

Running head: Increasing self-regulation through arts infused learning

**A Phenomenological Study Exploring the Effects Arts-Infused Learning Has on
Increasing Self-Regulation to Support Student Learning**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of
Education

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ABSTRACT

Arts infused learning allows a student to learn alternative approaches to increase self-regulatory skills and promote student learning. It was hypothesized that students who are involved in arts pathways have knowledge and skills that promote self-reflection, and increase their awareness of the importance of learning self-regulatory strategies. Through the duration of this study, students who were enrolled in the arts infused pathway of learning improved in areas of academics, attendance, and self-control. Responses of students who are currently funded under the Alberta Exceptional Grant List as having a severe emotional behavioral disorder were compared to the perception of the educational assistants that were assigned to work with them. The study showed that there was a significant increase in student involvement, academic growth, and behavioral incidents declined in comparison to previous years.

A Phenomenological Study Exploring the Effects Arts-Infused Learning has on Increasing Self-Regulation to Support Student Learning.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction / Background

The central purpose of this research is to examine the effects arts infused learning has on increasing self-regulation practices to support student learning. The study will examine arts infused methods and whole-school approaches to rationalize the benefits that arts infused learning can have on increasing student achievement. The key stakeholders in this research include the pupils, classroom support teacher, and support staff, notably the Educational Assistants (EA's). The key research question was:

- Q) How does arts-infused learning increase self-regulation practices to support student learning?

It must be acknowledged that this research follows students who have been assessed to align with the Alberta Learning Criteria for Students with Special Needs. In accordance with *Alberta Education Special Education Standards, 2017-2018*, students who require special education refer to the education of students with mild, moderate, or severe disabilities and those who are gifted and talented (p. 7). The *Standards for Special Education* ensure the education system meets the needs of all learners – and that all learners have access to high quality education. Other broad definitions of special education include pupils with a wide variety of needs such as, cognition and learning,

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communication and interaction, social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties; and sensory and/or physical needs are considered (Ainscow, 2007; Head and Pirrie, 2007). As a future educational leader, it is pertinent to understand and implement self-regulatory skills for ‘all’ types of learners. The primary motivation for including students with behavioral needs in this study is to demonstrate how effective arts infusion can be for even the most challenging learner. A phenomenological approach has enabled an in-depth qualitative analysis of the views of the stakeholders within one post primary school.

Method

A phenomenological approach was adopted to explore the aforementioned question. Interview data and observation records were collected from a total of 6 participants, which included students and educational assistants in one post primary school in Northern Alberta, Canada. The interview data were transcribed using two methods of qualitative methods analysis. Thematic data analyses and Discursive Psychological Analysis were the two methods that were used, allowing for effective triangulation of the data analyses.

Statement of the Problem

How does arts infused learning promote self-regulation practices to support student learning? To begin what I perceive as an uncharted investigation regarding this question, I began discussing this question with multiple colleagues, and students who seek student services regularly throughout each term. The feedback I received was encouraging with indication that my topic was indeed an unexplored phenomenon. An extensive literature review also indicated a deficit in data for understanding how arts-infused learning promotes self-regulatory skills, thereby increasing achievement. While

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scholars have investigated the correlation between arts-infused learning and academic achievement, research pertaining to the impact arts infusion has on self-regulation practices was difficult to attain. Furthermore, the most significant deficit is apparent in the lack of research that demonstrates how arts infusion can promote regulatory skills for students with pervasive behaviors; which, in the field of educational leadership, is a recurrent component of the job assignment. Scholarly literature is unidirectional and rarely captures the students' understanding of the regulatory skills they have acquired through an arts infused learning experience. The research seeks to understand how students with emotional or behavioral difficulties can learn regulatory practices through arts infused learning.

The Researcher

In the spring of 2003, I graduated from Sir Wilfred Grenfell College with a Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts (Acting), and shortly after I completed a Bachelor's Degree in Education. I naively believed that the difficult part of my early career was behind me, and eagerly began the process of applying for teaching positions throughout the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. My initial optimism shortly turned to concern, when I realized that obtaining employment, as a fine arts teacher was an impossible feat. As spring turned to summer, I broadened my search and moved to Fort McMurray, Alberta. Within one month I attained a position as a fine arts teacher.

Over the ensuing ten years, I became immersed in the field of English Language Arts, art, and drama. More importantly, having consistent involvement in the arts and social sciences increased the potential for cross-curricular experimentation. The experience that I gained has allowed me to create a repertoire of theoretical practices and

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illustrative examples that delineate the role of fine arts in enhancing student learning, and enhancing self regulatory strategies that promote positive behaviour(s). Contrary to my beliefs, I observed that by the time many students entered high school they had already formed strong conclusions about their interest and ability regarding high school subject areas including dramatic arts. Significant numbers of students had formed the opinion that arts infused learning was boring, weird, and ultimately – unnecessary - an observation consistent with Mohr-Schroder, et al., (2014) finding that these perceptions often formed prior to the eighth grade. In my experience, students would often adamantly refuse to enrol in fine arts courses, and often only complete the minimal requirements for graduation before seeking employment in the traditionally lucrative oil and gas industry. Regrettably, it was not uncommon for these individuals to discover that without additional training and fine arts courses, the potential of attending a university could only happen if they chose to return upon graduation and upgrade their courses.

Oreck, Baum, and McCartney (2000) attest that increasing a students' repertoire and awareness of their own effective learning behaviours and strategies can be one of the most powerful benefits of the study of arts. When enrolment was mandated based on academic need rather than want, students had to engage in active arts while learning a number of effective behaviours. Some of the behaviours were learned, while other were intuitive. More importantly, when a student was subjected to arts infused learning it enhanced their ability to apply themselves to solve complex tasks. When a teacher or administrator has the experience of teaching regulatory strategies through the arts, the student gains the ability to transfer such behaviours in other academic areas. For students to become self-regulated, they need to monitor what they are doing, compare their

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progress to a standard, self-criticize or self-praise, and have confidence and high expectations in their ability to learn (Zimmerman & Schunk, 1989).

In the spring of 2013, I decided to leave my job as a fine arts teacher with Fort McMurray Public, and begin a career as a Classroom Support Teacher with the Fort McMurray Catholic School Board. In light of my new role, I made the decision to seek further education and entered Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador's Masters of Educational Leadership program. As a Classroom Support Teacher (CST), my role is to provide special education services to students who have difficulty in the general academic stream, assist with psycho-educational testing, and provide differentiated learning techniques for students who are struggling in a core subject area. As a CST, I have the opportunity to observe students during instructional time, and work with them one-on-one. More importantly, I speak with them about how they learn, and discuss some of the barriers that may be hindering their performance. As a future educational leader, I intend to promote the use of discipline techniques that enhance the students' ability to self-regulate, rather than continuously exercise the isolation practice of suspension.

The research draws inspiration, concepts, processes, and representational forms from arts infused learning. The purpose of this research is to provide a context that will encourage educational leaders to teach self-regulation strategies by promoting and encouraging students to use active arts practices both inside and outside of the classroom. Therefore, the measure of the academic research will study the effects that arts infused approaches have on promoting positive behaviours, and increasing self-regulation practices to promote student learning. So far with common core subjects, the often-accentuated approach is STEM integrated education and its potential impacts on students.

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Arts integration is just as effective, however many times it is overlooked. According to Popavich (2006) arts integration-teaching practices have been shown in brain-based research to improve comprehension and long-term retention. Therefore, to better understand the issue, I examined literature regarding fine arts integration and its potential impacts on student growth, both academic and behavioural. The literature also explores whole-school approaches, regulatory techniques, and arts infused practices. Within this review, I address the major themes that emerge throughout the literature and the research assignment. The literature review begins with an explanation of the research assignment regarding student experiences using arts infused regulation and learning strategies. Then I briefly discuss the history of arts infused learning. The literature review then delves within the major themes that emerged throughout the literature.

Research Approach

The basic qualitative research approach that I intend to explore is based on the experiences of 3 special education students who are currently funded under the Alberta Special Education Coding Criteria as Code 42 (Severe Emotional Behavioural Disorder). According to the Alberta Learning: Special Education Criteria 2017-2018 Manual, a child who is a code 42 displays chronic, extreme, and pervasive behaviours and requires close and constant adult supervision, high levels of structure, and other intensive support services in order to function in an educational setting. The behaviours significantly interfere with both the learning and safety of the ECS child/student and other ECS children/ students (p. 7). I also intend to examine the effectiveness of the regulatory practices and impact of arts infused learning from the perspective of the educational

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assistants who have been assigned to work with each of the students for the duration of this study.

For three years, I have implemented regulatory strategies that encompass arts infused approaches to increase academic standing and promote behavioural regulation. I work with students in a one-on-one approach, and have observed their academic behaviours, and socio-emotional regulation practices inside the classrooms, and during unstructured time. Furthermore, over the course of the last two years, each student has been immersed in an Arts Academy as a part of his or her selected high school pathway of learning. This research project seeks to develop an understanding of central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012), through an exploration of the implementation of arts infused learning from the perspective of students and to develop an "understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Meriam, 2009, p.5). I believe that qualitative research methodology is an effective and appropriate choice for the arts infused approach.

My intent is to explore experiential data from the perspective of students who require regulatory practice and non-traditional ways of learning. It is important to remember that human experiences are often intangible mental constructs that are local and specific in nature, although elements may be shared across individuals and cultures (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Individual experiences are filtered through multiple lenses and are influenced by past experiences, giving rise to fluid constructs that cannot be definitively viewed as true or false (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Constructivist inquiry seeks to understand the constructions held by people, aiming towards consensus, while being

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open to new interpretations and a more sophisticated understanding (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) and therefore serve as the foundational framework for this research project.

Definition of Key Terms

The following is a list of terms that will be used to guide this research study

- Arts: The four arts disciplines with articulated national standards: art, music, drama, and dance (Consortium of National Arts Education Association, 1994)
- Arts Infusion: Using the arts throughout the curriculum, providing more than one viewpoint, multiple examples, and complementary ways of understanding.
- Arts Integration: is an approach to teaching that integrates the fine and performing arts as primary pathways to learning.
- Core Academic Curriculum: Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Science
- Curriculum: Plan incorporating a structured series of intended learning outcomes and associated learning experiences – generally organized as a related combination or series of course.
- Post-Primary School: The post primary school in this study enrolls students from grade 7-12
- Self-Efficacy: Belief or expectation about one's ability to perform a given task successfully.
- Self-Regulation: The ability to monitor and control our own behaviour, emotions or thoughts, altering them in accordance with the demands of the situation.
- Social Constructivism: Knowledge is socially constructed where individuals create meaningful learning through interaction with others.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following literature review addresses three broad questions that impact the effects arts integrated learning has on student achievement. (1) What defines "arts infused learning"? (2) How methods of arts infused learning are implemented? (3) How arts integration facilitates student growth and increases self-regulation? In an attempt to refine the study, the literature reviews teaching methods and implementation in a variety of settings. The review delves into three major themes that emerge throughout the findings (a) performance, (b) engagement and (c) student growth. The thematic findings discuss the impact of arts integrated methods, how it contributes to student growth, and the potential benefits that may result from this model.

In addition to the findings on arts integrated effectiveness, the correlation of arts infusion and its potential impact on facilitating student growth are addressed through the review of the results of teaching practices, case studies, and longitudinal data. The study also includes research about the models of arts integrated learning focus on school wide implementation, teaching methods, and learning practices.

Arts Infusion

Robinson (2013) attests that arts infusion can be best understood, because of the lack of consensus on any one definition, as being defined in three categories: arts infusion as learning through and with the arts, arts infusion as a curricular connection process, and arts infusion as collaborative engagement. Today, student learning has become technology driven, and rather than becoming interconnected, socially - students are becoming disconnected. Through an arts infused approach, teachers are better able to

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bring students together to create a common stage. In arts infused classrooms students are working "with" the art form and "through" the art form to reach academic, social, and personal goals (Cornett, 2007, p.17). More importantly, the personal representations of knowledge can be shared through active individual experience. According to Eisner (2002), the rationale proposed by some is that experience in the arts develops initiative and creativity, stimulates that imagination, and in some arts fields, helps the young learn how to work together. He believes that these personal attributes are vocationally relevant. Thus, even though the projects that students work on in an art class might not look as if they have much to do with the workplace, they are very much a part of the skill set needed to become productive workers. For students to progress academically, they must become involved in the lesson. The fundamental importance of arts infused learning is to allow the student to become a part of the collective process, collaborating through art.

Jensen (2001) elaborates on the benefits of arts education. Jensen believes that measuring success through high-test scores limits a student's potential to excel. In the recent study, *Arts with the Brain in Mind*, Jensen conveys that the arts develop neural systems that often take months and years to fine tune. It enables students to build mental constructs that frame a set of examples sharing a common identity and apply authentic connections between two or more disciplines. Jensen affirms that a school should value the many non-academic benefits of the arts.

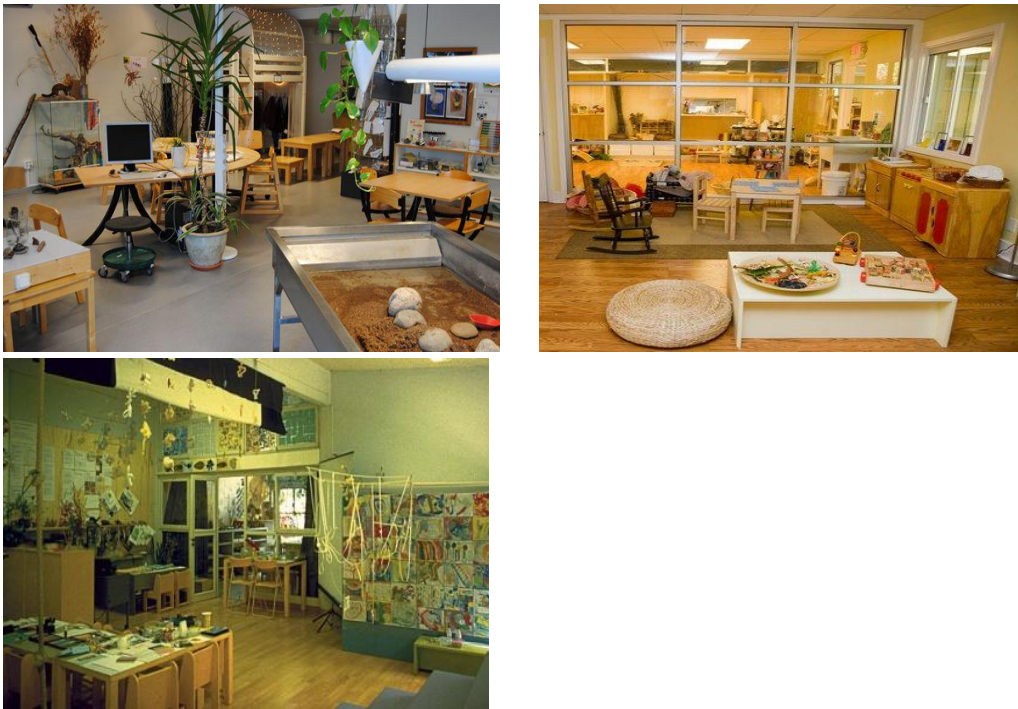
Arts Infused Schools

Integration of arts is also evident in both the private and public education school systems. A prominent example of the integration model is the Reggio Emilia School.

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Originating in Reggio, Emilia, Italy, primary teachers have taken the time to carry out a process of collaborative examination and analysis of teaching and learning about students. Broadening constructivist theory, the Reggio approach invites students to learn according to their own interests. The institution invites students to become both the decorators and designers of their lessons, using a constructivist, kinaesthetic approach (Linn, 2001). A co-teaching model supports the learning approach, whereby; the teacher collaborates with an Atelierista - a trained visual artist, to create lessons that are student guided. Hendrick (2004) states that the role of the teacher in a Reggio Emilia school is to be a collaborator instead of a leader and developer.

FIGURE 2.1



In the pictures above, each classroom is transformed into a studio for learning, and the student, facilitated by the teacher and the Altelierista, become the curators of their own designs. Margaret Inmann Linn was a part of a group of educators who studied the

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Reggio model in Reggio, Emilia, Italy. One of the core concepts that was accentuated throughout the tour was that:

Reggio's core value of the competent child directs choices about all aspects of the child's development. Emotional development is, at times, encouraged by exposing children to material that might be frightening to some. The idea is to help them develop necessary coping skills in the context of a supportive group. Intellectual development is encouraged through a similar belief in the child's ability to make meaning of material that is serious (Linn, 2001, p. 332).

A key component for the effectiveness of arts infusion is that the students learn how to self regulate by recognizing that failure is a normal part of life. Linn observed that in Reggio schools, failure is addressed differently. If a child is struggling, an acceptable practice is to seek help from another student to finish the work. This encourages the independence and self-advocacy without having the consent of the teacher pre-selecting a partner. The founder, Loris Malaguzzi, expressed that "children with special needs (or 'special rights' as they are called in Reggio Emilia) are not limited by adult perceptions of their cognitive functioning and are included in all activities (as cited in Linn, 2001, p.334). From a Reggio perspective, one of the most important parts of being a life-long learner is the ability to always be learning from your peers or co-workers. If one is able to truly listen to what someone else says, digest it, and critically analyze it, then they are much more adept for future success (Linn, 2001).

Another example of the integration of arts within a school system is found in Harlem, New York. Bryce (2012) referred to the program as "Mano a Mano" reflecting the values of a unified, collaborative school community that approaches education and

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learning from the perspective that 'it takes a village to raise a child (African Proverb)' (p. 179). Students have the opportunity to explore all art forms in an attempt to enhance their literacy whilst working collaboratively. The focus is to improve visual literacy through exploration of various elements of visual arts. The results of the program found that students "became motivated learners [and conclusively] art enhanced and improved children's visual literacy" (p. 179). At the James Welden Johnson Leadership Academy in East Harlem, the core emphasis of the school is the integration of arts literacy in both a community / whole school approach. Bryce unveils the schools infused approach by capturing the artwork that students create, explore, and use to create a deeper understanding of the curriculum that is studied.

Approaches for Integration

Setting the stage for learning requires techniques that will allow students to work together. In 1960, Dorothy Heathcote developed the Mantle of the Expert approach in drama education; the method encapsulates the idea that treating children as responsible experts increases their engagement and confidence. Heathcote and Bolton (1994) state that the primary importance of Mantle of the Expert approach is to create a problem or task, and in role, explore the knowledge that can be discovered. Drama for learning provides students with the chance to develop a strong personal connection with the material. Bolton, a contemporary of Heathcote's, proposes that both participants and teachers may be misled to believe that a performance of a work necessarily leads to understanding that work. Therefore, in order to create a deeper understanding, the student needs to develop an intense exploration of their assigned role. Then, "scrutiny of each other's work is built in as a part of the mantle of the expert system" (Heathcote & Bolton,

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1995, p. 190). The dual reality of Mantle of the Expert is the idea that students focus on what is being learned, and how it is being learned. The teacher can employ skilful questioning techniques that can unknowingly invite the students to reflect on how the learning is unfolding and, if negotiations are necessary, to reconstruct an alternate way of learning.

In *Critical Links*, a compendium of arts education research, Catterall discusses the relationships between affective development, cognitive development, and learning. As defined by Catterall, the term "affective" in this context means an increased interest in learning, self worth, and willingness to try new things (p.8). His findings reveal that as learners develop cognition, they develop abilities and expertise that support academic and social learning. Heathcote's affective approach leads students to become cognisant of their role in learning, and gain expertise from the role they assume as an expert. In the video *Teaching through Drama*, Heathcote reveals her central philosophy (Manchester Metropolitan University Institute of Education, 2008):

Drama is about man's ability to identify. It doesn't matter whether you are in the theatre or in your own sitting room. What you're doing if you are dramatizing is putting yourself in somebody else's shoes:

Man's gift, with which we seem to be born, of just putting ourselves instantly into somebody else's shoes and having a sort of total picture of how it must feel to be feeling like that person right now. We have as yet not done very much about harnessing this to the education of our children but everybody uses this. We don't know how young they are when they begin to use this. It's just about time we said to ourselves -

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Can we use this in the classroom situation? (p. 9).

Heathcote immersed the world of education with drama. Her philosophy focuses on the importance of creating authentic experiences for students to learn about the real world.

In a recent study, Stig Eriksson in the book *Distancing at Close Range* (2009) expanded on the idea that trust, distancing, and the integration of theatre arts in core curriculum deepens classroom drama and increases the inherent learning in dramatic experiences. The comprehensive text "investigate[s] distancing as an arts education concept, focusing particularly on its importance in drama education" (p. 13). Eriksson focuses on four dramatic traditions Scklovsky's Formalism, Brecht's Epic Theatre, Heathcote's Process Drama, and Bullough's Aesthetic theory. His core philosophy aligns with the Nordic tradition of dual aims for arts pedagogy, "to learn by learning to play theatre" (p. 23). According to Eriksson, distancing has a prominent position in arts education. It allows the actors to separate from their personal attachment, and recognize the core understandings of their assumed role. He claims, " a significant reference for breaking up habitual perception by distancing is the concept of making strange" (p.66). In the context of Heathcote's approach, in any given subject - an integral part of the learning experience is starting from the beginning. If a student can detach from the knowledge they have acquired, and learn through 'making strange' the artistic process will be more authentic. Through de-familiarization (the act of making strange), reflection is realized by looking at the ordinary with new eyes, and make what is familiar, strange.

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Self-Regulation and the Arts

Most studies of self-regulation in the arts concern the application of specific learning strategies in tasks that involve easily represented information. However, learning through the arts tends to be more complex. In a past study, Baum, Owen, and Oreck, (1997) observed talented New York City elementary school students engaged in arts classes in dance, art, music, and theatre. Students who were not enrolled in the arts integrated courses generally scored below grade level in reading tests, and more than 25% were at risk for failure. However, in the arts classes the gap between high scoring and low scoring students was not as apparent, and students demonstrated high levels of motivation and self-regulation. The researchers developed a list of ten notable behaviours that contributed to the students' success in the arts integrated classroom. (1) ability to pay attention (2) perseverance (3) problem-solving (4) self-initiating (5) asking questions (6) risk-taking (7) cooperating (8) goal setting (9) using feedback (10) being prepared. The researchers inferred that the focus on skill development rather than content-based learning makes the process itself more transparent for the learner. Immediate performance feedback allows the learner to gauge the effectiveness of their learning strategies and judge their progress toward explicit, relevant goals.

Student Achievement

Over the last decade researcher James Catterall has conducted several studies on the critical links between how arts integration facilitates student growth. In *Doing Well and Doing Good by Art*, critical links are shown between economically disadvantaged children in the areas of basic reading comprehension, and increased achievement

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motivation. The objective of the study is to provide important empirical data for the significance of the role that arts infusion plays in preparing young people for both academia and life.

In the late 1990s, James Catterall and colleagues analyzed data from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey (NELS:88), a study of 25,000 secondary school students over four years. In 2009, Catterall analyzed ten additional years of data related to the same cohort of students, now age 26. The researcher correlated the relationship between arts-involvement and heightened student performance. The methodology of the study used a database of the U.S Department of Education that tracks student responses to surveys over time. The research findings reported significant advantages for arts-engaged low-SES students in college going, college grades, and types of employment (jobs with advantageous future possibilities). Also, the study found that low income ELL (English language learners) students excel in arts-rich versus arts-poor schools. Students who were granted an opportunity to learn through arts rich programs, even struggling learners, were more productive and politically involved as young adults. The study's results demonstrate that longitudinal data are necessary for supporting the idea that arts infused learning promotes self-efficacy, and increases student learning – even those who face academic challenges.

Arts infused teaching broadens and increases access to education by providing multiple ways to derive meaning from academic and social curricula. In the section *Involvement in the Arts/Success in Secondary School*, the researcher illustrates a 1998 monograph published in the Americans for the Arts. The research results showed a strong statistical difference between low-art, and high-art groups. Additionally, Catterall's study

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reveals the impetus to educate the student beyond the 10th grade, which in turn, leads to the decade long study that clearly identifies that arts-infused learning leads to stronger academic results. Students of low socio-economic status who attended schools that were characterized as "arts rich," as opposed to the students who attending schools that were "arts poor," benefited in terms of college attendance, academic achievement, and both community and political volunteerism.

Arts Infusion and Learning Ability

Eisner (2002), in his study "What can education learn from the arts about education," discusses how arts integrated learning introduces flexibility to a standardized educational environment and invites opportunities for teachers to promote creativity and individuality. One of the practices that are discussed in Eisner's study is the parallel between arts integration and increased success of struggling learners. In one of the programs developed for third graders who were struggling readers, art teachers and reading specialists combined performing arts with instruction. Through recitation, and performance - students that were involved in the program, compared to those who were not involved, demonstrated a heightened comprehension of the story they were given. Eisner contends that a collaborative, interdisciplinary teaching experience provides deeper experiences for both the teacher and the student. In a similar study, Mardirasian and Fox (2013) found that a performing arts reading program, with third grade students, increased comprehension primarily in the story that the students performed. The researchers found that close interaction with the text, and reading aloud for learning, improved comprehension. As aforementioned, the impetus of learning is that 'how' a subject is taught is as important as 'what' is taught.

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Eisner also believes that "In teaching, whether a teacher is considered to move swiftly or slowly depends not only upon the teacher's rate of speech but also on what the student brings to the occasion. For some students, swift is slow, and for others, slow is swift. It is the character of the interaction that defines our experience (p. 24). The locus of control should inspire students to master their own learning, rather than force them to conform to the classroom expectations. Educators often rely heavily on covering core content and teaching "to" the students, rather than teaching and learning "with" them. The self-efficacy of a student is highly dependent on motivation, as well as on pedagogy and classroom instruction. For students to understand the regulatory processes in which they need to excel, they must be motivated towards a goal and have opportunities to apply personal strategies. Many students suffer from low self-efficacy and low teacher expectations; the classroom may offer few opportunities for them to apply their skills or most effective learning strategies (ArtsConnection, 1997; Baum, Owen, & Oreck, 1997).

Arts Infusion and Communication

In an attempt to measure the impact that arts-infused learning has on the individual learner, Burton, Horowitz, and Abeles (1999) investigate whether any transfer occurs through learning through the arts thus impacting learning in non-art subjects. More importantly, the research explores the relationship between arts learning, creative thinking, and self-concept. The researchers used numerous tests to assess creativity and learning, and their impact on academics. More than 2400 students in fourth, fifth, seventh, and eighth grade in over 12 public schools where arts specialists taught integrated and discipline based art instruction were used to measure the outcome. The researchers tested students' figural creativity and academic self-concept. They also

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administered three questionnaires to teachers asking them to rate: 1) their perceptions of students' imagination, risk-taking, expression, and cooperative learning; 2) their school climate in terms of affiliation, student support, professional interest, achievement orientation, formalization, centralization, innovativeness, and resource adequacy; and 3) how much they integrate the arts, collaborate with arts specialists, and use the arts as a tool to teach other subjects.

The research found that students in high-arts groups were better able to express thoughts and ideas than peers in low-arts groups. The students who were educated through higher arts integration could convey their ideas, and communicate with more clarity than students who had minimal arts exposure. In terms of social behaviour, high arts students could articulate their understanding creatively, cooperate with other students, and reveal their understanding publicly. In addition to creativity, students in high-arts groups also demonstrated a better rapport with teachers, and more sustained focus. With on-going financial cuts in education, arts integrated programs are often among the first to be eliminated. Popular research suggests that arts infused learning not only increases academics, but it fosters individual growth in communication, and social involvement. Low performing students need to build self-confidence and self-efficacy in their learning abilities and develop a level of metacognitive knowledge to recognize their strengths. They then need to find practical ways to apply those strengths to solve academic tasks.

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Limitations of Arts Infusion

Arts infusion within a school system has undeniable strengths. However, within every model of learning there are identifiable weaknesses. Lajevic (2013) believes that educators use too much of their prior school methods and their own personal style, rather than embrace innovative learning models that involve the student. The researcher believes that teachers and administrators resort to methods that provide them with personal comfort, and if art is not a subject of comfort, they easily revert to methods that are familiar. Lajevic states that it is necessary to 'move beyond' what earlier encounters in education might have taught us, and enter into risk-taking where uncertainty takes an important role in teaching and learning (p.52). In conjunction with levels of comfort, time is also a factor in integrating arts within the curriculum, and within regulatory practice. Planning an integrative lesson for a teacher who is not experienced will inevitably require additional time. McCracken (2013) believes that the greatest challenge is that teachers are not familiar with the art standard, and oftentimes they have to explore the standard. Additionally, more professional development is required so that teachers, counsellors, and administrators can begin to integrate arts with more knowledge and independence.

The educational research and underpinnings that have been reviewed within Chapter II, have explored literature that communicates the impacts that arts infusion have on increasing regulation, and promoting learning. In order to provide an in-depth exploration of the views of students and staff, a phenomenological study was adopted using interviews and focus groups to elaborate on its effectiveness both inside and outside

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of the classroom. Further details of the research methodology will be elaborated on within Chapter III.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

The basic qualitative research project that I am undertaking during Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador's Fall, Winter, and Spring term in the 2017-2018 semester(s) explores the experiences of 3 students who are currently funded under the Alberta Education criteria for code 42 (Severe Emotional/Behavioural Disability), and were immersed within arts integrated classroom to promote academic and socio-emotional growth. The research project seeks to develop an understanding of a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012), the exploration of the implementation of arts integrated methods is used to develop an "understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p.5). Consequently, the research methodology is determined to be an effective and appropriate choice for the research project because it is based on the principle that human perception is not passive, but rather "consciousness is always consciousness-of-something" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000, p. 488). According to Hammersley (2000), the phenomenological approach to research eliminates presuppositions and traditionally held assumptions and offers the best opportunity to reform policy making and practice in education. Phenomenological methodology provides an important perspective from which to study instructional practices, and what they mean to the teachers, and the students in the school.

Similarly, Cornett-DeVito and Worley (2005) focused on how students with learning disabilities perceived their instructors' competency in differentiating classroom lessons, while presenting a different way to assess the effectiveness of teachers within an

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inclusive classroom. Rather than rely on test scores, the phenomenological approach looks at the situation through the eyes of the students. Through a phenomenological study I intend to discover previously unidentified problems, as well as successes that might normally have been ignored.

Sites and Participants

Each participant was selected from the Special Education Funded List, and after providing informed consent or receiving informed parental consent, the volunteer student became a participant in arts infused learning, instruction, and coaching. The location for the study was at a post primary school in Northern Alberta.

Arts infused strategies were implemented in language arts and social studies, to study the effects arts integrated learning has on student learning. Students were introduced to role playing, recitation, and arts infusion; which, for the purpose of this study was education concerned with one or more of the fine or applied arts, including studies or creative experiences. In addition, the classes participated in three interdisciplinary workshops in semester one and semester two. The workshops served two instructional purposes: (a) to reinforce reflective practices through a component of curricula design; and (b) to create a learning laboratory for students to understand the curriculum through an arts infused approach. The workshops were divided into three components: 1. acting (kinaesthetic learning); 2. reading aloud (recitation); and 3. reflection (through preferred art medium). Achievement was measured by the student's ability to self-regulate for participation, and achieve the required learning outcomes.

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Purposeful sampling was utilized by selecting 2 males, and 1 female. 2 males from grade eleven, and 1 female currently enrolled in grade 11 classes. Also, 3 educational assistants were selected to provide insights and observances about the benefits of each strategy for their assigned student. The students who were willing to orally articulate their experiences regarding the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012) were interviewed. The purposeful sampling strategy was used to (i) select students who can best help us understand our phenomenon and (ii) develop an understanding that might give voice to "silenced" people (Creswell, 2012). Additionally, maximum variation sampling was used to select individuals based on different characteristics or traits (Creswell, 2012) in an attempt to better reflect local, cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity within the selected northern Alberta urban community. The intent for maximum variation sampling was to gain multiple perspectives on the effectiveness of arts integration lessons have on student regulation and achievement. Emmel (2013) notes, with purposive sampling, the researcher is reflexive and makes decisions in response to empirical findings and theoretical developments that occur in the study. Maxwell (2013) contends that the researcher's intent is not to generalize from the sample to a population, but to explain, describe, and interpret. Therefore, through purposeful maximum variation sampling, multiple perspectives will be assessed.

Data Collection Methods

Interviews

The intent of the research project was to capture student experiences and feelings regarding their engagement, confidence, and increased comprehension when core

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curriculum lessons are guided by arts integrated techniques. Data required for this purpose are behaviours, feelings, and how individuals interpreted the world around them and not readily gathered through observation (Merriam, 2009). The data collection involved three one-time semi-structured participant interviews. DeMarris (2004) defines an interview as "a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study" (p. 55). The interviews consisted of open-ended questions that were designed to allow the participants to voice their experiences unconstrained by the perspective of the researcher (Creswell, 2012).

Interview questions were designed to elicit responses from participants and were based upon six formats detailed by Patton (as cited in Merriam, 2009) including experience and behaviour questions, opinions and value questions, and feelings questions. The use of questions beginning with "why" were avoided since concern they could lead to speculation about causal relationships and result in dead end responses (Patton, as cited by Merriam, 2009). Similarly, as recommended by Merriam multiple questions, leading questions, and yes-or-no questions were also avoided. Questions, instead, were designed to be flexible and provide opportunities for adjustments to be made as necessitated by circumstance (Merriam, 2009).

A semi-structured interview format was used to provide participants the opportunity to share detailed personal information and provide greater control over the information that will be received. An array of open-ended, flexible questions, were presented in a loosely structured and flexible order, providing the opportunity to react dynamically to conversations and ask follow-up questions as required to draw out the information being sought (Creswell, 2012). The flexibility inherent in semi-structured

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interviews provided opportunities to capture the "emerging world view of the respondent" as well as "new ideas on the topic" (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). This format required the interviewer to be consistently cognizant that information would be filtered through personal perceptions, potentially altering it from the participant's original intent (Creswell, 2012). Consequently, copies of transcripts will be made available to participants to ensure collected data are consistent with their intent when answering questions.

Focus Groups

Another form of data collection I used were transcription notes from focus groups. Marshall and Rossman (2006) state that "an individual's attitudes and beliefs do not form in a vacuum: People often need to listen to others' opinions and understandings to form their own" (p.114). Traditionally used in social science research (Merriam, 2009), the purpose of the focus group is to bring people together in order to listen, and capture their attitudes, experiences, or perspectives on a focused topic, or specific set of objectives. Used as both an interview and an observational technique (Teddie & Tashakkori, 2008), the focus group allows researchers to gain access to issues around a topic, particularly when not much is known about that topic (Richards & Morse, 2013).

Krueger and Casey (2000) describe the use of a questioning route and categories of questions that researchers can use to develop the key questions for the focus group. A typical session should take 1.5 to 2.0 hours (Richards & Morse) and should consist of 6-10 participants (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011).

For one hour, I interviewed 6 participants, 3 students, and 3 educational assistants, selecting the candidates for the focus group using purposive sampling. Merriam (2009)

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states that participants are usually selected for their knowledge of the topic to be discussed. Therefore, purposive sampling, rather than random sampling was employed (Richards & Morse 2013). The typology of the questioning technique that I explored followed an interview schedule. To meet ethical requirements, there was a signature space to ensure that consent forms were signed before proceeding.

To begin, I created a supportive and non-threatening atmosphere by informing participants that different perspectives are expected and welcomed and there will be no right or wrong answers to be assessed by the moderator (Kruegar & Casey, 2000). Before the meeting commenced I had an interview schedule that contained the questions that I asked throughout the focus group.

Kruegar and Casey (2000) describe the use of a questioning route and categories of questions that researchers can use to develop the key questions for the focus group. Drawing on their ideas for a questioning route for the focus group, I employed a questioning route that had an opening question, introductory questions, key questions, end questions, and probes. The intention of the opening question was to establish a sense of belonging to the group, and to identify participants' voices for transcription purposes. The purpose of the introductory question was to get everyone talking and create a sense of control for the moderator; it was designed to be easy to answer and to focus participants on the topic. The key questions were developed from the study's main research question, and the questions were asked in sequence from a simple to complex order. The end question gave participants the opportunity to reflect on the groups' discussion and to make any final comments about the topic that were important to them. Essentially, the end questions brought the discussion to a close, and as they were critical

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to analysis, they were not omitted (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The use of the probe technique ensured that the required data were generated. Probing questions or comments were used to follow up something that was said by a participant in order to get to the heart of the matter (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) believes that the fewer, more open-ended questions there are, the better. It allows all participants to become actively engaged.

For recording purposes, I used the TranscribeMe see <http://transcribeme.com>. The program was uploaded on my iPhone and used to record the audio during the focus group meeting. The transcription notes were then assessed for possible emerging themes using intra-case analysis. Capturing the complex interaction between participants in focus groups allowed interactive factors to be analyzed, providing another dimension to reflect on for possible findings (Richard & Morse, 2013).

Triangulation and Assumptions

Wiersma (2000) attests that triangulation compares information to determine corroboration; in other words, it is a process of qualitative cross-validation. Preferably, each method would measure the same construct while having a different error type inherent in that method. Brinberg and Kidder (1982) have noted that the deficiencies of each method would then average out, leaving a true estimate of a single result. Therefore, triangulation yields a more accurate and valid estimate of a result when each method of measurement actually converges on the same answer (Mark & Shotland, 1987). The two principal methods for establishing trustworthiness is (i) triangulation and (ii) precise description. According to Creswell (2012), methods of triangulation include collecting multiple sources of data, selecting more than one observation site, conducting multiple

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interviews, member checking, and engaging in more than one form of data analysis. To triangulate my research, I collected varying perspectives from multiple participants, using both a classroom and a variety of classrooms for focus group sites. I also used intra-case analysis, and thematic analysis to decode the data, and validate the findings. Another strategy that I used to ensure internal validity was member checks. Merriam (2009) states that the idea of member checks is to solicit feedback on emergent findings from the participants. Because human beings are the primary source of my data, I cross checked insights and information to create a precise description of the data I attained.

Finally, two assumptions have been made during the planning process for the execution of this basic research project. I assumed that participants would recount their experiences openly and honestly. The failure of participants to act in this manner could potentially present threats to the validity of the data I collected and subsequent inferences. Secondly, I assumed that the research project would yield data of interest and usefulness for educators including teachers, principals, and district leaders.

Purpose, Questions, and Sub-Questions

This research project sought to explore the experiences of three students, and three educational assistants in an urban, Northern Alberta community regarding their immersion into a grade 11 arts-infused learning program. Each student was enrolled in an arts academy that incorporated drama and visual art as a part of their mandated curriculum. The core philosophy of the arts academy is to allow students to complete their assigned core courses, while balancing their course timetable with an equal amount of assigned arts-infused instruction. To attain a stronger understanding of the impact of

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arts infusion on self-regulation, students with pervasive behaviours were strategically selected. Often educators need to use alternate behaviour/learning plans to support the most challenging students. Throughout this research, arts infused learning was selected to provide insight into alternative regulatory strategies for struggling students. The question guiding the inquiry was: *What impact does arts-infused learning have on enhancing self-regulatory skills to promote student learning?* To address the key question, I explored the sub-questions; (a) How has participation in an arts academy program impacted upon the engagement of students regarding arts subjects and tasks? (b) How has participation in arts infused learning impacted the confidence of students and (c) How does art infused learning promote effective behaviours that allow students to improve cognitive skills?

Data Analysis

The analysis of participant data occurred simultaneously to its acquisition using constant comparative data analysis (Merriam, 2009), a characteristic that distinguishes qualitative research from traditional positivist research (Merriam, 2009). Analysis of data from the first interview commenced immediately upon receipt of the transcript, allowing for an opportunity to reflect upon the process and emerging themes within the data. Interview questions and procedures were refined in response to this reflection to better elicit additional information and clarify emerging themes. Once the second interview was complete, the data were compared to the first and used to inform the third interview, and so on.

Interviews were transcribed in an electronic, line numbered document, with a unique coloured background for each participant, and the right margin was adjusted to

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leave additional space for comments to be appended. The original transcript documents were then archived and alterations saved under a new file name in order to preserve the original documents for future reference. Transcripts were read several times, both manually and by utilizing text to speech software. During this process, each of the participants reflected upon their response and decoded what they had said to ascertain its core meaning (Saldana, 2013) a short hand description designation, (Merriam, 2009) was inserted directly after the relevant text.

When I was certain that the meaning of the participants' statements were fully decoded and identified, I began to group these codes into thematic categories by assigning a colour to similar short hand codes. I paid careful attention in determining categories and sub-categories that appeared to be prominent, serving the dual purposes of establishing student engagement as central phenomenon and facilitating the development of an axial coding schema consisting of five thematic categories which were each assigned a two-letter code. In addition, a set of sub-categories was determined for each of the primary categories, and assigned a two-letter code. Existing and subsequent transcripts were then coded by inserting a two-letter code followed by a (.) and one or more subcategory codes, testing the validity and effectiveness of this system and informing decisions regarding the addition and deletion of categories or the possible re-categorization of primary categories to subcategories (Merriam, 2009).

Intra-case analysis was completed through the use of an electronic spreadsheet software. Segments of dialogue that were axial coded were copied into a designated column along with additional columns that record the participant's pseudonym. The line number from the originating transcript and the primary sub codes were used to classify

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that specific text. Further data were entered as they became available and were checked against the established code categories to determine if patterns and relations held. Once the interviews were complete and all of the data categorized, linkages and relationships were examined to determine what inferences can be made.

This research project aimed to explore how arts infused learning increases regulatory skills, thereby promoting student learning. The following chapter will illustrate recurrent themes and underpinnings that emerged from the key stakeholders in one post primary school in Northern Alberta, Canada.

CHAPTER IV: THEMATIC DATA ANALYSIS PART I

Thematic Data Analysis of Focus Group Interviews

In regard to the key research question, “*What impact does arts infused learning have on enhancing self-regulatory skills to promote student learning?*”, a number of diverse themes emerged. These are shown in alphabetical order in Table 4.3 below and include 5 themes.

Table Key:

S1: Student I: grade 11 female with PTSD, ADHD-1, ODD, and Depression

S2: Student II: grade 11 male diagnosed with ADHD, and Conduct Disorder

S3: Student III: grade 11 male with ADHD, Anxiety, Depression and Conduct Disorder

EA1: Educational Assistant for Student I

EA 2: Educational Assistant for Student II

EA 3: Educational Assistant for Student III

CST: Classroom support teacher, responsible for special education services

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Table 4.1 Focus Group Participants

Name	No. of Females	No. of Males	Total No. in Group
Pupils (Senior)	1	2	3
EA's	3		3
CST	1		1
Subject teacher I	1		1
Subject teacher II		1	1

Procedure

Initially the Superintendent and principal were approached in a face-to-face conversation about the intention to complete a study about the impact that arts infused learning might have on self-regulatory skills. The project was discussed in detail, and verbal consent was granted. The response was very positive, and the details of the proposed study were e-mailed to the superintendent. A list of the potential students was then created for consideration, and parental contact was made to ensure that there was approval for the student to participate in the research project. Furthermore, each student was contacted to seek approval to begin the study, and a formal letter of consent was sent home to validate parental consent. From this list, teachers were selected from the arts academy that would grant consent for integrating specified approaches and learning labs

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whereby the researcher could evaluate the impact of each strategy as each student freely participated. Guidelines were provided to the school principal regarding the selection process, which included obtaining the names of students listed on the schools Exceptional Grant List, and ensuring that purposeful sampling was used to represent students of varying race and socio-economic backgrounds.

Three focus group meetings were held and observation notes were collected. To ensure that students could speak freely, EAs and students were interviewed at separate times and locations. When a relaxed atmosphere is created, participants feel that their thoughts and opinions are valued, and they are more likely to express their experience freely (Byers & Wilcox, 1991).

For each of the 5 themes regarding “How arts infused learning enhances regulatory skills to promote student learning,” direct quotes are used to illustrate comments that were made by the focus group participants. To clarify the data, the quotes have been stated separately, separating the EAs from the students. The following table provides insight about the impact arts infused learning has on a student’s ability to regulate and learn.

Table 4.2 shows a number of key themes that emerged from the focus group meetings. However, it should be noted that some of the participants’ views could not be coded holistically because they could be used in more than one category.

Table 4.2 Summary of Themes

Key Themes	Examples to Illustrate
Academic	e.g. Promoted skills for memorization, “sometimes you have to do things to remember” and “It made me want to learn more”
Behavioral	e.g. “When I am feeling really down, I can step away from myself” and “When I got older I used music to calm me down”
Emotional	e.g. “When I am in an ordinary class, I feel like everyone is looking at me”
Physical/Movement	e.g. “I feel like there is electricity running through my veins, and the only way to get rid of it is to walk around and let it go” – “I need to do things to learn”
Social	e.g. “My teacher likes to do a lot of group work it makes everyone the same”

Table 4.3 illustrates the impact that arts infusion themes has on student learning and regulatory skills. Other stakeholders mentioned some of the themes, however only the student perceptions were indicated in this instance. Each category represents areas where arts infusion was beneficial for enhancing self-regulation and promoting student learning.

Educational Assistants Views of Arts Infusion

This section focuses on the views of the educational assistants who are assigned to work one-on-one with each of the students. The EAs discussed a variety of experiences they have observed since each student has been enrolled in an arts infused learning

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pathway. Each theme is addressed in alphabetical order, using anecdotal comments to ascertain prominent themes.

Table 4.3a Academic Theme

“In math, I notice that she draws pictures for word problems” (EA I, Student I)

“Without drama, you would see an entirely different student” (EA II, Student II)

Table 4.3b Behavioral Theme

“In drama class when he becomes reactive, we use self talk and art as a way to become more focused” (EA II, for Student II)

“Now she can control her feelings, and even when she wants to become introverted or disengage, she attempts to do more things that are out of her comfort zone” (EA I, for Student I)

“I can see that he has learned coping skills, and an understanding of the things he needs to do to listen and remain calm” (EA II, for Student II)

Table 4.3c Emotional Theme

“Usually his natural reaction to doing something that he doesn’t want to do is anger, in drama we learned about mirroring – and part of that was stepping away from yourself – I know he got something out of it last term.” (EA III, for Student III).

“Over the course of two years, watching him in student services, and watching him in his classes, I can see that he has learned coping skills and an understanding of the things he needs to do to listen, and remain calm.” (EA II, for Student II)

“Now she can control her feelings.” (EA I, for Student I)

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Table 4.3d Physical Theme

“For a kid with ADHD, getting mad at them for wanting to move around is really ridiculous.” (EA II, for Student II)

Table 4.3e Social Theme

“A lot of kids need that outlet. A sport, a group, a club, just something to feel a sense of belonging. When you see a student that is failing in life, but excelling in the arts, it is wonderful.” (EA III, for Student III).

“It really gives her confidence, and helps her get out of her shell.” (EA I, for Student I)

Throughout the focus group interviews the general discussion focused mostly on the academic and behavioural benefits of arts infused learning. Students articulated how it made them feel, while the educational assistants elaborated more on the improvement of socio-emotional wellness, traits that they were observing in students..

Table 4.4 Summary of Themes

Focus Group	Themes Discussed
Pupils: (one group) N=3	Academic/Behaviour/Physical/Emotional
Educational Assistants: (one group) N=3	Academic/Behaviour/Emotional/Physical/Social
Educational Assistants and CST N=4	Academic/Behaviour/Emotional/Physical/Social

Table 4.4 shows the number of themes that were discussed in regards to the relationship between arts infused learning and the regulatory impact it has on both student behaviour and learning. The focus group interviews generated insights into the potential that arts infused learning has for promoting student growth. Each group confirmed that when a student is instructed through arts techniques (movement, physical theatre, recitation) they learn strategies for regulating negative behaviours, and strategies to promote cross-curricular learning. For the pupils, the focus of their discussion was primarily on the feeling of their experiences. In contrast, the educational assistants' views were on the outcome of learning through the arts. The transfer of effective learning behaviours to the classroom was evident from the focus group interviews. Both students and educational assistants confirmed that arts infused learning allows the student to transfer other skills to assist with their learning, and most importantly – their ability to regulate behaviour(s).

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As a result of the vast amount of focus group data, Chapter IV discusses prominent themes that emerged from the experiences of students and educational assistants. Chapter V will highlight the understandings and insights shared by each of the participants.

CHAPTER V: DISCURSIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS (DPA)

As a result of the intricacies of the focus group data, a second form of analysis Discursive Psychological Analysis was included., This incorporated interviews from some of the focus groups and educational assistants to examine the question: *How does arts infused learning increase self-regulation practices to support student learning?* The question was addressed using focus group discussions, student interviews, and interviews with educational assistants.

Procedure for Discursive Psychological Analysis

Discursive Psychological Analysis involved several stages of examination of the full transcription completed for analysis and a close iterative reading of the transcripts. Both forms of data were examined to see how different interpretations of arts-infusion and regulation are drawn on and practised. The preliminary analysis focuses on the following. I have made them into questions for you that build on the thematic analyses outlined in Chapter Four.

- i) How might arts infused learning enhance regulatory skills?
- ii) How might arts infusion techniques promote student learning?
- iii) How might socio-emotional benefits of arts infusion impact students with pervasive needs?

The following question, “How does arts infusion enhance regulatory skills?” was stated to initiate a discussion about the impact arts infusion has on regulation. The EAs were

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quick to develop their personal ideas and discourses on arts infusion as a progressive educational practice.

Sample Responses

Table 5.1a

“When students have the ability to learn collectively, and engage artistically – they become more involved. Especially kids that do not conform, or struggle. For the first time, they are given the opportunity to communicate in a way that appeals to them – a way that is not uniform. That’s important.”

The discussion of arts infusion in practice moves from a fairly abstract idea to a practical discussion on how teachers need to practice varying techniques of learning. Additionally, in order for strategies to be effective, they need to be supported by administrators and relative stakeholders. The educational assistants believe that students who face academic struggles or social difficulties can benefit from a less traditional approach to education. In respect, two key themes are drawn on simultaneously:

Table 5.1b

“I am not really sure about the social benefits – sometimes when we place kids in a class with significant behavioral needs, it is obvious to the rest of the class, and it does disturb their learning. However, on the other hand, I have witnessed the academic growth by personally working with the kid, so it’s catch 22.” (EA III, for Student III)

The justification for the benefits of arts infusion is discussed in the lengthy abstract that follows. This illustrates some of the problems that are faced when students do not have

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opportunities to learn regulatory strategies, and the benefits that arts infusion can be on a student with socio-emotional and academic difficulties.

Table 5.1c

“Last year, I worked with my student, and one of the teachers really didn’t want us there. She said “her class was no place for someone with severe problems” and then she continued to say that “my student should be in a special program.” This is a reality that kids with difficulties have to face everyday. Not only are they being mocked by other kids, but a lot of times, they have to face the teacher too. I think universities need to provide courses for teachers on how to deal with kids with behaviour problems. I will admit, that when my student entered the program, he was difficult. But not rude difficult, just really active. Kids with ADHD, really need to be dealt with in a different way, especially when the hyperactivity part is really extreme. After the second year in the program, and after doing a lot of the strategies that he practices in student services, I really do see a different kid. I think that arts programs has allowed him to really grow – its so neat to see kids use strategies that they have learned, and even recognize their own behaviour. That’s real growth. When a kid can say, I think I need to settle down.....that’s pretty huge. (EA II, for Student II).

The example above illustrates the struggle that educational assistants face when they are working with students who have significant needs. The positive social benefits of being included in a mainstream program that uses arts infusion to guide student learning outweigh the negative reactions of educators that educational assistants encounter. The most obvious socio-emotional benefit for a student is the sense of belonging they attain from inclusion, and the approaches that allow each student to understand the complexity of their emotional wellness. In this broad context, being excluded from mainstream arts programs “to be in a special program” prohibits students from attaining positive educational experiences with their peers.

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Further to the belief that arts infusion enhances regulatory skills, EA's and students were asked to comment on how the benefits of using in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions. The interview began with an emotive question that allowed the students to express how they felt when punitive measures are used for 'acting out'. Each student was given the opportunity to elaborate on the benefits of using arts infused approaches (breathing exercises, drawing, music therapy, drama) in school, rather than restrictive punishment followed by a next day re-entry. The students drew on examples of 'acting out' to argue whether or not the punishment was an acceptable consequence for the behaviour.

Table 5.1d

Question: When you are sent to the principal's office for disobeying the rules and you are suspended for the day, how does that make you feel?

Student III: I actually like it. For me it's a break, I usually go home and go to bed.

Question: What do you think administrators should do rather than send students home?

Student III: Clearly – make them do something they don't want to do. It's not exactly rocket science. Unless they got in a fight.

Question: Do you think sending a student home for fighting is a good idea?

Student III: Depends on how bad the fight was.... But if it was super bad, get the cops involved. Scare them.

Question: What if the fight was just a little dispute?

Student III: Make the kids work together – they'll hate that.

Question: Do you think that doing some of the breathing strategies, or regulation strategies that we have been doing will help?

Student III: Might weird out some kids – but wouldn't hurt. It's better than staring at a wall all day.

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The discipline measures stated in the excerpt above confirm the ineffectiveness of school suspensions. Although administrators have to abide by school law, the age-old ‘send the kid home’ measure is ‘a break’ for many students. Oftentimes the student re-enters the school and there is no intervention completed to teach the pupil the repercussion of their actions. In an interview with Student II, the student elaborates on the theme of behaviour by discussing the ineffectiveness of his years of in-school suspensions.

Table 5.1e

Question: Over the years, you have been suspended several times. Do you think you have learned anything from this?

Student II: No! Man oh man, when I was in grade nine, I was sent home every other day for not listening. At my house no one is ever home, and that punishment became so constant that my parents stopped caring. Sending a kid home for not listening is kind stupid if you ask me. Plus, I take medication for that anyways, so obviously I have a problem. Not a listening one.

Question: What has helped you improve over the years?

Student II: Taking courses that let me get it all out. I have a lot of energy and sometimes when I can't get it out, I just get really annoyed.

Question: Have your arts courses helped you with that?

Student II: For sure – I love doing drama because I can use my energy in some of the stuff we do – and not get in trouble for it. The last time I got in trouble was for walking out of my math class, and not listening to the teacher. I had to do an in school and that was worse because I had to sit in the same spot for the longest time.

In the excerpt above, the student focuses on the idea that having the opportunity to move around in class helps to regulate behaviour. Oftentimes, behaviour can be regulated with strategies that do not involve isolation. In the fine arts class, the teacher incorporates

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physical instruction and movement as a part of the daily lesson, and this allows students with attention difficulties to maintain focus.

Some similar arguments can be found in the individual interviews that were conducted with the educational assistants on the relevance of arts infused instruction in a core class that does not use cross-curricular arts infusion strategies.

Table 5.2a

“I really found such a huge difference when my student went to math class and the teacher used a really traditional approach. Students were expected to be quiet and listen to what she had to say. That is usually the typical classroom, but this teacher would talk for an hour and ten minutes and I could just watch my student zone in and out constantly. I don’t think she could really understand because there was way too much talking and she doesn’t learn that way. One thing that I really learned from some of the art strategies is that when classes are like that, for kids like her, I have to step it up and help her with the notes, and teach her the lesson one-on-one. So, it’s really a drag because you have to do two classes on one lesson. In the arts infused classroom, teachers break the lesson up and the kids are ‘doing’ a lot more than just listening.” (EA I, for Student I)

The perception above indicates that there is a notable difference in a classroom that uses traditional methods of instruction rather than a classroom that uses a variety of kinaesthetic, and creative strategies to problem solve and learn. For students with attention deficits, the educational assistants believe that a classroom that differentiates instruction is imperative for student success. While there are distinct advantages, students with behaviour regulation issues can sometimes be hindered by an ever-changing environment. The incident below captures the EA experience with the same student who has severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as the result of early childhood trauma.

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Juxtaposing the two experiences with the same student accentuates both the positive and negative experience that come from arts infusion.

Table 5.2b

“Although I am in favour of arts infused learning, I have also witnessed how it can really be a negative thing. My student suffers from severe PTSD and sometimes the triggers are hard to recognize. We were doing a short story where the character had an abusive father, and the class had to work together to re-enact some of the scenes – not the abusive one – but the scenes that captured some of the main ideas. My student, after reading the story, kinda went into panic mode and hid under the desk for the rest of the class. So, sometimes I really have to take a look at what they will be learning so I can coach her about what is coming up. Some of the strategies I actually learned from her arts classes. We do a distancing thing – where we step away from the story and pretend we are someone else. We also do an exercise where I read a line and she reads a line, and we use different voices (even though it is the same character) and that eases her into the book. It really helps knowing these things because when she gets overwhelmed and the fear takes over, I have the knowabout to bring her back. And the real success is that she has gone from a very remedial program, and now is doing mainstream courses that will allow her to graduate. That’s the real success. (EA I, for Student I)

Contrastingly, the excerpt below conveys the idea that using arts infused techniques when the student is elevated can escalate the undesired behaviour. Deducing that sometimes the only effective measure of regulating is to provide the student ‘time’ to adjust.

Table 5.2c

“I had days where my student is so elevated that he would just scream and yell, and no matter what I did – or the administration did – there was no coming down until he was ready. As much as we prepare for using all of the techniques that we learn – sometimes no one can manage the behaviour. Mental illness is and can be a dangerous thing. And without proper medication (which he oftentimes fails to take) the student can become really unpredictable. (EA II, for Student II).

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This example affirms that sending students home as a disciplinary measure can be ineffective for a student with pervasive needs. Contrary to this idea, each student throughout the year was given in-school suspensions for acting ‘out of hand’. Rather than using the regulatory techniques they learned throughout the year, the suspension included confinement to the school infirmary for the day. An integral component in terms of the behavioural theme is teaching staff to learn regulatory approaches that incorporate the arts (dance, music, art, drama) rather than isolating the student and returning to class the following day.

Table 5.2d

“You try so hard throughout the year to strategize and really help the student learn to understand their needs, and in an instant, everything you did is redundant and you have to start from square one.” (EA III, for student III).

Conclusion of Discursive Psychological Analysis

DPA is an insightful source of data analyses that reveals key themes generated by the thematic data analyses. The use of DPA from the student and EA focus groups and the EA interviews provided a useful method of triangulation, allowing for exploration and revelation of potential discourses underlying the views of EAs and students on arts infusion and their impact on social and behavioural regulation practices. Data gathered from participant interviews suggest that participants were engaged with the pathway of their programming. Over the course of three years, they learned how to adapt to the classroom environment and use strategies that were arts centered to create focus, and promote a greater understanding. Participants also reported a high likelihood that they would remain in their program in subsequent years and/or participate in additional arts courses throughout the duration of their studies. Educational assistants agreed that staff

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requires more hands-on training in regulatory practices to bridge the infused lessons to classroom management, and school wide discipline policies.

This DPA of arts infusion suggests that certain themes that were evident in the thematic analyses were used in the EA interviews and focus group discussions to understand the impact arts infusion has on both student behaviour and student learning. Using two dynamic perspectives provides introspection on the student's behalf, and an outward perspective from the educational assistants' observances that highlight the fortitude of the strategies. Sometimes the strategies were ideal and at other times construed as detrimental to a student trying to cope with the pressures of mainstream curriculum. The discourse was centralized around having an alternative means of both emotional and behavioural regulation, and understanding that arts initiatives (like staff training) is integral for all stakeholders.

The themes and discourses that were discussed in Chapter V will be elaborated on in Chapter VI. Each theme will be discussed and the findings will reveal the impact that arts infused learning has on increasing self-regulation to support student learning.

CHAPTER VI: FINDINGS

In conjunction with the five predominant themes that were evident throughout the thematic analyses, the personal accounts suggest that participants commonly addressed (a) the challenges faced during the program and their success in overcoming them, (b) the learning environment participants encountered during their experience and, (c) their interactions with peers and adults.

Task Difficulty. Participants unanimously indicated that they felt at least some of the strategies they used throughout their studies were difficult and frequently referred to them as “challenges”. In several instances, participants indicated that strategies that were taught at the beginning of their program were “uncomfortable” and “weird” and that they found the tasks became less difficult, as they became more involved. The arts infused approach provided teachers and educational assistants with an active learning model that invited reluctant learners to take initiative and persevere. There was an obvious increase in self-regulatory behaviours such as paying attention and learning to identify negative behaviour through self-reflection and student-EA dialogue. Student I, a grade eleven female, described her experience with arts infused learning as providing “challenging kinds of lessons to go through,” that often presented her with obstacles like “doing things you really need to think about, and stepping outside your comfort zone.” Student II, a grade eleven male, similarly described his experience with the learning labs as “very frustrating” and he was required to “do what you learned before and just get up, face your fear and do it.” Student III, a musically inclined grade eleven male, elaborated on his experience with arts infused learning, and the arts academy as “being the best challenge I

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had to face” and “it made me understand why I do what I do.” EA I, stated that “ this really lets kids who are challenged, challenge themselves – which is not always permitted.” Findings indicate that both students and EAs believed that immersing students with severe emotional and behavioural needs in an arts pathway was challenging, but the reward of inclusive education promotes the students’ regulatory skills and self-awareness that would otherwise not be attained.

Academic Theme Findings

The academic theme justifies the advantages of arts infused education and expands on the benefits for students with socio-emotional behaviour disorders and learning disabilities. Eisner (2002) believes that when education is rooted in the arts, the acts of thinking and feeling are enhanced. Findings indicate that participants, despite expressing some initial frustrations and temporary setbacks, were highly motivated to continue working using the strategies they had learned through their arts infused pathway of learning. EA II indicated that “without this kind of educational experience, I don’t think my student would make it through school,” while EA III believes that “ moving away from isolation and giving students a real chance to explore is not only the key to academic success but self discovery, too.” The data suggest that when students are integrated into an arts infused pathway, linking a content area of the arts (drama, art, music, dance) with a core content area (English, math, science or social studies), students accrued experiences that stimulated their interest and expanded their ideas for both thinking and feeling. This self-awareness decreased their behavioural incidents and improved their academic standing. Catterall (2002) believes that “learning activities in the arts have various effects beyond the initial conditions of learning (p. 154). In addition,

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the most evident observance in academic growth is recognized through increased willingness to engage, envision, observe, reflect, and explore.

Behavioural Theme Findings

Despite several regulatory setbacks over the course of the research, students spoke reflectively about participation in a variety of arts infused approaches they learned over the years. Heathcote and Bolten (1994) attest that it is through the conjoint learning experiences of the students and the willingness to assume an active role in a lesson that students become more likely to engage rather than disengage. It is through shared experiences that they have the chance to work in collaboration, assuming a role that differs from the norm. In describing the behavioural benefits of arts infusion, EA I stated, “Sometimes we use her art to talk about her behaviour, and she gets that.” While Student I affirms, “Sometimes when I panic, I use my drawing to soothe me... it really helps to calm me down.” Another observation about the regulatory impact that arts infusion has on behaviour was communicated by Student II, who conveyed “When I am really angry my teacher talks to me like I am not me – and then I think about what she is saying, and I don’t want to be like the idiot she is describing.” Student III similarly, indicated that when he is feeling really down or aggravated “I use music to lift me up.” To expand on the power of collaboration EA III indicated, “ Sometimes when he is forced to work with others you really get to see another side of him, it’s quite interesting – he becomes way less defiant.”

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Emotional Theme Findings

Collected data suggest having access to strategies, support from administration / student services and coaching from an educational assistant, promote students' ability to learn *how* to emotionally regulate. Oreck et al. (2000) affirm that increasing students' repertoire and awareness of their own effective behaviours can contribute to a heightened emotional self-awareness. Zimmerman and Schunk (1989) believe that it is imperative to understand that self-criticism, self-praise, and learning how to self monitor, is all a part of the learning process, and a beneficial means of increasing self-control. Student I, specified that some of the strategies like *distancing* has allowed her to "step away from herself." An integral part of learning how to control emotions is having the ability to reflect and step away, rather than become engulfed by an uncontrollable feeling. EA I reinforced this practice by stating, "Sometimes she would fake illness just so she could go home" rather than try to cope with her feelings or attempt to regulate. EA I then claimed "I don't see as much of that this year / that is a big bonus." Another example of increased emotional control is reiterated through the experience of EA II when she states, "If he doesn't have a release for all of his energy, the rest of the day is wasted." Here, she reinforces the idea that for this particular student, emotional regulation is achieved through activity (physical theatre, drama, or dance) – allowing the student to release the adrenaline he feels when he becomes heightened.

Physical Theme Findings

Providing a supportive and encouraging space for learning is an integral component of the learning experience. The interaction between the learner and the

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learning environment provides students the opportunity to demonstrate self-regulation, and the self-efficacy to learn. When students have difficulty with socio-emotional regulation, the engagement they have with the teacher and the classroom culture is vital to their academic success. Cornett (2007) reiterates this idea and believes that students need to work “with” the art form, and “through” the art form to achieve success. Furthermore, arts infusion provides teachers a way to cultivate a positive classroom environment setting a tone of inclusiveness. EA II believes that, “the classroom needs to be organized, so the kids can focus and have equal opportunity”; she then continues to say, “some classrooms are just plain chaos.” The physicality and physical space are both crucial components of setting an engaging atmosphere whereby *all* students can learn. Instructors, administrators, and counsellors can use any art form to help students become more aware of their own behaviours and the process of understanding their physical or regulatory challenges. To ascertain this idea, Student II stated, “Sometimes you have to do things to learn.”

Social Theme Findings

Participant data additionally indicated that the interactions participants had with their peers as well as adults during immersion in the arts infused program impacted upon their social engagement. Participants frequently indicated a desire to interact and collaborate with their peers; particularly those that did not conform to the class norm. In describing elements of the Arts Academy they enjoyed, Student I emphasized “When I am in drama class, I feel like everyone else / My teacher likes to do a lot of group work that makes us act outside our comfort zone and it kinda makes everyone the same.” The response was also echoed by EA III, who believes “A lot of kids need that outlet / A

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sport, a group, a club, just something to feel a sense of belonging.” Through collaborative learning opportunities, students witness varying perspectives and gain an appreciation for different modalities of expression.

In Chapter VI, the thematic findings sought to explore the challenges that were faced by students and participants during the study were explored. Chapter VII provides a summary and conclusions for implementing arts infusion as a means of increasing self-regulation and promoting student learning.

Chapter VII: SUMMARY and CONCLUSIONS

Summary

Self-regulation has a significant impact on student learning. Zimmerman (1989) contends that students who are self-regulated, possess awareness of their own learning processes and choose specific strategies to complete specific tasks. Research and literature provide evidence that the practice and exposure to arts infused learning can promote self-regulation, thereby, increasing student learning and engagement. Oreck et al. studied at risk students who excelled in the arts and they concluded that the self-regulatory skills that were learned in the classroom could be transferred outside the classroom as well. Arts infused regulatory techniques and learning can be an effective tool to begin changing the discipline practices for students with pervasive needs, *or* who require behavioural intervention. I feel that my current study is consistent with those other findings. Based on the five themes generated from this study, students believe that having an alternate outlet for decompressing was more effective than suspension, sometimes referring to the isolation practice as “a break.” Each of the stakeholders believes that arts infusion increased student performance, decreased behavioural incidents, and contributed to enhancing self-efficacy; boosting confidence.

Conclusions

Four main conclusions arose from the findings of this research. These include:

1. Administration should initiate an open dialogue with educational assistants and teachers concerning the integration of regulatory approaches for students with exceptionalities.

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2. Educational policies and practices of school districts can implement arts infused remediation practices to promote mental health and wellness, and limit suspension practices district-wide.
3. Both educational assistants and teachers noted the positive aspects of arts infused learning. Their continued use is necessary for ensuring higher levels of student engagement and regulation.
4. Many of the stakeholders articulated the positive experience that students have by being integrated in mainstream arts infused pathway, despite their disability. The school district should review school syllabi to include higher-level arts-infused pathways for students who are otherwise forced into taking remedial courses. This would increase the number of students taking higher-level courses.

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APPENDIX A

Dear Mr. McGuigan,

As a confident and experienced educator, I am writing to you today to express my desire to become a Vice Principal for Fort McMurray Catholic Schools. I avidly believe that my knowledge and passion for education will allow me to excel in any endeavor I chose to partake.

First and foremost, I am a practicing Catholic who upholds the morality of my faith, and I firmly believe that religion is a fundamental tenet that should be fostered in every element of my educational practice. Furthermore, as a proud mother of two, my children are also guided by a life enriched by Catholicity, which has – and always will – ground us in the gospel and the teaching of the church.

My experience as an educator has granted me the opportunity to work as a member on the board of standards confirmation for English Language Arts, Manager of King Street Theatre, Public Speaking Coach, and McMann Youth Home (MRP). In addition to this, I have 3 years of experience as a Classroom Support Teacher at Holy Trinity Catholic High School, and 10 years of experience teaching both advanced and remedial language arts.

Over the last three years I have been completing a thesis on the impact arts infused learning has on enhancing self-regulatory skills to support student learning. As a future educational leader, I intend to promote the use of discipline techniques that enhance the students' ability to self-regulate, rather than continuously exercise the isolation practice of suspension. To ascertain the validity of my work, on May 20th, 2018 I will be attending my convocation to receive my Masters in Educational Leadership from Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I whole-heartedly believe that I am ready to begin my journey as a Vice Principal with Fort McMurray Catholic Schools, and I look forward to discussing my ideas with you.

Sincerely,

Rachel Lambert

Consent Document

A Phenomenological Study Exploring the Effects Arts Infused Learning has on Increasing Self-Regulatory Practices to Support Student Learning

The following consent form is seeking permission for your participation in a study about the impact arts infused learning has on increasing self-regulation to support student learning. You have been asked to participate in this study because you are an active participant in our regulation services, and you are currently enrolled in an art infused pathway of study. Your participation has the potential to yield information that can be used in my study. Please read the following form, and feel free to ask any questions you may have before you decide if you would like to participate.

Background Information

The purpose of this research is to examine the effects arts infused learning has on increasing self-regulation practices to support student learning.

Procedures

If you choose to participate in this research, you will be asked to do the following things:

- Participate in 2-3 focus group sessions approximately 60 minutes long
- Agree to 3 observations, by the researcher, in a classroom setting
- Allow the researcher access to feedback such as parent correspondence, notes, emails and any other form that has potential to serve as corroborative evidence. These documents will be strictly confidential and remain locked within the researchers home.

Risks of Being in the Study

The potential risks of participating in this research study are minimal. Minimal meaning: the same amount of risk that could incur on any normal day of activity. If you experience any risks, please notify the researcher immediately.

Benefits of Study

Participant has the opportunity to increase knowledge of regulation practices, and incorporate them in learning practices.

Confidentiality

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All records accumulated throughout this study will remain confidential. Research records will remain in a secure file; only the researcher can have access. If there are any problems with the study, the research records may be viewed by Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador review board for assessment purposes.

Contacts and Questions

The researcher conducting this study is Rachel Lambert. If you have any questions please feel free to contact her at Rachel.lambert@fmcsd.ab.ca or 780-880-4141.

You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Statement of Consent

I have read and understand the information provided above, and I agree to participate in the study, "*A Phenomenological Study Exploring the Effects Arts Infused Learning has on Increasing Self Regulation to Support Student Learning.*" I understand that my participation is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time without negative consequences.

I agree ___ I do not agree ___ to participate in this study

Print Name of Participant _____

Sign Name of Participant _____

Print Name of Parent _____

Statement of Purpose Document

Dear Participant:

I am a master's student who is currently enrolled in the Masters of Educational Leadership program at Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador. The reason I am contacting you is because I am doing a research study on *The Effects Arts Infused Learning has on Increasing Self Regulatory Practices to Support Student Learning*.

The purpose of this research is to examine the effects arts infused learning has on increasing self-regulation practices to support student learning.

You have been asked to participate in this study because you are an active participant in our regulation services, and you are currently enrolled in an art infused pathway of study. Your participation has the potential to yield information that can be used in my study.

If you choose to participate in this research, you will be asked to do the following things:

- Participate in 2-3 focus group sessions approximately 60 minutes long
- Agree to 3 observations, by the researcher, in a classroom setting
- Allow the researcher access to feedback such as parent correspondence, notes, emails and any other form that has potential to serve as corroborative evidence. These documents will be strictly confidential and remain locked within the researchers home.

Your participation is completely voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time without negative consequence.

If you are willing to participate in the study please reply by contacting me at 780-880-4141. We can then make an appointment to meet and create a schedule/timeline for our interviews and classroom observations.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Sincerely,

Rachel Lambert

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APPENDIX D

Proposal Checklist

Research Title:

A Phenomenological Study Exploring the Effects Arts-Infused Learning has on Increasing Self-Regulation to Support Student Learning

Research Questions:

1. How does arts-infused learning increase self-regulation practices to support student learning?
2. Does participation in arts infused programming promote student engagement regarding arts subjects and tasks?
3. How has participation in arts infused learning impacted upon the confidence of students?
4. How does art infused learning promote effective behaviours that allow students to improve cognitive skills?
5. Disadvantaged and at risk youth are often barred from school arts programs in favor of remedial reading and math, what impact does arts infused learning have on student(s) behavior?
6. What socio-emotional benefits arise from immersing students with pervasive needs in an arts-infused program? Prior

Methodology:

Phenomenology

Methods:

Focus groups, Interviews, classroom observations