Figure 1: *Student-created signage for our classroom parlour door.*

Mystery Ink

A Teacher Self-Study of a Tattoo Art Education Project

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A Teaching-based Thesis

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Dana Marie Sciuto, entitled: Mystery Ink: A Teacher Self-Study of a Tattoo Education Project, complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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ABSTRACT

This project examines the role of the educator involved in a student-centred, art-based project aimed to increase learning and engagement for at-risk youth in a rural high school. Specifically, a tattoo parlour business in an alternative classroom for at-risk youth was designed, implemented, and studied. In conducting the project, the researcher sought to establish how theory can drive a practical, hands-on project that can be integrated into an alternative classroom setting. This self-study project is inspired by the researcher's personal educational history and a desire to approach learning from a different angle than that imposed by standardized curriculum and evaluation. It begins with the premise that at-risk youth, who are not served by the mainstream learning path, require a curriculum that targets their interests and motivates them to stay in school. An important corollary to art education, engagement, and at-risk youth is the importance of play in the learning process. The results are examined using Lassonde (2009) and Samaras (2011) self-study methodology and the final outcome of the project includes a teaching portfolio that provides clear instructions for other art educators or alternative educators who wish to incorporate the project into their schools.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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All photos were taken in our classroom, by me at Mill St Secondary School during the course of our project between March and May of 2016 (Sciuto, 2016)

CHAPTER 1:

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INTRODUCTION

For this teaching-based thesis, I investigated the benefits of arts integration as a hands-on project for at-risk youth through the lens of tattoo education. My research took place in an alternative secondary school classroom and was based on the following question: In an attempt

to bridge theory and practice, how can a teacher integrate the arts into daily practice for at-risk youth? I present my thesis in the form of a teaching portfolio with the aim to address the current gap between theory and practice in the classroom. Additionally, this portfolio includes a sample of a proposal to a governing school board (appendix A) for such a project, hands-on tattoo curriculum in the form of two lesson plans addressing some of the big concepts related to running a temporary tattoo parlour project which encourage play and experimentation (appendix B) and reflections on my daily practice as a teacher as an immersive contextual element for prospective readers to experience (appendix C).

DETAILED DISCUSSION OF THE QUESTION

Reflecting on my tumultuous high school career, I now know that when it comes to education, I have a learned to react like an outsider. As a former high school dropout, my desire for change within the education system is strongly rooted in my experiences as a student. Because of my perspective and subsequent teaching experience, I was recently asked by a principal at a rural high school to work with at-risk youth. I accepted the offer without hesitation, knowing it would be a great opportunity to give back to my community while further developing my teaching experience. According to Trudel and Puentes-Neuman (2001), 'at-risk' refers to students with a higher probability of having negative developmental outcomes, difficulties in social adaptations, academic hardship, and mental health issues. Additionally, the Quebec Ministry of Education (2007) defines the term at-risk student as "students at the secondary level who present certain vulnerability factors that may affect their learning or behaviour, and who

may therefore be at risk, especially of falling behind either academically or socially, unless there is timely intervention" (p.24).

As a student, I was certainly one of the lucky ones, who was able to face and overcome my adversities, ultimately emerging stronger on the other side. My initial impression of the relationship between myself and my students was that we realized our kinship quite quickly. In other words, we discovered we were members of the same club.

The critical difference now was my role: I could use my formal training as an art educator to design a project for my students. This project was based on a deep understanding of their individual needs and mutual respect between us. The students in my class were from a rural area and at-risk both academically and socially, which left them unable to excel in a regular high school program. Instead, they were presented with with hands-on training to prepare them for the workforce. In keeping with Marcotte's (2011) findings, my students who lived in economically disadvantaged area, were at-risk of dropping out of school, and their motivation to succeed was extremely low.

According to Statistics Canada, in the province of Quebec, in 2009, the high school dropout rate was 13.9% for boys, and 8.3% for girls; both rates were higher than the national average (Turcotte, 2015). As noted by Catterall (2011), if dropping out of high school can be prevented, students will have an increased lifetime earning potential, reduced dependence on social services, and may avoid getting caught up in criminal activity. I did not want to see my

students joining the ranks of disenfranchised youth, and I wanted to help them make it to graduation to reap the benefits of their hard work. My students were a living depiction of "school burnout" as described by Bask and Aro (2012), as expressing cynicism towards school, feelings of academic inadequacy, and exhaustion at school. Further, in their longitudinal study, Bask and Aro found that cynicism and low grades were the most significant factors for kids who dropped out. Fortin, Marcotte, Diallo, Potvin & Royer (2013) found that in addition to low academic performance, other school-based factors including negative classroom climate and negative interactions at school contributed to school drop out. These researchers also implicated factors such as poor relationships between parents and teens, youth depression, and difficult home-life as stressors contributed to dropout rates. Thus, these at-risk students may be contending with stressors both at school, and outside of school. What I planned to do was to approach these students with empathy, be a source of positive interaction and endeavor to create a safe, engaging classroom climate to combat the above mentioned contributing factors that influenced my students' livelihood and their ability to learn on a daily basis.

I considered how I could work towards engaging and motivating my students more effectively and, as a result, I turned to the idea of incorporating play in the classroom. Pitri (2001) defines play as activities of pleasure or recreation that encourage allow students to supply their own meanings to activities while promoting autonomous decision making. She further explains that "play is often the means by which children express their thoughts and feelings and facilitates understanding of these thoughts and feelings" (p.47). In her description of play as an effective model for learning, Pitri (2001) posits that "the more emotions are involved, the more

sensory information we receive, and the more easily learning takes place" (p.47). Connecting play to art education, Pitri (2001) further states that "The process of artmaking for individuals of all ages is an inquiry activity of exploring and expressing ideas which reflect experiences. These behaviours can be facilitated by play" (p.47).

Much of the research conducted on art making and at-risk youth points to the importance of play, experimentation and improvisation in cognitive development (Gillespie, 2016; Gude, 2010; Pitri, 2001). More specifically, play through art is an excellent way to connect with at-risk youth and has been found to reduce stress, improve attendance, reduce dropout rates, improve social behaviour, and increase motivation and engagement in the classroom while reducing educational challenges (Creedon, 2011; Deasy, 2002; Li et al, 2015; Rabkin & Redmond, 2006; Respress & Lufti, 2006). Additionally, Respress & Lufti (2006) found that play promotes whole brain development and higher thinking skills, which enhance capabilities in reading, math and science.

In accordance with the recommendations of the Government of Quebec's *Reducing the Dropout Rate at the End of Secondary School* guide (2013), I set out to create a specialized class project that reflected the class's individual interests. Consequently, I began by asking the students what their interests were. We quickly reached a consensus that tattoos were an inspirational medium that the students were enthusiastic about collectively.

Tattoos are rapidly becoming destigmatized and provide an excellent lens through which students can process trauma as well as form and embrace their own identity (Blair, 2007; Huang, 2011); tattoos provide a method for students to express self-worth and self-care (Huang, 2016). Furthermore, it is important that students are educated on the misappropriation of cultural symbols and taught how to interpret media messages and approach tattooing in a socially responsible way (Blair, 2007; Huang, 2016). In addition to this, there are numerous health and safety concerns surrounding tattoos that demand proper attention and education (Armstrong et al, 2014; Armstrong, 1997; Armstrong, 1994). Considering all of these factors reinforced my theory that tattoo education was a path worth exploring with my students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Arts in Education

Many educators have innately understood the value of integrating the arts into classroom activities to motivate and inspire students when traditional methods of instruction have fallen short. However, the drive for measurable outcomes has outweighed the qualitative value of the learning experience, and thus has limited creative instruction. Conrad, Moroye, and Uhrmacher (2015) found that teachers, while in the process of curriculum planning, did indeed value meaningful learning experiences over traditional assessable content learning, and urged that teachers should actively enable students to connect with the taught material in a variety of modalities to create an "aesthetic experience" (p. 6). Thus, educators continue to struggle to provide authentic, creative learning experiences that students can connect with, while delivering the measurable results as defined by guidelines and grading rubrics.

Art education has many reported benefits, and has been shown to improve the emotional well-being of teenage students. For example, Creedon (2011) stated that the implementation of a well-designed and structured art education program could reverse or prevent the long term effects of stress and even "reduced negative social behaviour" on students (p. 35). Creedon also asserted that "integrating arts based creative processes into teaching and learning will enhance student mastery of critical content while it also supports the emotional and physical needs of our children" (p. 36). This was a wonderful endorsement of the holistic benefits of art education to those viewing the matter through a more traditional lens.

The value of incorporating creativity and the arts in classroom instruction has also been well established as a way to reach and inspire youth, thus improving their quality of life and avoiding negative social outcomes. For instance, Deasy (2002) found that at-risk youth who had received art instruction in secondary school were twice as likely to win academic awards, have increased attendance or join school councils and engage more in literacy for leisure than at-risk youth who had not received art instruction. Another finding to this end was made by Barry et al (1990), who note that the arts made a major impact on students' ways of thinking, and on their participation and engagement in other learning contexts. Complimenting this information, Greene (1995) offered a poetic reflection on the benefits of the incorporating the arts: "art offers life - it offers hope. it offers a prospect of discovery; it offers light" (p. 133). Further, Catterall, Chapleau, and Iwanaga (1999) found that students involved in the arts at school had overall better academic performance on standardized testing, increased reading proficiency, and lower

dropout rates than youth who were not engaged in the arts at their school. These researchers also

found that students involved in instrumental music had improved math skills, and students

involved in theater had gains in reading proficiency, increased self-concept and motivation, and

higher levels of empathy and tolerance for others (Catterall, Chapleau, and Iwanaga, 1999).

More generally, Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr (2001), noted that using the arts to teach about

other cultures, and individuals within diverse cultural groups, was a much more authentic way to

educate students than was relying on established curricula that may foster cultural stereotyping.

Additionally, these researchers advocated for social reconstructionism through art instruction,

which empowers both teachers and students to become change-agents for disenfranchised

persons/groups (Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001). Thus, education through art, (or, in this

instance, tattoo art) can encourage a more inclusive, egalitarian experience in the classroom.

The importance of play in the classroom

One way to increase creativity in educational programming is to reintroduce the notion of

play to teenage students. This stands in stark contrast to all of the structured classroom time to

which most have become accustomed. Playful activities may be a welcome reprieve from a more

traditional and/or direct instructional approach. Play in the classroom has benefits that are

realized in terms of promoting cognitive development and creating a multisensory experience

that facilitates deeper learning (Pitri, 2001). Furthermore, artistic play allows students to plan for

themselves, make their own choices and behave autonomously (Pitri, 2001). Additionally, play

offers students genuine opportunities to exercise critical thinking, problem solving and decision

making skills, which are all transferable and multidisciplinary skills (Pitri, 2001). Thus, incorporating art-based play into the classroom can help students gain skills that benefit them not only in other subject areas, but in everyday life well.

A compelling body of knowledge documents the successful implementations of creative curriculum or "play" in the classroom. One such implementation was done by Gillespie (2016), who successfully used Oliver Herring's TASK model as in introduction to his secondary school art classroom. On the first day of class, students were asked to write out tasks and put them in a box in the centre of the room. Students then drew each other's tasks from the box and interpreted them with provided art materials or through dance, or acting, which was then followed by a debriefing session. For example, one task was to "wrap someone up like a present", another example of a task was to "adorn a girl and take her picture" (p. 34). The teacher took on the role of facilitator to allow for uninhibited self-expression.

The TASK project emphasized the importance of creating a safe space in which students could experiment or fail, and encouraged playfulness based on simple flexible rules and mutual trust. The goal was to create an authentic sense of ownership for students and encourage them to form deep connections with artmaking. Gillespie (2016) noted that his implementation of the TASK model achieved all of the ideals previously mentioned, and also created a place for open sharing of ideas which fostered a sense of equality between teacher and student (Gillespie, 2016), thus challenging the traditional power imbalance often observed in more traditional teaching and learning methods. Overall, Gillespie (2016) felt that through the TASK project, he and his

students set a tone of "mutual trust and excitement for art in the classroom before even reading the syllabus" (pg. 37). Thus, as Gillespie demonstrated, incorporating a creative, interpretive play-based activity is an excellent way to make the arts both engaging and accessible to students.

Tattoo culture in education

Historically, tattoos have been viewed as unprofessional and linked to rebellion within Western culture. These stigmas persist, in spite of the increasing popularity of tattoos among teenagers. Huang (2016) posited that tattoos can be appreciated as a way to navigate healing from personal trauma, and can also be used as a tool for promoting healthy identity development through the often painful acceptance of oneself. Additionally, Huang (2016) and Blair (2007) suggest that tattoos are an excellent way to celebrate our differences; this sentiment does well to explain the shift from underground towards mainstream cultural acceptance of tattoos.

Despite tattoos becoming more prevalent in mainstream culture, individuals, especially youth, still experience internal conflict when considering getting tattooed. Irwin's (2001) study found that young people were still wary of conservative reactions to their tattoos by parents and members of the community, and had social anxieties regarding their tattoos, such as fear of being associated with a low-status group. Irwin (2001) further noted that tattoo recipients were "forced to confront the different ways that tattoos threatened core conventional values and norms regarding hygiene, beauty, decision making, and self-presentation"(pg. 67). One way that people with tattoos are able to resolve such conflict is by entering into the situation well informed about

the risks, benefits, and perspective of someone who takes the role of the expert with respect to body art.

According to Armstrong et al., (2014), educational institutions should endeavor to help inform young adults with about the health risks associated with tattooing by "reducing decisional conflict while promoting positive development in the areas of empowerment, self-esteem and maturing to help achieve stronger decision making skills" (p.12). Armstrong et al. (2014) referred to school nurses as the usual facilitators of health education, but similar conversations are frequently had between students considering getting a tattoo and teachers. Additionally, when at-risk youth interact with individuals who are open to discussing the subject of tattoos, or, even have tattoos themselves, they benefit from the lived experience of someone who chooses to embrace their body art and contend with stigma and societal preconceptions every day.

As mentioned before, tattoos have the power to promote healing, self-expression, and exploration of one's own identity. Tattoos (the temporary and/or permanent variety) are also popular with teenagers, which is a trend that educators could build on as a way of incorporating popular arts into their curriculum. Blair (2007) recognized the opportunity that tattoo culture presents for relating to youth and asserted that art educators could create meaningful lessons using tattoos, but stressed that it is the responsibility of the educator to teach about the multiple messages that tattoos carry and the social responsibility associated with them. Blair (2007) also outlined additional reasons that youth are getting tattooed; "for many teenagers, tattoos will serve as aide-memoires of their youth. They will mark important rites of passage, indicate group

membership and declare love" (p.43). Thus, there are many ways that tattoos help us know ourselves and each other better, help us heal, facilitate self-expression, and share our identity with the world. Consequently, the long-practiced art form of body art has certainly earned a place in contemporary art education.

METHODOLOGY

Samaras (2011) defines self-study as " a personal, systematic inquiry situated within one's own teaching context that requires critical and collaborative reflection in order to generate knowledge, as well as inform the broader educational field" (p.10). I chose to conduct a qualitative self-study for my research because, as Samaras (2011) states, it "builds on the relationship between myself and my professional teacher community" (p. 5). My research describes how my practice as a teacher changed in light of my involvement in our classroom tattoo parlour (Lassonde et al, 2009) and my teaching portfolio is based on personal experience and my reflective practice, which has "a strong influence on self-study" (Lassonde et al, 2009). Lassonde (2009) offers further support for my decision that self-study is an excellent approach for researching and creating a teaching portfolio with her statement that 'self-study may incorporate other methods, such as personal history, narrative inquiry, reflective portfolios, memory work, or arts based methods" (p. 5) and that "self-study involves a strong personal reference, is constructivist because it includes elements of ongoing inquiry, respects personal experience, emphasizes the role of knowledge construction and collaborative component of self-study acknowledges the important role of the social construction of knowledge"(p. 10); these are all core components of my study.

Limitations of self- study include what Lassonde (2011) refers to as the acknowledgement that self-study "can be paradoxical in nature - it is about the individual, but requires the participation and collaboration of other people" (p. 8). Lassonde (2011) refers to self-study as a private and personal exploration. However, as Lassonde (2011) points out, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2004), also state that it can be difficult to separate yourself from the study. According to these researchers, self-study scholars have demonstrated that "self-study works from the postmodernist assumption that it is never possible to divorce the 'self' from either the research process or from education practice and that self-study doesn't claim to know a truth but rather seeks to understand what is" (p. 607). Therefore, an effective researcher must objectively consider her role within the study without the involvement of her ego; it is fundamental that the researcher is able to collaborate openly, embrace alternatives and self-reflect effectively (Lassonde, 2011).

Examining this further, Lassonde presents additional limitations for consideration concerning ethical and effective self-study, which includes the importance of "storytelling as opposed to re-storying" (p. 24) and taking into account the different perspectives and/or protecting the identity of my participants before, during and after my inquiry (Lassonde, 2011). Considering that storytelling is a reflection of a shared experience and that re-storying is an internalized and re-worked personalized experience, I approached my self-study "with integrity without leaving my identity behind" (p.30) and tell an authentic story that considers the impact

of my role within multiple realities, which is important considering that an integral part of my research focuses on identity building for teachers and students respectively.

OUTLINE OF THE PROCEDURES, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Although this is a self-study research project, the tattoo parlour was a student-centred, student-led initiative. It took place in our rural alternative classroom over a two-month period, with the parlour open to the school community during lunch hour, twice a week. Post project, interpretation and review of the data is based on Samaras (2011) and Lassonde's (2011) guidelines for self-study. Primary data was collected through keeping a personal, reflective journal. Secondary data was collected through daily observations, creating lessons and participating in the daily operations of the tattoo parlour. A major part of the research consisted of engaging in reflective writing which focuses on daily teaching practices. This journal helped me as an educator to "reflect on the reactions of my students after a new lesson, find areas of improvement, and tweak my practices" (Samaras, p. 37). I was able to see my growth throughout this process and became aware of the sentiment within my classroom in conjunction with running the tattoo parlour (Samaras, 2011).

Post-project, I considered my research while reviewing my journal entries and reflecting on my professional practice. I then addressed any concerns about the authenticity of my observations and took them into consideration. Finally, I created a teaching portfolio based on my research. This portfolio bridges theory and practice by presenting as hands-on, accessible resources for teachers. I incorporate the concepts of play, self-regulation, the exploration of self

and identity building and tattoo health /safety education (Armstrong et al, 2014; Armstrong, 1994; Armstrong, 1997; Gillespie, 2016; Gude, 2010; Irwin, 2001) into my lesson planning.

JUSTIFICATION

When creating our project, I considered the school's particular strengths, interests and available resources (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006) and observed the need for alternative curriculum which did not focus on standardized test results (Li et al, 2015; Conrad, Moroye, & Uhrmacher, 2015)**.** Knowing that my students carried their own stories, identities, traumas and pain and that they required a safe space (Blair, 2007; Deasy, 2002; Gillespie, 2016; Gude, 2010; Huang, 2016) I set out to create the tattoo parlour project. To my dismay, hands-on curriculum literature on the subject of tattoo education, or any materials for practical application of theoretical concepts in art education were scarce, if not impossible to come by. Thus, I endeavoured to address the lack of hands-on material for myself, and other teachers (Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr 2001; Gude 2010) seeking similar projects in the future by creating a teaching portfolio of our project.

As stated before, there is a wealth of educational theory pertaining to integration of the arts, but a lack of material providing practical applications of such theory, thus creating a gap in the literature. When there is a disconnect between theory and practice, such theoretical research becomes inaccessible to those trying to implement evidence-based practice on the front lines. This lack of availability of accessible step-by-step, practical curriculum for art-integration in the classroom has been documented by Gude (2010), who noted a reality of "overworked teachers and dispirited students who are unable to integrate the required fearless exploration needed to

make art" (p. 32). Gude further discussed the resulting unhappiness that surrounds both the teacher and the student at the current model for creativity in the classroom . The results of the present study has implications for the field of art education and in the realm of alternative education for at-risk youth. I hope it will encourage the acceptance of tattoos and their cultural importance as a valid form of art education and, as a result, increase the availability of more publications that include hands-on examples of practical, multidisciplinary, arts-based curriculum. It is my hope that this thesis will serve as a guide for other educators attempting similar ventures.

To that end, in the next two chapters, I have endeavored to create a blueprint of my project, including my personal story as a teacher and a copy of my project proposal to the school's governing board and lesson plans in order to give the reader a day-to-day account of the challenges and successes I encountered when running the tattoo parlour project.

CHAPTER 2:

Mystery Ink: A Teacher's Personal Narrative

In early winter 2016, my partner and I had just settled into our newly rented cabin in rural Quebec. Shortly thereafter, the principal of nearby Mill Street Secondary School phoned to asked me if I would be interested in taking on a last-minute teaching contract with a group of at-risk youth in a work-oriented training program. Having supply taught at Mill Street over the years, the principal advised me that she had observed my teaching methods in the past and that she felt that my style would be a good match for the students in question. As a former high

school dropout, I was immediately intrigued by the opportunity to work with at-risk youth, and

agreed to start on a two-week trial basis, with the possibility of a replacement contract for the

remainder of the year.

I would like to take a moment to reflect on what it was like to change careers in my

mid-thirties. To quote my favourite muppet, Kermit the Frog, "it's not easy being green"

(Henson, 2011). Even after three years of teaching, I still consider myself to be a new teacher.

Most 'green' teachers face an uncertain future with regards to stable work in the field of

education, as there are very few tenured positions available in the current job market. It didn't

take me long to realize the realities of being a new teacher in Quebec, including unemployment

every June and meager paychecks. Any of these things on their own is stressful, but by far the

most difficult aspect of teaching is adjusting to a special kind of exhaustion that only other

teachers can understand; this is a unique brand of weariness that is brought on by a desire to

carve out a place for yourself in the world of education, and become your idea of a good teacher

as quickly as possible.

When I arrived in my new classroom in late February, I wanted not only to be a good

teacher but also an effective one. Right away, I began to sense that a traditional approach to my

classroom was the wrong approach. However, I wasn't sure how to adjust my professional

practice to meet the needs of my students. I'll admit, in those first two weeks, I was a highly

ineffective teacher due to a lack of experience working with at-risk youth. As a result, I felt like I

was letting everyone down, myself included. Working with students between the ages of 14 and

21, I saw the same students every day, all day, for four individual subjects: Math, English, Autonomy and Job Skills. Thirty students were registered in the program, but, in reality, between seven and fifteen students showed up every day, and it was never the same ones. Unfortunately, most of these students were so unmotivated that they had simply stopped attending school. Furthermore, for the ones who did attend, it was a constant power struggle to get them to participate in any way. I was unsure of how to deal with the extreme behavioural challenges that I faced every day. The students constantly tried to test my limits; in our class, there was a constant barrage of swearing, the occasional outburst where students would storm out of the class, and a flat out refusal to follow directions and/or complete tasks. The students had settled into their routine of oppositional defiance, and it was clear that this was not a pattern that they were eager to change. As a result of these factors, there was no continuity or consistency with my planning; I couldn't anticipate who would actually be present in class. Sadly, trying to work on anything ongoing, like reading a novel, proved to be impossible under these circumstances. Even when students did physically show up, often they were mentally uninvested and our days together were long and unproductive.

The reality of my first few weeks as a teacher with at-risk youth involved keeping the room from exploding into full-blown mutiny. There was zero trust between myself and my new students. I made the novice mistake of attempting to integrate into my new classroom by simply being friendly and actually trying to teach. Thus, I spent a large portion of my day either being completely ignored by the students, having to avoid things being thrown at my head or being on the receiving end of hateful comments. Many of the students would simply walk out of the room

at their convenience, or I would have to call security for help defusing potentially violent situations. I frequently had to ask students to leave because of excessively disruptive behaviour.

The truth is that all of my teacher training went right out the window on the first day because the critical situations I was facing took immediate precedent over trying to implement metaphorical teaching philosophies. As a result, I learned very quickly that if I was not prepared to engage myself in a praxis of living and learning (McKerracher et al., 2016) based on the immediate needs of my students, it was unlikely that any sort of bond would form between us, and the power struggle would continue until I gave up or lost my mind.

About a month after my arrival at Mill St, I realized that our classroom situation had become critical. Without much to build upon, I decided to start from scratch. After administering some basic evaluations, I concluded that the student's reading and writing skills averaged around a grade 3 level. Some students were able to read but had weak comprehension skills. Others could read but could not write, and some were neither able to read nor write. Some students did not speak at all, while others possessed strong verbal skills. Considering their disparate levels of ability, it was clear that a non-traditional approach was needed for these students. Each had his or her own individual education plan, but little progress was being made despite accommodations. Additionally, behavioural challenges increased when students were unable to complete tasks due to frustration, and learning and/or emotional difficulties. I struggled to connect with my students while remaining professional in the face of what was an extremely stressful and forced daily engagement for everyone.

Mostly because of my lack of my experience, I was quickly overwhelmed by feelings of depression and helplessness. Within the first week, I already felt the pressure and urgency of putting all of the theory I had learned during my teacher training into practice. Unfortunately, based on my evaluations of the students, it soon became clear to me that it was impossible to modify my teaching enough to accommodate such vastly different individual needs. Adding to my stress was the misfortunate fact that, during my first week on the job, my partner had taken a nasty fall on some ice and broke his left humerus clear through. It was a nasty break and, believe me when I tell you, it wasn't that funny. Due to the nature of his injury, he required full-time care in the evenings, which scarcely left me time to breathe, let alone to ponder how best to reach the students in my class. Within two weeks of starting my new job, I was spiritually, emotionally and physically exhausted from trying to take care of everyone except myself.

One day, I hit my limit, which, in retrospect, was inevitable. In that moment, to save my sanity, I sat down on a chair in the middle of the room with my morning cup of tea and tuned out. I waited while the students ignored me as usual. I lingered as they socialized amongst themselves and pretended not to notice my deliberate detachment from the classroom. Very slowly, the students became curious about what I was doing (or not doing, in this instance) and began to inquire as to what was going on. I stated flatly that we were getting nowhere and that I had no more time for their games. Suddenly, ten pairs of eyes were staring intently at me. I stopped for a minute, carefully contemplating what to say next; it was the longest minute of my high school teaching career.

I cautiously began with, "You know, I was in a class just like this when I was in high school..."

The students stared at me skeptically. Then, one of them tentatively asked, "Really?"

"Yup". I replied matter-of-factly, "I know exactly what it's like to be removed from regular classes because you don't fit in".

"How did that go for you?" another student inquired.

I responded, "It didn't work for me at all - I ended up dropping out. How's it working out for you?"

Silence.

Then...one brave soul started talking "Well...actually... it's not going great for us, either."

And for the first time, I really listened to them.

The first thing I learned from my students is that they felt defeated and abandoned, and that these forlorn feelings were intricately interwoven with the depressing facade of our classroom space. Our classroom had been used for storage for many years and the space was only recently converted into a classroom. The room we were supposed to spend six hours a day in looked and felt exactly like what it was for them: a prison cell, designed to hold the students that didn't fit into regular school society. The students felt like they had been locked away and forgotten. I took a good look around our "classroom" through their eyes - it was indeed a cold and barren space. Admittedly, even I didn't want to be there. Aside from the bodies that occupied the space, it was totally empty. No student work was displayed, no posters were on the walls, nothing attracted the eye at all. Completely devoid of character or life, the bare, grey,

cracked cement walls somehow echoed and multiplied my students' despair. It was clear that

something had to be done to remediate our surroundings, to change the feeling of the room, and

to improve the outlook of my students (figures 2 and 3).

Figure 2
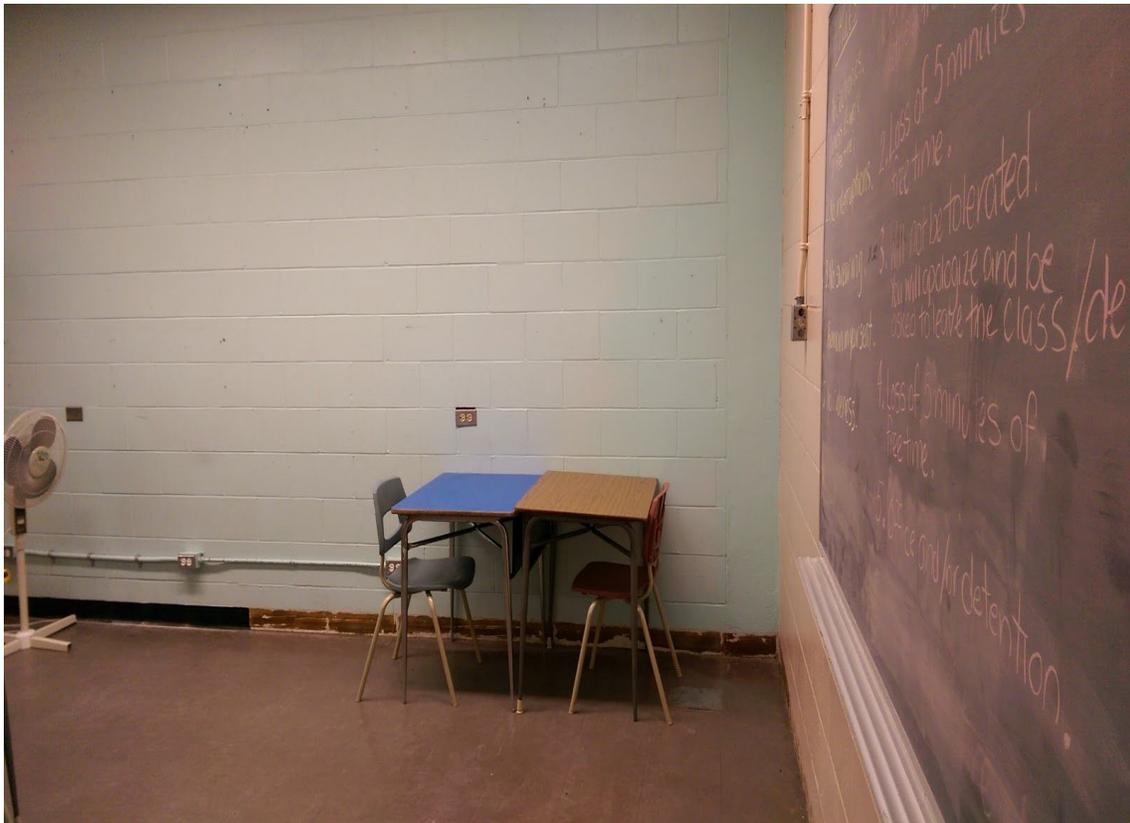
Figure 3

Figure 2 and 3: *These two images of our "classroom" were captured by me at the beginning of my contract at Mill St Secondary School in February of 2016. (Sciuto, 2016).*

I decided that, for this group of students especially, simple, creative and fun tasks and projects needed to happen in a learning environment that was warm and inspiring. By changing the aesthetics of our physical learning space, we changed it's meaning from somewhere that we were trapped into somewhere that inspired us to learn, play and develop our interests. Books, games and toys that we had collected from around the school were available on a shelf at any time and student-created artwork was proudly displayed on the walls. The desks were rearranged and the speakers podium acted as a welcome counter at the front of the room for tattoo parlour

We created flash art and hung it on the walls. We brought in some speakers, a projector and some DJ equipment. As a teacher, I believe that building our new learning environment as a team reinforced our connection to each other and our project (figure 4).

Figure 4
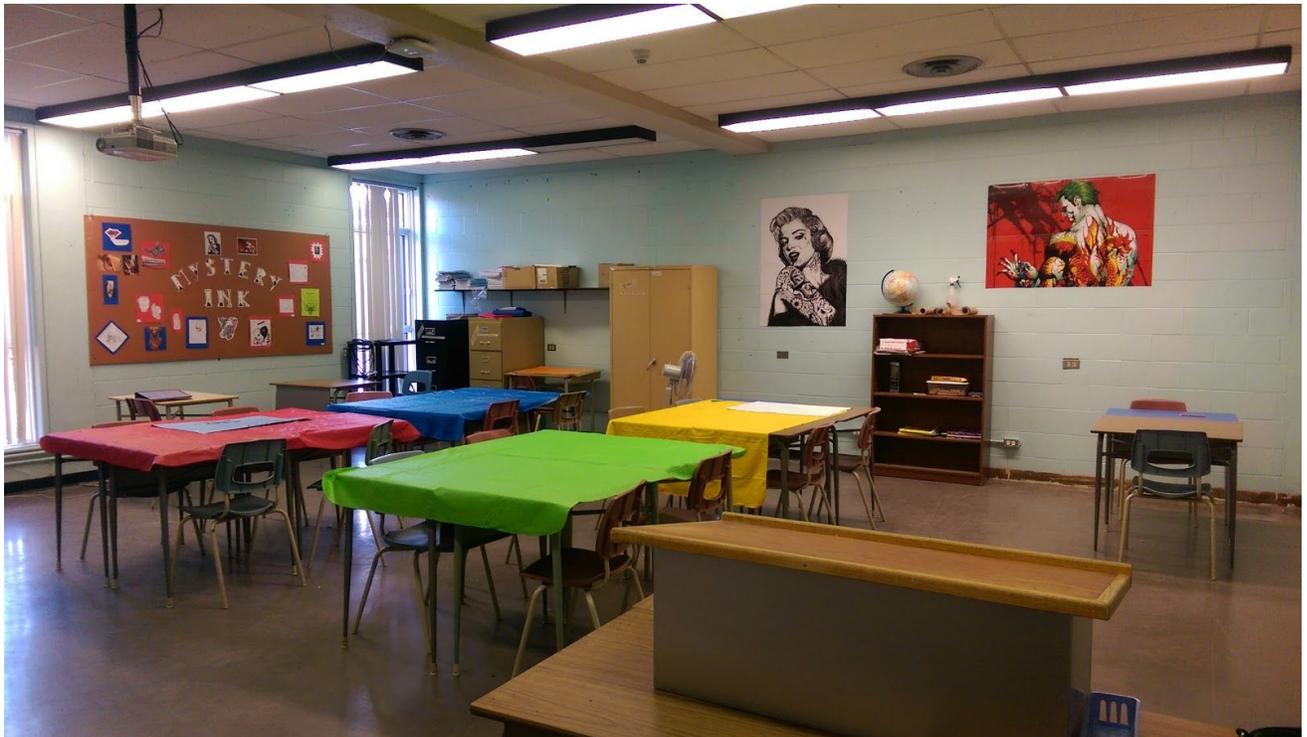
Figure 4: *Transforming our classroom into our tattoo parlour. This image of our classroom was captured by me in April 2016 (Sciuto, 2016).*

For several mornings after the initial physical transformation of our classroom, I was still greeted with long faces and short tempers. However, something had changed; the mutiny had stopped when conversation had started, and that was progress that I gratefully acknowledged. One critical piece of information that the students shared with me when they began to open up

was that their regular teacher had left the previous November and that in the three months since then, there had been a rotation of supply teachers, with someone new coming in almost every day. I was the first to stay longer than a few days and, understandably, they were hesitant to believe that I wouldn't leave as well. In that moment, I realized that the next order of business was for me to step forward and make a commitment to them. Above all else, we needed to build trust, which is a vital part of any classroom (Gillespie, 2016). It was my professional opinion that for this particular group, what they needed most from me was a lived commitment to show up for them every morning.

Each day, the students continued to test my limits, but something had changed. The disruptive behaviour seemed more habitual than deliberate, and it gradually declined. During our days together, I spent most of our class time listening to the students talk and doing simple things they were good at. I discovered that they really enjoyed it when I read short stories aloud, so we established this as a daily routine. Some days were productive, some days the students acted out, but every day, I came back for them. I began to actively and meaningfully offer words of encouragement at every given opportunity. I would look for the smallest things, like coming to class on time, and completing assignments to offer them praise whenever possible. We continued to work on basic assignments slowly and steadily, which built a new and simple classroom norm.

Then, one day, in mid-March, something wonderful happened. I realized that when I offered them words of encouragement and support, they were tentatively offering them back to me. Recognizing this as a critical point in the development of our student-teacher relationship, I

decided that this was my moment as their teacher to take up their personal stories about how they had ended up in our classroom. Rak & Sinner (2016) stated that "when we take up the power of stories in education we begin to cultivate a presence that allows us to consider what lies beyond our preconceptions, with a greater mindfulness and with a purpose" (p.97). Hearing their stories inspired me to put away our textbooks and focus solely on the students' stories as the basis for our curriculum moving forward.

At this time, I had coincidentally been reading about Oliver Herring's TASK model. The very nature of TASK projects is to act as an invitation to access genuine student engagements that focus on the process over finished product (Gillespie, 2016). Considering the social and academic difficulties experienced by most of my students, I decided to release my students of the pressure of not being able to complete certain assignments (Gillespie, 2016). While contemplating the design of their new curriculum, I allowed alternative, artistic possibilities to begin to ruminate inside my head. At night, while I tended to my partner, the two of us talked about my desire to build upon the students' personal experiences in the classroom through art education. He asked me if I had expressed this desire to them and I realized that I had not, but that we were ready as a class to take the next step together. I realized that I wanted to give these students more agency and control over the content and direction of their learning, with subject matter that was tailored to their interests and offered practical skills that they could take into the world. McKenna et al. (2016) found that when students were given more agency, they enjoyed the process of learning, remembered content, and did better on standardized testing. Consequently, the following morning, I asked the question that changed the course of our

student-teacher relationship completely: "So, what would you all like to do with our time together?"

No matter how much the students resisted working, it was clear to me right away that it wasn't working hard that they dreaded, but being laden with meaningless busy-work. They were genuinely excited by my question, and I knew that we had to plan something that was student-centred with simple routines and structure, that taught practical work skills and that was radically different from their current routine. As a new teacher, that was a tall order, however, I could relate to the students both as a former at-risk student, and as their teacher. I realized that during my disastrous high school experience some 20 years earlier, I could have benefitted from a project like the one we were dreaming up in our class, and that, as a teacher, I was stepping into territory in which I was comfortable because it was familiar and relatable. Choosing to believe in myself and my instincts and heeding the knowledge of Henson's (2011) assertion that students don't always remember what you try to teach them, but they will remember who you are, I decided that my personal experiences were my best qualification to engage the kids in this project.

At this point, I considered the framework upon which we could build our project. The salient needs of this particular group were: increased stability, and increased opportunities to socialize with the greater school population. A typical day in our classroom consisted of 90% socialization and 10% curriculum. As an educator I knew what was important was not the

content of their work, but the need for it to be engaging and meaningful.We began brainstorming as a class to determine our common interests.

One thing that became evident was the student's fascination with my tattoos. My tattoos have been a part of my identity for 20 years and tell the story of my difficult youth. As such, they are a part of myself that I have never felt the need to cover up at work. Building upon Blair's (2007) statement that "tattoos reflect one's hopes, beliefs and act as a vehicle to communicate those beliefs to others" (p.39), I started a conversation with the students concerning their desire to know the stories behind my body art. I asked them how they felt about tattoos as an artform and the response was unanimously positive and inquisitive. A few students began sharing the stories behind their own body art and/or their plans to get tattoos in the future. I listened impartially, as I felt it was important to express to the students that I was not judging them, nor did I expect any sort of conformity from them, just as they should not expect it from me. As a result, we slowly built "a safe and democratic atmosphere, where the students were more willing to take risks, discuss ideas, embrace ambiguity, as well as develop a more authentic sense of ownership for their art projects" (Gillespie, p.36).

In response to the high level of interest in tattoo art, I opened the floor to the students for suggestions on starting a possible project surrounding the concept. After a class discussion, the idea of a temporary tattoo parlour, which was affectionately named "Mystery Ink" was born. As a teacher, I was fortunate that the school administration at Mill Street Secondary School was incredibly progressive, and that the idea of a temporary tattoo parlour within the school was well

received. With his/her support, I presented and justified the project in a proposal which reflected the requirements of the Quebec Education Plan, and framed it within the required competencies in Math, English and Special Education (see Appendix X). My proposal obtained governing board approval and I launched the idea into action.

During class time, we learned about the history of tattooing, as well as the dangers associated with the misappropriation of cultural symbols. Then, we combined this knowledge with research the students conducted on disease prevention, and created tattoo safety education materials for teenagers, in the form of health and safety brochures (figures 5,6 and 7).

Figure 5

Figure 6

Infection - Dirty needles and equipment can pass infections like HIV

Allergies - Inks can cause skin reactions - do your research.

Scarring - Unwanted scars may form when getting or removing a tattoo

Make sure the parlor is clean and licensed.
Check that the artist has a good portfolio - bad ink lasts forever!

MADE WITH
FONT CANDY

Figure 7

TATTOO AFTER CARE

1. Let the ink dry for 30-60 minutes to avoid smearing.

2. It is okay if the ink peels a bit - leave it alone.

3. Leave the ink on your skin for between 3 and 6 hours.

4. Rinse the inkoff gently with warm water - DO NOT SCRUB.

5. The colour will be light grey and will develop to a blue black within 48 hours.

6. Sleep with the tattoo covered for the first night to avoid ink tranfer to other body parts.

7. Enjoy your tattoo

MADE WITH
FONT CANDY

Figures 5, 6 and 7: *Student created tattoo health and safety education brochures for the parlour.*

We then proceeded to research and order jagua ink samples (which is a type of non-toxic, semi-permanent henna-like fruit ink we used for tattooing), practiced tattoo drawing techniques and acted democratically to decide what skills we would need to acquire to run the parlour, and who would assume which responsibilities based on their personal strengths such as making posters and advertising materials (figure 8 and 9).

Figure 8
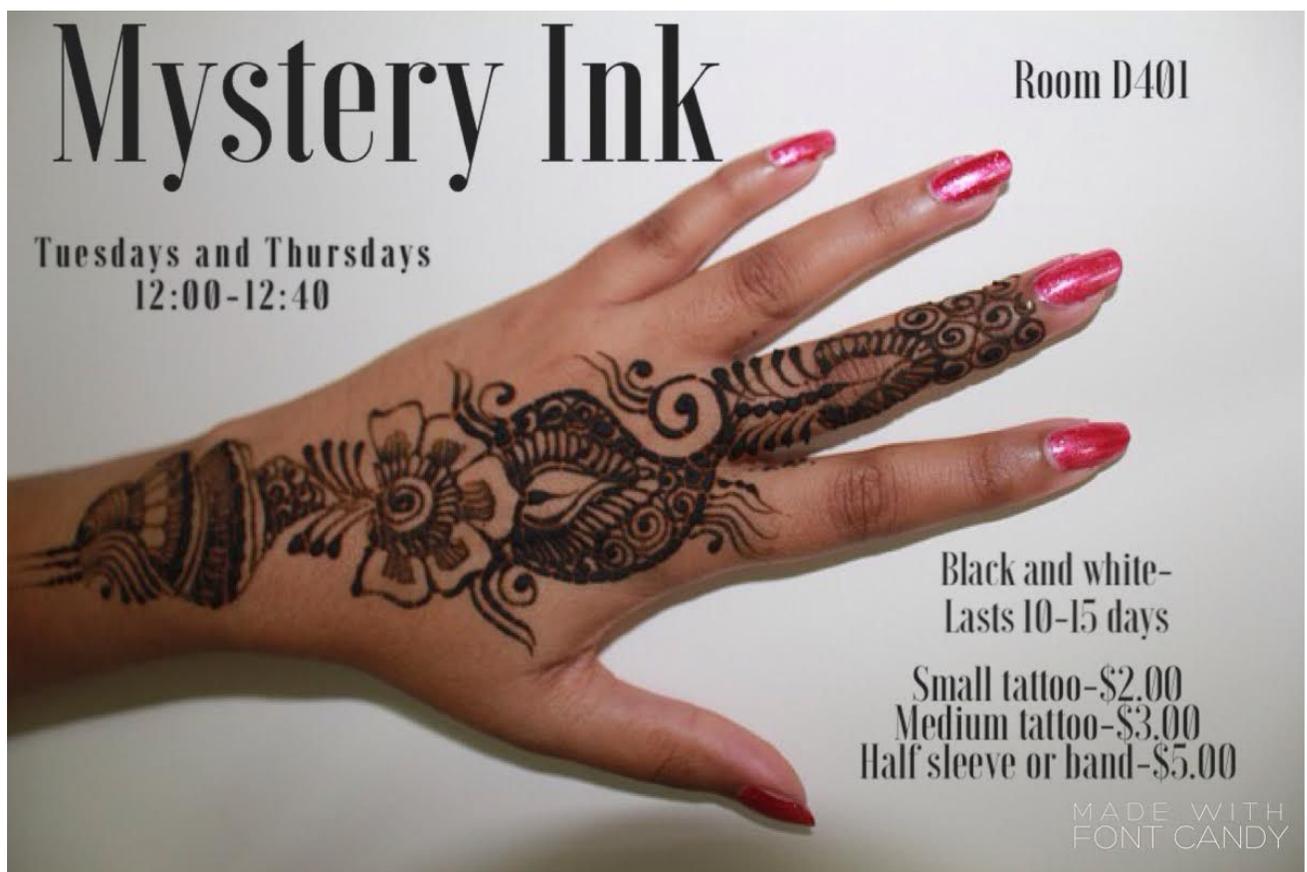
Figure 9
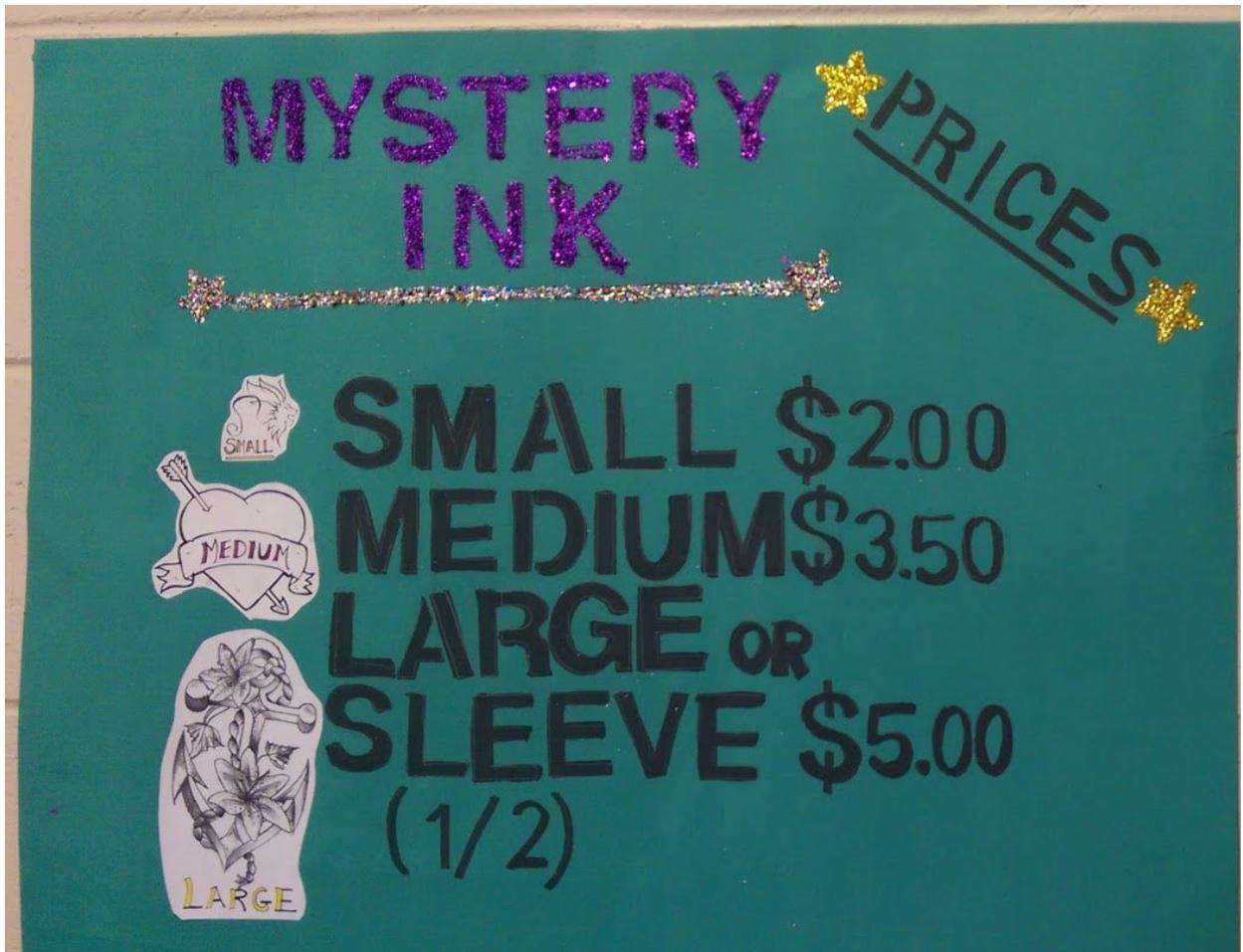
**Figure 8 and 9:** *Examples of promotional materials made by students using free digital software and hand drawn posters (Sciuto, 2016).*

Each day, I taught the students practical math skills that would enable them to handle cash transactions. We also learned how to write receipts for the clients, and acquired cash balancing and deposit skills by putting money in the school bank. Together, we refined our

communication and interpersonal skills by greeting and assisting customers. This also lessened the students' feelings of ostracization and promoted healthy rebuilding of social relationships within the regular school community. Then, students began using their artistic skills to design tattoo art; stencils were provided by the company who distributed the ink. This was a great way for all students to participate as artists confidently, regardless of their skill level (figure 10 and 11).
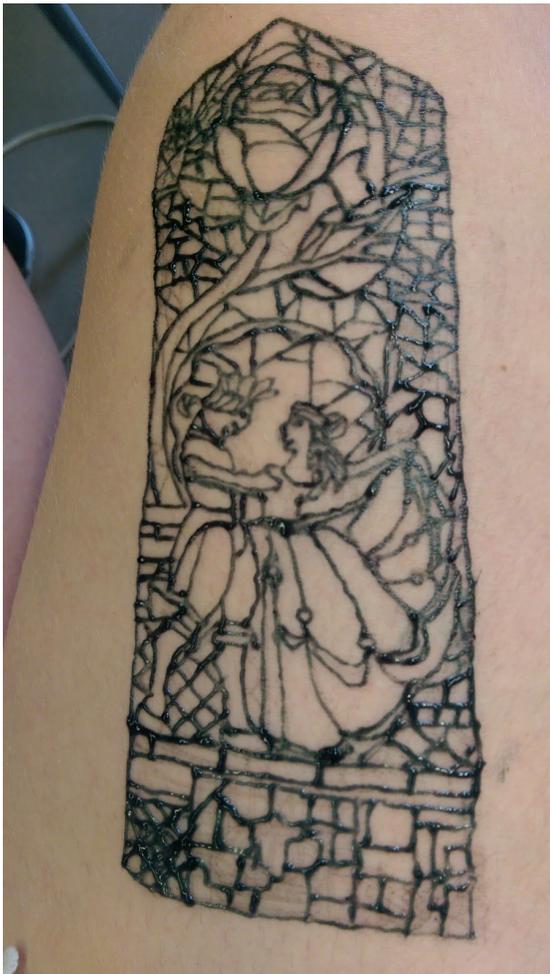
Figure 10   **Figure 11**
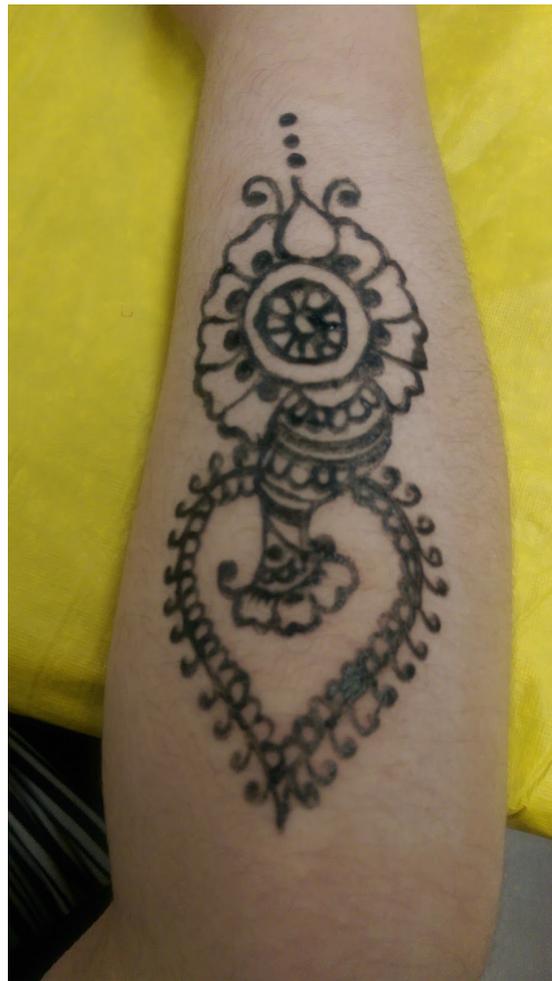
Figure 10 and 11: *Examples of student tattoo artwork, photos taken during our project (Sciuto, 2016).*

As mentioned previously (figures 5, 6, and 7), students also created promotional materials such as posters and flyers for the school using free digital software. These flyers were distributed to visiting clients and students explained the real dangers associated with unsafe tattooing practices and the importance of students educating themselves before considering getting a real tattoo. Some students volunteered to stay at lunch and work as artists. As a result of these mini projects, our classroom became alive with happy, productive students who were engaged individually to reach a common goal - to get the school inked. When tattoo art creation started to happen in the classroom, all of the student's relationships within our space changed. Similar to Brindamour's (2014) experience in Montreal, the more the students became more engaged with their space, the more they created art within its borders. The space itself became a place where the students looked forward to visiting and spending their day. In addition to this, the students were proud of the creation of their authentic, inspiring space, and were eager to bring other students from mainstream classrooms to experience their environment and engage with the art produced there. Just at it did for Brindamour's students in Jarry Park, our tattoo parlour had transformed the relationship between the students and their physical space and had created the opportunity for dialogue between students that may not have had an opportunity to interact meaningfully otherwise (figure 12, 13 and 14).

Figure 12

Figure 13

Figure 14

Figure 12: *Staff and students are united with their choice of tattoo designs.*

Figures 13: *Students work together to create tattoos both freehand and using stencils.*

Figure 14: *The school principal gets inked by a student running the parlour.*

All images taken by me at Mill St Secondary School in spring of 2016 (Sciuto, 2016).

I had a particularly contentious relationship with one student who was extremely disengaged and prone to violent outbursts. I decided to designate this student as the business manager, to increase his or her engagement with the project. Although he was technically the most unlikely candidate, I wanted to give this student my full trust and the chance to make decisions on behalf of the parlour, because as the teacher, I knew that it was exactly what he needed. In return, his confidence in me as a teacher soared and he became my best pupil. This student even used his amazing woodworking skills to create the sign for our parlour door which is on the first page of this document (figure 1). Reflecting on these moments, I knew that I was finally being what could be described as "a good teacher" to my students by seeing their hidden potential and using it as a foundation from which to create purposeful, relevant and meaningful curriculum for them.

The tattoo parlour, like any other project, had a natural lifespan in the classroom. I chose to be realistic about this and let the project run its course. This did not mean the project was unsuccessful. Rather, our project came to a very organic end; when the students were ready, they took the lead in suggesting which direction they wanted to go in for their next project.

CHAPTER 3

Final remarks about my experiences teaching at-risk youth.

I want to start by saying that never before had I seen a group of students grow so quickly, both academically and socially. However, reflecting on my professional practice, it is my conclusion that during my time at Mill St Secondary School, it was less about encouraging play for the students and more about how the idea of play informed my practice as a teacher and encouraged me to think outside of the box. The tattoo parlour started when I made the decision to play with our curriculum; I played with several ideas to improve my students' overall educational experiences. As a direct result of my decision to play, the students adopted my playful attitude in the classroom. Ultimately, my playful actions created a permissive space for my students in which they could experiment and learn.

Once I encouraged them to take ownership of their learning (Gillespie, 2010), their involvement and engagement within the classroom dramatically increased. Supporting Respress & Lufti's (2006) statement that play promotes whole brain development and higher thinking skills, the most obvious proof of this is that students began showing up regularly to class. Amazingly, around the second week of the parlour, one student who was registered in my class (but whom I had never met before) heard about what we were doing and turned up to investigate; I conclude that our parlour acted as an incentive for him to come back to school, because he participated in the parlour for the rest of the year. This was an amazing moment, knowing that he was there because of my choice as a teacher to re-work our classroom into something more meaningful for my students.

A great experience for everyone in the class (myself included) was when, halfway

through our project, we took a field trip to a real tattoo parlour. We were hosted by a local tattoo

artist who was keen to offer a real live tattoo demo for the kids while showing them tattoo health

and safety procedures. Midway through our project was a great time to get out of the classroom

and into the field; it gave the students a goal to work towards and kept them motivated but was

far enough into the project that they had built a solid knowledge base from which they could

scaffold their learning. We had the opportunity to move away from our classroom and gain real

world work experience and the trip also provided us with the opportunity to develop a more

meaningful student/teacher relationship. After our visit to the tattoo parlour, I personally took my

students out for breakfast at a local restaurant. This was a critical moment for me as a teacher

which helped me to fully understand what individual realities my students were bringing with

them every day into our classroom. Prior to our field trip, I was aware of the poverty that

affected many of my students' personal lives but I had never really personally experienced it.

While we were out at breakfast, I noticed that most of my students were barely eating their food.

At the end of our meal, most of the students started boxing up their food in takeaway containers.

When I inquired as to why they were doing this, they students informed me that they were taking

food home to share with their family. This was a very emotional experience for me as their

teacher. After our excursion was over, I learned from one student that this was the first time that

many of them had ever been out for breakfast at a nice restaurant and it became clear to me then

that many of them felt guilty about having the privilege of going out for breakfast when the rest

of their family could not join them. As a result, many of them had felt obligated to take food

home to share with their parents and siblings. After this experience, I started stocking my desk with snacks and juice boxes for the students; the most difficult part of this was knowing that the students would never directly ask for food if they were hungry. I took it upon myself to watch my students closely. When I noticed that they were getting slow or tired in class, I would place a snack on their desk and continue with whatever we were doing without making a big deal out of it.

Revisiting my prior statement in chapter 1, I still believe that the most important factor in building the relationship I had with my students was simply showing up for them, every day. I learned that working with at-risk youth was about so much more than what I taught; it was about teaching who I was, remaining constant in the face of adversity and maintaining genuine student engagement that focused on the process over the finished product (Gillespie, 2016). Connecting with at-risk youth required that I cared about the students' individual stories; by reinforcing their self-worth regularly and engaging them in meaningful activities, I helped the students to build their own positive identities. Today, as a result of adopting Gillespie's philosophies in my classroom, students from my tattoo parlour group still continue to visit me in my new classroom, just to say hello or to seek my advice. Since the conclusion of our project in May 2016, one of my students has moved out of his group home environment and has taken on an apprenticeship at a real tattoo parlour.

As Gillespie (2016) stresses, none of this could have happened without building trust as a number one priority and fostering a sense of equality within our classroom. Deciding to be completely myself, vulnerabilities and all, proved to be highly effective when building trust with

my students. Once this mutual trust was established, it was like I had a whole new class. The students became agents of change and demonstrated acts of kindness towards others. It was my experience that the smallest steps yielded the most incredible results when students felt a sense of ownership and pride in their work. I actively worked to make sure that my students were involved in a situation where they were respected, praised and encouraged; as a result, by the end of the year, their confidence in themselves soared. As a teacher, I learned that motivational comments which were directed towards students, even for the completion of the most seemingly inconsequential of tasks, such as "you are really great at this, wow, that worked super well", or "it wouldn't be the same without your help" were completely transformative to their perception of themselves as learners.

Academically successful students who frequently push to be top performers as a main priority are often paralyzed by their fear of failure. Contrary to this, it was my observation that my group of at risk-students were more inclined to take incredibly creative, boundless leaps outside of their comfort zones because they felt like they had nothing to lose and everything to gain. It is my experience as a teacher that as a result of this liberated approach to learning, my students' personal growth and development skyrocketed. I took away the knowledge as a teacher that there was a certain irony to the fact that a group of students who were labelled "at-risk" were the least afraid to take risks in the classroom and embraced my non-traditional methods with a high degree of openness and a willingness to try new things.

Play in the form of our tattoo parlour was a highly effective way to connect with my students and I noted many improvements in their academic and social performance. First, when I shifted the focus to addressing the the emotional and physical needs of my students as a priority, (Creedon, 2011) stress levels in class were greatly reduced; this is supported by the notable reduction I witnessed in violent and/or aggressive outbursts by the students and the discontinuance of defiant or oppositional behaviour towards me. This provided me with much relief. Honestly, there were times in the beginning of my teaching this group that I wasn't sure I was going to make it through without giving up. In the end, it wasn't only the students who proved to themselves that they were totally capable of succeeding in the classroom. Another important thing to note is that during the parlour project, most of my students attended class regularly, were happy to be there; they took the initiative to explore and learn through play (Gude, 2010) and acquired the skills and knowledge they needed to enter into the workforce the following year. As a result of our time together, 100% of the students who were enrolled in my class last year are now participating in paid cooperative work placements. Another important note was that my energy levels as their teacher were much higher overall after we started the parlour and that everyone adopted a more positive attitude towards learning; by the second week into the project, I was revived enough to give the students the full support they needed.

The most rewarding thing I took away with me from my experiences at Mill Street Secondary School was to never underestimate the bravery and adaptability of at-risk students. One year later, it is still difficult for me to write about my experiences teaching this particular group of at-risk youth at Mill Street Secondary School without becoming overly sentimental. I

feel that it is important to note that Mill Street Secondary School is in a rural, economically

depressed area far from where I grew up. Regardless, at the finish of our tattoo project, we

couldn't have been closer. In the end, the students had heard what was happening with the fires

raging in Fort McMurray. Ultimately, they decided to donate all of the proceeds from Mystery

Ink to the United Way Alberta. Watching a group of kids who had so little make such a selfless

gesture affected me in profound ways. I was deeply moved by each and every one of them, with

their generosity, caring nature, unique talents and strong work ethic. As a result of my

experiences with this particular group, I learned three valuable things: the benefits of taking the

time to reflect on my professional practice as a teacher, the importance of play for both teachers

and students alike and why, as a teacher, connecting on a meaningful level with your students is

priority one. At the beginning of the year, I didn't know if we were going to make it. By the end

of the year, I was so attached to them all that it was hard to let them go. My students knew that I

would never leave them but, in the end, the greatest feeling of all was knowing that they would

all make it on their own and that they didn't need me anymore. I guess I had become what I

would consider a good teacher after all.

APPENDICES A & B

The accompanying appendices offer practical tools for the implementation of such

projects as the tattoo parlour. An actual proposal to the governing school board and real lesson

plans have been included for reference (appendix A). Inclusion of the the proposal was meant to

be treated as a sample for other educators, who are required to apply for board approval for a

similar project. The two lesson plans included were meant to aid in bridging the previously

discussed gap between theory and practice by inspiring teachers while giving step-by-step

instructions on how to successfully implement concepts related to this project in the classroom

(appendix B). Additionally, I do hope that these materials act as a helpful reference point for

teachers who are engaged in projects with at-risk youth.

Appendix A

GOVERNING BOARD PROPOSAL
Mill Street Secondary School

Work Oriented Training Program Project Proposal

Proposal Date:
Anticipated project start date:
Duration of project (days, weeks, months, etc.):

Teacher:
Group:
Summary of Project

For this project, students would run a small business in the form of a temporary tattoo parlour out of the WOTP classroom. This project would take place during lunch 2-3 days per cycle. The parlour would offer professional level temporary tattoos which would last 3-7 days using high quality jagua ink. Depending on the level of commitment that students show to growing their business, we may consider offering other services in the future, such as design your own t-shirts, nail art and/or learn to DJ classes.

Justification for Project - links to the QEP and Progression of Learning

I currently teach four classes in the WOTP program:
Math, ELA, Autonomy and **Prep for the Job Market.**

Running a small business supports the integration of all of these subjects as a coherent whole and explicitly targets cross-curricular learning. It also targets the development of the following

competencies by promoting students' active involvement in the learning process (QEP Foreword, 2016).

Connections to the Broad Areas of Learning:

Health and Well-Being: *Ensures that students develop a sense of responsibility for adopting good habits with respect to health, safety and sexuality. (QEP, Ch.2 , p.5)*

Students will learn and then teacher their peers about tattoo safety and STI's, each student who receives a temporary tattoo will receive an educational card that talks about the dangers and risks associated with real tattoos.

Career Planning and Entrepreneurship: *To enable students to make and carry out plans designed to develop their potential and help them to integrate into adult society. (QEP, Ch.2 , p.7)*

Each student in the class will learn how to perform various roles and the required duties that relate directly to running their own business. Each student will alternate in these roles during the operation of the tattoo parlour. These roles will include but are not limited to: Receptionist, Scheduling, cash & balancing, price setting, marketing and sales and advertising, artist, maintenance of the parlour and stock/inventory. By performing all of these duties, students will become self aware of their potential and how to fulfill it, as well as learn about their talents, strengths, interests and personal career aspirations. (QEP, Ch.2, p.7)

Citizenship & Community Life - This project will allow students to take part in the democratic life of the class and the school and develop an attitude of openness to the world and respect for diversity. Running this tattoo parlour will allow them the opportunity to solve problems collectively by means of discussion and negotiation. It will also reinforce making decisions cooperatively and acquire hands-on experience in exercising their citizenship *(QEP, Ch.2, p.13).*

Connections to the Cross Curricular Competencies (Ch.3)

Below are a few examples of connections to the CCC's:

Uses Creativity - performing tattoo artist duties, decoration of parlour (classroom), creating designs, working collaboratively with other students.

Solves Problems - scheduling, customer service, organization and logistics of the parlour.

Adopts effective work methods - practiced through the various roles mentioned above, resulting in learning all of the skills required to run your own small business.

Uses information and communication technologies - using computer software to problem solve, use logic and organization skills in "beat matching" for learning to DJ.

Achieves his/her potential - exploring talents and interests through various work roles associated with the parlour.

Communicates appropriately, uses information- sales, marketing and customer service. Problem solving with students who wish to create their own designs.

Exercises critical judgment - customer service, scheduling, cash and balancing, inventory

Cooperates - performing various roles associated with the parlour and sharing responsibilities with peers.

DIRECT RELEVANCE TO SUBJECT SPECIFIC COMPETENCIES

MATH

Problem solving, cash and balance, sales, inventory, use of logic and organization.

Competency #1 - Solves situational problems. This project will represent realistic challenges associated with the workplace, stimulate students' interest and involvement and encourage them to find solutions.

Competency #2 - Uses math reasoning. Students will learn to construct and explain their reasoning and organize their thoughts, interpret data, balance a cash and learn to keep inventory.

Competency #3 - Communicates by using math language. By working in roles which are related to the operations of their tattoo parlour, students will discover the usefulness of mathematical language in a variety of everyday activities.

AUTONOMY

Competency #1 - Demonstrates autonomy in everyday situations. Students will gradually learn to solve everyday problems on their own. They will learn independence, responsibility and entrepreneurial skills through participation in various roles related to running a small business.

Students will have the opportunity to participate in various roles such as mangement, employee (artist, DJ) customer service, sales, marketing, inventory and receptionist duties.

Competency #2 - Students will take an informed position on everyday issues and assert their position through exercising social responsibility and teaching other student "clients" about the risks involved with real tattoos and personal health and safety.

Competency #3 - Participation in community life. By running their own business, students will have the opportunity to become acquainted with the process of democratic life in a group and discover the importance of respecting the rules. They will develop a plan to run their business and implement it, then reflect on the outcomes and correct as necessary to optimize their business to meet the needs of both the classroom and school community.

PREP FOR THE JOB MARKET

Competency #1 - Students will learn to **establish his or her personal and occupational profile** through a variety of activities related to running their own small business through examining his/her characteristics, considering the requirements associated with different work situations and where he/she stands in the market and identifying his/her own achievements.

Competency #2 - Gains an understanding of the job market. This project will offer students the opportunity to "explore certain employment sectors and continue their career planning process within the framework of a guidance-oriented approach" which will help students gain a new understanding of the job market. They will be able to gather information about work situations by using appropriate resources and envision him/herself as a future worker. (QEP, Ch.10,p.1).

Competency #3 - Carries out a socio vocational integration plan. I believe that this project will bring a much needed level of stability to the classroom based on long-term work related and personal experiences.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Competency #1 - Uses language/talk to communicate and learn.
Competency #2 - Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts.
This project will motivate students to read and create texts which connect to them directly and are relevant to their lives and interests. They will explore the social phenomenon of tattoos and explore its practices from an informed perspective.

Competency #3 - Produces written, spoken and media texts. Once they have a critical understanding of the history of tattoos, students will work to create literature about tattoos as well as advertising/promotional materials for their business, tattoo designs and set the classroom up as a tattoo parlour using posters and signs, price lists and information.

STUDENT ROLES

Cashier
Tattoo artist
Receptionist
Customer service
P/R Advertising
Inventory and stock manager
Parlour maintenance
Safety and tattoo education specialist
Scheduling
Parlour "DJ" - XBOX 360 game with turntables (I already own this)

SUPPLIES AND BUDGET

For this project, we would like to use Stargazer brand professional temporary tattoo pens. They are the safest option and also high quality, lasting a few days. We would require a colour kit of 13 pens to start plus a few extra black pens and stencils. The pens are $90.00 for the kit plus $10.00 per pen for a few extra black pens. Total cost is $**120.00 for pens.**
https://www.stargazer-products.com/semi-permanent-tattoo-pen-set.html

We will also require alcohol wipes and a good makeup remover product.
Approximate cost for these products is $ **30.00**

Alternative medium - jagua ink with applicator bottles and eucalyptus oil. Cost is approximately $75 USD for a one year supply.

We will also require the following materials:
Cash box and coin dividers
Envelopes
Large desk calendar (for notes/scheduling)
Appointment book (for client bookings)
Henna Pens as a tattoo alternative
Multicolour poster board x 20

Markers, pens and pencils

Rulers

Glitter

8.5 x 11 Neon paper for promotional materials - 100 sheets

XBox, DJ Hero game, turntable and cables - provided by teacher.

New Speakers for computer/XBox

Approximate cost for these products: $100.00

TOTAL BUDGET REQUIREMENT: $250.00

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

-Each student will receive a tattoo educational flyer with each visit

-Tattoos may be on visible limbs, neck or wrists/ankles only. No chests, backs, private areas or faces allowed, no exceptions.

-All tattoos must be chosen from teacher pre-approved designs

-No violence, swearing or inappropriate content will be tolerated.

-Tattoo parlour, its employees and its clients will show respect at all times. If any of the rules are broken, students and/or clients will be asked to leave and will not be invited back.

-No unsupervised tattoos - parlour hours with supervision only.

-Only the artist of the day is allowed to tattoo - no exceptions. No one else!

-Any profit gained will be reinvested in the business or donated to a non-profit cause of the students agreed upon choice.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION! Any questions, please do not hesitate to ask!

Appendix B

Lesson plan #1

Understanding the Misappropriation of Cultural Symbols

Subject(s): Autonomy, Art, English Language Arts.
Cycle /Level: Work Oriented Training Program for At-risk Youth
Date: February, 2016
Duration: 150 minutes (2 classes)

Lesson Agenda/content
As an introductory lesson for the tattoo parlour project, students will learn about the dangers associated with the misappropriation of cultural symbols through the lens of the media.

Materials:
Laptop, computer or HDMI cables, internet access, projector and screen, brightly coloured poster board, art supplies such as magazines for collage, scissors, glue, markers, pencil crayons, access to a colour printer and white A4 paper.

Learning Intention:
By the end of this lesson, students will be able to**:**

- Discuss and reflect on the impact of the misappropriation of cultural symbols.
- Identify examples of cultural misappropriation
- Demonstrate their learning by creating a poster board presentation which provides examples and explains the negative impacts caused by the misappropriation of cultural symbols

Set of Procedures (1-4)

1. **Set Up Time:** 10 minutes per class

2. **Hook and Lesson:** 30 minutes

- Youtube video of Katy Perry's song *Dark Horse.*
- Visual introduction to the concept of Cultural Misappropriation using (Dwyer, 2016).
- Discussion on examples of cultural misappropriation in the media (Metcalfe, 2016).

3. **Activity:** (100 minutes)
4. Creating a collage or poster presentation on concept of cultural misappropriation and providing visual examples with explanations.

5. **Clean up Time:** 10 minutes per class

Accommodations/Modifications:
None

Evaluation:

This exercise is formative to help students to connect with the materials and connect the concepts of tattoos and cultural misappropriation.

Resources

Dwyer, G., (2016) 12 times celebrities landed in hot water for cultural appropriation, article retrieved from:
http://www.sbs.com.au/news/thefeed/article/2016/02/01/12-times-celebrities-landed-hot-water-cultural-appropriation

Metcalfe, J (2012) Native Americans know that cultural misappropriation is a land of darkness, retrieved from:
https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/may/18/native-americans-cultural-misappropriation

Gottwald, L., Houston, J., Hudson, S., Martin, M., Perry, K., Walter, H., (2013), Prism - *Dark Horse,* Capitol Records, retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0KSOMA3QBU0

Lesson plan #2

<u>Tattoo Risks, Health and Safety Education for Teens</u>

Subject(s): Autonomy, Art, English Language Arts.
Cycle /Level: Work Oriented Training Program
Date: February, 2016
Duration: 150 minutes (2 classes)

Lesson Agenda/content
As an introductory lesson for the tattoo parlour project, students will learn about the dangers associated with unsafe tattoo practices and learn to identify key tattoo health and safety risks.

Materials:
One macbook or IPad per student, HDMI and printer to laptop connection cables, internet access, projector and screen, access to a colour printer and multi coloured card stock A4 paper, downloaded Font Candy app.

Learning Intention:
By the end of this lesson, students will be able to**:**

- Identify key tattoo health and safety risks
- Understand the importance of educating teenagers on the health risks associated with tattoos.
- Demonstrate their learning by creating promotional materials using free digital software Font Candy

Set of Procedures (1-4)

1. **Set Up Time:** 10 minutes per class

2. **Hook and Lesson:** 30 minutes

- Youtube video NHS- Getting a tattoo: the health risks to be aware of. 3:33 (2010).
- Youtube video - Can tattoos make you sick? 6:00 (2016).
- Discussion of risks for teenagers associated with tattooing including disease prevention,

making smart art choices and aftercare.

3. **Activity:** (100 minutes)
● Creating promotional materials using Font Candy to be distributed to students visiting the parlour, informing them on the health and safety risks associated with tattoos, aftercare instructions and promoting smart decision making.

4. **Clean up Time:** 10 minutes per class

Accommodations/Modifications:

Students who do not wish to create flyers may present their research in the form of a powerpoint presentation or poster.

Evaluation:

This exercise is formative to help students to learn about tattoo health and safety. Based on the successful completion of their flyers, students will demonstrate their understanding of the risks associated with tattoos.

Resources

MasterPieceTattoos (2016), *Can tattoos make you sick?* retrieved from:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAj-m8L7Ilo&t=1s

UK National Health Services, (2010), *NHS Choices: Getting a tattoo: the health risks to be aware of,* retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lp0zyf_m_j8

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