Paraprofessionals: Gatekeepers of Authentic Art Production

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Paraprofessionals are increasingly utilized in inclusive art classrooms to support the art production of students with disabilities. For this descriptive qualitative study, we observed 18 paraprofessionals across elementary, middle, and high school inclusive art classrooms in Central New York. The findings suggest that these support staff act as gatekeepers, either denying or allowing access to authentic art production by facilitating or impeding access to the art curriculum. Implications for practicing art teachers and art teacher preparation programs are included.

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An increasingly diverse population of learners with varying abilities, diverse languages, and cultural backgrounds have been present in the inclusive art classroom (Weibe-Zederayko & Ward, 1999). The art classroom has been a place of creative expression and a place where students with various backgrounds, abilities, strengths, gifts, and talents have been successful as they produce and respond to art. An increasing number of students with more significant disabilities have been attending art classes due to a national effort to educate more children within inclusive environments. These efforts have stemmed from legislative mandates including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), most recently reauthorized in 2004 (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Parents, educators, and administrators have carried out these mandates with a philosophical belief in inclusive education. The U.S. Department of Education (2004) reported in the *National Report to Congress* that almost half of all school-age children receiving special education services are in general education classrooms for at least 89% of the day. Therefore, classroom teachers have seen an increase in the number of students with disabilities. The experiences of art teachers have mirrored this trend (Guay & Gerlach, 2006). Today, the placement of students with disabilities in the art classroom has increased as schools strive to meet the legislative mandates of IDEA for educating students in the least restrictive environment alongside of typical peers.

Historically, the art classroom was one of the first places that students with more significant disabilities were placed. Special educators began to recognize the opportunities the art room provided to support curricular goals for individuals with disabilities. Art was seen as a teaching strategy (Anderson, 1978; Arnheim, 1983; Brubeck, 1981; Zamierowski, 1980). Dalke (1984) stated that participation in the visual arts for students with disabilities was a way to "train and reinforce deficient perceptual, motor and academic skills" (p. 1). Indeed, Dalke continued, it was seen as a "vehicle from which to enhance weak self-concepts in special children" (p. 1). In some

ways the art classroom acted as a test case for inclusion. Students were first included in art to see if they could "make it," and if they did, they were often included in other general classrooms (Schiller, 1999). Currently, more inclusive practices and expanding definitions of literacy have allowed art to be seen as a mode of expression, particularly for students who fail to display the language required for successful participation in schooling (Siegel, 2006). In addition, the artistic production of students with disabilities has shifted from simply serving other curriculum to a valuable contribution to the education and development of the whole student (Blandy, 1989; Dake & Caldwell, 2000).

A common response to an increasingly diverse population of learners in the classroom has been to place paraprofessionals as key support personnel in the art room (Wolery, Werts, Caldwell, Snyder, & Liskowski, 1995). Supervised by certified professionals, paraprofessionals have supported students with disabilities and performed tasks as determined by a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP)[1]. Other terms that have described people who serve this paraprofessional function may include "aide," "assistant," or "associate," among others (Ashbaker & Morgan, 2001; Pickett, 1989). Gerlach (2004) noted that an estimated 950,000 paraprofessionals have currently served in inclusive classrooms in the US.

The volume of literature that exists on supporting students with disabilities in the art classroom has focused much of its attention on the modification and adaptation of art materials and curriculum. Some of the literature has situated the practical challenge of inclusive art education regarding how to design a universal curriculum that accommodates the learning abilities of all students and to assess them accordingly (Bensur, 2002; Carr, 1999; Frame, 1992; Furniss, 2007; Karamanol & Salley, 2005; Platt & Janeczko, 1991; Spencer, 1992; Walter, 2005). Another vein of research has addressed the purpose of supports for students with disabilities (Weibe-Zederayko & Ward, 1999) and has situated art education as the great equalizer in inclusive education (Gregoire & Lupinetti, 2005). Yet recently, this has been tempered by the infusion of a social model of disability (Oliver, 1996) upon art education and has called into question the ways that teachers think about students with disabilities and the experiences of students with disabilities in the inclusive art classroom (Blandy, 1991; Davis & Watson, 2001; Kraft, 2004; Sowers, 1991; Taylor, 2005; Winner, 1996; Enderle, 2007). The types of supports addressed in the literature vary from high to low tech adaptive materials (Enderle, 2007; Kiefer-Boyd & Roland, 2006; Weibe-Zederayko & Ward, 1999) such as modified scissors or pencil grips to sophisticated computer technology with eye tracking devices and modified joysticks. Included among low-tech supports has been the use of paraprofessionals where one relevant study emerged.

Guay (2003) looked at the approaches to art instruction for students with disabilities. Of the 12 art teachers observed, all of them relied on the support

[1]An IEP is a document that outlines and describes the goals and support services that a student requires.

of a paraprofessional. Although Guay initially intended to study the art teachers' approaches, she found that paraprofessionals provided the majority of instruction for students with disabilities. Therefore, the paraprofessionals became her focus. A summary of the key themes from Guay's work and a description of each theme can be found in Figure 1.

Research Questions

Our study examined the paraprofessional's role in supporting students in the art classroom and their access to the curriculum. The specific research questions were, "What supports or barriers do paraprofessionals provide to the art curriculum?" And, "What impact might these barriers or supports have upon the authentic art production of students with disabilities in the inclusive art classroom?"

We defined "authentic art production" to mean art that comes from the exercise of an individual's creativity and own ideas, and created by the student's

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Prominent Themes in Guay's (2003) Article

Themes	*Description of Theme*
Necessary and Helpful Helpful Help	Paraprofessionals performed key responsibilities and performed various roles that allowed the teacher to teach art to students with significant disabilities.
Patterns of Communication	Art teachers spoke minimally with paraprofessionals in the classrooms. The paraprofessionals rarely knew what they would be doing before entering the art classroom.
Learning and Expectations	For students with severe disabilities, the learning outcomes mostly consisted of conformist type art, or making a project that looked like other projects. Paraprofessionals supported the art in a step-by-step format.
Assimilation	Paraprofessionals tried to hide or cover up differences in art performance instead of adapting or differentiating instruction to meet student needs.
Disempowerment and Learned Helplessness	Paraprofessionals tended to take over for students even though their verbal directives were often suggestive of supporting independence.
Relinquished Leadership	Art teachers revealed that they felt the paraprofessionals were the experts on their students. Art teachers did not feel comfortable providing direction to the paraprofessional and let the paraprofessional make most decisions about the supported student.

Figure 1. Summary and description of themes from Guay, D. (2003). Paraeducators in the art classrooms: Issues of culture, leadership and special needs.

own means. We have understood authentic art production by students with disabilities as empowering them to be able, competent participants in the art room and the world around them. To be clear, we have not meant art therapy, which can be defined as a therapeutic technique that uses art materials and is primarily done diagnostically (Dalley, 1984). We instead described inclusive art education, where students with and without disabilities are sitting side by side in art classrooms, learning, thinking, and making art together.

Description of the Study

Participating Schools

This qualitative study was conducted in ten K-12 schools in Central New York. Specifically, we focused on four elementary schools, three middle schools, and three high schools. Throughout this research, 18 paraprofessionals, 8 art educators, and 2 special education teachers were directly observed in inclusive art settings and on art-related field trips. Our selection criteria for specific schools sites were that (a) they had a history of inclusion, (b) they utilized paraprofessionals to support students with disabilities in the art classroom, and (c) the administrators, art teachers, and paraprofessionals agreed to participate. For the purpose of this paper pseudonyms have been assigned to each of the participants (see Table 1).

Data Collection

Data were collected using participant observation (DeWalt, DeWalt & Wayland, 1998) in inclusive art classrooms. We conducted a total of 25 hours of observations during 21 school visits. Paraprofessionals who were

Table 1. Participants in Study			
Student	*Paraprofessional*	*Art Teacher*	*School*
Annie	Mr. A	Ms. C	Urban High
Anthony	Ms. P	Ms. L	Suburban Elementary
Ben	Ms. H	Mr. U	Suburban Middle
Canitha	Ms. C	Ms. M	Urban Elementary
Christopher	Ms. T	Ms. A	Urban Middle
David	Ms. G	Ms. M	Urban Elementary
Douglas	Ms. D	Ms. M	Urban Elementary
Garrett	Ms. T	Ms. A	Urban Middle
Kevin	Ms. K	Ms. F	Urban High
Mary	Ms. D	Ms. M	Urban Elementary
Paul	Ms. P	Ms. L	Suburban Elementary
Ray	Ms. N	Ms. J	Urban High
Rodney	Ms. S	Ms. L	Suburban Elementary
Sam	Ms. W	Ms. B	Suburban Elementary
Shawn	Mr. A	Ms. C	Urban High
William	Ms. E	Ms. L	Suburban Elementary

part of this study worked in art classrooms in urban and rural public schools. The paraprofessionals were the focus of our analysis. We examined the ways that they either helped or hindered students' production of authentic art through observational data collection. During each observation, we collected field notes and checked for accuracy directly following the observation, and we organized notes by date of observation.

Data Analysis

We analyzed the observational data inductively using categorical coding (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Field notes were read and marked by hand, identifying initial codes using words descriptive of text content. Particularly descriptive passages were highlighted and separate notes were maintained on emerging themes. Using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) we re-coded the observations with these themes in mind and either accepted, rejected, or further refined each theme. Inductive analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) was applied to assist in the identification of the major themes.

Findings

Our research suggests that paraprofessionals play the role of a gatekeeper, either opening or closing the gate that provides access to the art curriculum, and ultimately, to authentic art production for students with disabilities. Our first major finding suggests that paraprofessionals can close the gate, or create barriers, to students' access to the art curriculum. Our second major finding demonstrates ways that paraprofessionals open the gate or provide helpful and appropriate support of, and access to, the art education curriculum.

Closing the Gate: Barriers to Access of the Art Curriculum

During classroom observations, paraprofessionals were found to impede access to the art curriculum for students with disabilities. These findings were consistent with Giangreco and Doyle's (2002) earlier work where they found that the assignment of paraprofessionals to students in the classroom could present physical and symbolic barriers to individual student engagement with the curriculum. In this research, barriers to the curriculum were organized around sub themes of (a) interfering with physical access, (b) interrupting authenticity, and (c) altering art production entirely.

Closing the Gate: Interfering with Physical Access

One important first step to accessing the curriculum has been getting students in the door, as demonstrated by an urban elementary art educator, Ms. M:

> When I first came to this school … I couldn't believe what it was like. The art teacher that was here before me, she would tell the aides to bring the kids in 20 minutes late. She didn't even want them here! To her, they were a distraction, a disruption. She really didn't think they needed to hear the introduction to the lesson. She thought they could

just come in; mess with some art stuff, and leave. I think she really believed they weren't capable.

This is one example of the ways that paraprofessionals can create barriers for students with disabilities to access art curriculum. It was commonplace during observations for paraprofessionals to remove students early, take students out, bring students late, or arrive late themselves. It is important that both the student and paraprofessional arrive on time and remain in class as intended in the curriculum. By coming late to class, or not being present at all, a paraprofessional denies access to the classroom and subsequently to the art curriculum. The first step to accessing the art curriculum requires the presence of the student and any necessary supports.

Closing the Gate: Interrupting Authenticity

Co-opting the Work

We observed paraprofessionals in elementary, middle, and high school settings employ a type of support in which they worked simultaneously with the student on one piece of artwork. This was seen when Ms. H painted glaze on one side of Ben's piece while he put glaze on the other side. When this strategy was employed, it compromised the authenticity and integrity of his work. Sometimes this type of support resulted in the adult contributing a great deal more to the project than the student in the same amount of time, altering the "authentic" status of the art production.

Confiscating the Materials

At times, the paraprofessional maintained control of the materials. (See Figure 2 for a humorous representation of this concept.) In one observation, Paul, a fourth grader with multiple disabilities reached to take the brush from Ms. P, the paraprofessional, as she painted on his paper. After waiting patiently Paul finally grabbed the brush from Ms. P. She then picked up another brush and began painting on another area of Paul's project. This type of unsolicited and intrusive support interrupted the authenticity of the student's art piece. While "partial participation" (Guay & Gerlach, 2006) may be an effective strategy in other content areas, it can be problematic with authentic art production. A better way to support authentic art production is to find, plan for, and implement adaptations of materials, processes, and projects that enable students with disabilities to participate to the fullest extent, utilizing the greatest means possible to express creativity.

Controlling Creativity

In another elementary class, Rodney, a first grader with a disability, was asked to come to the front of the room to share the pattern of symbols he created. Rodney stood at the front, holding his drawing in front of him and said while pointing to the pattern of symbols on his paper, "Ms. S's idea was: smile, x, smile, smile, x." In other words, he was sharing the paraprofessional's work. He attributed the ideas and symbols that Ms. S had drawn on his paper, clearly illustrating an interruption in authenticity. During his

Figure 2. Cartoon by Michael Giangreco (1998), *Ants in His Pants: Absurdities and Realities of Special Education.* **Reprinted with permission.**

explanation, Ms. S was seated at Rodney's table and buried her head in her hands. Rodney understood that the idea and symbols did not belong to him, and Ms. S assumed control over his project.

Our findings echo Guay's (2003) work about learning, expectations, and assimilation. Guay found that for students with severe disabilities, learning outcomes mostly consisted of conformist type art or making a project that looked like other projects. Paraprofessionals often tried to hide or cover up differences in art performance by over supporting or doing the work for the student.

Restricting Choice

Limits were inadvertently placed on the students' ideas. For example, in one elementary classroom, the students were asked to draw six symbols that represented aspects of them to be used in a project. Ms. C, the paraprofessional working with Canitha, drew four symbols on the student's paper, none of which were generated by the student. This strategy could have been representative of the paraprofessional's drawing ability or Ms. C's perception of Canitha's ability. But ultimately, when Ms. C chose the symbols and altered

the number of symbols required, she inappropriately limited the choices that Canitha had with regard to the creativity and level of completion of the art objective. Limiting choices for students is a way that the paraprofessionals limited access to the curriculum, and it interrupted authenticity.

Closing the Gate: Altering Art Production

Paraprofessionals sometimes made decisions that altered the intended aesthetic or conceptual outcome of the project. These decisions, though seemingly small, changed dramatically the production by students with disabilities. Replacing materials, interrupting curriculum, and lowering expectations changed the artistic production of students with disabilities.

Replacing Materials

The use of art materials has remained an integral part of the art curriculum. When paraprofessionals were unfamiliar with materials or processes, they made decisions that denied access to materials without consulting the art educator. This was seen in an urban high school art classroom. During an urban high school studio art class, students were using brayers and ink to create some background paper for a project. They were expected to choose two or three colors of ink, roll them out on a tray, and then apply the ink to a large sheet of paper. When two students with disabilities, Annie and Shawn, and a paraprofessional, Mr. A, arrived, the other students were preparing materials for the assignment. Mr. A grabbed a big bin of markers and set it down in front of Annie and Shawn, replacing the intended materials of ink and brayers with crayons and colored pencils. Mr. A made no attempt to ask what the students were supposed to do, and the teacher did not approach him to share expectations. To the observer, these students would have been very capable of participating fully with the planned curriculum and materials. However, Annie and Shawn began drawing rainbows on their large sheets of paper using the colored pencils and crayons Mr. A provided.

This scenario raises some foundational concerns with regard to curriculum support. First, without proper planning and communication, the art teacher and paraprofessional denied Annie and Shawn access to the intended materials and art objectives. Although replacing materials in support of specific student need is not inappropriate, whenever possible, these adaptations should provide a quality curriculum support or lesson extension (Gude, 2007). A common explanation by paraprofessionals we observed was that a particular material might be "neater" or less apt to "end up all over" the student (or paraprofessional). But more often, the limiting of materials or choices offered to the students with disabilities was unjustified.

Hijacking the Curriculum

Another way that access to the curriculum was denied by paraprofessionals was through what we term "hijacking" of the art curriculum. Hijacking stemmed from paraprofessionals who were unfamiliar or uncomfortable with the art curriculum, or who had a different goal or objective in mind.

One example of hijacking occurred when students were taken off task with quizzing or drill-and-skill activities that did not reflect or reinforce the intended art curriculum as set forth by the art educator. Classroom activities such as sketching and planning time were often spent naming colors of markers, content from other classes, or trivia unrelated to the art classroom. In one elementary class, the students were asked to draw six thumbnail sketches for their project. Ms. D, the paraprofessional, spent much of this time drilling Mary on color recognition, using the markers as she held them up one at a time. This activity took up the majority of the time allotted for sketching. In another class, students had been given the final 10 minutes of class to do "free drawing" from pictures in magazines. In this case, Ms. G had David read aloud an article in an issue of a popular magazine for kids. Upon completion of the reading, Ms. G quizzed David on the article he had just read about the most popular baby names in the early 20th century. These two activities did not support the art education objectives; the paraprofessional was interrupting the objectives set forth by the art educator.

The observations in this research support Guay's (2003) findings about relinquished leadership and how art teachers believed that paraprofessionals were the experts on their students. Guay found, as we did, that art teachers did not feel comfortable providing direction to the paraprofessional and let the paraprofessional make most decisions about the supported student. These decisions included paraprofessional decisions about materials and direct support strategies, which limited the authenticity of the student's artwork.

Lowering Expectations

It was common within this study for the paraprofessional and/or the art educator to lower expectations for students with disabilities based on their assumptions of the student's purpose in the art classroom community. They would remark, "I'd rather have him turn in something than nothing at all" (Ms. L) or would alter requirements when it became evident a student did not follow directions or required more time to meet production requirements. For example, when Ms. C, a high school art teacher, approached Kevin to look at his project, the exchange included this:

Ms. C: "You got all four done?"

Ms. K (Paraprofessional supporting Kevin): "I thought you said three."

Ms. C: "No problem."

Notice the absence of the student's voice in this exchange. This practice made us question what informs some curricular adaptations made in the art classroom. Honoring the student's beliefs and perceptions can provide valuable information about the best ways to support the student.

Opening the Gates: Supporting Access to the Art Curriculum

The types of supports we observed were not all misguided. As Guay (2003) found, these supports were often necessary and helpful. In our study, para-

professionals often performed key responsibilities and roles that allowed the teacher to teach art to students with significant disabilities more easily. The following highlights some of the supports that opened the gate to authentic art production for students. The supports that paraprofessionals provided fell under the following sub themes: (a) ensuring access, (b) supporting authenticity, and (c) honoring art curriculum.

Opening the Gate: Ensuring Access

Physical Access

When paraprofessionals valued art, they were more apt to see art as positive for students. In addition to seeing the benefit of creative expression, social inclusion, and alternative classroom formats, they often sought out ways to allow for students to more fully engage in artmaking experiences. One paraprofessional participant, Ms. T, identified herself as an artist and someone who "loved making art in her free time." She shared that she had nearly gone to art school. She felt it was important for her middle school students to be present in class, and most importantly that she was present with them. She encouraged students to be on time and to be prepared at the beginning of class to hear directions. She also shared that she valued her own presence in the classroom. Ms. T stated, "If I'm not here it sends them a message that it isn't important for them to be here either." Ms. T communicated through encouragement and modeling that she valued the students' artmaking.

Positioning Student for Success

For Sam, an elementary student who used a motorized wheelchair, location was important. Ms. W, a paraprofessional, made sure that he could get his chair close enough to the table where students were gathered to see a demonstration of glazing techniques. The art teacher, Ms. B, was also conscious of the physical space required to bring Sam to the table. She made sure that he could see the demonstration of materials, and later, enabled him to share materials with another student by giving him a longer handled brush. This allowed him to reach a vat of glaze that was positioned on the table for the group, rather than his own container.

Opening the Gate: Inclusive Pedagogical Access

Providing Opportunities for All

Ms. T exhibited a powerful strategy during the introductory phases of a project. In this example, Ms. A, the art teacher, provided handouts with images to help students create sketches and generate ideas for an upcoming project. Rather than limiting her reiteration of the use of the reference materials provided by the art educator, Ms. T walked around the room, showed the picture to each table and said, "Anyone want to see this? If you were wondering what the Statue of Liberty looks liked, here it is!"

Supporting All Students

Ms. T did not limit her support to those students who had labels, but purposefully worked with all students in the room. When students see the paraprofessional adult as someone who can offer help and support to anyone, it reduces the stigma for students who may require more continuous external supports. By fading support for the individual and highlighting information for the group, Ms. T opened the gate for access to the art curriculum for *all* students.

Opening the Gate: Supporting Authenticity

Modify Materials

Often, students were vocal about their perceptions of their own abilities as participants in the art curriculum. Comments such as "I'm not good at this" (Christopher), "I don't know what I'm doing" (Anthony), and "I don't want to do this shit!" (Ben) were all clear indications of student's perceptions of their success in artmaking. Students often expressed statements of concern over the use of materials—in particular, paint—and worries about the expectations of the project. The encouraging responses of the art educators and the paraprofessionals in this study to such sentiments often included things like, "This will be good practice!" (Mr. U), and "It takes patience, but I know you can do it!" (Ms. F), but this didn't seem to convince the students. When Garrett, an eighth-grade student complained, "I'm not good at painting, it goes all over!" Ms. T, the paraprofessional in the room, offered to tape off areas of Garrett's paper to help him create the clean lines he desired. Another possible support for this student would be to use adaptive brushes with grips that make fine motor control more attainable.

Fading Support

In another class, Ms. E, who supported first-grader William, highlighted peer interaction between William and the student next to him. As she passed by his table she remarked, "You two are good friends aren't you? You are doing really good work together, I like that!" and then she walked away. Ms. E recognized the successful partnership that William had with his classmate and used it as an opportunity to encourage and fade her level of support. When appropriate, fading paraprofessional support is an important aspect to successful support of students with disabilities. In Broer, Doyle, and Giangreco's (2005) study, adolescents who had paraprofessional support described their relief when support was appropriately withdrawn. Ms. N was an expert with this strategy. She remained at quite a distance from Ray throughout the art class. She came near him only when he needed academic or behavioral support, but spent most of the time helping other students.

Opening the Gate: Honoring Art Curriculum

Parallel Production

We saw the paraprofessional creating artwork along side of (but not on the same paper as) the supported student, especially in the secondary classes we

observed. Our analysis of this strategy is that it can be positive. It engaged the paraprofessional in the content and familiarized them with the art materials, both of which informed student support. Additionally, it provided modeling of techniques. Occasionally, this strategy proved a distraction for the student, such as Kevin, who spent more time watching the paraprofessional, Ms. K, than working on his own piece. At times the paraprofessionals became so engrossed in their own projects that they paid little attention to the progress of the students.

Another paraprofessional would engage in conversations with all of the students at her table, about her own work and theirs. This more universal approach allowed her to engage many students in discussions of the project, including those who did not require support. This type of strategy is well supported in the literature as it promotes peer interaction (Causton-Theoharis & Malmgren, 2005a; Causton-Theoharis & Malmgren, 2005b; Malmgren & Causton-Theoharis, 2006). This allowed students with and without disabilities to talk to each other.

Continuing the Art Experience

The ways that the paraprofessionals meaningfully supported the art curriculum occurred through appropriate support during projects and by extending art experiences during "down time" or free time. Encouraging students to look at art (e.g., Ms. D), talk and think about works of art (e.g., Ms. C), or work in sketchbooks (e.g., Ms. K) were just some of the ways that paraprofessionals supported the art curriculum. For example, when Kevin finished the required project components with 10 minutes left in the class, Ms. K suggested he get out his sketchbook and draw. This was not only a way for Kevin to exercise choice but was also in direct support of the art curriculum.

Implications

The findings from this research impact art teachers, and more broadly art teacher preparation programs, as supported in the literature (Hillert 1997; Kraft, 2001). Special education teachers are ultimately responsible for guiding the work of paraprofessionals about specific modifications and appropriate adaptive techniques and materials. As the expert on the art curriculum, the art teacher is essential and can support the student and paraprofessional in several ways.

First, the art teacher is responsible for educating the student regardless of the disability or type of support that comes with the student. Throughout our observations, the presence of a paraprofessional created a barrier between the student and the art teacher. This finding is well supported in the literature on paraprofessional support (Giangreco, Broer, & Edelman, 2001). Art teachers need to increase their direct interaction with students who have support; paraprofessionals are not a substitute for art teacher-student contact.

Second, art teachers need to provide guidance and support to paraprofessionals so that they can more successfully support students in the classroom. Guay (2003) found that paraprofessionals rarely knew what they would be doing before entering the art classroom and expressed a desire for more information. Mr. A, a high school paraprofessional remarked, "He has no plan, I mean, tell me! I'm very creative when it comes to these kids but give me something." This plea by Mr. A, combined with the lack of observed interaction in the study, echoes the findings of Guay (2003) that art teachers spoke minimally with paraprofessionals in the classroom.

Art educators must make a shift in their sense of authority in order to make the most of paraprofessional support. "[Art] teachers must change their role from gracious host to engaged teaching partner" (Giangreco, 2003, p. 1). While it may be initially uncomfortable for art educators to take on a guiding role with another adult in the art room, it is imperative to the successful support of the students in the class. Something as simple as, "Here is the plan for today." Or "I would like Joey to use a large handle brush and peer support" can key a paraprofessional that there may be specific processes that can support a student in the class.

Third, communication between the art teacher and the paraprofessional is imperative. When the paraprofessional is unfamiliar with the objectives, the materials, or the expectations for students, art teachers must provide opportunities for increased knowledge and familiarity with materials and techniques. Ms. F extended an invitation to the paraprofessionals in her building to explore the materials during down time when she taught them specific art techniques. Minimally, the art teacher needs to provide the objectives of the lesson and student expectations every day.

Several studies have found that art teachers feel unprepared to teach students with disabilities (Guay, 1994; Hillert, 1997). Art teachers need to know how to work directly with students who have disabilities. They also need to know how to guide, support, and collaborate with paraprofessionals. Therefore, these skills must be specifically addressed in art educator preparation programs, as working with paraprofessionals is an increasingly important job responsibility. Additional questions arise in art teacher preparation concerning the utilization of both low and high technologies and resources within and outside of the school (Henry, Banks, Day, Dunn, Fergus, Foster, Galbraith, Hatfield, Hansen, & Young, 1999). Art teacher preparation programs need to provide art teachers with a research base that will better prepare them for their career to educate an increasingly diverse population of artists. Such programs must prepare beginning teachers to take on the leadership role necessary for successful collaboration with support personnel in their 21st-century classrooms (Galbraith, 1997).

Conclusion

Ideally, the art curriculum should consist of artistic experiences with materials aimed at meaningful art-centered learning outcomes for all. As the diversity of artists in the K-12 art classroom increases, complexities can arise as art educators figure out the best ways to make art curriculum accessible and employ appropriate supports for students. In this study, it was common to see paraprofessionals be a necessary support that allowed the student access to the art curriculum. Unfortunately, it was also commonplace to see art outcomes replaced with paraprofessionals' own ideas about the curriculum, objectives, and materials. At the university and K-12 levels, attention to collaboration between the art educator and the paraprofessionals is essential to ensure engaging, meaningful, and appropriate art experiences for all students. What we do know from the findings of this study is that when the art educator and paraprofessional work together, the gate of authentic art production is opened for generations of future artists.

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