “Or I can put special treasure in it.”
Catherine then finished her sentence “…so no one would notice that it was a treasure box.”

One child (YC) then said to the group, “I could put roses on it.”

To which, Catherine asked, “Did you see roses on the chests in the gallery?”

The child responded, “Yes.”

This prompted another child (EC) to share, “I saw a treasure chest with handles on it…and one with a key right by the lock.”

Catherine responded, “Maybe you could put a lock on yours,” and then asked the group, “What did you see on the treasure chest upstairs?”

Several children started talking at the same time, but few directly answered her question. One child (AC) launched into a description of all the things he had made in the class, throughout the week, and then moved into describing for the group what he planned on doing with his treasure box:

“I will bring it to parties or […] and no one would know,” he shared.

A teaching assistant, Ashley, responded asking, “What did we talk about with all those drawers and doors in the gallery?”

Another boy (BC) answered, “Because you could put one treasure in one drawer and they won’t know, because they’ll get…think there isn’t anything in there.”
“Might confuse the pirates?” Ashley asked.

“Maybe you have so many treasures; can’t hide all in one places [sic].” AC offered.

“Maybe the pirates didn’t know it was a chest, just thought…,” BC trailed off.

AC responded, “The law if you leave them on the lawn and the pirates and you carve one just like that and you put it in there, you would trick them.”

A third boy, LTC, added, “I have a brother who’s littler [sic] than me and if he finds out it’s a treasure chest and thinks there’s something in there and it will be empty, and I’m trying to [have him] think there’s nothing in it.”

AC asked impatiently, “Are we going to make the boxes today?”

And, Catherine instructed the group, “Find a seat.”

Hearing this prompt, the kids jumped up and hurried to seats at the tables, anxiously awaiting their supplies and discussing their ideas. Their conversation during the group time, though not linear, traced along their thought process and intentionality in what they will be creating and how it related to the things that they saw in the galleries.

*Interpretation of Scene 4*

Again rooted in a familiar topic and area of interest for young children, treasure and pirates, Catherine introduces a topic with connection and reiterates with experiences in the galleries and an art making extension. This activity is engaging due to its activation
of students’ imagination, through inference in a wordless story, in the galleries as they imagine what could possibly be hidden in a treasure box, and by creating their own secret box inspired by art objects. The connection built by introducing these objects through the mystery and excitement of treasure provides for students to engage quickly and heightens their interest in different art objects. When students reference the things they have seen in the gallery, such as when one child shares, “I saw a treasure chest with handles on it…and one with a key right by the lock” and then brings this idea into his art making, he demonstrates translating these experiences into his current creative endeavors.

The theme of imagination is again present in this scene, as students must imagine the use of an art object and how they would take on creating their own art using inspiration from the collection (Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2010). Through dialogue students were prompted to imagine the possibility of what could be stored in the chest and box in the gallery, which lead to excited exploration of historical objects and transferred into students’ creations. Additionally, the environment established in the class encouraged risk-taking and sharing out of ideas, as demonstrated by Catherine’s approach to letting students talk in their small groups and as a whole class about their plans for making and regarding the collection objects.

Scene 5: Elise’s Class

In the classroom, Elise gathered the students on the carpet. She brought out a basket filled with small musical instruments - shakers, drums, and bells. To the group, she asked whether they had musical instruments. Several students responded all at once and all children inched closer in towards the basket:
“My grandma…” SC started to say, and AC interrupted.

“My mom has a little guitar from when she was little.”

KC then added, “I have a whole box of musical instruments.”

Trying to refocus the group, Elise called out, “Eyes on me, we lost our listening ears. Sit on edge of carpet. Do you think I want you fighting about an instrument?”

Students shook their heads or said, “No.”

Elise contined, “We are going to jam - do you know what that means? Song is ‘Be yourself,’ if you want to dance.”

She turned on the music and several students began dancing, while the whole class started to play instruments. Noticing that kids were starting to play their instruments, some with various angles or approaches, she mentioned, “There are different ways to use your instrument,” and demonstrated different ways to shake their instruments around. Following her lead, the children started to shake their instruments in new ways.

When the song ended, Elise gathered the instruments and directed their attention forward. She shared about a drum she had brought in for demonstration and her teaching assistant’s musical ability, “I have a drum. Did you know Neal plays the drums? I’ve asked him to play loud and soft for you.” As Neal started to play, demonstrating the different sounds created by playing on the inside and outside of the drum; the class sat mesmerized, scooting closer to watch. One student (CC) whispered, “I have a trumpet.”

Later, holding on to a rope lined with hanging ribbon loops, the class slowly walked into the African Art gallery looking up towards the high ceiling and all the art
they pass. Elise instructed the group to sit on the floor near a platform with a group of objects, including several drums. After some confusion with the rope’s placement on the floor, she got their attention and directed the group to look at one drum. As Elise motioned to the drum on the platform and then to the one she is holding next to her:

“Would this drum…would it sound the same as this one?” she asked.

Shaking his head, BC, answered, “Because it doesn’t look like the exact same, because that drum is not as curved in.”

Responding to this description, Elise prompted, “If I had to trace…put your hands up to trace it in the air.” Following her cue, the children raised their hands and traced the drum’s shape in the air.

To answer her question, KC responded, “The size - it’s bigger, could be a lower sound.”

“It is a little more straighter [sic],” SC added.

Following this line of questioning, Elise asked, “Quieter or louder?” “Louder,” CC definitively answered.

Elise noticed some touching, playing, and preoccupation with the rope laying on the ground, and redirected, “Walking rope down.” CC continued, “Bottom is shaped,” and trailed off as he raised his hand to indicate the round shape of the drum.

Following this thought, Elise asked the group, “And, what do you see on it?”
SC’s hand raised, and she said, “Elephants and string and sticks to hold it down at the top.”

Noticing a distant sound of music from a different gallery, CC said, “I want to go see what else is making music ….”

Elise returned the attention to her line of questioning, “What animals do you see?”

Kids contributed all their ideas aloud, “Flamingos, bird, peacock, spiral…that might be a snake.”

Elise then introduced their next activity, “We are going to read a story - cool story to use our…”

Pausing to touch her head, the students responded, “impressions,”

Elise then completed her sentence, “…to think about a story behind the drum.”

As she read, the kids craned to see the book. Some children wiggled their bodies, while others sat up on their knees to see, but despite the movement, they remained calm, responded to Elise’s questions, and made comments throughout. When she reached the end, the kids started to move more. One boy (AC) said, “That was awesome.”

Elise introduced the idea, “Drums are used in all different cultures. Sometimes used as a signal times to do something - time to dance or go to the dinner table.” She then directed the conversation to describe a drumming activity. She had a bag filled with small slips of paper. Each piece had an everyday activity printed on it; activities such as dancing and eating dinner. She explained that the students’ role would be to come up one
at a time, pull a slip and then create a rhythm or pattern that would indicate it was time to
do a certain activity. She pulled a slip to demonstrate, and read aloud, “Time to wake up.”
She then beat a slow rhythm on the drum that gradually gets faster. Swaying back and
forth, the group of children watched in anticipation as she drummed in the galleries. The
first child (AC) was then called to the front of the group and smiling she stood to go up.
As a child (MC) mentioned, “I don’t want to do it.” JC sat excitedly and shared, “I really
want to do it.”

Elise read the slip that had been pulled, “Time to make art.” AC then tapped her
fingers on the edge of the top of the drum, and said, “Like thinking.” Another child (CC)
asked, “Tapping your finger where you’re making…?” AC responded, “Like she’s
thinking it’s time to make the art.” After her turn, JC walked up to the drum, banged the
surface, stopped, and walked away smiling without further explanation. Elise called the
next child (KC) up to the drum. Again, she read the slip, “Time to walk.” KC played the
drum softly, saying, “Walking feet sound.”

Another child (DC) made her way to the front of the group and Elise read the slip,
“Time to play.” At this, DC played the drum loudly, and articulated her idea, “Time to
play, like and walk stomps feet and bangs.” With the next child, Elise shared the writing
on the slip, saying, “Time to be quiet.” IC smiled and made light finger taps on the drum
surface, sharing, “It’s like a mouse.” The last child (XC) walked up the drum and listened
to Elise whisper what the slips said in his ear. He banged the drum’s surface forcefully.
Elise shared with the group, “That was time to eat veggies.” To which, XC shared, “That
was spinach!”
Back in the studio, the students had decorated large strips of paper that would be attached to tin cans to act as the drum bases. Some have included animals inspired by those on the drum in the gallery, however most decorated them with insects and butterflies. They then began to construct the top of the drum. This activity was highly organized with students getting step-by-step instructions, as well as having a teacher or teaching assistant at each table to support at each instance of question or need for a helping hand. As a piece of paper was stretched across the top of each can and fastened with rubber bands, students showed excitement, smiling and demonstrating how their drums play. With this playing, one child (CC) covered her ears and shouted, “Too loud!” While other children started moving around the room, drumming on their instruments, singing along, or tapping markers on the side of the can.

Based on students’ interest during the previous day, Elise offered the idea of playing a concert for lady bugs out in the small garden. She asked, “Should we wake them up and then put them to sleep?” The class agreed, and as a group they walked in a single-file line out to the garden. They paraded with one small arm wrapped around the base of their drums and the other tapping along with the group. Elise instructed them to change their beat as they walk through the space, all following the same path around the garden. Students had focused looks on their faces and squinted in the light of the mid-day sun.

Interpretation of Scene 5

In considering this particular scene, there are multiple conditions that contributed to students being engaged with the content and experience. Similar to the structure of
Catherine’s class, Elise has a three-part format to this lesson, including a multi-sensory introduction to an idea, a dialogue-rich interaction in the galleries that is focused on one object, and an open-ended art making activity that reiterates concepts or utilizes inspiration from the gallery experience. Elise’s introduction of the drum through a multi-sensory experience of listening to, touching, and seeing a drum before experiencing the collection art object, added depth an aesthetic element to the experience and led to engagement. Sensory experience, or exploring an object through the senses, aligns with one of the elements of perceptual teaching framework (Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2010). This structure is characterized by active engagement, as it calls on a large amount of student participation. Rather than with verbal reactions, students show a high level of engagement with their excitement around participating - playing instruments, listening and interacting with the storytelling, and in creating their artworks. With this active participation throughout, this scene illustrates how students and the teacher are engaged in a certain level of risk-taking. The element of performance and using unusual materials in the galleries pushes both students and teacher to be confident creatively and take risks in a public forum, one which does not typically encourage loud noise or distraction.

In order to encourage this level of risk taking, Elise had scaffolded the experience through reiteration of a topic and relevant themes that allowed for easy entry points. The modeling and demonstrating in a comfortable setting of the classroom allowed students to interact with the instruments prior to their reinforcing experience in the galleries. Then, when in the galleries the paper slips with “time for bed” or “time for dinner,” students were asked to take risks in performing for others in a public forum, yet the universality to
the experiences that they were creating rhythms for gave an easy point of connection and relevance. Each of these activities built on one another, thus leading to both intellectual scaffolding, and a growing level of comfort for students that allowed for taking risks through active engagement (Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2010).

Summary of Classroom Observations

Based on these five exemplary classroom scenes, the curricular conditions that led to student engagement can be characterized as 1) having relevance and connection to students’ lives, interests, and prior knowledge, 2) involving imaginative elements, 3) providing an environment supporting risk-taking, 4) involving active engagement, and 5) stimulating multiple senses. Due to the nature of these characteristics, the curriculum of the summer class could also be characterized as aligning with the ideas of perceptual teaching (Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2010). This relationship also has implications for these conditions potentially providing for the possibility of having an aesthetic experience. The implementation of these conditions also contributed to students engagement when pedagogy took on a quality of making students feel comfortable engaging in the museum setting, discussing art and ideas, experimenting with new art processes, and understanding connections between activities and observed objects.

Teachers’ and Parents’ Perceptions of Experience

Teacher Interviews

When defining intentions for the summer classes and in reflecting on the experience of the four days, teachers shared their perception of student experience, articulating the behaviors that indicated when students were most actively involved.
Acknowledging that engagement differs for each child, Catherine shared that “[students] were most engaged during the art making.” She attributed this engagement to students having their “own creative agency,” having an experience with new materials, and the “few rules” that allowed for “[avoiding] a ‘right’ thing that they should be doing.” She also discussed the other components of her class that included connection building and active engagement, which was often seen in their small-group time. Catherine mentioned the “individual attention during story time” and how the “boys especially liked the movement component.” The structure of allowing for student response time in small groups and providing prompts for kinesthetic movement follow the themes of aesthetic education, as this pedagogy of giving time for connection and active engagement supported the level of engagement (Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2010).

Amelia and Elise also discussed this element of connection, as they expressed seeing students most excited when relating art or the conversation to their own life, whether about families, animals, instruments, or other previous experiences. Elise cited specific activities of when she felt students were most engaged, especially the drum concert in the garden and an art making activity when students were using movement and connecting to the art they had visited in the galleries. These moments of connection and active engagement served to represent the moment she saw students the more involved in the learning and creating process. These responses reiterate the importance of personal connection and active engagement as conditions within curriculum to lead to engaging experiences.
**Parent Questionnaires**

Observations and parent questionnaires provide indicators of received curriculum for students. As described throughout the data presentation, I have interpreted each scene to identify the elements of class activities, pedagogy, and student interaction that most contribute to students’ engagement, which will continue to be addressed in the conclusions. The scenes presented illustrate student engagement, which can help articulate the conditions that lead to each of these experiences.

Of the thirty-nine parents, who were sent emails with questionnaire links, seventeen parents or caregivers responded to the two questions. The second question and its sub question addressed the parents’ responses to their children’s experiences at the summer class. These responses were based on how their child had talked about or in some way referenced the summer class experience, either positively or negatively, and in what context these topics were emerging.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3</th>
<th>Parent Questionnaire Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emerging Theme</strong></td>
<td><strong>Revisited and discussed museum and/or specific objects with parent/caregiver</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Has taken me to several of the places of artwork &amp; told me a little about the discussion surrounding it. Then expressed those same thoughts (loud &amp; soft sounds/colors) with other artwork (03.2)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- She showed me everything they looked at. (09.2)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- My kids love that they know the museum better than I do. (17.2)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Expressed desire to return to camp again</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- I asked her if she would like to attend another art camp next summer and she said yes (05.2)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- She would love to go back next year and in years to come (11.2)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- He asked me if she could go next year. (16.2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Enjoyed and talked about art project(s) | - Talked about her projects (01.2)  
- She talked about the different art she saw in the [gallery] and how it correlated with the things she made (02.2)  
- Proudly showed all the instruments made during class time and described the artwork that inspired it. (03.2)  
- She talked about the different things she made, which materials they used (04.2)  
- It took most of the week for her to let everything settle in but on the last day she would not stop talking about all she had experienced throughout the week. When she traveled out of state to visit her grandma and grandpa, she had to take her bag of instruments to share with everyone. (05.2)  
- My daughter like the variety of materials used and like how many projects she made. She also liked how she went back to some of her projects to add more elements. (08.2)  
- Great teachers, fun projects, and interesting learning throughout the museum. (17.2)  
- She loved getting to use all the different materials (09.2)  
- He loved his teachers and doing crafts. (16.2)  
- Talked about… the art she could touch in one of the exhibits (01.2)  
- She talked about the different art she saw in the [gallery] and how it correlated with the things she made (02.2)  
- She talked about…the works they saw around the museum (04.2)  
- She loved going to see the art in the museum! (09.2)  
- The boys’ dad is an artist and the camp provided some excellent bonding opportunities over different kinds of art and media (12.1)  
- He described what he looked at that day and how his impressions shared the art he made. (12.2)  
- He told me what he made and what he looked at in the galleries. (13.2)  
- Stories and artwork (07.2) |
| Shared an art experience from the galleries |  |
| Talked about teachers | - He really liked his teacher and the other helpers in his group. (13.2)  
- …liked the teachers…said they were nice (14.2)  
- He loved his teachers and doing crafts. (16.2)  
- Great teachers, fun projects, and interesting learning throughout the museum. (17.2) |
Expressed general positive experience
- She loved it! (02.2)
- She literally ran out of the door yelling, “Mommy, this was the best day ever!” (06.2)
- He said he had a great time. (16.2)

The parent questionnaires provided insight into the events that transpired following the class lessons and full week of classes, as well as focus on the degree to which the intentions of the camp were fulfilled. Their responses are listed in Table 3 according to the several main thematic threads I identified in my analysis. Questionnaires reported that students had: 1) an overall positive feeling about the museum and/or summer class, 2) shared about art and gallery experiences, 3) expressed pride in the artwork that they created, and 4) articulated some connection between their art making and time in the galleries. When considering the initial intentions defined by the administrators and teachers, parents’ reports can be organized to identify alignment or misalignment with these intentions and the received curriculum or experience.

Whether referencing the teachers, a desire to return to camp, or a generally expressing enjoyment, a theme of positive sentiment about the summer class was demonstrated in the data. Of the 17 completed parent questionnaires, 7 parents additionally discussed a child sharing an experience had in the galleries, both in relation to revisiting relevant art objects in the galleries or sharing about them. One parent mentioned, “The boys’ dad is an artist and the camp provided some excellent bonding opportunities over different kinds of art and media” (12.1), illustrating the power of the experience to transfer into other long-lasting moments of connection. Additionally, a questionnaire participant expressed her children’s excitement around being more familiar
with the museum than her parent (17.2). Other parents discussed the direct connection children were able to articulate between the art and their personal experience, such as when a child returned to a gallery with a parent discussing the conversation her class had and then “expressed those same thoughts…loud and soft sounds/colours…with other artwork” (03.2). Thirteen parents out of the seventeen wrote about a child sharing their art projects. A parent shared that her child shared his artworks without prompting and, “[he] loved the fruits of his labor,” indicating a sense of pride in his work (12.2). Parents also described children’s sharing about their artwork, and how these creations were inspired by works in the galleries, such as the instruments (03.2). These reactions illustrate experiences from the summer classes that carried into students’ lives beyond their time in the museum. They also confirm that the intentions for the classes, including comfort in the museum setting, empowerment to talk about art and try new art forms, and interpret connections between activities and collection objects, were to some degree achieved.

Two parent responses indicated their dissatisfaction with elements of the summer class, but as they were only represented once they did not show up in the themes in Table 2. One parent mentioned a greater emphasis should have been placed on time spent in the galleries: From my point of view I think there could have been more time spent in the art museum itself, maybe in small groups of 3. When I take them there they love the galleries and I think that should be a focus of the class, to enjoy the art in the galleries. (14.2) Additionally, another parent expressed his desire for the camp to last longer, as it presents
challenges for working parents “to figure out what to do on Monday and in the mornings and afternoons” (11.1).

Conclusions

Structural Dimension

The aims and objectives developed for the summer class experience were focused primarily on comfort to empower students and a curricular connection to the collection. With each of these scenes, components related to the structure of the class, especially referencing the environment and classroom organization remained consistent across the different classes. The classroom organization and environment remained unchanged, which suggests that by providing the structure in this way it contributes to the conditions leading to engagement. Additionally, the setting of the art museum for this summer class has major implications on the potential experience. Seen in the curricular and intentional dimension, the museum environment influences many of the decisions for the summer classes.

Intentional Dimension

In addition to the conclusions about the conditions leading to engagement, it is important to acknowledge the success to which the initial objectives and intentions were carried out, through teacher reflection, observation, and parent questionnaire responses. As seen in the parent responses, students shared about art and gallery experiences, expressed pride in the artwork that they created, and articulated some connection between their art making and time in the galleries, as well as enjoying their teachers and expressing an interest in returning to camp again. In looking at the alignment or
misalignment between these intentions and the received or reported experience, there is consistency among the administrators and teachers’ intentions for the class and that which the parents reported hearing or experiencing from their child. This alignment indicates that providing the conditions for engagement, as seen when the aesthetic themes of education were apparent in curricular design, also supported accomplishing the intentions and objectives of the classes based on the students’ responses.

Curricular and Pedagogical Dimensions

As introduced in the beginning of this chapter, many of the concepts behind perceptual teaching - connections, risk-taking, imagination, sensory experiences, and active engagement - can be identified in conditions that led to engagement for young children in the art museum summer class experience (Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2010). The five scenes depicted illustrate curriculum and pedagogy in which students showed signs of engagement, therefore serving as reference for articulating these conditions. The continuity between these three teachers’ choices in regards to curriculum and pedagogy corresponded with their use of active engagement to support their lessons. Teachers also integrated at least one other dimension from perceptual teaching, such as connections, sensory experience, risk-taking, or imagination (Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2010).

In most scenes, connections were present either through inherently relevant or universal ideas, or connections built through scaffolded experience that established prior knowledge in the class (Vygotsky, 1978). As portrayed by Elise’s use of natural sounds relating to nature scenes in paintings, students made connections to their personal experiences with these sounds or their time in nature, thus heightening their engagement
with the objects and the concept of quiet or loud sounds in these artworks. In the same way, Amelia chose artwork that portrayed fruits and vegetables, thus providing an artwork accessible to young children based on their experience labeling these objects in their life. Catherine helped support students’ connection by creating a foundation of shared experience, as demonstrated through her small group centers that introduced both animals and searching for treasure through books, active movement, and art making.

The structure created in several of Catherine and Elise’s lessons, which took advantage of an arch of activities organized around a certain topic, contributed to the successful engagement of students in this environment. This flow of lessons also served to create frequent sharing opportunities and connection between gallery experiences and art making efforts.

Lessons also utilized the dimensions of imagination, sensory experience, and risk-taking to support student engagement. Accessing imagination through open-ended art making and inviting students to imagine in their dialogue related to an artwork was seen in many of the lessons and in the facilitation of discussion. At first risk-taking was less obviously used in lessons, with the exception of the drum activity. However, upon revisiting the transcripts, I began to realize the presence of risk-taking opportunities such as students sharing personal experiences and discussing their ideas about an artwork without fear of having the wrong answer. This behavior, which would be considered risk-taking for older children or adults, was occurring often with these young children, but due to the nature of age group and the personalities of these children, these actions did not initially appear to be uncomfortable or pushing them beyond their comfort zone.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Research has identified the benefits of exposing young children to the visual arts, as it contributes to visual awareness, pre-literacy and pre-writing skills, and modes of communication (Danko-McGhee, 2007b; Wachowiak & Clements, 2006). Understanding the development of the early childhood brain from birth to five years old, experience in novel environments and repetition of routine supports a network of brain connections contributing to a foundation for experience to translate into learning throughout a lifetime (Eliot, 1999; CFDC, 2011; Healy, 2004). Developmentally-appropriate practice indicates the importance of play, self-regulation, and relationships to support this maturation of the brain’s neurological pathways (CFDC, 2011; NAEYC, 2009; Healy, 2004). While neuroscience and early childhood educational theory have contributed to the development of programming models for both formal and informal environments, there remains a need to better understand the ways in which the museum setting can contribute to the early learning of young children. Research emerging from all types of museums has contributed to an awareness of audience and has likewise contributed to the creation of and iteration on programming formats (Bowers, 2012; Munley, 2012; IMLS, 2013). However, the field lacks research on the art museum summer class for four- and five-
Through observation of practice, interview, and questionnaire, this Educational Criticism depicts the educational event of an art museum summer class for four- and five-year-old children. My description and interpretation have led to a series of conclusions regarding the conditions that supported students’ experiences of the summer class in order to inform future program development within the field. The intentions behind the observed summer class provided a foundation on which the other educational components built; therefore, the goals identified in my study have implications for guiding other dimensions of schooling – structure, curriculum, and pedagogy. Through an analysis of classroom observations, I have identified how formalizing the application of the aesthetic themes of education (Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2010) to art museum summer class curriculum development can influence the conditions developed to support student engagement. Additionally, due to the nature of the perceptual teaching framework (Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2010; Moroye & Uhrmacher, 2010; Uhrmacher, 2009), the use of these ideas in developing curriculum and pedagogical methods could support providing conditions potentially leading to students having aesthetic experiences in the art museum setting, heightening the experience’s impact.

Synopsis of Study

Based on research about young children and their developmental characteristics, the need to consider early childhood education in informal learning environments, such as museums and libraries, has been a topic of interest in recent times (IMLS, 2013). The research is dominated by that of exploring young children’s experiences with their
families or caregivers in museums and libraries (Bowers, 2012), but less work has been
done to explore what the experience is for four- and five-year-old children attending art
museums without their families. The lack of research in this area contributes to the need
for study to identify the best ways to support young children when attending the museum
without their families, which is typically in summer camps or workshops, or when
attending with school groups.

Summer classes at an art museum in Denver, CO, provided an opportunity for
exploring this topic and understanding which conditions set up through intentions,
environment, class structure, curriculum, and pedagogy can lead to engagement of young
children. By acknowledging how these conditions can collectively create experience for
students, my analysis can determine the characteristics of these conditions, as well as
identify to what degree the initial goals of the class, or intended curriculum, aligned with
the observed behaviors and perceptions of the students' families, or received curriculum.
To address this inquiry, a series of questions has guided my research, as introduced in
Chapter 3. Given how the conclusions I have drawn for each build on each other, I have
organized and grouped questions to reflect this progression.

What are the intentions and goals of summer class programming for four- and five-year-
old children?

Acknowledgement of the intentions of the summer class supports an
understanding of how all other elements of the educational event contribute to reaching
these goals. In this study, intentions and main goals were identified by administrators and
teachers through interview responses. Parents also added to this discussion, as their
responses regarding interest in sending their children to an art museum summer class articulated their aims for the class. Consistent among teachers and administrators and confirmed by parents, the intentions behind the summer class were 1) providing for students to feel comfortable in the museum setting, 2) empowering students to voice their ideas and try new things creatively in this environment, and 3) developing curriculum for students to understand connection between class activities and the objects in the art museum’s collection.

The environment of the art museum has been identified as intimidating or uninviting to infrequent or first-time visitors (Edwards, Loomis, Fusco, & McDermott, 1990; Hood, 1993). Given the awareness of these visitor perceptions, museums must combat these barriers by considering the components of environment (Hood, 1993). Hood (1993) acknowledges the importance of museums providing for visitor comfort and demonstrating that these considerations emerge from care for the visitor. This concept has transferred into the work of museum educators, as the administrators and teachers expressed a desire to provide a sense of comfort for their students in their interviews. Specifically addressing the reputation of art museums, Laura alluded to the act of providing comfort as one that could change this view, starting with the museum’s youngest visitors. Teachers described comfort as children feeling welcome and a sense of belonging to the museum. This notion was expanded upon when teachers discussed a desire for students to have fun and learn how to be in a museum from this experience. Further, the idea of making young children comfortable in the museum setting stemmed
out of an interest in being an institution that outwardly indicates its value for this young audience.

The concept of empowerment repetitively appeared, as both teachers and administrators viewed the summer class experience as one that should provide students with a sense of validation for their ideas and creative contributions. Both when considering dialogue and opportunities for making in the galleries and classroom, the intention of empowerment was reliant on encouraging students to share their ideas and actively engage in their interests. Catherine discussed her desire to “create a dialogue between parent and their [sic] kids about art,” thus articulating a desire to support students’ confidence in their ideas around art. These intentions give weight to providing an environment that encourages creative freedom and promotes students sharing their opinions. While an understanding of the importance of early visual art experiences exists in the field (Danko-McGhee, 2007b; Wachowiak & Clements, 2006), research on the intention of empowering young children to discuss their opinions in this setting has received less attention. This specific goal, an idea that carries over from early childhood education of self-direction, could contribute to the art museum education field as supporting engagement in this setting.

Although an established idea, the concept of using the stimuli of a museum - the objects of the art collection - to engage visitors in meaningful looking and perceiving exercises continues to be supported by museum educators in their intentions behind summer classes (Williams, 1982). Teachers discussed how being in the environment of the art museum leads to unique circumstances for their work that would be different in
another setting, therefore connecting their lessons to the collection was of the utmost importance. Administrators articulated a similar goal for teachers and the summer class students, as they wanted to see that everything done within the class was connected to the collection to give purpose to it being held in the context of the museum. This idea was then reiterated in the parent responses indicating their desire for children to spend time in the museum and be exposed to art. The objective of taking advantage of the collection is integral to the summer class in an art museum setting.

Looking at the three main aims for classes, teachers and administrators identified that a main indicator of successfully reaching these goals was children sharing their experience with families and other teachers. Through this sharing both during the class time and with their families outside of the class, the long-lasting influence of the summer class was indicated, as discussed below.

What conditions were implemented in order to engage children in the art museum? What observed behaviors show alignment or misalignment between teacher intentions and students’ reception? What experiences have a lasting impression on children (therefore indicating engagement)? Does the child’s observed or reported engagement align with teachers’ intentions?

In considering the intentions for the summer class, teachers implemented certain conditions related to class structure, lessons taking place across the environments of the classroom and galleries, opportunities for art making, and the selection of teaching aides and focal art objects. Falling predominately in the dimensions of structure, curriculum, and pedagogy, these conditions led to experiences for students. The behaviors observed
and reported during the summer class and at home following the class supported an analysis of the level of engagement of these experiences, and to what degree the outcomes aligned with the set of intentions. By identifying these conditions that led to student engagement, their consistent characteristics can be articulated in order to inform curriculum, pedagogy, and class structure design for working with young children in the art museum setting.

Although, there was not an acknowledged use of the elements of aesthetic themes of education in the designing of curriculum, the characteristics of the conditions that led to student engagement related to the dimensions defined in this theory (Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2010). Identified in curriculum and pedagogy leading to student engagement, the characteristics of perceptual teaching, including connection, risk-taking, imagination, sensory experience, and active engagement, support the development of these conditions. 

Connection

The concept of connection and relevance was prominently illustrated in the observations, as children immediately jumped to share their relation to a work, conversation topic, or teaching aide. Whether an intellectual, emotional, sensorial, or communicative connection (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990), this theme can support different ways of presenting conditions with a similar effect. When students had a connection with a wordless book about a secret hiding place that then translated into recalling this idea in the galleries, the aspect of connection through prior experience emerges. Both in previous experiences constructed in the summer class or those that happened in a child’s personal life outside of the class, the opportunity to connect these
instances with an object in the galleries or an overarching theme speaks to the power of supporting children’s growing awareness through introductory activities and the use of universality topics or themes. Topics that had an appropriate level of connection for students included nature, instruments, animals, treasure, and people.

*Risk-taking*

Due to the characteristics of young children, when opportunities to try something new, talk in front of the group, or display their creativity are presented, it is possible to overlook the theme of risk-taking, as it appears natural for young children to participate in this manner. The conditions that were characterized by risk-taking behaviors, such as playing a rhythm on a drum surrounded by art objects and people or answering a question about an object in a nearby case with a group of peers, led to student engagement and should be considered in approaching curriculum development.

*Imagination*

Both thought of as an internal process and an act using creativity to create a product, the theme of imagination aligns with the developmentally appropriate practice (Piaget, 1945/1962). Engaging students in dialogue with objects as the focal point creates an opportunity for imagining about an object to broaden the experience; a technique Egan (1986) suggests should be a more significant aspect of early education. Stemming from this idea of asking students to allow their curiosity to lead exploration, the format of discussion utilized in the galleries was predominately inquiry-based and provided for imaginative thinking. Additionally, the opportunity to create in the studio classroom using different art materials, especially when open-ended making prompts were given,
supported children’s engagement through the activation of imagination. Following introductory activities and discussion in the galleries, art making consistently added to the conditions supporting student experience. The instances of these being the most engaging were those characterized by their open-ended quality. As illustrated in Amelia’s composite portraits, students took inspiration from the gallery experience and translated this into their collage art. Although not all students followed the parameters of creating a face, they did actively create and found humor in the opportunity to create in this way.

*Sensory experience and Active engagement*

Kinesthetic movement and sensory experiences also showed prominence in the lessons, as dancing, drumming, listening closely, and acting out animals were all included. When students were invited to take on the movement and sound of being different animals, especially birds in Catherine’s class, they then had rich conversations about birds in looking for examples of bird pots in the galleries. This was also seen in the opportunity to listen and play the drum in class, before finding one in the African Art gallery and discussing its sound as a group. These opportunities for deeply engaging with the senses, in addition to seeing objects, added to the experience and provided conditions that supported students’ engagement, as discussed in perceptual teaching.

There were also several instances of movement being encouraged through students searching the galleries. Given as a task-oriented objective, students searched for a type of object or sound associated with an object and had freedom to explore the galleries, providing for movement within the parameters of finding a particular object. The active engagement involved in each of these movement and sensory components
relates to the ideas of aesthetic themes of education (Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2010), as well as aligning with developmentally-appropriate practices (NAEYC, 2009).

Object choice

As object choice comes into consideration in curricular development and in relation to the classes’ intentions, it is important to consider its alignment with aesthetic themes to identify the implications for carrying these concepts to other environments. Object choice can be influenced by several elements from perceptual teaching to lead to student engagement, therefore I have separated this idea out to discuss further. The objects used in the observations presented included artworks with relevant subjects, easily identifiable aspects, forms that connected to the curricular topic, or sensory elements. As referenced in Chapter 4, the use of objects with nature scenes, animals, or food (i.e. fruits and vegetables), contributed to student engagement as children were familiar with these forms and could articulate the objects and connect them to events in their personal experience. Additionally, when connected to the curriculum introduced prior to their time in the galleries, students showed excitement around discovering an object that aligned with their morning discussion, such as their interaction with the treasure chest and box with a secret door. Objects that had tactile or auditory elements, such as the drum, which could then be transferred to a supplementary prop, also supported students’ interest in interacting with an object. The element of object choice and its relationship to the ideas of perceptual teaching - connection-making and sensory experience, specifically - reiterate the use of this framework in multiple dimensions of an educational event (Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2010).
Teachers both asked students questions about their interpretation of objects and allowed for them to ask their own questions about the works. As seen in Elise’s probing about the African drum, students were asked to think about the shape, use, and decoration of the drum, which had implications for the subsequent story, activity, and art making. Catherine also utilized this format in her conversation around the treasure chest, prompting students to consider what they would use a treasure chest for and who would have had this object. Finally, Amelia’s conversation with her students about the objects composing the two portraits gave an opportunity for close looking and curiosity to naturally emerge, which was seen to engage students. Each of these examples identifies the ability for object-focused inquiry to give students the opportunity to articulate and consider their ideas more deeply.

Alignment of Intentions and Perceived Experience

During the summer class, students shared personal experiences, discussed imagined ideas, conversed with peers, attended to the task of creating art, participated through physical or verbal response, and listened, all considered forms of engagement, in the gallery, classroom, and outdoor garden settings (Teaching Strategies, 2010). Parents then reported their children’s sharing about different instances at the museum, whether alluding to artworks and conversations about these objects, or about the art projects they had created. These student behaviors show the alignment between both the way in which students were engaged and the original intentions for the summer class. The considerations of the administrators and teachers’ intentions for the class, which fall into the themes of comfort, empowerment, and connection to the art museum’s collection,
were apparent in the behaviors of students during the class, as well as those reported by parents following the four-day session.

Although parents did not specifically articulate isolated experiences that they had heard from their child, the overall experience and instances of returning to specific artworks in the museum did emerge signaling the lasting effects of components of the summer class. As the concepts of comfort, empowerment, and connection to the collection were the main intentions of the administrators and the teachers, these support addressing the correlation between the two. Parents reported that their children exhibited comfort in museum setting and with working with different materials, just as expressed by teachers and administrators. Several parents also mentioned the materials and focus on art making, as their children had expressed enjoyment from this opportunity to experiment.

The concept of empowerment emerged in parents’ responses about their children. Through revisiting the museum, parents reported having children point out what they had looked at during the class. This sense of ownership in knowing the museum and feeling validated to share their experience in dialogue or prideful sharing of art projects speaks to their level of empowerment. The summer class experience also provided new avenues of connection between children and their families, just as Catherine had articulated in her initial goals.

Finally, the goal that all curricula would be related to art objects in the collection was fulfilled as demonstrated in parents’ responses regarding their children talking about and showing their families these connections. The connections made between the art
objects and the art work students’ created were mentioned in several of the parent responses, as students discussed how their art projects related to the art in the galleries. Children’s ability to articulate the inspiration for their artwork shows the influence of having each activity deeply rooted in the stories and visual aspects of the objects. Additionally, the curriculum dimensions, such as introducing sounds as a conduit for describing artwork characteristics, were reported in an example of a child bringing his parents back to the galleries and explaining the conversation had in the class, which was then followed by carrying these ideas to other works. The parent questionnaire indicates the alignment between the intentions behind all conditions implemented and the child’s experience at a summer class, as demonstrated by children’s sharing stories from the galleries, revisiting places in the museum, and sharing about their creativity and inspiration for choices.

What conditions for an art museum summer class experience lead to engagement for young children?

There is little control or universality to creating an experience for others. Instead, a set of conditions can be considered, designed, and iterated on, in order to support the potential for certain experiences. Theretofore, an art museum summer class cannot provide a singular experience for students, but can provide a set of conditions that supports student engagement regardless of each child’s unique experience. The conditions for an art museum summer class leading to engagement for young children are thus reliant on structural, intentional, curricular, and pedagogical dimensions to the educational event (Eisner, 1998). Given the level of student engagement at different
moments across the three classes observed, five of which are highlighted in the data presentation, the conditions set up for these moments transfer into my conclusions as those that can lead to the engagement of young children. Due to my guiding research questions, I addressed intentions in the previous questions, whereas here I attend to the elements of structure, curriculum, and pedagogy.

The structure of the art museum summer classes was the most consistent component across the three different classes observed. There is a need to mention to the fact that all moments of engagement that were highlighted did occur in the classroom, in the galleries, or in the small garden, which indicates that this environment did provide, in part, to the engagement of students. Of greater importance, the structure of the class, in regards to the scheduling of the day, including start and end time, and the inclusion of a snack, contributed to the set of conditions that allowed for student engagement. All three of the classes were held from 9:30 am -12:30 pm. Teachers were encouraged to take at least one snack break during the 3-hour class, which students could bring food for or would be provided by the summer class staff. Other elements of the classes’ structure relied on pedagogical decisions.

Upon a foundation of intentions rooted in established theory of comfort and object-oriented learning and developing ideas around empowerment, the set of conditions that led to engagement can be characterized according to the aesthetic themes of education (Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2010; Moroye & Uhrmacher, 2010; Uhrmacher, 2009). Focusing on connection, risk-taking, imagination, sensory experience, and active engagement, this formalized structure can contribute a model for curricular and pedagogical development.
of an art museum summer class. Due to the tenants of perceptual teaching theory (Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2010), the instances that align with these elements, not only demonstrate engagement, but also potentially create a set of conditions that could lead to aesthetic experience, further elevating the possible experience.

Contrastingly, certain pedagogical elements led to student engagement, but instead of engagement with content or interpersonal sharing that was related to the lesson topic, play, or creative art making choices, students were attending to interpersonal relationships with intentional exclusion of others and emotional aggression. The pedagogical element at play in these scenarios was a lack of proactive classroom management techniques and engagement of children in struggles of authority. I elected to not specifically highlight these instances in my data presentation, as the components of both curriculum and pedagogy that lead to student engagement with content, lesson objectives, and creative exercises were more pertinent to the research problem.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings from this study serve to formalize a process for creating summer class programming for young children in an art museum setting. While not formulaic in the sense of creating a curriculum unit to follow, applying aesthetic educational themes to this context with this audience provides a framework for educators to utilize when developing plans for curriculum and pedagogy (Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2010; Moroye & Uhrmacher, 2010; Uhrmacher, 2009). This framework can be considered to support students’ engagement with overarching themes, while also interacting with the visual arts.
Each of these summer classes had goals for environment, pedagogy, and curriculum emerging from a desire to create conditions for comfort, empowerment, and meaningful connection with the objects in the collection. The elements of comfort and empowerment dictated choices about exposing students to different artworks, processes, mediums, and ways to interact with objects. Whereas, making connections between the collection and their lives or creations led to considering relevant topics and themes to drive conversations around carefully chosen works. These intentions combine with the framework of perceptual curriculum planning created a set of conditions leading to student engagement.

Based on these intentions, the conditions provided for student experience included those of structure, curriculum, and pedagogy. Although the structure, which includes class organization and environment, remained relatively consistent across the three classrooms, this element has implications due to its importance in the intentions and influenced decisions around curriculum and pedagogy. The structure of the summer class with a three-hour session in the morning, which included one snack break, enabled time enough for typically four separate aspects to the daily schedule. These components were utilized in different ways by different teachers, but this construction to the day did provide for exemplary instances of engagement.

Additionally, the different environments that were shared by all three classes must be considered to their influence over student engagement. The studio, while problematic for some teachers because they did not support the students physically with missized tables, chairs, and sinks and not characteristically beautiful, did give opportunity for kids
to actively engage in art making. Teachers utilized this space appropriately and provided students with materials in organized ways, thus contributing to their ability to participate. Interactions in these spaces also provided a conceptual atmosphere of comfort and acceptance, which supported utilizing this environment to encourage students’ exploration and experimentation. I have discussed the role of object choice in overall curriculum design, but the environment of the galleries, which was identified as an essential ingredient by teachers, administrators, and parents, greatly contributed to the structure of the summer class.

With the adopted set of intentions and class structure, findings related to the curriculum and pedagogy serve to provide formalization of a framework, which could be transferred to other programs of a similar nature. The research identified in the review of the literature led me to consider the importance of self-identification, play and imagination, and relationships in early educational experiences of young children (NAEYC, 2009; CFDC, 2011). With this awareness of developmentally-appropriate practice, the scenes illustrating student engagement exhibit the appropriate application of Uhrmacher and Moroye’s (2010) ideas on aesthetic themes of education. Five of the six components of this theory - connection, risk-taking, imagination, sensory experience, and active engagement - were identified throughout the curriculum of the highlighted lessons. Considering these components as conditions for curricula, students’ interaction with the content can be characterized as engaged. Students also are provided with conditions leading to experiences that are carried into other aspects of their lives, as demonstrated by the observations and parent reports in this study. The framework also aligns with
educational models for working with young children, as themes for lessons and object-choice are relevant to students by having a universal quality that builds on their prior knowledge and allows personal connections to occur naturally. Active engagement is another characteristic of this framework that, in this context, offered students with opportunities to move, converse, search, and create. This element was supported by encouraging sensory experiences, imagination, and risk-taking, as each instance of active participation pushed students to engage their senses, try new things, and conceive of new ideas through their imaginations.

Finally, the implementation of curriculum by summer class teachers supported a forum for sharing out of connections through dialogue, story, and prompts to consider what is possible. The main goals of comfort and empowerment further contributed to the construct for pedagogy leading to engagement, as teachers’ ability to scaffold connection and personal interest to connect to the collection in meaningful ways. The extended explorations of a theme or topic supported the use of open-ended questions and art making opportunities, as students could construct their own interpretation of an idea or of an artwork.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

My study provides an analysis of the conditions of summer classes in an art museum setting that can lead to engaging young children. This work supports utilizing a curricular framework that is developed using the ideas of perceptual teaching and curriculum planning, which can lead not only to engagement, but also aesthetic experiences for young students (4- and 5-year-old children). As identified in the
limitations, this study looked at the conditions in place for a four-day summer class for young children held in an art museum setting, therefore there are remaining questions related to providing for this audience with different time or situational parameters. Considering there were multiple touch points with these groups of students with the four-day format of the class, further research is needed to determine the conditions for engagement when students are making one visit to the museum, such as young children visiting with their school, child care, or community group class, or during a workshop.

Additionally, the application of the perceptual teaching model of curriculum development has been to the observations of this audience in a single setting, but with changes to the context or setting, further research must determine the success to which the use of this structure provides for conditions that lead to engagement. Object-choice was addressed in the analysis of curricular planning, as frequently the artworks chosen that led to student engagement were works that students were connected to or could engage their imaginations. However, a deeper analysis of artwork choice that provides for these two criteria would support museum educators’ planning for this audience and compliment the research describing young children’s aesthetic preferences (Danko-McGhee, 2006).

While research has identified the aesthetic preferences of young children when in the art museum setting (Danko-McGhee, 2006), the application of this curricular and pedagogical framework to art museum programming for this audience does bring into question the consideration of how art object choice influences engagement. We know that children gravitate to objects that are three-dimensional, shiny, have recognizable subject
matter (i.e. animals), or have a subject matter that is associated with play (i.e. dress-up) (Danko-McGhee, 2006), however further research is needed to understand which objects act as the most appropriate catalyst for these engaging experiences. As indicated in my conclusions, art objects that offer relevant subject to lead to connection-building or those with tactile or auditory elements to lead to deepened sensory experience support the use of perceptual teaching strategies to actively engage students with a work. Although these observations were an aspect of my analysis, research could focus on the medium, scale, and subject matter used in artworks to identify the most appropriate application of this framework.

Identifying what conditions best support this audience through engagement in all contexts for their visit, whether it is with family, school or community group, summer class, or other programs with other children. My research has focused on one type of visit to the art museum; however it is important to continue to address the ways in which the art museum can be an engaging and educational environment for young children regardless of their visit type. Additionally, attending to the application of perceptual teaching and curriculum planning to educational programming developed in art museums will further explore how these programs can support engagement and lead to aesthetic experiences for young children.
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You and your child are being asked to be in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don’t understand before deciding whether or not to take part.

You and your child are invited to participate in a research study about the experience of young children at an art museum summer class.

If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to give consent to having a research student observe in your child’s classroom. You will also be sent a voluntary online questionnaire following your child’s summer class.

There are no potential risks or discomforts associated with participation.

By doing this research I hope to learn about what learning approaches and activities lead to the greatest engagement for 4 and 5 year-old children in the art museum setting.

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You may choose not to participate for any reason.

If you have questions about this research study, you may contact Kristina Mahoney, Kristina.mahoney@gmail.com.

If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during research participation, please contact Paul Olk, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at 303-871-4531, or you may contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs by email, du-irb@du.edu, or call
303-871-4052 or write to the University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121.
The University of Denver Institutional Review Board has determined that this study qualifies as exempt from full IRB oversight.
You should receive a copy of this form for your records. Please sign the next page if you understand and agree to the above. If you do not understand any part of the above statement, please ask the researcher any questions you have.

**Agreement to be in this study**
I have read this paper about the study or it was read to me. I understand the possible risks and benefits of this study. I know that being in this study is voluntary. If I choose to be in this study I will get a copy of this consent form.

☐ Please initial this box if data from this research may be used for future research.

Child’s Name: ______________________________________
Parent/Guardian Signature: ___________________________ Date ______
Print Name: ________________________________________

By continuing with this research, you are consenting to participate in this study.
TITLE: Early Childhood Experiences at an Art Museum  
Principal Investigator: Kristina Mahoney  
Protocol #: 617586-1  
Approval Date: 

You are being asked to be in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don’t understand before deciding whether or not to take part.

You are invited to participate in a research study about the experience of young children at an art museum summer class.

If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to give consent to having a research student observe in your classroom. You will also be interviewed prior to and following your summer class.

There are no potential risks or discomforts associated with participation.

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If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to give consent to having a research student conduct an interview with you.

There are no potential risks or discomforts associated with participation.

By doing this research I hope to learn about what learning approaches and activities lead to the greatest engagement for 4 and 5 year-old children in the art museum setting.

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☐ Please initial this box if data from this research may be used for future research.

Signature: ___________________________ Date __________

Print Name: ___________________________

By continuing with this research, you are consenting to participate in this study.
APPENDIX D: Interview Guide

Interview Questions
(Associate Director of Education & Head of Family Programs, and Coordinator of Community & Family Programs)

Thank you for sharing your thoughts about the summer classes I will be observing this summer. I appreciate your time. This interview should take approximately 10 minutes, but please remember that you can choose to end this interview at any time.

- Tell me about your role in summer classes.
- How long have you worked at the [museum]? with [museum] summer classes?
- Why were you interested in working in this setting?
- What is your experience with 4 & 5 year-old children?
- Tell me why you were interested in working with this age group.
- What are your goals for 4-5 year-old classes? (age group, instruction, student experience, outcomes)
- What do you feel are indicators of success for these goals?
- Tell me about your intentions for the classes' curriculum.
- Tell me about your expectations for the activities, environments, and interactions.
- What are your intentions for summer class teachers for developing curriculum? What are your intentions for summer class teachers for implementing curriculum?

Again, thank you for your time. I appreciate your help with this research study.

Initial Interview Questions
(3 summer class teachers)

Thank you for sharing your thoughts about the summer class I will be observing this summer. I appreciate your time and willingness to allow me to observe. This interview should take approximately 10 minutes, but please remember that you can choose to end this interview at any time. Similarly, you can also choose to discontinue my observation at any time.

- Tell me about your role in summer classes.
- How long have you worked at the [museum]? with [museum] summer classes?
- Why were you interested in working in this setting?
- What is your experience with 4 & 5 year-old children?
- Why were you interested in working with this age group?
- What are your goals for your 4-5 year-old camp? (age group, instruction, student experience, outcomes)
- How do you intend to engage students this week? How do you define engagement?
- Do you intend to have any interactive components in the gallery? Why or why not?
- What do you aim/intend for student experience?
- What role does gallery time have in your camp?
- What role does studio time have in your camp?
- What are the components to your camp/instruction? What are the intentions behind these components?

Again, thank you for your time. I appreciate your help with this research study.

**Summative Interview Questions**
(3 summer class teachers)

Thank you for sharing your thoughts about the summer class I observed this week. I appreciate your time and for allowing me to observe. This interview should take approximately 10 minutes, but please remember that you can choose to end this interview at any time.

Tell me about your overall impression of your summer class. (i.e. highs and lows to the class)

- What role did gallery time have in your camp?
- What role did studio time have in your camp?
- What were the components to your camp/instruction?
- Tell me about the interactive components of your camp.
- What experiences or moments during camp felt most successful to you? Why do you think so?
  Tell me about experiences or moments that felt less successful to you. Tell me why you think so.

- When did you feel that students were most engaged? Why? (student behaviors, characteristics of engagement, characteristics of environment, characteristics of experience, etc.)
- Did you have any other reactions to the camp, campers, or instruction?

Again, thank you for your time. I appreciate your help with this research study.
APPENDIX E: Parent Questionnaire

Parent Questionnaire
(Sent through email 10 days following the end of child's class)

Thank you for sharing your thoughts about the summer class your child recently attended at the [museum]. This questionnaire consists of 2 questions and should not take more than 5-8 minutes. I appreciate your time and willingness to respond. Please remember that you can choose to end this survey at any time.

- Why were you or your child interested in participating in [museum] summer classes? [short answer]
- Has your child shared anything about his or her experience at summer class, positive or negative? [Yes/No]
- If yes, please cite the characteristics of your child's expression of his or her experience (i.e.
  • What did your child share about?
  • What prompted your child's sharing of his or her experience?
  • Describe how your child shared?) [short answer]

Again, thank you for your time. I appreciate your help with this research study. Have a nice day!