



As a high school art teacher, I am always interested in discovering activities that best engage my students, and encourage them to be lifelong learners who are appreciative of the role art plays in their lives. A student-art exhibit can be a powerful activity for student engagement and learning (Burton, 2001; 2004; 2006). Exhibition opportunities tap into the natural sociability of the art room, and promote not only learning in the visual arts, but also literacy, confidence, and social skills. In this study, I sought to determine what educational value this endeavor would have for my students and our school community, and how the experience of visiting a museum might enrich the exhibition design process. I developed a project that integrated a museum visit, an art-making experience, and a student-run exhibition. Rather than choosing an art exhibit that diverse and younger generations of visitors may regard as cold and unapproachable, I chose the thematically rich and inviting exhibition *Connecting Cultures: A World in Brooklyn*, at the Brooklyn Museum. Since curators and designers at the Brooklyn Museum created this exhibit with the intent of welcoming the responses of its diverse visitors, I thought that it might serve as a stimulus for the students' own art making and designing an exhibit (Drake, 2013). Finally, I conducted this study to understand the effect of my project on students and the larger school community.

The first stage of the project involved studying artifacts from the *Connecting Cultures* exhibit with personal response, presentation, and discussion activities, culminating with a class visit to the exhibit. Then, students engaged in a discussion of the three broad themes the various artifacts from the exhibition were organized around: "Connecting People," "Connecting Things," and "Connecting Places." The discussion gave students the opportunity to brainstorm what their own exhibit theme and title would be, to develop their own individual ideas for art-making projects, and to choose media through which to express their ideas. Finally, I asked students to

create one artwork inspired by one or more museum pieces. The last stage involved writing reflections, captions, and educational information for the exhibit. This article is an exploration of the three stages of the exhibit. I begin with a review of relevant literature, briefly describe my methodological approach, then present and analyze the work resulting from my three-staged approach to leading a student-run exhibition.

## Review of the Literature

Student-run exhibits are powerful motivators for learning. They are hands on, invite diverse roles, and build on the inherently social character of the art room (Burton, 2004; Choi, 1998; Cummings, 2010; Maheshwari, 2006; McCall, 2006; Witmer & Borst, 1999). Burton (2001; 2004; 2006) recognized that staging art exhibits notably promoted student engagement. While many teachers he surveyed acknowledged exhibiting as an important strategy for engaging students, nearly the same percentage of teachers viewed it as a requirement rather than opportunity for authentic learning (Burton, 2001; 2004; 2006). The teachers' inconsistent responses regarding the value or practicality of student-run art exhibits, suggest that teachers and students alike are missing an excellent opportunity for teaching and learning. This response illustrates a need for research on how best to engage students in self-directed art making and exhibition planning.

The existing research proposes that great leaps in learning can take place when students engage in student-run exhibits. Student-run exhibits meet two conditions that stimulate optimum engagement and learning in the art room: making learning *authentic* and *personally meaningful* to students (Hathaway, 2013; Hicks, 2013; Pitri, 2013; Roberts, 2005, 2008; Walker, 2010). A student-run exhibit incorporates student interests by encouraging the choice of materials, topics,

or themes. It also stresses the process rather than the product in making art through problem solving, open-ended assignments, collaboration, and negotiated working conditions and assessments. Key to engaging secondary students and meeting their essential developmental needs are the strategies of competence, connection, and autonomy (Hafen, Allen, Mikami, Gregory, Hamre, & Pianta, 2012). While student-run exhibits are an excellent example of student-centered education, as a pedagogical approach they have the potential to yield impressive contributions to the field of art education.

Reflection, discussion, decision making, art making, researching, and writing are all activities central to the student-run exhibition process (Burton, 2006). These educational practices present students with occasions for learning both individually and collaboratively. Reflecting and realizing ideas through materials in the art room and through verbal exchange in and beyond the classroom, invite the potential of transformation (Cotner, 2001; Zander, 2003; 2004). As a space for viewing and conversing about art, an exhibit continues the opportunities for dialogue beyond the classroom, encouraging diverse interpretations, reactions, and learning. During the exhibit, participating students communicate with adults and peers in their community through visual and verbal means (Lackey, 2008). The collaborative and communicative nature of the student-run exhibit encourages deep and meaningful engagement of conceptual ideas through practice-based approaches to learning.

## **Methodology**

Although I developed an organizational framework for the study before the research commenced, this paper is an exploratory case study (Berg & Lune, 2012), because I determined the research questions during the project. The method of data analysis taken was emergent theme

analysis (Bowen, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I collected, organized, and color-coded the data to conceptualize the emergent meaning, analyzed the data to discover emergent themes, and interpreted the findings (Saldaña, 2012; Stokrocki, 1997).

## **Participants**

Using convenience sampling, I recruited 21 students ages 14-18 from one of five art classes that I teach at a small, public, urban high school in Brooklyn, New York. Approximately 90 percent of the population qualifies for free lunch. Students are predominantly African-American: American-born students of Caribbean descent and international students from Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad, and Guyana. Male students exactly doubled females. Six participants were English Language Learners (ELLS), including one student, who was a Student with Interrupted Formal Education, or a SIFE. Two students, one a SIFE, were international students from Trinidad and Guyana, whose native language was English. Three others had Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs), and one required a full-time paraprofessional in class. Art is a ninth-grade class and prerequisite for graduation, but three 12th-graders were enrolled in the class this inquiry took place in. This sample ranged in both skill level and interest in visual arts and general academics. When initially surveyed, 50 percent reported strong interest and previous background in art, while the remaining half claimed little formal education or experience in art.

## **Project Development**

Drawing on the literature surrounding student-run exhibits, I set out to develop an experience for my own students that mirrored a student-centered pedagogical approach. In my search for relevant art exhibits, I stumbled upon Drake's fascinating Master's thesis whose

subject was *Connecting Cultures: A World in Brooklyn*, a current, long-term exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum.

*Connecting Cultures* demonstrates novel and provocative connections between people, cultural objects, and places across time and cultures using both artwork and museum artifacts. Pairs of items fall into one of three themes: “Connecting People,” “Connecting Places,” and “Connecting Things.” In her analysis of the exhibit, Drake sought to answer the question: “*How can non-traditional display techniques help museums represent culture more effectively?*” (Drake, 2013, p. 2). Drake concluded that *Cultural Connections* crosses boundaries of geography and time by removing objects from their own cultural contexts, and placing them in a broader, cross-cultural human context. The exhibit also obscures any assumed, pre-constructed differences between art and artifact, and transforms what some may consider as mere objects into museum pieces. Most importantly, rather than authoritatively communicating information to visitors, this exhibit invites them to produce their own knowledge instead, engaging their inquiry and critical thought (Drake, 2013, 38). According to Drake, “there are multiple, valid ways to make meaning out of objects beyond what we are used to seeing” (Drake, 2013, p. 39).

My visit to the exhibit before our project commenced confirmed Drake’s findings. It recognizes its visitors’ agency by acknowledging their experience and inviting them to make their own meanings. Since this exhibit encouraged making connections and questioning assumptions, I expected that it would stimulate my students to create authentic and personally meaningful artwork. Not only could it potentially act as a catalyst for the students’ art making, but it could also model how they might set up their own exhibition.

Burton (2004) noted the importance of having the teacher play the role of assistant throughout the process of a student-run exhibit, while also permitting the students to carry out

the work themselves. With an understanding that students' experiences visiting, engaging, and planning their own exhibit were limited, I anticipated acting as the teacher-guide, able to step in where and when necessary throughout the project. Working under this presumption, I openly acknowledged my role as the teacher-facilitator, defining our journey as a collaborative one from the start. I carefully chose when I would step in and facilitate in an effort to encourage as much collaborative, student-led behavior as possible. This focus on collaboration became a central theme in both my project development and later in my discovery of emergent themes.

After an in class overview of the project and its timetable, I introduced museums and led an in-class study of the *Connecting Cultures* exhibit. Students initially responded in writing



**Figure 1: Korumbo Gable Painting**

about their familiarity with museums and what they would expect to see in one. This background information provided me with an understanding of the level of teacher involvement necessary to successfully facilitate a student-centered experience. Following the introduction to the *Connecting Cultures* exhibit, students explored the purpose of museums and reviewed relevant vocabulary. Alone or paired, students chose, or—if they ultimately could not choose—had me choose for them, one object from the exhibit. I provided students with information, pictures, and probing questions for their written responses to encourage them to contemplate their personal connections to their objects. For example, I paired a photograph of a Korumbo Gable Painting from the Pacific Island Abelam

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culture (see Figure 1), which played a cultural role in the initiation of young men, with questions such as: *Why do you think it is important for societies to mark young people's transition to adulthood? In our country what are some ways that people mark a young person's transition to becoming an adult?* With slides of their objects projected on a screen, students then presented their responses orally.

This first part of our project culminated with a visit to the Brooklyn Museum where students viewed the exhibition and reflected on their visit. Students completed gallery worksheets that included questions that encouraged them to think about the layout of the exhibit and to become aware of the three themes that organized the exhibit: "Connecting People," "Connecting Places," and "Connecting Things." Other questions prompted them to make personal connections to individual artworks or artifacts that both represented their themes and made connections between other works. I also asked students to reflect on the relationships between and among objects, and to consider whether the written captions of the objects helped with understanding. Finally, I asked the students to walk through the exhibit again with the purpose of choosing one or two objects that fascinated them the most. The students could make their choices based on an object's beauty, artistic quality, or the idea that its caption presented. Students sketched and photographed their objects, and those without a camera or phone, asked me to photograph their objects for them.

Back in the classroom, students brainstormed to discover common themes between their art making and the *Connecting Cultures* exhibit. Some of the themes that they arrived at included confusion, freedom, faces, inside out, change, inventions, creativity, and connections. Once the discussion ended, I encouraged students to make anything they wanted for their exhibit. Some students worked together, while others worked alone. They made sketches and



requested certain materials. Along the way, students explored different materials.

As students finished their artwork, we then moved to the exhibition planning. In an earlier discussion of career roles of museums, I outlined the various roles that would be available for the students to assume once at the planning stage. Some students volunteered readily for particular roles, while others had to have roles assigned. After one student negotiated a day, time, and available spaces with the principal, we unanimously chose the intimate and well-lit courtroom as our exhibit space. Most students wrote and typed their own artist statements, one student made and circulated a sign-up sheet for teachers to attend with their classes within time slots, and another prepared a typed introduction to our exhibit. Available students set up the exhibit space and agreed to place student artwork next to a photograph of the corresponding object(s)/art work(s) that had inspired it. On the day of the exhibit, most students remained in the space for the day and engaged in conversation about their art with visiting students and staff. The students invited visitors to leave written comments or suggestions in a box.

### **Analysis**

The data types referenced in this study included teacher-researcher observations of student behavior, oral responses from interviews, written responses to class worksheets or exhibit visitors' exit slips, worksheets for the museum exhibit, oral class presentations, and student reflections and artist statements. Additional types of data comprised of photographs of artwork in the Brooklyn Museum, student sketches and artwork, and photographs of the students while working in the art room and viewing the exhibit. Throughout the project, I kept

a journal of field notes in which I made entries on all work, observed activities, and behaviors, and informal, unstructured interviews I held in class. I asked students to respond in writing whenever I had further questions about what they wrote, said, or made, as individual oral interviews were not logistically possible. Time permitting, I checked written responses with them orally in class and made notations in my journal. I conducted most of the research within four, weekly, one-hour class periods over the span of eight weeks. While I presented this project as part of our regular classroom activities, I have only included the students who agreed to be part of the study.

My analysis consisted of looking for patterns or themes among the data (Saldaña, 2012). I sifted through written student worksheets, my journal entries that recorded students' oral responses and behaviors, my observations, artwork, and photos I took of artwork at the museum, of students at the museum exhibit, during art making, and at their exhibit. During my coding work, four clear themes emerged: teacher as collaborator, students as problem solvers, museum exhibits as a creative catalysts, and student-led exhibits as opportunities for school-wide collaboration.

## **Teacher as collaborator**

Since students differed in their exposure to art and experience with art making, their level of independence in making choices likewise varied. I found, however, that students' readiness for decision-making, collaboration, and motivation, could vary at all stages of the project, and some students required continual monitoring on my part for the project to go forward.

After introducing objects in the *Connecting Cultures* exhibit, some students struggled with choosing an object to present to the class. Remembering that the primary goal of the project was student engagement, I stepped in and assisted students who struggled with decision-making.

During the subsequent student presentations, some students needed more guidance than others; often forgetting information concerning their object, I stepped in and offered prompting focused on student completion of the presentations.

This teacher interjection occurred again after students brainstormed in groups for the exhibit's theme. After sharing theme ideas with the class, I asked students to think of a title for their exhibit. This group decision proved to be a complex activity resulting in disagreement among the class, but a number of students offered suggestions, including "Teen Visions," "Kids' Visions," "Art Work at its Best," and "See Life as it is Right Now." Incorporating the prominent theme of "visions" from the students' brainstorming, I titled the exhibit at the last minute myself: "Visions: Our Journey through Art."



**Figure 2: Students at work**

The students' initial art-making prompt was to develop an idea for an original artwork from the object from *Connecting Cultures* that they chose or had me choose for them. Further discussion, reflection, the visit to the exhibit itself, and brainstorming and consideration of available materials back in the classroom, however, enriched this starting prompt. Yet, I noticed that at the later stages of art making, some students persisted in not knowing what to do. Some had trouble finding a working idea, while others were not

sure of the capacities of certain materials and media. I walked a fine line between encouraging

students to persist in finding their own path and keeping them from becoming frustrated and shutting down. I found students needed varying degrees of guidance and initially, some could not or would not even participate (see Figure 2).

Initiative and willingness to collaborate directly impacted student engagement and ultimately the success of the exhibition. While students were excited and inspired after their visit to the Brooklyn Museum, some students found that the strong connections they initially made there became tenuous by the start of art making. Many remained uncertain about what to create. I repeatedly displayed photographs of the objects that students had said that they liked, and we read and discussed the objects' captions. We also revisited the chart papers that displayed the results of our brainstorming for themes, and the students created more sketches. I helped students discover ideas and also encouraged students to help one another if someone struggled to come up with ideas.

Despite some of the challenges, students were eager to create during the art-making stage. I set ground rules to ensure all students' success and learning: have a minimum of one working sketch, be able to verbalize use of the available materials, and negotiate with others when using tools and materials. Since many students opted to make collages, I presented a mini lesson featuring a collage by Romare Bearden and one of my own. I encouraged students to layer from larger to smaller pieces, and to lay out their pieces as a whole, arranging and rearranging them first instead of gluing them down piece by piece. By showing students other artists who engaged in collage making, the overall motivation to create collages increased. This increase in interest indicates that although student-centered motivation ultimately rests on the student's motivation, teachers must still scaffold the learning process to ensure that the student is confident and successful.

## Students as problem solvers



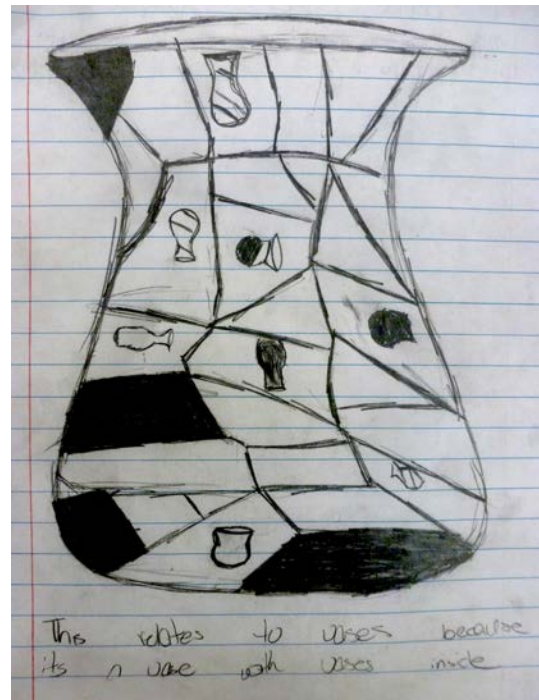
**Figure 3: Dzunuk'wa cannibal woman mask**

While preparing presentations on their exhibit objects, students initially labored to connect to their chosen or assigned objects from the exhibit. At first some students responded as if their objects were foreign to them, but it helped when I gave them progressive prompting questions to lead them in the direction of relating to them. These prompts gave the students opportunities to become problem solvers. An example of progressive probing concerned the 19<sup>th</sup> century Dzunuk'wa cannibal woman mask (see Figure

3). The Kwakwaka'wakw people of northwestern Canada use these masks in a cultural ritual dance. In their culture, Dzunuk'wa are cannibal women who devour children when they disobey their parents by entering the forest unsupervised. In order to elicit an authentic student response, I asked the following questions: *What purpose does this woman mask and its accompanying dance ritual have in the Kwakwaka'wakw society? What traditions in your culture serve to keep young people who act out or disobey their parents in line?* I knew that the students got the point when Susan responded to the second question with “being grounded.” Similarly, concerning the Korumbo Gable painting, (see Figure 1), which plays a central role in young men's initiation to adulthood in the Pacific Island Abalam culture, I queried: *Why do you think it is important for societies to mark young people's transition to adulthood? In your culture, what are some ways to*

*mark the transition to becoming an adult?* Similarly, I knew that students were making connections when one responded to the second question with “a bar mitzvah,” referring to the coming-of-age ritual for boys in Judaism.

While probing students to engage personally with the museum objects, I found that encouraging students to focus on their favorite objects was another effective tool for instigating problem solving. The exhibit worksheet asked students general questions about the exhibit’s organization, to identify favorite objects, and formulate themes. In order to encourage students to think divergently about broad themes first and their individual projects second, I had them brainstorm words or sketch ideas that came to mind. I asked them to describe how art projects based on their themes might look and then to identify possible materials.



**Figure 4 & 5: Exhibition of vases and Ted's initial sketch of vase project**

The tall, lit, partitioned, shelving unit, containing vases from different times and places, impressed Ted. He liked three particular vases. In class, he listed a flood of words to describe his project, including “delicate,” and sketched one large vase consisting of internal vases, which



expressed his feeling of seeing all of the vases together in the exhibit (see Figure 4 & 5). Ted's completed collage, *The Way Out*, features a vase, surrounded by darker colors, which he referred to as "The darkness." The vase, filled entirely with maps, "represent(s) a way out of darkness" (see Figure 6). Ted defined "darkness" as "anything negative or bad that ever happened in a person's life" and said this of his work: "[my work] speaks to the audience individually to show that there is a way out even through the simplest things." When asked whether another object in the exhibit inspired his work, Ted identified what he called the "dark mirror," *Iago's Mirror*. Made of intricately ornamental Murano glass and painted black, this mirror symbolizes Iago's all-consuming jealousy of Othello in Shakespeare's play (see Figure 7). Ted's final piece shows how attention to his favorite pieces, *Iago's Mirror* and *The Wall of Vases*, resulted in a hybrid of the two. This hybrid is an example of Ted's problem solving ability. When faced with the task of making art in response to his favorite pieces in the exhibition, Ted chose to combine the physical structure of the vase and surround that image with the conceptual meaning behind *Iago's Mirror*.



Figure 6: Ted's final collage, *The Way Out*



Figure 7: *Iago's Mirror*

Ted was not the only student inspired by *Iago's Mirror*. A few students used mirrors of varying sizes and shapes in their work, while for others, like Ted, the piece influenced them conceptually. Betty studied Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party* in eighth grade and explained her change of focus from Chicago's *Sojourner Truth #2*,



**Figure 8: Betty's collage, *Confusion in the Making***

for the *Dinner Party*, to *Iago's Mirror*: “There was some artwork at the Brooklyn Museum exhibit that made me think differently than the artist did. For example, the dark mirror made me think of confusion.” From her line drawing, Betty proceeded to create *Confusion in the Making*, a collage teeming with textures, materials, and colors (see Figure 8).

Gerrit Rietveld's *Doll's House* (see Figure 10) inspired Kathy, Jeremy, and Jake's *The Vision Phone*, and Rob and Joe's *House of Happiness*. Kathy, Jeremy, and Jake invented a special vision phone, taking their idea from the description that defines the model's purpose as showing kids about the adult world: “Our project is about making a model, something no one has ever seen or ever done.” *House of Happiness*, also a model, is a home with table and chairs made of wood pieces with the Haitian flag on its roof (see Figure 11). Rob and Joe chose to make a home because homes are “places where you sleep and enjoy being in.” Joe said, “I appreciate houses. My country (Haiti) appreciates houses. Our house made me think of my country.”





**Figure 9: Gerrit Rietveld, *Doll's House***



**Figure 10: *House of Happiness***

The work of these students demonstrates how using student interest can become an important part of individual and group problem solving. By asking students to consider the relationship between artwork, themselves, and the world around them, they were able to engage in successful art-making endeavors that addressed personally relevant interests and concerns. The student as problem solver was but one of the student-centered themes emerging from my data analysis. While students' fixations on their favorite work both in and out of the exhibition was a clear inspiration behind their art making, student engagement often emerged from the museum experience itself.

## **Museum exhibits as creative catalysts**

The museum exhibition experience clearly influenced one student, Andrea. *The Sojourner Truth #2* plate and the nineteenth-century cane carved with four centuries of African-American history fueled Andrea to create her collage *Freedom* (see Figures 11). She attributed

her passion for human rights to her being African American, and specifically defined Emancipation, as “My favorite topic in history.”

Judy Chicago’s plate depicts Sojourner Truth’s sorrow and angry struggle as an African American woman. The calm and regal image in the center of the plate, which balances the two contrasting emotions, depicts Sojourner Truth as an iconic African-American hero in the fight for civil rights. Andrea likewise showed the varied emotions of the struggle in her collage. She expanded the imagery that she chose for her collage historically by including a photograph of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century cane—with its own representation of history, pictures of the Ku-Klux-Klan, chains, as reminders of slavery, and more recent words reflective of segregation: “colored” and “white.” Andrea goes on to



**Figure 11: Andrea's collage, *Freedom***

contrast these dark images from our history with positive words, such as “strength,” and images from our present history: pictures of female African-American family members of the first African-American president in the history of the United States. Andrea’s museum experience was catalytic in that it helped her to express freedom positively for herself as a young, African-American woman.

Janet, Ken, Dave and Ned’s work is another example of the museum experience providing impetus for art making. Rather than draw inspiring references from specific pieces displayed in the museum, these students drew inspiration from the act of curating objects and images. All of these students created artwork that collected ideas, objects, and images— and



and their process of creating art, discussed in the previous sections, suggest that the ideas that personally gleaned from the exhibit inspired them the most.

### **Student-led exhibits as opportunities for collaboration**

Flexibility became a determining factor in this classroom encounter. Because I scaffolded student experiences, the stages of learning built on one another and thus, had to happen consecutively. However, schools are not always environments of predictability and inevitability and steps could not happen as originally planned. This was most obvious during the exhibition set up and display. Since students were often absent or unavailable during these times, I struggled to make the creation of the exhibit as collaborative as the previous experiences had been. Not having adequate time to teach students how to prepare visitors for the exhibit was a problem and would have been even more difficult to navigate if project-based learning was not regularly a part of our school culture.

At the start of the exhibit, neither students nor visitors knew what to do. Many students sat in the back and when we invited them to look around they said, "I'm tired," or "I'm bored." Other students said, "I don't talk to students in school I don't know." A few students lacked understanding of basic museum etiquette, and touched pieces, or even attempted to move, them around. The presenter's comfort with his or her role was not the only factor that engaged the audience. The teachers' conversations with the student artists encouraged the participation of the visiting students and teachers, and eventually everyone participated.

Through conversation, student presentations, and verbal and written comments from visitors about the exhibit, the event provided a dynamic learning forum for members of our school community. As Lackey (2008) discovered, students and adults exchanged meaningful conversation. In fact, it was the active role that the accompanying teachers played that



contributed most to the quality of the conversations and student learning (See Figures 13 - 16). As I observed the exhibition, I noticed teachers modeled for the visiting and participating students just how important conversations about art could be.



**Figure 13-16: Photographs from the exhibition**

It is clear that this student exhibit intensified the climate of engagement at our school. Most comments about the exhibit praised each student's talent and recognized how much the Brooklyn Museum had inspired and taught them. Others singled out works for their creativity or their ability to illustrate a concept. One comment expressed the importance of effort and what happens when one tries, while a few more expressed hope that we do it again.

Enthusiasm and school pride mingled in another comment: “The art is so interesting [*sic*], it should be available in art museums [*sic*] all over the world!”

Perhaps most importantly, our school exhibit showed the students that creative collaboration and personal expression bring confidence and satisfaction, and are essential competencies that they can exercise throughout their lives. These competencies are especially important in a current educational climate in which academic testing is increasingly important. With varying degrees of collaboration and assistance, all students made the Brooklyn Museum experience their unique, creative journey. Whether embodying love of country and homesickness in a model house, making a new technological invention that no one has ever seen before, or defiantly relating the world to them, student presenters shared their work with student visitors and teachers.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to discover what happened when a class of high school students set up an exhibit of their own artwork in response to a museum exhibit. Four themes emerged from this study: *teacher as collaborator*, *students as problem solvers*, *museum exhibits as creative catalysts*, and *student-led exhibits as opportunities for school-wide collaboration*. The results of this study may encourage visual arts teachers to undertake student-run exhibits, and provide them with suggestions concerning planning. The teacher’s role as collaborator is central to the success of the project. Teachers need to inquire what the students may know or be interested in, and be prepared to scaffold the experience for them in a variety of ways throughout the project. Teachers also need to know when to step in and help students by being aware of the gray area between encouraging independence in students and keeping them from becoming frustrated and tuning out. This project showed the extent to which students became problem

solvers and produced authentic and personally meaningful artwork from their museum experiences. Teachers should encourage students to connect the learning experiences about the world, which they had at the museum and in class, to their personal experiences and interests.

The experience of visiting the museum itself was catalytic for many students. One theme expressed by two pieces in the museum exhibit, emancipation from slavery, became the starting point for one student's unique work. In addition to this student, several others incorporated the exhibit's curatorial practice of "making connections" between its images and objects by combining images, objects, and ideas in their art. Hence, the museum visit itself directly stimulated students to create their own unique work. These results suggest that teachers should choose culturally complex and engaging exhibits on a par with *Connecting Cultures* for their students to study and visit.

Finally, student exhibits are opportunities for school-wide learning and collaboration. They offer students the chance to explore careers in the visual arts and to engage in lifelong learning. They bring faculty, administrators, and students from the school together to create occasions for dialogue and communication among diverse people. These outcomes call for further studies that investigate how the student-run exhibit contributes to lifelong learning and to the creation of a positive school community or even change in school culture. Most, importantly a student-run exhibit provides students with a model for learning about the world outside of the classroom.

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