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English Learners  
in Virginia's Secondary Art Classrooms

Alexandra M. Mamatas

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

School of Art, Design and Art History

August 2017

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my students, both past and future. Thank you, for inspiring my desire to learn and grow as a teacher and a researcher.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to examine effective strategies for accommodating and differentiating secondary art education curricula for English learners. This thesis documents the gap in research on adolescent English learner (EL) students in secondary art classrooms, and investigates classroom strategies implemented by secondary art educators. The literature review analyzed a historical perspective on English learners in the United States, as well as state standards. Triangulation of the literature review, online survey, and follow-up interviews were utilized in this research. The survey was disseminated to 338 secondary members of the Virginia Art Education Association to examine state, school, and art classroom EL demographics. Additionally, the survey collected reflections from teacher participants on effective strategies used to accommodate English learners in secondary art classrooms. Follow-up interviews were conducted based on interest provided from participants. Resources from the research findings include recommendations for educators interested in implementing research-based effective strategies for ELs in their art classrooms.

*Keywords:* English learners (EL), English language learners (ELL), secondary art classroom, art education, effective strategies, accommodation, differentiation.

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **Background of Study**

I was raised in a large and diverse metropolitan area that is home to an equally large and diverse public school system. After I graduated from high school, earned my undergraduate teaching degree, and completed all my preservice teacher requirements, I arrived back where I started in the same large and diverse school system. I was looking forward to starting my teaching career in a school system that I knew and trusted to provide quality education to students. Serendipitously, I was offered a visual arts teaching position at my old high school. I happily accepted the offer, knowing that the contract was secure and I would be able to teach content for which I felt well trained and in which I am proficient.

I remember feeling a combination of nervousness and elation for the first day of school. All of my methods courses, practicums, student teaching, and substitute teaching experiences led to this moment. My classroom was clean, the syllabi were printed, and welcome activities were all set. As the first week proceeded, I was caught off guard by one element that caused me to feel remarkably unprepared. I was not equipped to verbally communicate with over fifty percent of the students in my classes who were non-English speakers.

In the moment, I was lost. I attempted to recall the few Spanish vocabulary words I knew, so that I could connect with some students, but the variety of primary languages spoken in my classroom extended well beyond just English and Spanish. I relied on symbols, pictures, and expression through body language to engage my new students.

With all teaching, a certain amount of flexibility and invention is required.

Although I had survived my first week by improvising, I recognized the greater need for better ways to facilitate learning and create a classroom community where language barriers were predominant. From the standpoint of a teacher and a researcher, I came to the realization that methods and teaching techniques in visual art classrooms required an adjustment in order to benefit our students.

This insight that occurred three years ago has remained a relevant point of interest throughout my career, and guided me to pursue a deeper, critical approach to language, communication, and community in the art classroom. In most settings, schools in the United States have welcomed new immigrant children to their classrooms. Based on 2014 records, there were more than 840,000 immigrant students in the United States, and over 4.6 million English learners (ELs) (USED, 2014). These national numbers reflect at the state level as well, especially in secondary school systems in Virginia. In certain districts, demographics of student body have shifted greatly just within the past 10 years, reflecting the present changing needs for students. The diverse school system that I grew up in and subsequently started my career in has grown rapidly with students of diverse cultures, ethnicities, and primary languages. Today, this sizable school system contains over 142 elementary schools, 23 middle schools, 30 high schools, and 6 secondary schools. This school division is ranked within the top 3 largest school systems in Virginia, and within top 15 nationally, and is home to over 186,000 students (USED, 2016). Within those students in Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), over 28,000, or 17%, of them receive English for speakers of other languages services (FCPS, 2016).

Countywide numbers shift greatly when looking closer at each individual region and school. At the individual school level, English proficiency percentages fluctuate significantly. County-wide EL percentages approximately a decade ago indicate 36,723 students out of 165,722 overall FCPS students were receiving EL services (VDOE, 2017). This reflects around 22% of all FCPS students were categorized as LEP by the government, and received EL services at their schools. When I attended Herndon High School within FCPS around this time, English proficiency percentages reflected 19% of the student body. Currently at Herndon High School 35% of students enrolled receive EL services (VDOE, 2017). The changes in percentages indicate transformations in the community, schools, and classrooms. Within the high school curriculum, the art program is one of the first elective offerings suggested to EL students as they are beginning to learn English. Considering the overall percentages of ELs in FCPS this past year were around 29%, and percentages in Herndon were approximately 35%, my individual classroom experience with the EL population was closer to an estimated 50% of EL students enrolled in a single class. The visual arts in general have been promoted in my school and school system as a discipline in which all students can speak with one voice, through their visual communication. However, these increasing numbers of EL students present teachers in the visual arts, including myself, with new experiences and challenges. I believe that by addressing these challenges and changes with positive and adaptive classroom strategies, me and the teachers with whom I work will have more resources and self-assurance when teaching such a diverse range of students.

The term 'English learner' is a wide expression used to capture the significant diversity and variety within this population. (McNeir & Wambalaba, 2006). Students

learning English represent approximately 180 different native languages (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004) and enter school with vast degrees of proficiency in English in addition to their native language. ELs also vary widely in educational backgrounds, socioeconomic status, and length of time in the United States. Through research, I plan to gather percentages of English learners in Virginia and propose a thorough document that will provide secondary art educators with the tools they need to successfully reach their English learners in the art classroom.

### **Purpose of Study**

In my experience, the art classroom provides several benefits for all students, including English learners. An art classroom naturally utilizes imagery, requires creativity, and allows for multiple “right answers” or solutions to a given prompt. The art curriculum values meaningful discussion and constructive feedback during critiques, oral and written skills which enhance every student’s vocabulary, and critical thinking skills. Art education helps students become better readers and writers. When the arts are integrated with literacy instruction, all students benefit, especially English Language Learners and students from low-income backgrounds (Ingram & Reidel, 2003). Visual art as a secondary elective course can provide numerous benefits for students, and this study will explore a range of best practices and effective strategies for EL students.

In addition to providing a space that encourages individuality, art courses can also be among the beginning courses that transition EL students into the mainstream general education classes. Art courses are considered part of the general education courses, which provide students with viable credits that count towards graduation requirements. By



promoting these benefits through authentic engagement in the classroom, I believe there is a need to provide teachers with adequate and attainable methods and strategies that will contribute to their confidence when teaching EL students.

The purpose of this study is to address the needs of English Language Learners in the art classroom and provide current art educators with a compilation of effective strategies to utilize in their classrooms. Through in-depth research, surveys to current art educators in Virginia, and potential follow-up interviews, this study will provide an overview of EL demographics in Virginia's school systems, secondary schools, and art classrooms. Once the data has been collected and analyzed, this study will attempt to collect best practices and effective strategies used in the secondary art classroom. As a result, this research hopes to provide art educators with the means to facilitate a positive art classroom environment and foster an atmosphere of inclusion for EL students.

### **Statement of Need**

There is a need for effective and prepared visual arts teachers who are confident in educating our ever-growing diverse learner population. This necessity derives from our students' basic needs. All students should experience inclusion, classroom safety, and classroom community. All students deserve to be heard, understood, and be given the chance to make meaningful connections. Current teachers may not have the time, energy, or resources to compile best practices specifically geared toward their EL students in the art classroom. By addressing this problem and gap within art education, this study hopes to provide relevant resources regarding EL students in the secondary visual arts classroom.

## Research Questions

- 1) What is the percentage of Virginia's EL student population in art classrooms when compared to the percentage of EL students enrolled in the entire school and school system?
  - a. Is there a correlation between population size and the percentage of EL students?
  - b. What is the percentage of EL students, Levels 1 and 2, in respondents' art classes?
- 2) What strategies do art educators report as effective with their EL students?
  - a. What are effective EL strategies reported in the areas of: greetings; introduction of lessons; presentation of objectives; introduction and demonstration of student think time, planning, sketching, and art making; delivery of art-based vocabulary, historical, cultural, and artist information; and accommodations for group discussions, oral presentations, reading, and writing.
  - b. When do art educators feel most frustrated or discouraged in their work with EL students?
  - c. When do art educators feel they are making the most positive impact in their work with EL students?

## Significance

This study hopes to answer the research questions authentically, and find effective strategies for secondary art educators to implement in their linguistically diverse classrooms. This study is concerned with the needs of the growing EL population and

how art educators can better serve the wide range of students in their classes. Noted in the literature review, there are few scholarly studies on EL students in the secondary art classroom with resources for secondary art educators. By compiling the research gathered and presenting it to art educators and supervisors, data regarding the relationship between EL students and visual art classes will become more transparent and useful. Virginia educators in need of resources and strategies for working with EL students will be able to source relevant, contemporary data that will better inform their teaching practices. Art educators across the United States will still be able to relate to the findings in Virginia in a global sense. A larger goal is additional trainings and reliable information disseminated through school systems, addressing EL population's growing needs, considering all aspects of the students in need of accommodations. By recognizing that equality is not a synonym for fairness, we can address the necessities of the increasing EL population effectively.

### **Limitations**

The proposed data gathered and analyzed in this study is limited to potential responses from Virginia's secondary art educator survey participants, prospective follow-up interviews with willing survey respondents, and the literature review of English learners and secondary art classrooms. An additional limitation on this study is the timing convention of the survey. The survey data will be disseminated and collected over the course of a four-week span. The time range will be selected based on IRB approval and the researchers calendar, therefore it may not align with every respondent. The data is also limited to each educator's willingness to complete the survey and submit genuine reflections. Inconsistencies may exist among respondents, as open response questions in

surveys and interviews will yield a variety of responses. The study will attempt to provide minimal bias and clear definitions in the survey and interviews in order to reduce possible misinterpretation of the questions.

### **Assumptions**

As the researcher and a teacher, I hold assumptions and biases. An assumption within this study, I believe all students are capable of learning, all students should be treated with respect, and all students deserve an empathetic and inclusive school environment. I assume that inclusion is a positive characteristic of the classroom.

### **Research Gap**

There are an abundant number of scholarly journals and articles related to ELs in the classroom, however there are surprisingly few resources that focus specifically on secondary visual arts classrooms, such as high school studio art or darkroom photography, in Virginia. In my own teaching, I attempted to research resources that would assist my instruction when I struggled to find appropriate strategies for my EL students. General tools and basic trainings are a start in engaging preservice, new, and experienced teachers in understanding appropriate strategies for working with EL students. Through survey data, interview anecdotes, and the literature review, this study will provide an organized approach to working with ELs in the secondary art classroom and facilitating a sense of inclusion in the art classroom.

### **Definition of Terms**

Inclusion: An act of taking in as part of a whole, or, the state of being taken in as part of a whole. In the classroom, inclusion is the act of incorporating and including all students in the learning process. For the purposes of this study, I am also referring to the students' comfort level in and their feelings toward being included in all classroom activities.

Classroom Community: A planned environment that fosters a sense of belonging, for all students. In a positive and successful classroom community, students can feel secure, nurtured, supported, and respected by the environment, the teacher, and each other. Students feel accepted and individuality is encouraged (Church, 2006).

Differentiation: Content, process, product, and learning environment adaptations for students. The key in approaching and achieving differentiation in the classroom is to develop a curriculum that considers the diversity, needs, and preferences of all students. Differentiation includes implementation of a curriculum that allows for self-guided learning experiences, and provides options for content, process, and/or products. (Edwards, 2014).

English Learner (EL): An active learner of the English language who may benefit from various types of language support programs. This term mainly describes K-12 students. EL students are a highly heterogeneous and complex group of students, with diverse gifts, educational needs, backgrounds, languages, and goals. Language abilities are labeled based on level of English speaking proficiency. They are numbered one through five in the following order: entering, emerging,

developing, expanding and bridging. (English Language Learners, 2008). In depth descriptors are below:

EL, Level 1: Starting, students initially have limited or no understanding of English.

EL, Level 2: Emerging, students can understand phrases and short sentences.

EL, Level 3: Developing, students understand more complex speech, but still require some repetition.

EL, Level 4: Expanding, students' language skills are adequate for most day-to-day communication needs.

EL, Level 5: Bridging, students can express themselves fluently and spontaneously on a wide range of topics and in a variety of contexts (TESOL, 2006).

English as a Second Language (ESL): The former term used to designate EL students.

This term increasingly refers to a program of instruction designed to support EL students. The ESL term is still used to refer to multilingual students in higher education. (English Language Learners, 2008).

Limited English Proficiency (LEP): The U.S. Department of Education employed this term to refer to EL students who lack sufficient mastery of the English language, and struggle to meet state standards and excel in an English-language classroom. Increasingly, the previously mentioned term, EL, is used to describe this

population, because it highlights learning, rather than suggesting that non-native/English-speaking students are deficient.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL): Non-native/English-speaking students who are learning English in a country where English is not the primary language.

English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL): Generally used when describing programs outside of a K-12 setting that are designed for ELs who seek proficiency in social and academic language. ESOL programs generally teach basic grammar, vocabulary, and colloquial terms and phrases to ELs. Some schools and teachers use the term interchangeably with ESL. (ESLteacher.edu)

### **Procedural Overview**

This study encompassed multiple methodologies and data sources to provide a comprehensive summary. The purpose of this study is to recognize strategies practicing teachers can utilize when fostering a positive classroom community, inclusive of all our diverse learners, especially ELs. A portion of the analyzed data is from a state-wide survey sent out to all active VAEA secondary art educators across the Commonwealth of Virginia. In addition to data collected through the online survey, participants were offered the option to engage in a follow-up interview. Responses from both the survey and follow-up interview were coded thoroughly and emergent themes are represented in the data analysis and conclusions.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### Introduction

This literature review attempts to summarize research on effective strategies and best practices for EL students in secondary art classrooms. Due to the growing diversification of schools in the United States, there is an immediate need for additional methods and approaches for visual arts educators to use with their EL students. New teachers are prepared as best possible by their preservice teacher programs, however, information on how to implement positive strategies and create an atmosphere of inclusion for EL students in the art room is lacking. The review will examine these categories within the literature: 1) Brief History of EL Students in the United States, 2) Overview of Virginia State Standards for Secondary Visual Arts, 3) Overview of Virginia State Standards for Secondary English as a Second Language (ESL), 4) Background of Effective Strategies for EL Students, 5) EL Students In Visual Arts Classrooms, 6) Myths & Assumptions, and 7) Empathy & Compassion.

In this study, I referenced JMU Library Catalog (online), JMU Carrier Library (in person), National Art Education Association (NAEA), National Education Association (NEA), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and additional scholarly sites geared for educators. The database(s) I used in my search were JMU Library Catalog, Google Scholar, JSTOR, ERIC, and EBSCO. The descriptors and key words I used when researching for my study were, English Learner(s), EL, ESOL, ESL, LEP, teaching strategies, art class(room), inclusive/inclusion, differentiation, accommodation, language, diversity, multiculturalism, and art education.



## Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the grouping of similar topics and their connections. These three main areas that I addressed visually represent gears interacting with one another. In this graphic interpretation, the gears rely on each other to move along properly -- similarly to a well-managed classroom. For my study, all of these factors (gears) shown above are parts of the visual arts classroom. Through investigation on EL statistics, best practices, and review of literature, the data provided will be an organized collection of strategies and methods for current visual art teacher to utilize in our ever-diverse schools.

### Inner Workings of a Visual Arts Classroom



Table 1: Visual Representation of Visual Arts Classroom

By looking at best practices, learning strategies, and management methods for EL students in the secondary art classroom, this study provides tools for current art educators

teaching students from the EL population. The overarching goal of this study is through recorded strategies and methods; art educators can facilitate a positive classroom community and facilitate an atmosphere of inclusion and equity for ELs.

## **Review**

The foundations of our country rest upon immigration. Without the hundreds of thousands of families traveling to reach our nation and establish a life in America, we would not have the rich, diverse, and complicated landscape that we have today. In anticipation for future generations, the U.S. Census Bureau compiled population estimates and projection reports. It is suggested that between the years 2014 and 2060, the U.S. population will increase from 319 million residents to 417 million. In addition to this data, the report states "...by 2060, nearly one in five of the nation's total population is projected to be foreign born" (Colby & Ortman). This projection indicates that one in three students will most likely be classified as an English learner around 2040 (Crawford & Krashen, 2007). As the United States transitions into a more diverse "majority-minority" nation, educators are in a position where we need to be equipped with resources in order to provide compassion and equity to all our students.

**History of English learners in the United States.** Multilingual communities have coexisted for centuries. "[Language diversity] has existed in every era, since long before the United States constituted itself as a nation" (Crawford, 2004). Bilingual communities were present in North America in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, where over 18 different languages and dialects were spoken among the Native-American populations (Teaching as Leadership, 2009). In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, immigration in the United States originated

with colonization in early settlement days, and continues to be a defining factor and an integral part of the United States' identity. Over the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, various groups of people coming from all over the world continued to settle across United States territory. As immigrants arrived with various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, there became a critical need for bilingual education. Starting in 1839, some states began to adopt bilingual education laws that authorized instruction in other languages besides English (Teaching as Leadership, 2009).

Throughout the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, immigrants were taught to assimilate and abandon their native cultural heritage. During the 1920s through 1960s, most schools within the country did not offer a bilingual education and pursued strictly English instruction. (Teaching as Leadership, 2009). Several changes in government and education occurred in the mid to late 1960s, such as the foundations of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and the notion of English learners. In 1968, “congress passed the Bilingual Education Act under Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This represented the first national acknowledgment of the special educational needs of limited-English speaking children” (Teaching as Leadership, 2006). Throughout 1970s, 80s, and 90s, additional acts, programs, and funding that benefited and protected education and students were implemented.

Who are our English learners today? Many educators and professionals believe that majority of English learners are foreign born immigrants, however that is a myth. As cited in Zacarian & Haynes text (2012), around 75% of English learners are born in the United States. Although these students with beginning and emerging literacy skills may

not have traveled the world to arrive in America, they are still facing large hurdles similar to international EL students. As noted in *The Essential Guide for Educating Beginning English Learners*,

Schools that were once predominantly populated with monolingual English-fluent students are now finding themselves working with an emerging or continuously growing population of ELs. While this population of students is increasing quickly, their overall progress is very poor. The number of ELs who speak English and fail to complete high school is three times that of the general population, and ELs who struggle to use English- a significant and growing number- fail at five times the rate of the general population. (Zacarian & Haynes, 2012, p.7)

Beginning ELs are struggling in schools; the classroom setting may be the student's first time ever speaking English. Schools systems rely on educators to provide the necessary skills, resources, and wealth of knowledge to our students. However, if an educator is lacking the expertise on how to effectively manage and implement best practices with a group of students, the educator may struggle in efficaciously reaching the students. Currently, a U.S. Census Bureau reports that over 350 languages are spoken in U.S. homes. To affirm the validity of these numbers announced in November 2015, a quote pulled from the U.S. Census Bureau indicates that this census represents the "most comprehensive language data ever released" (U.S. Census, 2015). The perpetual increase of English learners in the United States is being mismanaged at the micro level. The reality of there being minimal focus on our ELs is massively contributing to our English learner's failures (Zacarian & Haynes, 2012).

Sonia Nieto (1992), an education professional who works in the realm of diversity, equity, and social justice, reflected on immigration and wrote,

Curriculum and pedagogy, rather than using the lived experiences of students as a foundation, have been based on what can be described as an alien and imposed reality. The rich experiences of millions of our students, their parents, grandparents, and neighbours have been kept strangely quiet. Although we almost all have an immigrant past, very few of us know or even acknowledge it. (p. 334)

Nieto captured a realistic perspective of immigration and how this life change is treated. Immigrants are expected to assimilate, and in that process they are asked to leave their native culture behind.

**Overview of Virginia State Standards.** In the state of Virginia, the mission of the public schools system is to educate students in the fundamental knowledge and academic subjects so that they become capable, responsible, and self-reliant citizens.

Current goals in Virginia public schools are:

- Accountability for Student Learning
- Rigorous Standards to Promote College and Career Readiness
- Expanded Opportunities to Learn
- Nurturing Young Learners
- Highly Qualified and Effective Educators
- Sound Policies for Student Success
- Safe and Secure Schools

**Overview of Virginia State Standards for Secondary Visual Arts.** Virginia's Fine Arts Standards of Learning (SOLs) encompass the same ideals as presented by the general goals of Virginia public schools. These goals are listed as providing students with the, "abilities to think critically, solve problems creatively, make informed judgments, work cooperatively within groups, appreciate different cultures, imagine and create" (VDOE, 2017). Virginia's Fine Art SOLs encourage educators to go beyond the projected standards and implement additional rich and relevant content to meet the needs of Virginia's diverse students (VDOE, 2017).

Goals and strands within the SOLs rely on a combination of contemporary content and objectives compiled by discipline-based art education (DBAE). DBAE, formulated in the 1980s, supports learning across four main content areas: aesthetics, art criticism, art history, and art production (Dobbs, 1992). The addition of big ideas, meaning-making, and incorporating visual culture to DBAE's four areas of content in art education promote an all-encompassing art education curriculum. According to the (ESLteacher.edu) data, the U.S. Department of State pointed out that effective language education for both EL and other students relies on "meaning-making," rather than conventional recall of vocabulary words. In contemporary art classrooms, making-meaning through art is a core part of the curriculum, providing all students with a rich and meaningful art experience.

**Overview of Virginia State Standards for Secondary English as a Second Language.** English as a Second Language (ESL) programs provide resources and services that are designed to assist students in communicating effectively inside and outside of school (VDOE, 2017). According to our Virginia Department of Education,

Section 3113 (b)(2) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), requires state agencies to establish standards and objectives for raising the level of English proficiency in the four recognized domains of speaking, listening, reading, and writing, and that are aligned with achievement of the challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards. On March 19, 2008, the Board of Education, adopted the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) ELP Standards. In 2012, WIDA released the Amplification of the WIDA English Language Development (ELD) Standards to support for college- and career-ready state content-area standards (VDOE, 2017).

**Background of effective strategies for EL students.** Educators are encouraged to provide ELs with challenging content in the classroom. “Curricula should be organized around “big questions,” involve authentic reading and writing experiences, and provide textual choices as well as meaningful content” (NCTE, 2008). In addition to presenting students with level-appropriate challenges, educators should set high expectations for their EL students in addition to their students who speak English proficiently.

It is important for educators to recognize that the native language and home environment of the EL student can and should be used as positive resources. In the art classroom, differences are celebrated and personal uniqueness is encouraged. By embracing native cultures in the classroom, students will be more receptive to contributing and collaborating in class.

**EL students in secondary visual arts classrooms.** Research on EL students in visual arts classrooms is greatly limited. Literature on the topic revolves around engaging EL students in general education courses through arts-based learning and activities. A list of general recommendations and accommodations for assisting EL students have been gathered from a variety of sources and are listed below. This list is certainly not exhaustive, rather it attempts to scratch the surface for types of resources and differentiation that could be provided for ELs. Suggestions for secondary visual arts educators includes a range of recommendations based on interactions with students, class time, outreach, curriculum development and planning, and understanding of EL students.

- Assess the abilities of all students, and use the results as a basis for appropriate programming decisions (Cox, Daniel, & Boston, 1985).
- To be effective in meeting the needs of all learners, programs must go beyond what they provide for mainstream students and pay particular attention to the social, cultural, linguistic, and literacy needs of diverse students and families (McNeir & Wambalaba, 2006).
- Personalize the program and curriculum through allowing additional group discussions for students to share opinions, and providing a choice-based art classroom (Greer, 2011).
- Observe the ability of students to solve problems or create works over an extended period of time as an indicator of interest and ability (Cox, Daniel, & Boston, 1985).
- Teach vocabulary that relates to students' English proficiency-level, emphasizing a few key words and concepts. When asked to recall the terminology, ask the students to discuss their process and when this term was utilizing throughout their learning (Greer, 2011).



- Curricula should be organized around “big questions,” involve authentic reading and writing experiences, and provide textual choices as well as meaningful content (NCTE, 2008).
- It is important for educators to recognize that the native language and home environment of the EL student can and should be used as positive resources. In the art classroom, differences are celebrated and personal uniqueness is encouraged. By embracing native cultures in the classroom, students will be more receptive to contributing and collaborating in class (Eubanks, 2002).

### **Myths & Assumptions**

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) compiled a research policy brief that expanded on ELs and decisions that affect teaching and learning. Taken from NCTE’s research brief, three myths regarding EL students are positioned: “many ELs have disabilities, which is why they are often over-represented in special education”; “all EL students learn English the same way”; and, “teaching ELs means only focusing on vocabulary”. The reality of the first myth is that not all assessments differentiate between disabilities and linguistic differences. This can lead to a misdiagnosis of ELs. Providing an inclusive environment that offers challenges rather than remediation is most effective (NCTE, 2008). Regarding the second myth, prior schooling, socio-economic factors, content knowledge, immigration status, and life experiences create variety in students’ learning processes. Therefore, there is variety in how student learn content-specific vocabulary (NCTE, 2008). And, regarding myth 3, in order for students to make connections and learn language structure, they need to understand relationships between language and forms. EL students need opportunities to express complex meanings, even when their English language proficiency is limited (NCTE, 2008). By dispelling the

following myths and assumptions about EL students, art educators are encouraged to gain a better understanding of the heterogeneous and complex population that accurately reflects EL students. It is noted that the NCTE dismissed these myths, and consequently provided research-based strategies for general EL instruction. In combination with a visual arts approach, the following methods are appropriate for working with secondary EL students in the art classroom.

### **Empathy & Compassion**

Empathy and compassion are two qualities that every educator should possess and share freely in order to reach our students in meaningful ways. As defined in Chapter 1, empathy is described as a gateway to compassion; it is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another (Merriam-Webster). Compassion takes empathy a step further and puts the understanding into action.

How can we best prepare our preservice teachers for authentic teaching experiences that encompass all learners? Can we provide genuine opportunities at the university level that will incite thoughtful reflection from our undergraduate students? Part of the university's art education elementary methods course curriculum includes the delivery of art education content and skill development to a variety of special populations. Some of these special needs populations include English Language Learner (EL), delayed development, autism, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), visual impairment, hearing impairment, and physically handicapped students. In the methods course classroom, undergraduate students are asked to consider a specific special needs group as they create lesson plans for each K-5 grade level. Through

readings, research, and focused assignments, the students are able to scratch the surface of these topics and include findings and selected strategies in their lesson plans. But, what happens when methods are taken a step further to stimulate empathy and compassion?

The professor gathered materials for the daily activity and greeted the students kindly, per usual. Students filed in like normal, and there was brief chitchat before class started. The professor prepped the space with supplies for a demonstration and activity, drawing paper and a pencil. Class began with a silent shock; the undergraduate students realized they could not understand a word of the professor's demonstration, as the professor was speaking fluent Spanish to a room of native English speakers.

This one major difference of the language spoken in the classroom environment altered the entire dynamic. Verbal communication was now a struggle and a subtle panic and silence swept over the room when students realized they needed to pay attention in other ways than oral in order to complete the task correctly. Students looked around the room with puzzled expressions and confused stares as they attempted to translate the professor's directions. As the professor continued to deliver the lesson in an unfamiliar language to the students, the students began searching for visual cues and body language signals that the professor offered. Some students were nodding at particular words, indicating they were able to recall some general Spanish vocabulary that helped them in understanding. The students started working insecurely, unsure if they were following the correct instructions.

The professor did not speak any louder than normal; the tone was clear and conversational. The professor utilized hand motions and body language to further explain

parts of the demonstration, but intentionally did not use other visuals (such as the Smartboard, whiteboard, or posters) that might have enhanced meaning. After motioning to the drawing pencil, students were reassured that they were to use the drawing paper and pencil to create an artwork. Although the professor did not indicate whether the students could talk during work time or not, the room was quiet with intense focus on the professor. The students did not rely on asking one another for help nor did they ask the teacher any questions.

I took time to observe and reflect on this demonstration, and how the tables were turned metaphorically and the English speakers were now the language learners. The confused emotions in the room resonated with me. I noticed direct correlation with the methods course demonstration to my former art classroom and prior teaching. After being a visual arts educator for three years at a large and diverse public school with a high EL population, I experienced similar scenarios in my own classroom. Some of my EL students would “work” quietly or appear engaged in an assignment even if they were lost or struggling, because in reality they did not have the confidence, skills, or understanding to ask for help.

My prior teaching experiences led me to inquiry and research on EL students in the art classroom. How could I provide strategies that would benefit other art educators when working with ELs in our expanding, diverse world? Additionally, how can I provide a positive classroom community for all my students, including ELs? What methods can I implement to reach better modes of communication and simultaneously create a sense of inclusion for my EL students?

Upon the concluded demonstration, an insightful classroom conversation between students and the professor about their thoughts on the activity allowed the conversation regarding accommodations for ELs to come full circle. The university students agreed that the experience was a struggle. Students shared that it was difficult to switch the language mode in their brain; they attempted to communicate verbally but lacked the skills. Because none of the university students understood Spanish at a deeper, conversational level, they relied on past skills and prior learning to influence their understanding. While attempting to stay on task, students were simultaneously putting the puzzle of information together. Why didn't the university students reach out and ask each other or the professor for help? The students explained that by asking a neighbor for assistance, they felt they would have been further distracted and pushed farther behind in understanding the lesson procedures. Once students caught a word or an idea that made sense to them, they ran with those initial ideas and hoped to get the assignment correct.

As a class, strategies and methods for working with ELs were discussed. First and foremost, exercising empathy is key. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon that monolingual teachers might have little empathy for how students experience learning second languages (Pray & Marx, 2010). It is important to consider our diverse students and meet their needs with compassion and effective learning strategies. Additionally, the students pointed out that the professor did not shout or raise their voice when explaining the content. A common communication failure is to speak louder to the student, thinking that the EL student will understand if the teacher says the vocabulary with bold emphasis. Speaking louder to students who are unfamiliar with the language is not a successful strategy, and our university students recognized this fault. Classroom approaches that

could have been implemented were visual signs and examples. The professor had intentionally left these resources out to give our students the chance to experience a unique struggle of EL students when attempting to decipher orally and body language cues alone. Art educators are fortunate in the sense that our world revolves around visual interpretations. Differences, culture, multiple explanations are celebrated in the art classroom. “The arts celebrate multiple perspectives. One of their large lessons is that there are many ways to see and interpret the world” (Eisner, 2002). Our classrooms can provide diverse approaches to learning and meaningful making, methods that support EL students and their language acquisition skills.

### **Significance**

Most contemporary public school systems have an art program, and depending on the location the art program can be large or small. Working in a small school system as a specialist usually indicates that there is only one art educator per school, and they are most likely working without a collaborative learning team. In contrast, there are large school systems that have a rapidly growing EL population, and educators who are not familiar with new strategies struggle to maintain effective teaching.

The art classroom is one of the general education spaces that EL students are placed in to earn credits towards graduation, therefore ELs are integrated into Art 1 as one of their first general education courses. As an art educator, I firmly believe that educators owe every student the opportunity to learn and succeed. By recognizing that equality is not a synonym for fairness, we can address the needs of the growing EL population effectively.

After examining the state of Virginia over the course of ten years, from 2003 to 2013, the percent of EL students has increased by 101%. At large, Virginia schools are home to over 99,000 EL students (WETA, 2015). This continual growth and expansion of cultures and languages situates schools in a unique position. Due to the rising numbers of EL students in the U.S., there is an immediate need for appropriate methods and approaches for visual arts educators to utilize when teaching EL students.

New teachers are prepared as best possible by their preservice teacher programs, however, additional information on how to implement positive strategies and create a sense of inclusion for EL students in the art room is lacking. Art education at the secondary level can benefit from a deeper understanding of our diverse learners and how to facilitate inclusion and fairness in the art classroom. Students of all cultures deserve highly qualified educators who invite compassion into their classrooms.

### **Chapter Three: Methodologies**

In this section, I will provide an overview of the proposed research design, sample, collection instruments and techniques, and data analysis approach. Any potential internal and external validity and reliability threats, and generalizations of the study will be addressed. The methodology will describe adequate measures taken to provide protection of any human subjects involved in this research. Justification of the analytic techniques that will be utilized in this study is described. Actions that will be taken to protect human subjects will conclude this section.

#### **Research Design**

In my research proposal, the purpose of this study is to identify the percentage of English Language Learner (EL) students in secondary art classrooms when compared to the percentage of EL students enrolled in the entire school. The hypothesis of the study is, are there are a high percentage of EL students in Virginian art classrooms, and if so, then what effective classroom strategies can art educators provide to aid in an inclusive atmosphere for these students?

The research design in this study was mixed methods, involving quantitative and qualitative methods. For example, the first research question noted below will yield quantitative results, which will be analyzed using basic descriptive statistics. The second research question listed will provide qualitative results, (Charmaz, 2006). Mixed methods allowed the study to “explore relationships between variables in depth. The variables can then be correlated with other variables” (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2015, p.556). Mixed methods research allowed the researcher to investigate the demographics and percentage



of EL students in art classrooms and further explore reflections and strategies from current art educators. By utilizing triangulation in this study's data collection, the goal is to employ mixed methods to produce a stronger and more reliable study.

One of the goals of this study is to examine the demographics in secondary schools in Virginia. If there are a higher percentage of EL students in art classrooms, this study aims at answering how can art educators reach this large population of students in an effective manner. Visual arts courses can promote EL's language acquisition skills. As noted in Daniel's and Huizenga-McCoy's 2014 article,

Art education in schools in the United States focuses on the study of artists, art media techniques, visual culture, and conceptual exchange through visual media. Exposure to art from cultures around the world can help a student remember something tangible about a country as well as navigate through today's highly visual culture. It can provide a cognitive introduction to complex content and reinforce ideas that are difficult to express in words. Second language learners benefit from the increased avenues that art provides to understanding (p. 172).

Considering how various research norms have evolved, like human interaction, trust, and time involvement per participant, utilizing a survey as a primary method of data is justified because it most readily meets the needs of the participants (Dillman, Smyth, Christian, & Dillman, 2009). The nature of this study is concerned with finding percentages of EL students secondary in art classrooms and gathering open-ended reflections regarding effective strategies. By requesting participation from secondary art

educators, who have knowledge on their own classroom demographics and teaching philosophies, the findings will show valid results from authentic sources. The survey will go through several test phases, first through family and close mentors, second through a pilot survey disseminated to reliable faculty who are involved in research, and third through a select group of willing secondary art educators. Pretesting the survey prior to its actual administration allows me to retain feedback and check the overall clarity of survey (Buffington & McKay, 2013).

Through a survey sent to secondary art educators and follow-up interviews, this research will provide answers to the questions listed below. Interviews were held in person and over email exchange. Face-to-face interviews were employed for collecting information when social cues and standardization were important (Opdenakker, 2006). A major advantage to a structured interview is consistency. Everyone receives the same questions and answer options. Coding and interpretations are easier with structured interviews (Adler & Clark, 2008). Complete review of the survey questions and interview questions can be found in Appendix A and B.

### **Sample & Population**

Individuals examined in this study are members of Virginia Art Education Association (VAEA). Noted in a spring 2015 VAEA news magazine, the Commonwealth of Virginia has one of the highest numbers of active memberships (Conti, 2015, p. 5), presently with 847 total members (P. Parker, personal communication, June 6, 2017). There are six membership categories: active, first-year professional, student, retired, associate, and institutional. Within VAEA, my population will be specifically all active

and first-year professionals who are secondary art educators, currently 338 individuals. Secondary art classes refer to both middle school and high school level students. A Qualtrics survey (Appendix B) containing 24 content questions and a few follow up questions will be disseminated to secondary art educators through VAEA's secondary distribution lists.

Due to the nature of this research, random and systematic sampling will be difficult to utilize. Convenience and purposive sampling will work best for this research, as it allows me to select a sample based on my knowledge and personal judgment (Fraenkel et al., 2015, p.101). This research proposal investigates a specific population of students (ELs) in a specific classroom setting (secondary visual arts). Based on this information, the research sample will rely on nonrandom techniques by utilizing secondary art educators who are willing to participate in a survey and potential follow up interviews.

### **Instrumentation**

Two main methods will be utilized to collect data for this research. The first approach will be an electronic, cross-sectional survey, sent out to all secondary art educators in Virginia through VAEA's distribution list. The online survey was created by using a secure online survey generator, Qualtrics. Survey research suits this study because they are mostly used to collect descriptive information on the characteristics, practices, and opinions of a selected population (Buffington & McKay, 2013). In this study, I am investigating the practices and opinions of secondary art educators who may or may not have a considerably large EL population in their art classes.

The survey has two main components, first, investigating quantitative demographics information, and second, reflecting qualitative open-ended response questions revolving around teaching practices in the secondary art class with EL students. The second method will be conducting interviews of select secondary art educators who provide interest through submitting their name and contact information. As recorded in a 2002 National Science Foundation report,

The validity of results can be strengthened by using more than one method to study the same phenomenon. This approach—called triangulation—is most often mentioned as the main advantage of the mixed-methods approach. Combining the two methods pays off in improved instrumentation for all data collection approaches and in sharpening the evaluator’s understanding of findings (p. 47).

The questions in the survey are designed to engage the participant, and avoid experimental mortality, or having participants drop out of the survey early (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). Questions were worded thoughtfully as to avoid bias, manipulation, and confusion.

### **Role of Researcher**

I have been an art educator in the public high school setting for three and a half years. Throughout my teaching experience, I have taught at two different public high schools in the same school system. For the purpose of this study, I will refer to the school system as School System 1, and the individual schools as School A and School B. As I investigated my topic of EL students in the art classroom, I was on hiatus from teaching

and the classroom setting. For the purpose of this study, I am relying on input from other art educators, EL teachers, as well as my teaching experience.

The high schools I have experience with have vastly different student populations and types of learners. In the past three and half years I have taught visual arts, I have experienced several different classroom settings. I have taught levels 1 through 4 of Photography, levels 1 through 4 of Computer Graphics, levels 1 and 2 of Studio Art & Design, and Advanced Placement (AP) Studio Art: 2D Design. During my year of research and writing, I do not have access to students or School System A.

Each public high school, each year, and each individual class has presented me with a different experience. I found that my challenges at School A contrasted intensely with my challenges at School B. My past experiences as an educator led me to question how we can serve our EL students better, with confidence, and provide all our learners with the inclusion they deserve.

### **Survey Questions**

The purpose of the survey is to identify the percentage of EL students in secondary art classrooms, and to provide reflections from current secondary art educators on effective methods and strategies used in the art classroom. The sample questions provide a look at the qualitative and quantitative questioning strategies used. All responses to questions in this study were voluntary, and the participants were informed that they may abandon the survey at any time without consequences. This caveat was employed to minimize risk for the participants. They should not feel forced at any time

during the survey. Refer to Appendix B for a complete list of questions and answer conventions.

**Questions addressing basic information and demographics.** In the first set of survey questions (Appendix B), the participants are asked to respond to multiple choice and slider scale questions regarding school demographics. This section is designed to provide data concerning percentages of EL students in school systems, schools, and art classes. In addition, it will deliver general and still anonymous information on the school's size, teacher's experience, and descriptor of setting.

**Questions addressing effective strategies and best practices.** The survey also provides a large section of open response questions that relate to the qualitative aspect of this study. Majority of the survey questions revolve around best practices in the art classroom with EL students, educator's standpoint of how much support is given, and reflective classroom anecdotes.

**Additional response questions.** When the survey comes to an end, participants have the option to respond to follow-up questions. (Appendix B). Respondents may leave additional comments, provide an email address for contact solely used to receive study results, and include personal information for a potential follow-up survey.

### **Sample Survey Questions**

- 1) How many students are enrolled in your high school? (Answer format: a) Less than 500 students, b) 500-1,000 students, c) 1,000-2,000 students, d) More than 2,000 students)
- 2) Within your high school, what percentage of students receive EL services? (Answer format: slider scale indicating percentage, 1-100%)
- 3) Within your art classes, what is the approximate percentage of EL students, Levels 1-5? (Answer format: slider scale indicating percentage, 1-100%)

### **Pilot Test**

The pilot test was administered to a small sample of James Madison faculty and close family. The intention of the pilot survey was to gain feedback on questioning strategies used in the survey, the feel of the survey, and the flow of the overall experience.

### **Interviews**

Interviews with current art educators in secondary art classrooms provided a deeper look at the EL population in visual arts.

### **Sample Interview Questions**

- 1) What are your most effective strategies when greeting an EL student to your class?
- 2) What are your most effective strategies with EL students when collaborating in a group critique?

After reviewing feedback, I was able to revise my survey and provide a reliable experience for all participants. Qualtrics, a highly professional and sophisticated platform

for creating surveys, allowed me to format multiple survey views, and allowed participants to utilize many types of devices, from a computer to a cell-phone. These multiple formats ensured reliability across multiple devices. The duration of the data collection via survey methods was 4 weeks in time, from the time the survey has been distributed to the last opportunity to receive results from respondents.

### **Procedure**

The 24-questioned survey was distributed by VAEA's server list to active VAEA secondary art educators. There were a variety of question types in the survey. Thirteen of the questions were either multiple-choice and/or percentage scales, ranging from 1-100%, and eleven of the questions called for open-ended responses. Participants' participation in the survey was optional, as was sharing their personal contact information at the end of the survey for further follow up questioning. Before they provided electronic consent for taking the survey, art educators were asked to indicate if they were over the age of 18, if they agreed with the confidentiality statement, and if they voluntarily agreed to participate. Due to the sensitive nature of school demographic information and personal open response answers, all information collected through the survey will remain confidential and only used for the purpose of this research. Any reporting of the data collected will remove any references to specific schools, teachers, and students. Once completed and analyzed, the data will be deleted from the password-protected computer.

### **Data Analysis & Coding**

Once the survey was closed, Qualtrics provides several methods for analyzing data. Qualtrics categorized answers into categories, such as, completed responses and



responses in progress. From this step, I was able to tag responses, import response, and combine responses. By adding extra information to survey responses after they have been collected, the researcher can effectively categorize the data (Qualtrics, 2015). Once initial responses were recorded and exported, the researcher summarized the responses and drew conclusions from the results. The total sample size and overall percentage of returns were reported in the data analysis (Fraenkel et al., 2015, p. 407).

Beyond utilizing predetermined data analysis techniques provided by Qualtrics, I allowed themes from open response questions and follow-up interviews to emerge as I began the coding process. The process was rooted in grounded theory, relying on constructing analytic codes and categories from data, not from preconceived logically deduced hypotheses. Rather, I pursued simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2006). “One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge” (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

When providing a visual record of the data, I used pie charts, bar graphs, and tables to illustrate data collected from quantitative questions (refer to Table of Contents for page locations). Through selective coding, core categories of data were identified in preparation for deeper analysis. Depending on the unit of analysis selected (words, words in context, or segments of text) and the coding system employed, data were enumerated. The frequency of their appearance was counted as an indicator of the strength of the presence of the term or phrase (Howe, 1990). Interviews were more difficult to evaluate, but through careful reading and choosing select words from reflections, I was able to process the raw reflections similarly to the qualitative survey responses.

## **Threats**

In the type of research I conducted, there are several threats to internal validity, such as subject characteristics, mortality, instrumentation, and attitude of subjects (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2015). My subjects in this study were secondary visual arts educators who live in the state of Virginia and were active VAEA members. Demographics considerations, such as gender, age, race, and ethnicity were not taken into account in this study.

For mortality, little can be done to control this risk. Because the main source of data for this research is a 20-minute survey, I anticipated that I would be able to keep the participants attention for that time before they might withdrawal from the survey. In minimizing instrumentation threats, such as, data collector characteristics and data collector bias, I was able to hold myself to unbiased standards and present only truthful data in this study. I did my best to present the data accurately and to eliminate any leading questions from my interviews. Since I conducted this research, disseminated the survey, controlled the interviews, and analyzed the data, I also planned on standardizing all procedures and eliminating opportunities for bias.

In order to minimize these threats to the study's survey, interview, and observation data, I first standardized all conditions that I could control. Second, I chose an appropriate design for this research. A survey, in addition to follow-up interviews, provided the most suitable method for obtaining demographic information from art educators across the state of Virginia.

According to Fraenkel et al. (2015), most researchers wish to generalize their findings to appropriate populations. After spending a great amount of time on this research, one of my goals was to have my results reach a wide range of studies, educators, and teacher-researchers. By obtaining a representative sample, secondary art educators in Virginia, my study may have the capability to extend to future art education studies in Virginia secondary schools.

### **Justification of Methods**

This study focused on the needs of art educators and EL students in the art classroom. Due to my nature as a researcher who does not have access to a personal classroom or set of students, I relied on the participation of my art education colleagues across the state of Virginia. Distributing a comprehensive survey with questions regarding school demographics and personal teacher reflections provided this study with rich content on the growing EL population. One of my suppositions for collecting the data was that if the data revealed that there was a larger EL population specifically in visual arts courses when compared to a school population, then changes in preservice training may be necessary to give teachers needed resources and strategies.

I felt that research in this field of growing EL population in secondary art classrooms is minimal, therefore there is a need for an in depth study. There is a wide variety of literature on working with EL students, but very few that specifically identify the strengths and weaknesses of encouraging students to be in a visual arts class. Research needs to extend to this area of art education, by providing both teachers and students with the tools and strategies in creating a positive and inclusive experience.

The primary risk of utilizing a survey as this research's main method is receiving a low participation rate. I will minimize this risk by monitoring survey results as they come in completed. If there is a low rate, I will send a kind reminder to my participants about completing the survey.

### **Protection of Human Subjects**

In order to protect the study participants involved in my research, I received approval from James Madison University's (JMU's) Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB committee provides thorough examination to all research conducted at JMU and ensures that the study participants will encounter no harm. Participant involvement in this study was completely voluntary, and through the initial survey method I obtained the informed consent from the willing participants. Once the data was collected, I ensured that no one else had access to the data to further ensure confidentiality of the research data (Fraenkel et al., p. 64). Electronic survey distribution allowed the survey participants to remain anonymous, and no personal names or information were recorded with the data analysis. However, if participants chose to reveal their name and contact information, either to receive summarized data or to participate in follow-up questioning, their identities were held in confidence and removed from the data used for the purposes of this study. When referring to data collected in the research, I refer nondescript pseudonyms, like "school A", for school systems, schools, educators, and any other identifiable participants in this study.

## Chapter Four: Results and Interpretations

### Introduction

Data and responses collected from the survey, English Language Learners in Secondary Art Classrooms, and follow up interviews are presented, discussed, and analyzed in this chapter. The survey was distributed to all VAEA secondary art educators in the Commonwealth, which totals 338 members. The survey was additionally distributed to 58 local visual art educators within a 100-mile radius of James Madison University. It is likely that some of the local art educators are members of the VAEA and, therefore, received the invitation both from VAEA and the local teacher distribution. The invitations were worded identically and it was assumed that teachers only completed the survey once. Preferences in the online Qualtrics survey were set to allow only one survey response per participant.

The survey was first disseminated in February, and subsequently in March as a follow-up reminder. A total of 43 responses were collected through Qualtrics. None of the questions on the survey were forced response, leaving participants free to skip any questions they did not feel comfortable or equipped to answer. For the results, I have included all surveys that had questions completed. Response rates to each question vary due to the ability of participants to choose not to provide a response. At the conclusion of the survey instrument participants received an optional opportunity to provide additional details through a follow-up interview. Out of the 43 participants, 6 individuals responded that they were interested in providing supplementary information regarding the topic, and 4 interviews were recorded.

The data analysis has been presented through rich, detailed descriptions of the outcomes of each question on the survey. The survey analysis is broken down into two sections: qualitative inquiry and quantitative inquiry. Each question has been reviewed and analyzed with a qualitative and quantitative approach. Survey questions listed below retain their original number as displayed in the survey instrument, however, they have been rearranged in this chapter. Data presented below has been organized to introduce the most prevalent theme first with subsequent themes that follow.

### **Analysis of Survey Responses**

**Quantitative Inquiry.** 13 of the questions posed to participants were quantitative. The following questions and data analysis displays information regarding demographics captured through the recorded responses.

*Question twelve: On average, what percentage of time during each class period do you spend specifically meeting the needs of your ELL students?*

Time is indicated in percentage throughout one class period, with a Likert scale ranging from 0 percent to 100 percent. 20 participants out of 43 responded to this question. Of the 20 participants, 50% responded 0-24 percent, 40% responded 25-49 percent, 10% responded 50-74 percent, and 0% responded 75-100%. The following table breaks down the data into individual responses from participants.

On average, what percentage of time during each class period do you spend specifically meeting the needs of your ELL students?

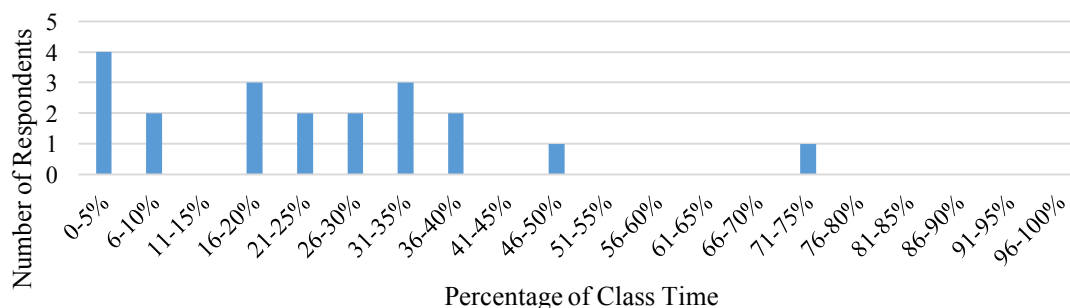


Table 2: Bar graph representation of question twelve.

The majority of participants selected lower percentile ranges of time spent addressing the needs of EL students in the art classroom. Half of the respondents selected 0-24% of class time was spent specifically accommodating their EL students. The other half of respondents chose 25-49% of time addressing the needs of EL students. Based on the answers of this question, the findings suggest that teachers are not dedicating entire class sessions to the needs of solely their EL students. Rather, teachers are monitoring their EL students and accommodating for them as necessary, which may be within 0% to 50% of the given class period.

***Question thirteen: How would you label your school system?***

The response choices presented in multiple choice format were: Urban, Suburban, Small Town, and Rural. 17 participants out of 43 responded to this question. Out of 17 responses, 29% indicated Urban, 24% indicated Suburban, 6% indicated Small Town, and 41% indicated Rural.

### How would you label your school system?

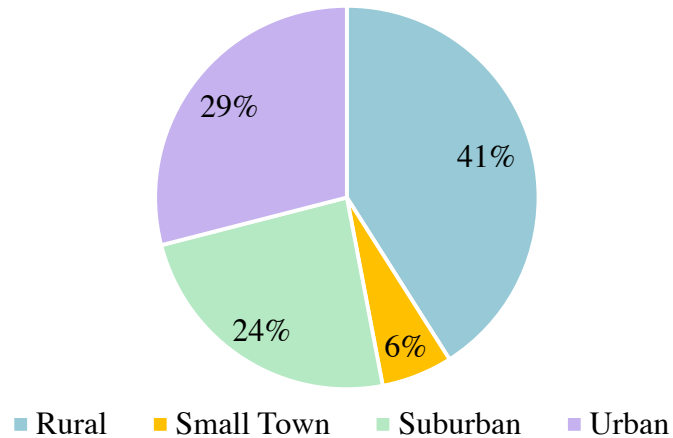


Table 3: Pie chart representation of question thirteen.

Majority of participants selected rural, indicating they work in school systems which are not urban (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Urban settings are those described as places with populations of 2,500 or more outside urbanized areas. Urbanized areas are those areas that have a minimum population of 50,000 or more. When defining the term rural, population density and remoteness are essential considerations; these factors strongly influence school organization, availability of resources, and economic and social conditions (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).



The findings for this question indicate that a variety of teachers across the Commonwealth of Virginia participated in the survey. The VAEA is comprised of 5 regions: Blue Ridge, Central, Northern Virginia, Southwestern, and Tidewater. Each region has unique characteristics, including the variation of landscapes.

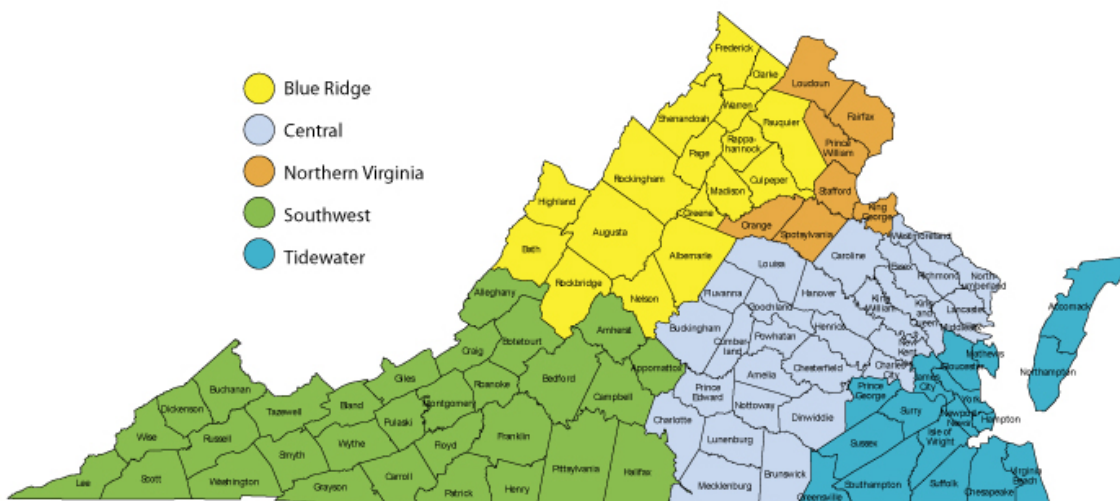


Figure 1: Map of Virginia's Art Education Association Regions.

The specified regions within the VAEA clearly showcase the diverse nature of school systems and independent cities within the commonwealth. The Blue Ridge Region has 36 school systems within its border, the Central Region has 45, the Northern Virginia Region has 13, the Southwestern Region has 58, and the Tidewater Region has 19. Although the Blue Ridge and Central Regions have a greater number of counties within their boundaries, those regions are significantly more spread out than the concentrated areas of the Northern Virginia or Tidewater Regions. (VAEA, 2016).

***Question fourteen: How many students (approximately) are enrolled in your school system?***

The response choices offered in multiple choice format were: Less than 5,000 students, 5,000-15,000 students, 15,000-25,000 students, 25,000-35,000 students, 35,000-45,000 students, 45,000-55,000 students, 55,000-65,000 students, and More than 65,000 students. 17 participants out of 43 responded to this question. Out of the 17 responses, 24% of participants selected Less than 5,000 students, 59% of participants selected 5,000-15,000 students, 0% of participants selected 15,000-25,000 students, 0% of participants selected 25,000-35,000 students, 6% of participants selected 35,000-45,000 students, 0% of participants selected 45,000-55,000 students, 0% of participants selected 55,000-65,000 students, and 12% of participants selected More than 65,000 students.

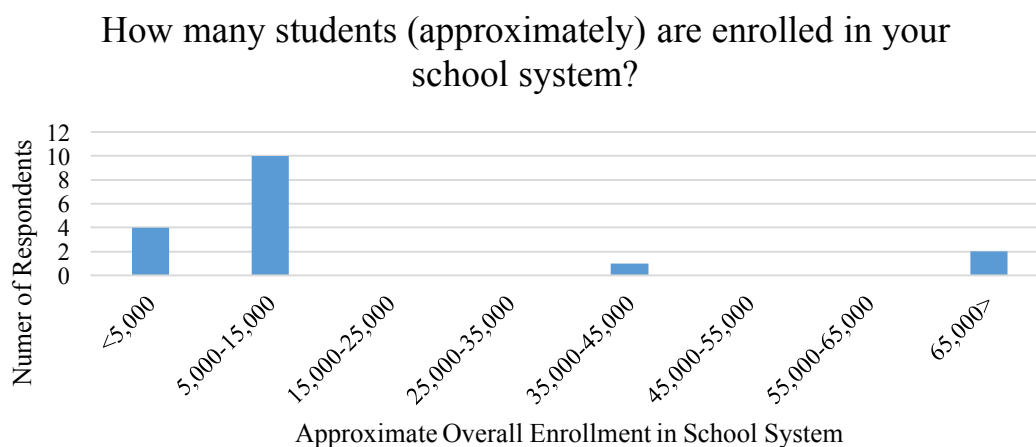


Table 4: Bar graph representation of question fourteen.

This data suggests that the majority of teachers indicate they have approximately 5,000-15,000 students enrolled in their school system. More than half of the participants in this study's survey are working in a district that is considered a small-medium sized

school system. In contrast, large school systems are identified as districts who have over 50,000 students enrolled in their schools.

***Question fifteen: How many students are enrolled in your high school?***

The response choices presented in multiple choice format were: Less than 500 students, 500-1,000 students, 1,000-2,000 students, and More than 2,000 students. 17 participants out of 43 responded to this question. Out of the 17 responses, 0% responded Less than 500 students, 47% responded 500-1,000 students, 29% responded 1,000-2,000 students, and 24% responded More than 2,000 students. The majority of participants indicated they are working in a medium-large size secondary school.

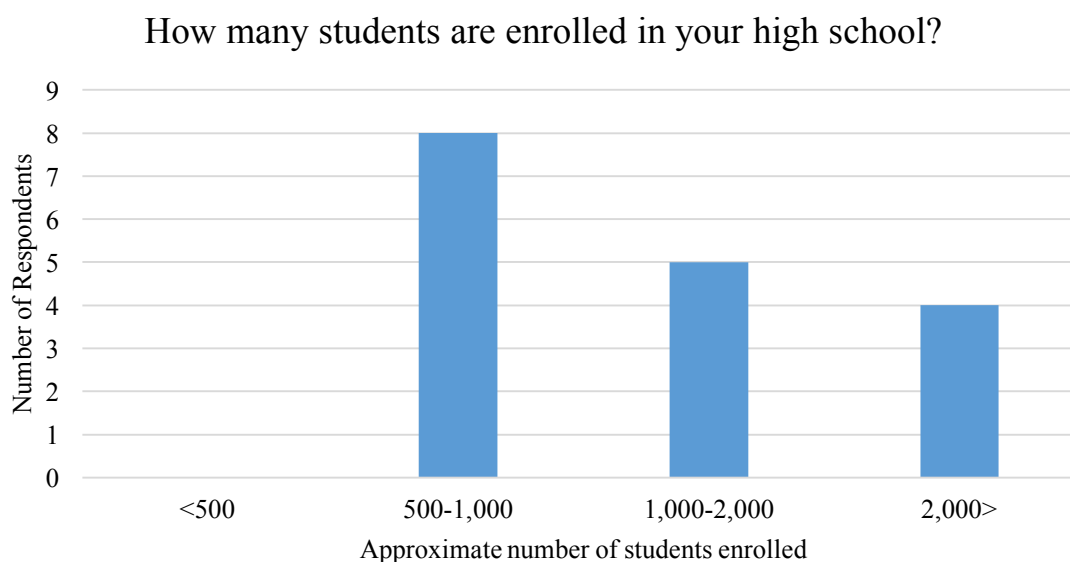


Table 5: Bar graph representation of question fifteen.

***Question sixteen: Within your school system, what percentage of students receive English Language Learner (ELL) services, Levels 1-5?***

Questions sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen were purposefully designed to ask a similar question with one variable. This study is interested in capturing reflective data on EL student percentages within the entire school system, the entire high school, and within art classrooms. This study's first research question inquires if art teachers experience a greater percentage of EL students in their art rooms in comparison to overall percentages school or county wide. The intent of including all EL levels, 1-5, in this question and additionally in questions seventeen and eighteen, was to capture a clear sense of all linguistically diverse students obtaining services for their language needs in this setting.

Within your school system, what percentage of students  
receive ELL services, Levels 1-5?

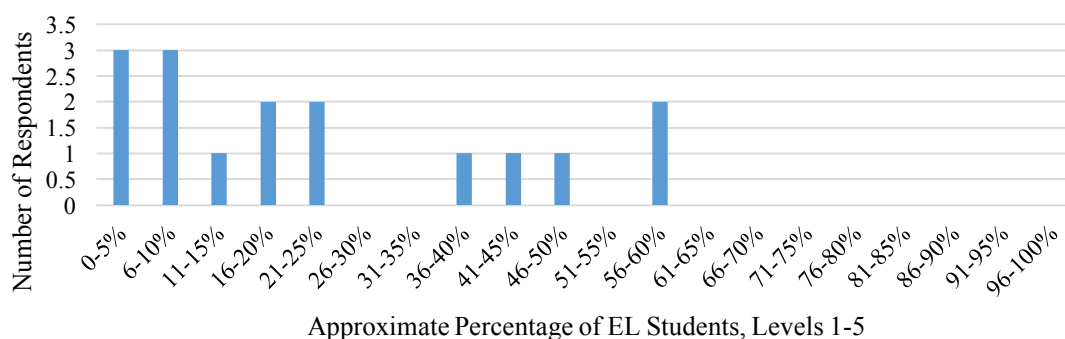


Table 6: Bar graph representation of question sixteen.

The number of students is indicated in percentage, with a Likert scale ranging from 0 percent to 100 percent. 16 participants out of 43 responded to this question. Of the 16 participants, 69% responded 0-24 percent, 19% responded 25-49 percent, 12% responded 50-74 percent, and 0% responded 75-100 percent. The majority of participants selected 0-24% of students receive EL services Levels 1-5. Expanding on this data, 7 participants selected 0-10% of students, and 6 participants selected 11-24% of students

receive EL services. This data indicates there are low to medium percentages of students receiving EL services in Virginian school systems.

***Question seventeen: Within your high school, what percentage of students receive ELL services, Levels 1-5?***

The number of students is indicated in percentage, with a Likert scale ranging from 0 percent to 100 percent. 14 participants out of 43 responded to this question. Of the 14 participants, 43% responded 0-24 percent, 21% responded 25-49 percent, 29% responded 50-74 percent, and 7% responded 75-100 percent.

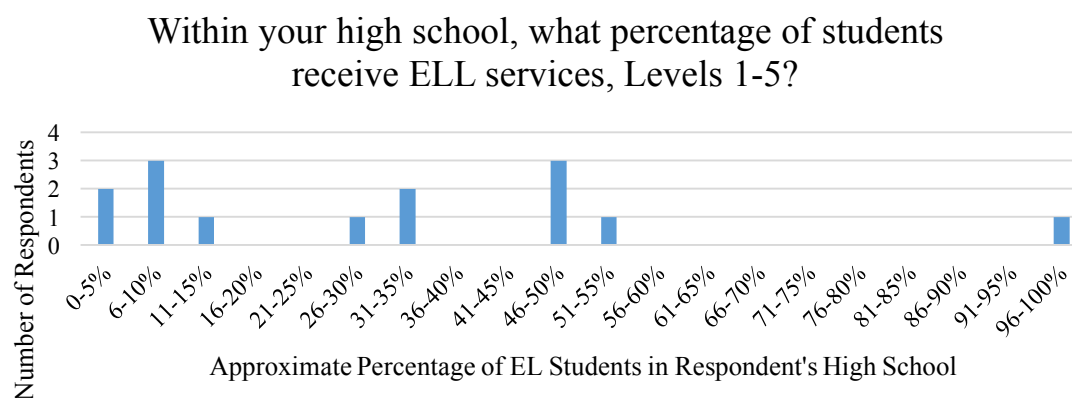


Table 7: Bar graph representation of question seventeen.

The majority of respondents selected 0-24% percent of students within their high school receive EL services. This suggests there are a low to medium number of students within the participants specific school setting that receive EL services.

***Question eighteen: Within your art classes, what approximate percentage of students receive ELL services, Levels 1-5?***

The number of students is indicated in percentage, with a Likert scale ranging from 0 percent to 100 percent. 15 participants out of 43 responded to this question. Of the 15 participants, 60% responded 0-24 percent, 20% responded 25-49 percent, 20% responded 50-74 percent, and 0% responded 75-100 percent.

Within your art classes, what approximate percentage of students receive ELL services, Levels 1-5?

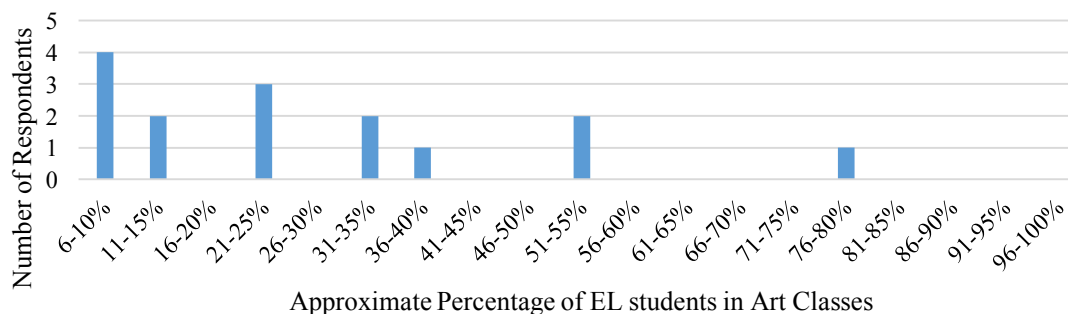


Table 8: Bar graph representation of question eighteen.

Majority of respondents replied that 0-24% of students in their art classes receive ELL services, all levels. The remaining responses indicate low to medium percentages of EL students enrolled in art classes that are categorized as Level 1-5 EL students. By observing this data together, it's evident questions sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen address the different environments that EL students may be present in.

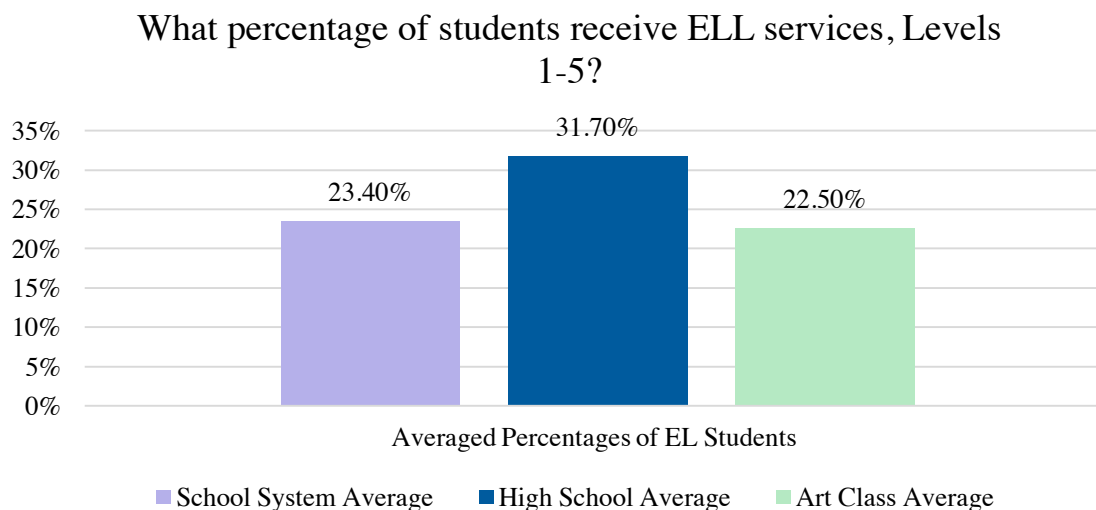


Table 9: Bar graph representation of survey questions sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen.

***Question nineteen: Of these ELL students in your art classes, what approximate percentage are Levels 1 and 2? (Levels 1 & 2: Beginning ELLs, little to no understanding, very limited vocabulary.)***

The number of students is indicated in percentage, with a Likert scale ranging from 0 percent to 100 percent. 15 participants out of 43 responded to this question. Of the 15 participants, 53% responded 0-24 percent, 7% responded 25-49 percent, 27% responded 50-74 percent, and 13% responded 75-100 percent.

Of these ELL students in your art classes, what approximate percentage are Levels 1 and 2?

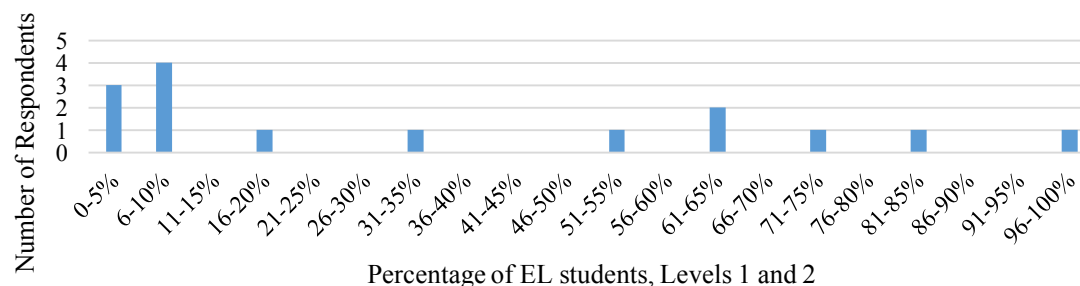


Table 10: Bar graph representation of question nineteen.

More than half of respondents selected 0-24% of students are Level 1 and 2 EL students. The remaining responses indicate there is a range of data; some teachers indicate they have a medium percentage of Level 1 and 2 ELs, some teachers indicate they have a high percentage of Level 1 and 2 ELs in their art classes. Based on the findings of this question, majority of participants express that they are working with 0-24% of students in their art classes who are Level 1 and 2 ELs. Upon investigating this segment of data further, 38% of participants in this section have 0-5% of EL Level 1 and 2 students, 50% of participants in this section have 6-10% of EL Level 1 and 2 students, and 12% of participants in this section have 16-20% of EL Level 1 and 2 students. Expanding on the majority segment in this question allowed this study to identify that most teachers within this range have a small percentage, ranging from approximately 6-10%, of Level 1 and 2 EL students in their art classes.

Additionally, there are outliers in this segment; 13% of participants overall indicate that their classes are 75-100% EL Level 1 and 2 students. These are unusually high percentages for a mainstream art class. Upon further analysis of the data collected in



this study's survey, few participants expressed they are teaching a studio art or foundations art course specifically for EL students. The pie chart below identifies percentages presented through the data for this question.

***Question twenty: Within a given school year in your school system, how often do you receive training related to ELL mainstreamed students?***

This question required a multiple-choice response selection; participants had the choice of no training available, 1 opportunity per year, 2 opportunities per year, 3 opportunities per year, and 4 or more opportunities per year. In this study, I am interested in collecting data on the number of opportunities rather than the number of trainings participants may or may not have attended. Through investigating the amount of “opportunities,” that allows participants to reflect on the offerings and support given by the school system or school. As the researcher, I selectively chose not to ask about how many professional development sessions teachers have attended, but rather how many offerings are present in their school system and school. This question relates to this study's effort to provide a deeper look at how art educators are supported as the landscape of education at large continues to evolve.

17 participants out of 43 responded to this question. Out of the 17 respondents, 41% of respondents selected no training available, 47% of respondents indicated 1 training available, 0% of participants selected 2 trainings available, 6% of respondents chose 3 trainings available, and 6% of participants selected 4 or more trainings available. The majority of the responses on this question indicate that there were one or fewer

opportunities available for educators to gain resources and support tools through training sessions.

Within a given school year in your school system, how often do you receive training related to ELL mainstreamed students?

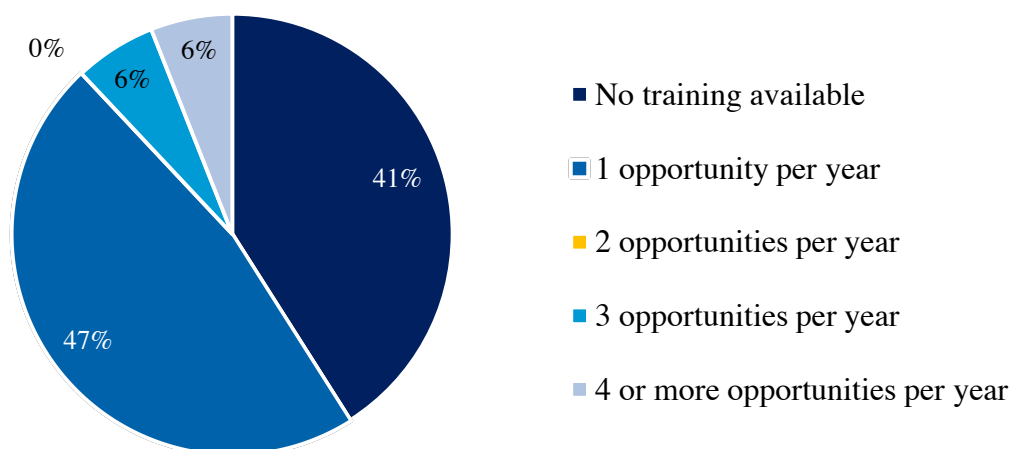


Table 11: Pie chart representation of question number twenty.

***Question twenty-one: Do you feel supported by your school with ELL resources/services?***

The response choices for question twenty were presented in multiple choice format: Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat disagree, and Strongly disagree. 17 participants out of 43 responded to this question. Out of the 17 responses, 12% responded Strongly agree, 24% responded Somewhat agree, 35% responded Neither agree nor disagree, 18% responded Somewhat disagree, and 12% responded Strongly disagree. Results from this question are inconclusive, as the majority of respondents selected Neither agree nor disagree. The data is spread across all answer

choices, making it difficult to recognize any trend or relationships. Responses from this question informs this study of the vast variety of experiences teachers encounter.

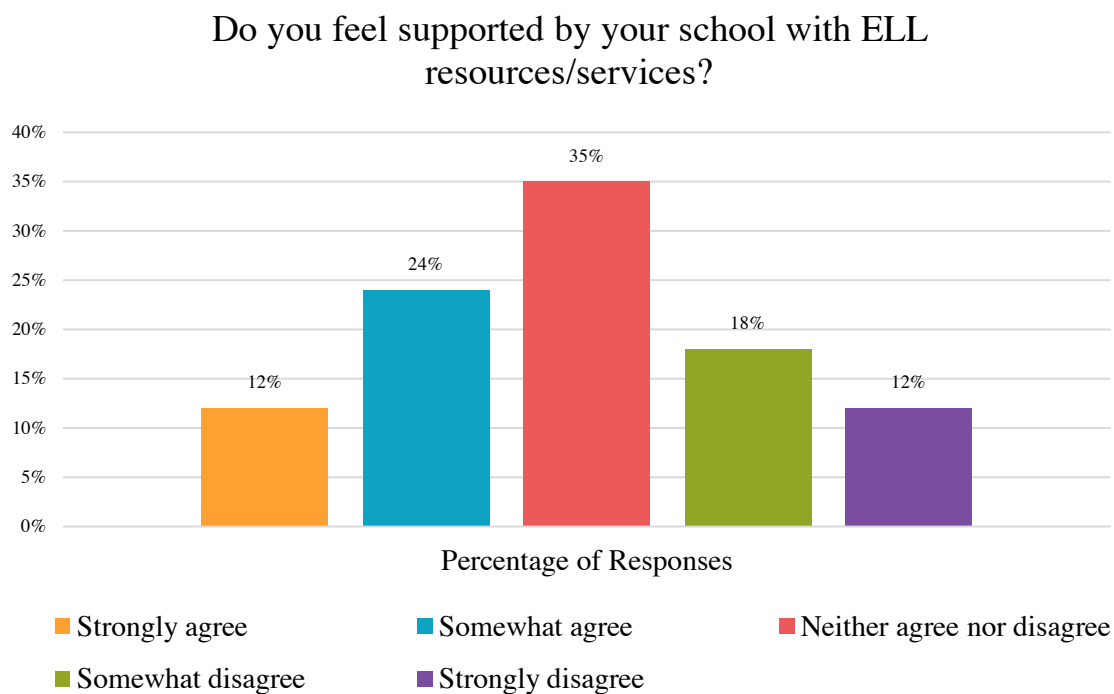


Table 12: Bar graph representation of question number twenty-one.

***Question twenty-two: If ELL trainings for art educators were available, would you attend?***

The response choices were presented in a multiple-choice format: Yes, I would make attending a top priority; Yes, I would attend if it worked with my schedule; Yes, because... [open response field]; Maybe, I would consider attending; No, I would not attend because I don't have the time; No, I would not attend because it is not a top priority; No, because... [open response field]. 17 participants out of 43 responded to this question.

Out of the 17 responses, 23% responded Yes, I would make attending a top priority, 53% responded, Yes, I would attend if it worked with my schedule, 24% responded Maybe, I would consider attending, 0% responded No, I would not attend because I don't have the time, 0% responded Yes, because...[open response field], 0 % responded No, I would not attend because it is not a top priority, and 0% responded No, because...[open response field].

Majority of the responses for this question reflect that participants would be interested in attending a professional development opportunity regarding EL students in visual art. It is important to note that respondents carefully selected yes, but under the limitations of their personal schedule. It is interesting that not one participant responded with “no, nor maybe. This data could be impacted by the authenticity of participants and their responses. Due to the anonymous nature of this survey and encouragement towards participants to provide authentic responses, individuals reserve the right to express their honest opinions

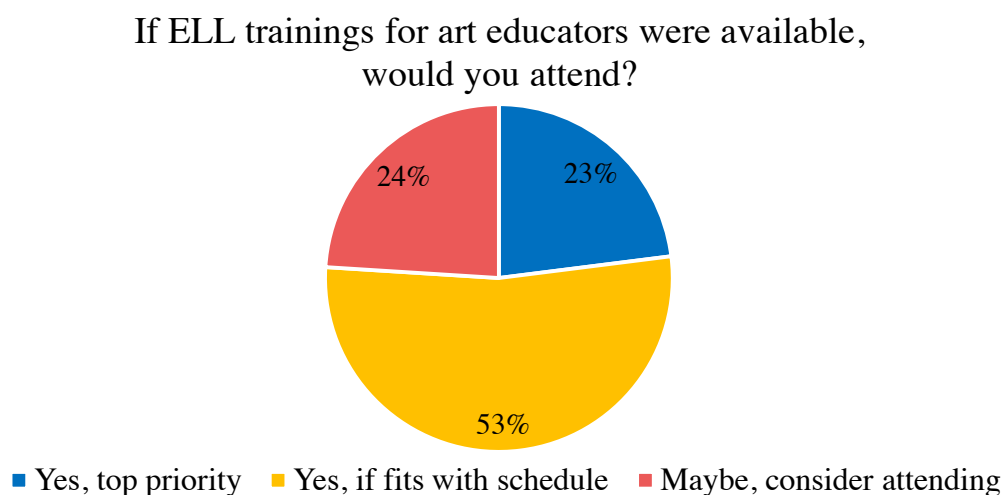


Table 13: Pie chart representation of question number twenty-two.

***Question twenty-three: How many years have you been teaching?***

The number of years is presented with a Likert scale ranging from 0 to 40+ years. 16 participants out of 43 responded to this question. Out of the 16 responses, 0% indicated 0-10 years, 63% indicated 11-20 years, 31% indicated 21-30 years, and 6% indicated 31-40+ years. This data suggests that all of respondents have had at least 10 years of teaching experience. Majority of participants indicated that they are within the range of having 11 to 20 years teaching experience. Additionally, this data indicates that there were no preservice or early career teacher respondents.

Although there is no evidence as to why early career teachers are not represented in this data, here are hypotheses on why teachers within their first 10 years of being an educator did not participate in this study's survey. Early career teachers within 0 to 10 years of teaching may have chosen not be members of the VAEA; therefore, did not receive this survey originally disseminated through the VAEA distribution email. Similarly, early career teachers may have opted to not receive VAEA announcements, therefore missing the opportunity to contribute. Alternatively, early career teachers may not feel qualified to respond on this topic, or may not have had time to respond to this study's survey.

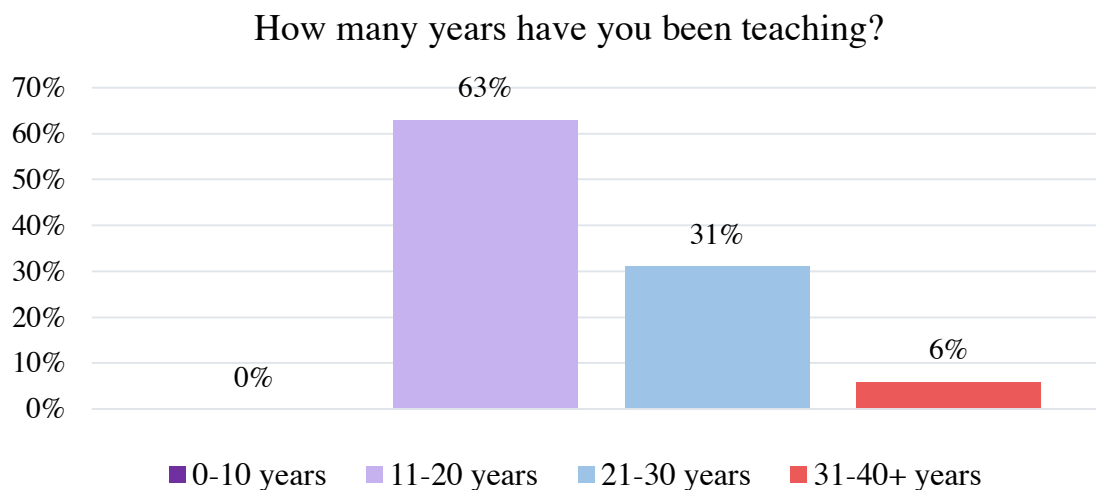


Table 14: Bar graph representation of question number twenty-three.

***Question twenty-four: What content area(s) do you teach? (Select all that apply.)***

The response choices were presented in a multiple-choice format, with the option to select multiple answers: General 2D/3D Studio Art, Photography, Digital Media, 2D Specific Courses, 3D Specific Courses, Design Courses, Advanced Art Courses (AP, IB, Portfolio), Other (Art Courses) [open response field], and Other (Non-Art Courses) [open response field]. 17 participants out of 43 responded to this question. Out of the 17 responses, 13 participants selected General 2D/3D Studio Art, 6 participants selected Photography, 2 participants selected Digital Media, 3 participants selected 2D Specific Courses, 1 participant selected 3D Specific Courses, 2 participants selected Design Courses, 5 participants selected Advanced Art Courses (AP, IB, Portfolio), 8 participants selected Other (Art Courses) [open response field], and 2 participants selected Other (Non-Art Courses) [open response field].

The broad range of data collected for question twenty-three implies participants are engaged in teaching a variety of art courses. The findings display majority of educators teach a general 2D/3D studio art course. Depending on the enrollment choices at participants' school systems, students may be required to take a foundational art course before enrolling into a photography or graphic design class. In my experience, I have found that majority of my former EL learners were enrolled in my studio art 1 course, an introductory visual art class that is an open elective to all students. This course served as a prerequisite for several other art courses offered in our school catalog.

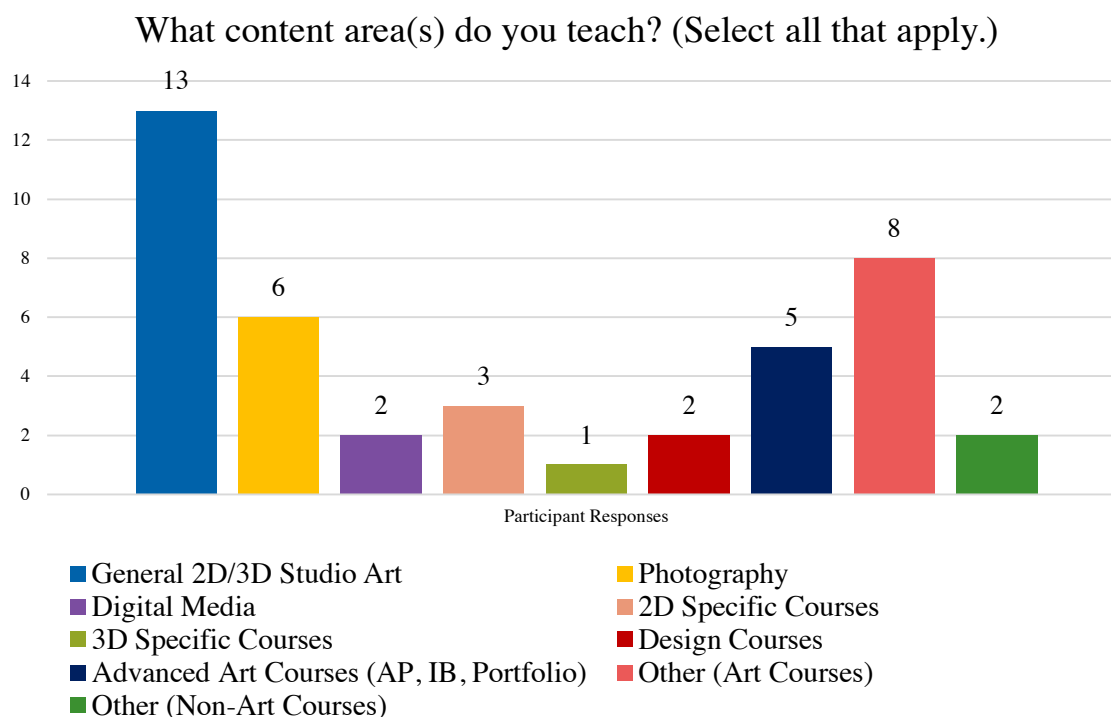


Table 15: Bar graph representation of question number twenty-four.

Data expressed in question twenty-three also highlights the least enrolled courses among participants; advanced art courses (AP, IB, portfolio), 3D specific courses, and other [non-art courses]. These findings suggest that low numbers of educators who

specialize in teaching secondary advanced art courses, 3D courses, and courses other than visual art chose to participate in this study's survey. It is possible that there is low teacher response rate from those content areas because there is low enrollment of EL students in those courses. This claim is merely a suggestion; further research on this data would allow a deeper scope as to why those specific teacher participation rates are lower than others.

**Qualitative Inquiry.** In the online survey, 11 questions were part of the qualitative inquiry. These questions were based on the steps and stages of a comprehensive lesson plan, where each key section is addressed while focusing on accommodations for ELs. In this segment of the data analysis, responses among participants have been coded carefully and are expressed through emergent themes. The data was listed in order of most frequent response among respondents to least common response. Each question analysis section was designed in this way, and was listed with the most common response first.

***Question one: What is your most effective strategy when greeting your ELL students at the beginning of class?***

21 participants out of 43 responded to this question. Respondents shared the following content through their open-ended responses. As noted above, replies were organized beginning with the most common response from majority of participants.

- Greeting in student's native language.
- Greeting in English.
- Utilize positive gestures and eye contact.



- Address student by name.
- Greet all students the same.

Data collected for question one suggests all teachers greet their students in some way. The most common response was to acknowledge the EL student in their native language by saying hello in a language other than English. The second most common reply was similar; teachers responded that they also greet students with a phrase or welcome statement in English. The findings indicate that teachers primarily rely on verbal communication with their students, either in the students' native language or in English, preferably both.

***Question two: What is your most effective strategy when introducing a lesson to your ELL students?***

18 out of 43 participants responded to this question. Respondents shared the following content through their open-ended responses. Strategies listed below were organized with the most common responses first.

- Provide visual imagery.
- Display examples of expectations.
- Demonstrations.
- Purposeful gestures.
- Check for understanding.

Responses collected for question two suggest secondary art educators rely heavily on visuals when introducing a lesson. Visuals were expressed by participants as visual

aids supporting content, images of student and artist exemplars, and demonstrations utilized to visually express physical processes of a lesson.

***Question three: What is your most effective strategy when presenting lesson objectives to your ELL students?***

19 out of 43 respondents shared the following content through their open-ended responses. Responses were structured to share the most common response first.

- Use translation resources, i.e. Google Translate, EL aid, bilingual peer.
- Provide written material, i.e. handouts, assignment sheets.
- Provide visuals, i.e. examples of objectives, finished artwork.
- Check for understanding.
- Demonstrate objectives.

Findings for question three indicate majority of art educators rely on translation tools. Educator responses expressed content can be translated through digital applications, such as Google Translate, or a person, such as a bilingual peer or an EL aid. Teachers shared that when they express lesson objectives to their EL students, they utilize verbal and written modes of translation.

***Question four: What are your most effective strategies for your ELL students when your lesson expectations require individual think time, problem solving, sketching, planning ideas, and/or individual art making?***

17 participants out of 43 responded to this question. Respondents shared the following content through their open-ended responses. Reflections listed below were ordered with most frequent response first.

- Provide examples, i.e. visuals, demonstrations.
- Request assistance from bilingual student or EL aid.
- Time accommodations.
- Provide translated documents and resources.
- Simplify instructions, use choice words.
- Checking for understanding.
- Accommodate students by allowing them to write in native language.

After an art unit has been introduced and objectives have been expressed to all students, brainstorming on project plans is naturally the following step in a lesson plan. The majority of art educator responses suggest providing students with examples of the brainstorming process. One participant submitted their specific processes and processes:

We have sketchbook assignments we do building up to the lesson. I have examples in my sketchbook. I often will do demonstrations or do an assignment with the students. For Level 1 and 2 students, mimicking positive behaviors and others working on an assignment seems to give the best results (personal communication, February, 9, 2017).

Educators second most common response was reflections on pairing lower level EL students with more advanced EL peers. The findings with the second most common

response suggest that teachers are attempting to reach their EL students through verbal communication. By accommodating students with translations and peer mentors, teachers are attempting to facilitate a collaborative classroom community.

***Question five: What is your most effective classroom management strategy that you use with your ELL students?***

18 out of 43 participants shared the following content through their open-ended responses. The list of reflections begins with the most common answer among participants.

- Fostering a classroom of: respect, kindness, and encouragement.
- Partner EL student near bilingual peer.
- Small group or one-on-one instruction.
- Proximity and close-monitoring.
- Separate students out at different tables.
- Express information in native language.

Findings indicated teachers are concerned with providing a warm and welcoming classroom environment, where students feel there is a mutual respect. In addition to a proactive approach to classroom management with EL students, educators also provided methods for facilitating a positive classroom community.

***Question six: What is your most effective strategy (other than oral methods) when your ELL students are expected to learn art based vocabulary?***

16 participants out of 43 responded to this question. Respondents shared the following content through their open-ended responses. Participant responses were listed with most common response first.

- Visual aids, i.e. flashcards with images and posters.
- Emphasis on vocabulary words, i.e. word of the day, taking time to practice writing skills, recording words and definitions in sketchbook.
- Providing translated resources and vocabulary worksheets.
- Prompting students with approachable sentence starter.
- Adapted vocabulary, i.e. less content to learn, alternative words.

Overwhelmingly, teachers indicated that they support second language acquisition and comprehending visual art terminology by using visual aids. A response states, “Try to present the vocabulary with visual elements and possibly in their own language” (personal communication, February 9, 2017). Additional findings suggest teachers support literacy and vocabulary through repetitive and consistent classroom activities. Another participant shared, “I have [EL students] write the words in their sketchbook, and I have them repeat after me when we are learning them, then I use them repeatedly as often as possible during the project” (personal communication, February 9, 2017).

***Question seven: What is your most effective strategy when your ELL students are expected to learn art historical, cultural, and/or artist information during a lesson?***

16 participants out of 43 responded to this question. Respondents shared the following content through their open-ended responses. Answers from respondents were listed in order with most frequent response first.

- Relate information to students' culture.
- Present relevant artists.
- Visual examples through presentations.
- Engage students in variety of technology and applications geared towards art history.
- I don't teach this, or I struggle with this.

Expressing content through visual modes is consistently addressed in response to several questions. Art educators are fluent in visual expression; the challenge is to provide relevant and clear examples for all students, including ELs. The majority of participants agreed that in order to approach art history, cultural, and artist information through some meaningful modus, educators should incorporate diverse and culturally relevant art historical content to students. This data suggests teachers might find time to gather information on their students' native culture and incorporate appropriate findings into the historical content and artist examples. Additionally, several participants provided honest answers and shared that they struggle with this aspect within a lesson plan, and sometimes avoid teaching it. The data in this question indicates teachers are still working through effective strategies and may still be searching for a positive tool to implement in the classroom.

***Question eight: What are your most effective strategies when engaging your ELL students in meaningful group brainstorming, group discussions, and/or verbal critiques?***

16 participants out of 43 responded to this question. Respondents shared the following content through their open-ended responses. The following list was organized with most common response first.

- Facilitating peer-to-peer partner activities.
- Promoting welcoming environment and respectful classroom community.
- Allowing EL students additional time to prepare.
- Pose questions to the entire class, and avoid singling out any one student.
- Encourage students to share when they are ready.
- Promoting an accommodating critique method, i.e. sticky note critique.

After the collected data was analyzed, it was made known that several teachers struggle with this aspect within a lesson plan. Of the participants who do engage their students in group discussions and critique exercises, the most common response was to pair EL students with a supportive peer partner. Findings indicate that participants advocate for peer activities because it provides students with a low-stress environment, which promotes positivity and productivity.

***Question nine: What best accommodations do you provide for your ELL students when you expect a written reflection and/or an assessment that requires reading?***

17 participants out of 43 responded to this question. Respondents shared the following content through their open-ended responses. Data collected was organized by displaying the most common responses first.

- Allow responses in native language.
- Allow responses in native language, however, student must translate them and include written translation for assignment.
- Present modified prompts and sentence starters.
- Provide time accommodations and extensions.
- Create a modified rubric.
- Translation resources.
- Auditory and oral methods of expression in place of written expression.

Teachers expressed a variety of strategies that they implement during stages of a lesson that require engagement with reading or writing. Participants indicated that during a stage in a lesson that requires students to write, teachers accommodate their EL students by allowing them to write first in their native language. Several respondents also shared that students are expected to translate their own writing into English, to support building up English skills and so that the teacher may interpret student content for accuracy and relevancy. In the open-ended response question, a teacher said, “They are encouraged to write in their first language and translate it to the best of their ability. Written reflection is for the student, I like to know roughly what it says to help me gauge their learning, but I don't have to get every nuance” (personal communication, February 9, 2017).



*Question ten: Describe a time when you felt frustrated or discouraged when working with ELL students.*

15 participants out of 43 responded to this question. Respondents shared the following content through their open-ended responses. Information shared by participants was structured with most frequent responses first.

- Feeling unsupported and untrained to teach to an EL student population.
- Students are assigned to visual art course with no warning from administration or counselors.
- Students being placed in visual art because it's "easy."
- Students who do not take school seriously, or refuse to engage in learning.
- Discouraged when student continues to struggle, even when teacher is trying their hardest to make an impact.
- Having large groups of ELs in one class section, difficult to assist large numbers.

In this open-ended response question, the survey attempts to investigate what art teachers are feeling in relationship to their EL student population. By encouraging teachers to share their honest reflections, the goal is to address their needs as well as the needs of their EL students. I believe the following quote from a survey participant embodies what many teachers are feeling in the classroom:

I am discouraged when I feel like I'm not doing enough, and I don't have enough resources to use nor enough time to create the resources I need. I don't feel very well equipped/trained to do this job most of the time because it is difficult to find

support specifically for teaching art to this population (personal communication, February 9, 2017).

Another participant shared their experience on gaining the training and learning effective strategies, and provided a written reflection on the process:

Most strategies are new and to attain understanding and mastery you often have to take some extra professional development or class to get them. Adding a second curricular practice makes the job of translating art to those who don't understand it doubled in work. Thus, no matter what the strategies are, the work load of teaching to a group and then re-teaching to a smaller group inside a group makes flow very tricky and exhausting... (personal communication, February 9, 2017).

***Question eleven: Describe a time when you felt you made a positive impact while working with ELL students.***

15 participants out of 43 responded to this question. Respondents shared the following content through their open-ended responses. Reflections are organized to express the most common responses first.

- Observing students who are engaged in the content and working hard on the assignment.
- Recognizing when students feel welcomed and loved.
- Witnessing students use visual art as a positive tool in their life.
- Sharing in a mutual respect in the classroom.

- Promoting differences, using art as a tool to share there are many correct “answers.”
- Visualizing students be empowered through daily tasks and lessons.

This survey is formatted purposefully in a way that engages participants and investigates effective strategies. As survey participants arrive at the end of the survey, they are asked to reflect on frustrations and successes within the art classroom. This survey intentionally was designed to conclude this portion on a positive and uplifting note. Several participants shared heartfelt reflections on successful moments in the classroom, where they observed positive instances in the visual art classroom. For example, in the following quote a participant shares their story and how they utilize the art classroom to promote positive experiences:

I feel I have made a positive impact on all of my ELL students. I have made sure their experience in art was good. I tried to use art as a way for them to learn more English. I also strive to make sure art is a place where they can succeed. There are many correct answers and solutions to an art assignment (personal communication, February, 9 2017).

**Optional Comments: Feel free to provide any additional comments regarding the survey here.** 5 participants out of 43 responded to this optional comments section. Participants indicated through open responses:

- Accuracy of percentages, participants selected approximate values.
- Interested in topic and willing to discuss further.

- Although teachers may have low EL percentages in their art classes, they are still invested in accommodating for all students.

Lastly, a participant provided an insightful quote in this section. The art teacher included as their last words on the survey, “Every child deserves a chance to learn.” This final reflection from a respondent captured the overall goal of this study. I agree, and believe all students deserve an opportunity to learn and grow.

### **Analysis of Interview Responses**

At the conclusion of the online survey, participants were offered an optional opportunity to share in depth reflections on ELs in their secondary visual art teaching experiences through an interview. Six respondents provided personal information and offered their time for a follow-up interview. Four respondents were interviewed; two were conducted in-person, and two were conducted through email. The in-person interviews were conducted at a preferred location and during a preferred time for the interviewee. At the time of the interview, the interviewee signed an interview consent form, permitting their responses and the conversation to be audio recorded. I, the researcher, asked the interviewee’s 5 open-ended questions.

Interview questions were intended to be an extension of the qualitative open-ended survey questions. The purpose of the follow-up interviews was to gain deeper qualitative data on art teacher experiences working with EL students. Question four and question five were new topics, not addressed in this study’s survey. This research is interested in providing support for secondary art educators working with an EL population in the art classroom. Through questions four, the goals of interview responses

are to investigate how teachers interpret their students' needs. In question five, interview responses were intended to investigate how art educators can accommodate for their EL population, and make their strategies known to teacher new to working with EL students. After the interview concluded, the conversation was transcribed using traditional methods. Responses were documented and coded on a secure, password-protected computer.

Interview responses are organized in this setting as reflections by interviewee A, interviewee B, interviewee C, and interviewee D. Names and locations are not revealed in order to protect the identity of the participants.

***Interview Question one: How many years have you been teaching?***

Four out of four participants responded to this question. The variety of answers are listed below.

- Teacher A: 26 years
- Teacher B: 21 years
- Teacher C: 23 years
- Teacher D: 13 years

Three out of four participants responded to interview question one with indicating they have been teaching for 21-30 years. This data suggests that majority of interview participants have had decades of teaching experiences. It also implies that with several years of teaching experiences, secondary art educators have worked with a variety of

students, and it is likely that participants care about their practice and effective strategies for working with all students.

***Interview Question two: How many years with ELs?***

Question two is an extension from question number one. Four out of four participants answered this question as well. The answers listed here correspond with the order listed above in question one.

- Teacher A: 26 years
- Teacher B: 15 years
- Teacher C: 15 years
- Teacher D: 5 years

Three out of four of the art teachers interviewed informed me that they have been working intensively with EL students for more than half of their career. One interview respondent indicated s/he had been working with EL students for less than half of his/her career. In the interviews, three teachers expressed that their time spent teaching and accommodating for EL students has been within the most recent years of their teaching. For example, interviewee D expressed that although s/he have been teaching for 13 years, the past 5 have been spent explicitly with high percentages of EL students (personal communication, April 2017). This interview participant reflected on his/her time in the classroom and concluded that s/he felt EL percentages at their school were rising, therefore, higher percentages of EL students were enrolling in art courses.

This data suggests educators have unique challenges and opportunities. Findings indicate the curriculum continues to change to adapt the needs of the learners. Based on the responses provided by interview participants, teachers indicated that providing a student-centered curriculum is vital.

*Interview Question three: What is a strategy that works really well with your ELs? Can you elaborate on a positive experience you've had with an EL student in your art classroom?*

Interview respondents were all asked to share their most used and most successful strategy overall. This interview question is an extension of survey questions one through eleven. Participants are challenged to contemplate their most frequently implemented accommodation, and share benefits of that strategy.

- Teacher A: Promoting differences by encouraging EL students to incorporate their native culture into their visual expressions; promote projects that support multiple interpretations and correct answers.
- Teacher B: Google Translate; bilingual buddy; use visual examples; charades and gestures- “This usually makes the student not afraid to try to talk with me, trust me, and normally willing to try to attempt to do what I ask.”; provide small group instruction; demonstrate in small group settings; allow ELs to write in native language; promoting differences by encouraging EL students to incorporate their native culture into their visual expressions; check for understanding often; promote projects that support multiple interpretations and correct answers. “I have a student who lost her mother about a year ago, and her artwork often has

something to do with her mother- memories of where she grew up, and cultural or family traditions” (personal communication, April 2017).

- Teacher C: Utilizing technology, allowing students to have ownership over their learning experiences. Use of classroom iPad set “allows some bridging students who might not have all the words, look and start helping to have input, and [through this process] they feel like they’re a part of the group.” “Once they’re taught how to look things up and research on their own, it gives them ownership of their learning.” “With technology, we can look something up at a moment’s notice” (personal communication, April 2017).
- Teacher D: Best strategy when communicating with EL students is modeling the assignment. Learning visual concepts is reinforced by modeling strategies.

***Interview Question four: What do you think your EL students need from you and from the art classroom?***

- Teacher A: “They need time to think. They need for me to help them develop language and give them tools they can carry out of my classroom and use in the rest of the school setting. They need an opportunity to communicate without [spoken] language for a part of their school day. They need to be able to express themselves through their art. They need a place to unwind, relax, and concentrate on art, a subject that can be universal and cross language barriers” (personal communication, April 2017).
- Teacher B: “Students know to try their best, even if it is totally wrong. They get an opportunity to put their emotions and feelings into their artwork and express themselves in ways they can’t express yet in spoken or written English. [My



classroom] is a safe place there they have an even playing field with their classmates” (personal communication, April 2017).

- Teacher C: “I try to encourage those [studio] habits [of mind], where they’re engaging. And those I think, help [EL] students specifically, because they’re working together, it’s a school community, it’s a studio environment, [and] we’re helping each other” (personal communication, April 2017).
- Teacher D: “I’m concerned with making them feel at home in my classroom. It’s important that they learn about art, but my goal is also letting them know I’m here, I’m supportive, I’m approachable, and I love them” (personal communication, April 2017).

***Interview Question five: For visual arts teachers new to working with large groups of EL students, what advice would you give them?***

- Teacher A: “Check for understanding often, always be willing to provide help to students. Have demonstrations, make sure your EL students can see your face and gestures when giving instructions. Give small group attention when possible. Analyze students individually when possible and play into their specific needs. Have students talk about and write about their art often in English. Let them teach you new words” (personal communication, April 2017).
- Teacher B: Provide a welcoming space, and differentiate based on student needs and preferences. “It took time for me to learn to differentiate instruction and how I grade student work, but we have all benefited from it” (personal communication, April 2017).

- Teacher C: “We need to be patient with ourselves, we need to listen to what the students are needing. Really listen to that, and then figure out ways we can help them learn. You might be educating yourself a little bit more, or finding resources, but most of all be patient with yourself, because it is a constant learning relationship. Never stop learning, and be open to new experiences. [Additionally,] being really open- any opportunity to laugh is golden” (personal communication, April 2017).
- Teacher D: “Re-think the way that you teach everyone. I try to speak in the simplest, most pure form, without anything that can be misinterpreted through language. You have to be aware of how you are using your words, and how much you lecture. Teachers tend to be very verbal, and when you have to boil your lesson down to the fewest clearest words, it helps every student that you teach. You’re distilling everything down to the most important parts” (personal communication, April 2017).

## **Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to gain a sense of what art educators know and have experienced regarding English learners in the secondary art classroom in Virginia. Upon focusing on the perspectives of secondary art educators, the findings of this study raise additional questions and concerns for the preparation and support art educators receive in order to provide accommodations for their EL students. Based on the qualitative data collected in this study's survey, it is evident there are a range of struggles both EL students and secondary art educators face. Additionally, this study captured a variety of successful and effective strategies secondary art educators utilize in their classrooms. Positive adaptations to their curriculum have been made in efforts to differentiate for their diverse learners.

This inquiry intended to encapsulate best practices geared towards EL student population and to provide clear and effective strategies for visual art teachers to utilize in the classroom to benefit and accommodate for their language learners. A quantitative and qualitative online survey was distributed to secondary visual art teachers in commonwealth of Virginia through the Virginia Art Education Association. The survey examined both demographics and open-ended reflections. As an optional follow-up, participants were offered the opportunity to provide additional details through an interview.

Ultimately, this study attempted to fill the void in the current investigation of how to appropriately adapt lessons for EL students in the secondary visual art classrooms.

Additionally, this research intended to support art educators who may not have the time nor resources to research effective strategies for adolescent EL students. The conclusions of this study indicate that there are several effective strategies for engaging EL students in secondary visual art lesson plans. Responses collected from survey participants and interview contributors reinforced the idea that visual arts can act as a bridge to literacy.

### **Summary of Findings**

Responses from question eleven and question twelve suggest that the inclusion of EL students in secondary visual art classrooms is a conversation that needs to continue. Recognizing the hardships that our linguistically diverse students face and understanding the difficulties art educators tackle in the art classroom is the first step in approaching this topic in art education. The findings from the survey data reveals the vast differences in experiences among art educators, even within the same state. Through the responses collected, educator participants indicated they are from a range of landscapes, they teach a diverse variety of subjects within visual arts education, and they have different approaches to differentiation and accommodation for EL students.

I obtained an array of responses in the qualitative, open-ended section of the survey. Participants shared their most successful instructional strategies when working with EL students, which allowed for a rich collection of effective approaches and best practices to be compiled. It is evident that educators across the commonwealth practice a variety of methods and develop diverse teaching philosophies. However, throughout the data collected, the underlying tone from each response is that every teacher cares for the wellbeing and success of their students, including their diverse language learners.

Overall, findings from the survey indicate that teachers are willing to accommodate their EL students and engage in classroom practices which are beneficial to their students. All participants responded positively to this topic and supported the open-ended questions with authentic replies. Some questions posed in the survey did not provide conclusive answers, which suggests this topic needs to be reinvestigated on a larger scale.

### Conclusion for Research Questions

1. What is the percentage of Virginia's EL student population in art classrooms when compared to the percentage of EL students enrolled in the entire school and school system?

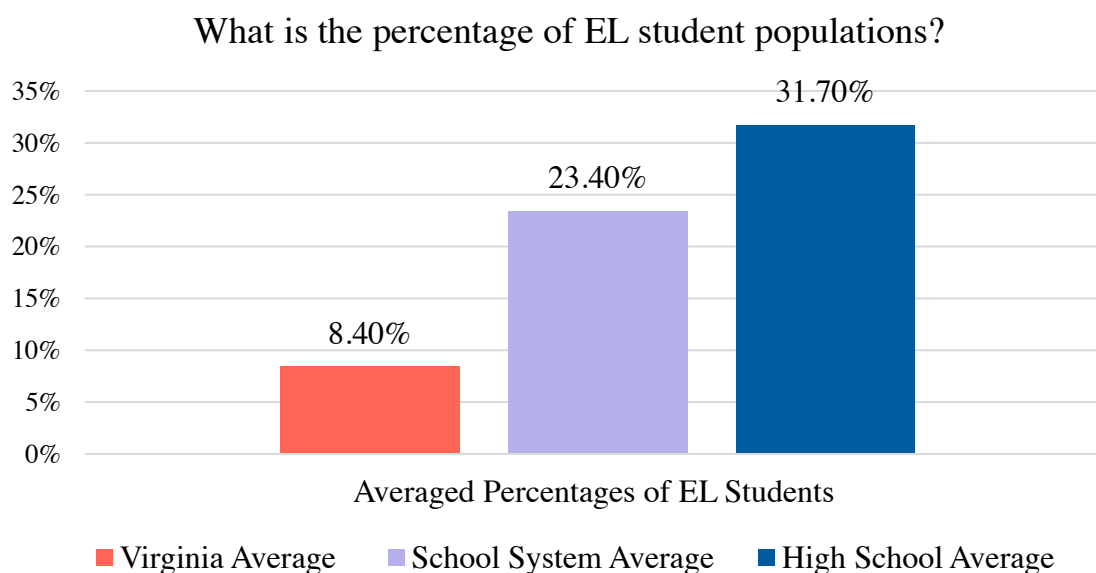


Table 16: Bar graph representation of research question one.

The responses provided by survey participants in addition to data from the Commonwealth of Virginia (VDOE, 2017) suggests that EL population percentages rise as the research focuses on school systems and high school

averages. In relation to survey question sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen, EL percentages do not rise when examining secondary art classrooms. This data does not correlate with my own experiences. As noted in chapter one, in my former teaching position, my secondary art classes had approximately 50% or more EL students enrolled. This suggests that the higher than average percentage of EL students I was working with and teaching was a phenomenon different from what survey participants expressed in relation to their experiences.

1.a. Is there a correlation between population size and the percentage of EL students?

Based on the data from this study's survey, the low number of participants does not allow the research to make claims on correlation between population size and percentage of EL students.

1.b. What is the percentage of EL students, Levels 1 and 2, in respondents' art classes?

The percentage of EL students, Levels 1 and 2, in respondents' art classes ranges from 1% to 100%. Majority of respondents, 53% of teachers, indicated they had between 0% and 24% of Level 1 and 2 ELs in their art classes. The second largest group was 27% of art teacher responses, which indicated they had between 50% and 74% of Level 1 and 2 EL students in their art classes. This data is difficult to generalize, because each participant has a variety and combination of unique art courses that they teach. For example, when looking at this data compared to the information captured in question twenty-three, it is apparent that art educators who participated in this survey are teaching an array of subjects and course levels within the art education curriculum.

2. What strategies do art educators report as effective with their EL students?

Among all the effective strategies collected from participants and listed in the qualitative inquiry section of this study, here are the top five most commonly used practices when working with EL students in the visual art classroom.

**Translation.** As much as we promote visuals and gestures to communicate with our EL students, translation tools are ranked at the top choice among respondents in this survey. Translating applications, such as Google Translate, are used to communicate verbally with Level 1 and 2 EL students. In their efforts to differentiate for different learner preferences, teachers also engage in translating hand-outs and assignment sheets to connect with the student through writing. In addition to translated texts and conversation, the facilitation of a bilingual buddy is noted several times by respondents. Peer-to-peer interactions, scaffolding, and negotiating for meaning are all positive strategies that authentically assist the EL student (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). “Bilingual peers who collaborated with adolescent emergent bilinguals on academic tasks served to bolster their developing academic English skills...” (Carhill-Poza, 2015, p. 692). Level 1 and 2 EL students are not only provided with informal instruction from their more English-proficient peers, they are also offered the opportunity to develop social networks that will enrich their linguistic skills. Traditional translation methods are an immediate tool for quick communication. As educators, we typically rely on communicating through speech; thus, translation can and should be used as a back-up tool for teachers working with EL populations. Utilizing the students’ native language while connecting key words to vocabulary in English signifies

that their native language is a positive tool, a bridge to literacy and academic language skills in English (Bauer, Manyak, & Cook, 2010).

**Visuals.** The second strategy teachers reported in this study was providing visuals. In most steps of a lesson plan, teachers rely on visual representations and examples to connect to the content. Relevant and accurate imagery is vital to the success of our students. “One reason visual aids are popular among ELL teachers is that they support second-language (L2) vocabulary development. Graphics provide this support, serving as a visual dictionary...” (Wright, Eslami, McTigue, & Reynolds, 2015, p. 43). As educators, it is vital to provide clear and applicable images that support the content. Visuals are effective and supportive tools to reach students in any content area. In visual art, it is important to gather images to support the lesson theme, the artist, art historical content, art vocabulary, stages of the lesson project, demonstration captured through still images, final examples, and any other aspect of a lesson plan where a visual explanation will support student learning goals.

Additionally, visuals can also include key words and emphasized text. Recent research reinforces that sans serif typefaces are designed for digital screens, and therefore, are more legible for students with eyesight accommodations. Clear and readable presentation material supports a student-centered classroom and promotes heightened comprehension. “This finding further supports the important new role of sans serif fonts, (i.e. Verdana), in demonstrating more readable text on the computer screen than competitors



recognized the character of serif fonts (i.e. Time New Roman)” (Hojjati & Muniandy, 2014, p. 171).

**Time.** The third most recorded strategy presented by respondents, was accommodating students with time extensions. This adaptation to instruction and the curriculum can be implemented at almost any stage of the lesson plan. Research indicates that there is a significant relationship between student performance and time. As time is increased, students have a greater opportunity to gain success (Crotts, 2013).

**Small Group Instruction.** Participants expressed small group instruction and one-on-one instruction works well for several of the qualitative questions posed in this study’s survey. Teachers are able to meet the needs of the students in a personal and approachable manner. In small group settings, involvement and participation from the students is maximized. Students can engage with the class material at a faster rate when in a small group setting, in comparison to whole class instruction and large group activities. While small group and one-on-one instruction are beneficial to the student, they can be difficult to facilitate in a large classroom setting. In my experience, there is one instructor in the room, and around 26-30 adolescent students looking for direction. A key goal when facilitating small group instruction begins by engaging students in the lesson by making them comfortable enough to participate and work with others, and to encouraging them to use their new language in front of you, the teacher, and their peers (Bauer et al., 2010). In order to successfully implement small group instruction, teachers are encouraged to promote group work and collaborative

projects. As students engage in a variety of learning activities, the content is enhanced through both repetition and personal discovery.

**Modeling.** Through demonstrations, using purposeful gestures, and modeling tasks, students are able to visualize the assignment clearly without having to speak fluent English. This strategy supports the EL population in numerous ways; students can record instruction through a combination of ocular observation and auditory explanations, as opposed to primarily auditory or written modes of instruction. Sociolinguistic research on second language acquisition examines the interdependence between the learner's cognitive processes and the social contexts in which language is used that ultimately leads to language acquisition. By practicing modeling techniques in the classroom, students not only see the skill demonstrated correctly, but are able to visualize themselves executing the skill without error (Ortiz, Burlingame, Onuegbulem, Yoshikawa, & Rojas, 2012). Students become autonomous when they capture the assignment and are able to practice the art-making skills unaccompanied.

- 2.a. What are effective EL strategies reported in the areas of: greetings; introduction of lessons; presentation of objectives; introduction and demonstration of student think time, planning, sketching, and art making; delivery of art-based vocabulary, historical, cultural, and artist information; and accommodations for group discussions, oral presentations, reading, and writing.

Among all the effective strategies collected from participants and listed in the qualitative inquiry section of this study, here are the areas listed in question 2.a. and the most common response from participants in this study's survey.

**Greetings.** Majority of respondents indicated they choose to greet their students in English with a welcoming phrase or by saying hello. Standing at the classroom door, recognizing all students by name as they enter, and engaging students in short conversations are supplementary strategies that develop from the daily greeting and diversify experiences with each student. An additional extension the customary "hello" in English, is inviting students to the classroom with a greeting in their native language. One participant shared reflections from their regular welcoming routine:

I try to greet or acknowledge all of my students as they come in the classroom with a smile, nod, or "good morning or afternoon." For my Level 1 Hispanic students, I will speak very broken Spanish for the first few weeks mixing in English words. I usually have other Hispanic students in the class who can assist with translating for more in depth conversations (personal communication, February 9, 2017).

This educator provides multiple ways to recognize and acknowledge the student's presence as they enter the art classroom. A warm and welcoming greeting at the door in the student's native language, while also expressing that greeting in English, provides the student with a positive start to class and promotes literacy in

English through cultural connections. As articulated in Woolfolk's (2014) article, "the expectation is that schools support the social etiquette standards of the community" (Woolfolk, 2014, p. 74). This author has worked with Latino students from all levels in education, and she has observed that when teachers dismiss the opportunity to greet their Latino students (or students from other cultures with similar customs), many of these students determine that these "un-greetful" teachers are not true authority figures. "As a result, some Latino students may begin disconnecting themselves from school because they feel invisible to the adults around them" (Woolfolk, 2014, p.74). A constructive practice is one that engages students in a meaningful context, exhibiting the teacher as a role model for positivity and classroom community.

**Lesson introductions.** Modes through which teachers introduce a lesson in the art classroom vary widely. Introduction can depend on the philosophy of the teacher, the amount of time in class, or the lesson theme and subject matter. Across the vast assortment of teaching styles and procedures when introducing a lesson, teachers still provided continuity in their responses on how to accommodate for EL students. The most common reflection from respondents for this question, was that teachers utilize an array of visuals to support the introduction of the lesson. Respondents shared that the usage of correct visuals, examples of ideas and the project, visual steps through demonstrations, providing graphic organizers, and showing relevant videos are all ways teachers promote the content visually. A teacher shared in the open-ended responses, "I am very animated when explaining a concept and I use a lot of repetition, visuals, and modeling" (personal

communication, February 9, 2017). Offering a multimodal approach to a segment of the lesson encourages the student to connect and learn in new ways. “When the power of images, whether graphic or mental, is combined aesthetically with words, the transaction between the reader and the text can have a transforming influence as the imaginary impact is exponentially multiplied” (Arizpe, Bagelman, Delvin, Farrell, & McAdam, 2014, p. 305).

**Lesson objectives.** As an educator, it is critical to be transparent with your students regarding goals and outcomes of a specific lesson. Teachers can express student objectives through verbal description, written format on a rubric, assignment sheet, or classroom board, or through many other modes. Findings for question three indicate the majority of the responding art educators rely on translation tools to ensure students are aware of lesson objectives. Educator responses expressed content can be translated through digital applications, such as Google Translate, or a person, such as a bilingual peer or an EL aid. Teachers shared that when they express lesson objectives to their EL students, they utilize verbal and written modes of translation. A participant responded, “I allow them to use a translator. Then try to explain key points back to me” (personal communication, March 22, 2017). This reflection indicates teachers are considering the repercussions of immediate translation tools by checking for understanding in a student-centered manner.

**Individual think time.** The majority of participants concluded that incorporating visual imagery into this segment of a unit is their most effective strategy for EL students. Similarly to the lesson introduction, educators rely on visual supports to

express this stage of learning in the art classroom. Providing examples of student mind-maps, sharing visual exemplars of sketches or thumbnails, passing around physical maquettes of the planning phase allow students to observe teacher expectations and envision their own approach to this process. Through the perspective of an art educator, “Students use a sketchbook and are constantly creating. Art is their visual voice... when given the opportunity to express their own thoughts and inspiration they excel naturally” (personal communication, February 9, 2017). Promoting a personal voice through visual expression is often the goal in a comprehensive art education. However, this process does not occur without consistent routines and procedures set in place. “Research shows that when we provide a place for our students that is safe, predictable, consistent, and nurturing, we will see increased student achievement” (Wong, Wong, Rogers, & Brooks, 2012, p. 61). Considering the benefits of effective classroom management, it is imperative that art educators implement the proposed strategies with consistent classroom procedures.

**Art-based vocabulary.** Overwhelmingly, teachers indicated that they support second language acquisition and comprehending visual art terminology by using visual aids. A response states, “[I] try to present the vocabulary with visual elements and possibly in their own language” (personal communication, February 9, 2017). Additional findings suggest teachers support literacy and vocabulary through repetitive and consistent classroom activities. Another participant shared, “I have [EL students] write the words in their sketchbook, and I have them repeat

after me when we are learning them, then I use them repeatedly as often as possible during the project” (personal communication, February 9, 2017).

**Art historical content.** Expressing content through visual modes is consistently addressed in several questions. Art educators are fluent in visual expression; the challenge is to provide relevant and clear examples for all students, including ELs. Majority of participants agreed that to approach art history, cultural, and artist information through some meaningful modus, educators should incorporate diverse and culturally relevant art historical content to students. “Studies by Freeman (2003) and Short (2011) on secondary ELs language growth demonstrated that ELs academic language was improved when teachers use culturally relevant themes in literacy instruction” (Ramirez, Gonzales-Galindo, & Roy, 2016, p. 23). Data collected in this study’s survey suggests teachers might find time to gather information on their students’ native culture and incorporate appropriate discoveries into the historical content and artist examples. Additionally, several participants provided honest answers and shared that they struggle with this aspect within a lesson plan, and sometimes avoid teaching it. The data in this question indicates teachers are still working through effective strategies and may still be searching for a positive tool to implement in the classroom.

**Group discussions.** Teacher goals include engaging the whole class, small group, or partners in collaborative activities where group discussions can occur. After the collected data was analyzed, it was made known that several teachers struggle with this aspect within a lesson plan. Often, formal critiques are skipped. Of the

participants who do engage their students in group discussions and critique exercises, the most common response was to pair EL students with a supportive peer partner. The findings indicate that participants advocate for peer activities because it provides students with a low-stress environment, which promotes positivity and productivity. Research has identified several benefits of peer-critiques and partner exercises. “Stronger bonds are often forged between classmates who ordinarily would only have a passing nodding relationship, and they become more of a support system for each other” (Newman, 2014, p. 70). Large group critiques can be stressful, awkward, and unproductive for the students (Elkins, 2012). When the discussion becomes an activity among partners or a small-group, student anxiety decreases and productivity increases (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

**Reading and Writing.** Teachers expressed a variety of strategies that they implement during stages of a lesson that require engagement with reading or writing. Majority of participants indicated that during a stage in a lesson that requires students to write, teachers accommodate their EL students by allowing them to write first in their native language. Several respondents also shared that students are expected to translate their own writing into English, to support building up English skills and so that the teacher may interpret student content for accuracy and relevancy. In the open-ended response question, a teacher said, “They are encouraged to write in their first language and translate it to the best of their ability. Written reflection is for the student, I like to know roughly what it



says to help me gauge their learning, but I don't have to get every nuance”  
(personal communication, February 9, 2017).

2.b. When do art educators feel most frustrated or discouraged in their work with ELL students?

In the responses submitted by participants, an underlying theme of their shared frustrations was a lack of control in their classroom. These moments occurred when new students were being placed into teachers' classrooms with no forewarning, or when students were disengaged with the material despite efforts from the teacher.

2.c. When do art educators feel they are making the most positive impact in their work with ELL students?

An inspiring theme that emerged from this question is promoting trust and empowering students. Teachers feel like they are making an impact on the lives of their EL students when they recognize that a student feels welcomed, loved, and respected. This is shown through student's actions in class or reflections on the art course.

### **Conclusions of the Study**

Data collected from the literature review, online Qualtrics survey, and follow-up interviews indicated that participants are interested in sharing strategies and learning more about effective classroom practices for EL students.

### **Limitations**

The data gathered and analyzed in this study was limited to several constraints, such as, number of survey responses, methodologies, time, setting, and personal educator philosophies. The small number of participants in this study limited the results of the findings. This inquiry was aimed at recording responses from a small selection of educators, secondary art teachers in the Commonwealth of Virginia who are active members of the VAEA. The constraints placed on this inquiry limited the number of responses, thus impacting the depth of information collected. Additionally, the views presented in this study remain instructional practices of VAEA members and art teachers specific to Virginia, indicating that this study does not necessarily represent practices and classroom adaptations recognized by art educators across the United States. A proposal for improvement on this study includes reaching out to art educators across the nation, and broadening the scope of art educators by researching outside of the members-based NAEA.

An additional limitation to this study relates to the nature of conducting survey research. Although research conducted through online surveys has benefits, it also has several limitations. Due to the lack of direct contact with the respondents, questions may be misinterpreted, answered quickly without thoughtful reflection, or be misrepresentative of actual classroom practices (Creswell, 2008). Based on responses from participants, some of the survey questions may have been redundant, therefore I received very similar answers on several questions. Some survey questions had lengthy or improper wording, which confused the participant. For example, on question eight “What are your most effective strategies when engaging your ELL students in meaningful group brainstorming, group discussions, and/or verbal critiques?”, I received an open

response answer that said, “??”. I found that this question was posed in an awkward manner, and the responses were impacted because of it. Moreover, in question fifteen and seventeen, “high school” is used as a descriptor as opposed to secondary school. This oversight in terminology presented in the survey may have affected middle school teacher respondents to skip questions fifteen and seventeen in confusion. Additionally, in question twenty-one, providing the answer choice “Neither agree nor disagree” allowed participants to stay neutral. Majority of participants selected this as an option for this question, and the responses did not impact the data in a meaningful way. A proposed solution is to eliminate this response choice and promote participants to select a stance of “agree” or “disagree.”

Continued recommendations include revisiting the amount of survey questions posed to participants. 12 out of 24 survey questions posed an open response field and requested a typed response. The amount of qualitative questions presented to participants may have negatively impacted the number of overall responses received.

### **Implications for Future Research**

The first step in enacting change in a classroom begins with recognizing the need for adapted practices that better suit our students. I believe future research can build upon the data captured and analyzed in this inquiry.

Although there was low participation on this study’s survey, the responses collected from art teachers across Virginia shared meaningful content which offer starting points for art educators to continue this conversation in the field of education. Educators

who seek to provide appropriate differentiation, support culturally diverse students, and integrate effective strategies for ELs into their curriculum.

## Appendix A

### Survey Cover Letter

#### **Survey Introduction**

Hello, and thank you for your interest in this survey! The purpose of this survey is to gather a wide range of data and reflections from secondary art educators who work with an English Language Learner (EL) population. I am interested in identifying best practices and positive strategies when working with EL students in the art room. Additionally, with your help, I hope to gather strategies to share that can lead our EL students to even greater success in our art classrooms. The responses collected from this study will contribute to the completion of my master's thesis.

#### **What To Expect**

This online survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes of your time. You will see questions regarding your practice as an art educator and your experience working with EL students along with basic demographic information about your school system, specific school, and art classrooms. I do not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study (that is, no risks beyond the risks associated with everyday life). For the purpose of this study, I value your authentic and thoughtful responses.

#### **Privacy**

Your responses are voluntary and will be kept confidential. Your responses will not be identified by name, school, or school system. Individual responses are anonymously obtained and recorded online through Qualtrics software; data is kept in the strictest confidence. All data will be stored in a password protected account on Qualtrics. Once I have analyzed the data, results will be presented in a thesis and at the VAEA or NAEA conference. I retain the rights to use and publish the non-identifiable data. At the end of the study, all records will be destroyed. However, if you wish to receive the results of the survey, please note the section at the end of the survey where you may indicate your contact information.

#### **Participation & Withdrawal**

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. However, once your responses have been submitted and anonymously recorded you will not be able to withdraw from the study.

#### **Questions**

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Alexandra Mamatas  
Art Education  
James Madison University

Karin Tollefson-Hall, PhD  
Art Education  
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(703)-300-4677  
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**Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject**

Dr. David Cockley  
Chair, Institutional Review Board  
James Madison University  
(540) 568-2834  
[cocklede@jmu.edu](mailto:cocklede@jmu.edu)

**Giving of Consent**

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about this study. I have read this consent and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age. By clicking on the link below, and completing and submitting this anonymous survey, I am consenting to participate in this research.

Thank you again for your interest in this survey. I look forward to reading your responses.

Sincerely,  
Alexandra M. Mamatas  
Art Education Graduate Teaching Assistant  
James Madison University



## **Appendix B**

### **Survey Questions**

This appendix includes the 24 questions in the order listed in the online survey. All questions were voluntary; participants could drop out of the survey at any time with no risks.

The first 12 questions were multiple choice and/or slider scale indicating percentage. Some questions allowed for multiple responses (“check all that apply”) while others required a single response, as noted below. For the remaining 12 questions, the survey includes several open response questions. At the conclusion of the survey, participants will be offered a space to indicate interest in follow up data and analysis of this study, interest in follow-up interview, and additional comments.

### **Questions Addressing General Information and Demographics (Multiple Choice & Percentage Slider)**

- 1) How would you label your school system? Answer choices: Urban, Suburban, Small Town, and Rural.
  
- 2) How many students (approximately) are enrolled in your school system? Answer choices: Less than 5,000 students, 5,000-15,000 students, 15,000-25,000 students, 25,000-35,000 students, 35,000-45,000 students, 45,000-55,000 students, 55,000-65,000 students, more than 65,000 students.
  
- 3) How many students are enrolled in your high school? Answer choices: Less than 500 students, 500-1,000 students, 1,000-2,000 students, more than 2,000 students.

- 4) Within your **school system**, what percentage of students receives English Language Learner (EL) services? Answer choices: slider scale, percentage ranging from 1 to 100.
- 5) Within your **high school**, what percentage of students receives EL services? Answer choices: slider scale, percentage ranging from 1 to 100.
- 6) Within your **art classes**, what is the approximate percentage of EL students, Levels 1-5? Answer choices: slider scale, percentage ranging from 1 to 100.
- 7) Within your art classes, what is the approximate percentage of EL **level 1 and 2** students? (Level 1 & 2: Beginning ELs, little to no understanding, very limited vocabulary). Answer choices: slider scale, percentage ranging from 1 to 100.
- 8) Within a given school year in your school system, how often do you receive training related to EL mainstreamed students? Answer choices: No training available, 1 opportunity per year, 2 opportunities per year, 3 opportunities per year, 3 opportunities per year, 4 or more opportunities per year.
- 9) Do you feel supported by your school with EL resources/services? Answer choices: Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree.
- 10) If EL trainings for art educators were available, would you attend? Answer choices: Yes, I would make attending a top priority, Yes, I would attend if it worked with my schedule, Yes, because...[fill in the blank], Maybe, I would consider attending, No I would not attend because I don't have the time, No, I would not attend because it is not a top priority, No, because...[fill in the blank].
- 11) How many years have you been teaching? Answer choices: slider scale indicating years, 0 to 40.
- 12) What content area(s) do you teach? (Select all that apply.) Answer choices: General 2D/3D Art, Photography, Digital Media, 2D Specific Courses, 3D Specific Courses, Design Courses, Advanced Art Courses (AP, IB, Portfolio), Other (Art Courses) [fill in the blank], Other (Non-Art Courses) [fill in the blank].



**Questions Addressing Effective Strategies (Open Responses)**

- 13) What is your most effective strategy when **greeting** your EL students at the beginning of class? (Open response)
- 14) What is your most effective strategy when **introducing a lesson** to your EL students? (Open response)
- 15) What is your most effective strategy when presenting **lesson objectives** to your EL students? (Open response)
- 16) What are your most effective strategies for your ELL students when your lesson expectations require **individual think time, problem solving, sketching, planning ideas, and/or individual art making**? (Open response)
- 17) What is your most effective **classroom management** strategy that you use with your EL students? (Open response)
- 18) What is your most effective strategy (other than oral methods) when your EL students are expected to learn **art based vocabulary**? (Open response)
- 19) What is your most effective strategy when your EL students are expected to learn **art historical, cultural, and/or artist information** during a lesson? (Open response)
- 20) What are your most effective strategies when engaging your EL students in meaningful **group brainstorming, group discussions, and/or verbal critiques**? (Open response)
- 21) What best accommodations do you provide for your EL students when you expect a **written reflection** and/or an **assessment** that requires reading? (Open response)
- 22) On average, how much time during each art class do you spend specifically meeting the needs of your EL students? Answer is in the form of a slider scale, with options for percentage ranging from 1 percent to 100 percent.

23) Describe a time when you felt **frustrated** or **discouraged** when working with EL students: (Open response)

24) Describe a time when you felt you made a **positive impact** while working with EL students: (Open response)

### **Additional Follow Up**

25) **Survey Closure.** Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. I appreciate your open and honest answers, and look forward to reviewing your responses. Without your input, this study would not be possible! I wish you the best with the rest of your school year. If you wish to receive the results of this study, please indicate below. Sincerely, Alexandra Mamatas.

26) “I wish to receive the results of this study.” Answer choices: Yes, and here is my email address [fill in the blank], and No.

27) **Optional Follow Up.** In addition to the survey results being an integral part of my research, I am also looking to conduct individual interviews. If you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview by phone, email, or in person, please leave your contact information below. All of your personal information will remain anonymous and used for purposes of this research and its presentation.

28) Best Contact Method for **Follow Up Interview** (Optional) Answer choices: Name [fill in blank], Phone [fill in blank], and Email [fill in blank].

## Appendix C

### Follow-Up Interview Questions

- 1) How many years have you been teaching?
- 2) How many years with ELs?
- 3) What is a strategy that works really well with your ELs? Can you elaborate on a positive experience you've had with an EL student in your art classroom?
- 4) What do you think your EL students need from you and from the art classroom?
- 5) For visual arts teachers new to working with large groups of EL students, what advice would you give them?

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