

Spiritual Development: Personal Discoveries and Explorations in Education

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Author Note

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Abstract

A deeper understanding of connectedness and existential thinking in education is needed now more than ever. Within this thesis, I will be researching forms of spiritual development for my own personal growth and exploring how to integrate meaning making practices into teaching methods in education. In a public school, church and state must remain separate. How does one cultivate an awareness of connected nature without religion? I will begin my research with how to first define spirituality outside the religious context as I explore insights on spirituality through scholarly educational articles. I will also include in depth research of studies of spirituality including neurotheology, connections to nature, partnerships with creativity, and explore spiritual development in adolescents and in holistic education. Spiritual Intelligences is a concept that will be discussed along with an approach to nurture spiritual development in the classroom known as Contemplative Pedagogy. Results from my research show that integrating some of these practices may not be appropriate in all education systems but is one step forward in cultivating a global society. I have used these topics as a catalyst for my personal artwork concentrating on each category of study.

Keywords: Spirituality, Neurotheology, Spirituality in Nature, Spirituality and Art, Spirituality in Education, Contemplative Pedagogy, Art Education

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Developing Spirituality: An Individual Discovery and Integration in Art Education

I was born into a devout Catholic family. I was raised in the faith of that church and went to Catholic schools. Not only did we go to church each Sunday, but we were a family that prayed before each meal, bedtime, and celebrated all Catholic holidays. Catholic education has taught me a lot about being the best version of myself and has shaped my values.

As I have grown older, I have questioned the practices of organized religions, specifically the Catholic faith. I am curious about experiencing the divine in other ways. What I lived to be true was wrong after doing critical research. I couldn't quite comprehend why everything that was taught to me was now different.

Adults who value spirituality often describe their spiritual development as a process of questioning or moving away from earlier beliefs and experiences from childhood religious or cultural tradition (Tisdell, 2008). After higher education and teaching high school art in a public school, I realized how looking at the world with only a Catholic view is limiting. I was seeing the world with blinders on. For years I have felt like there is a void in my life. This void being of deep connection, personal voice on what is true.

Being Catholic is a large part of my identity. I have had a deep desire to widen my beliefs and develop my spiritual identity. Spirituality is now often described as something that broke free from the restricting confines of association with formal religion (Jacobs, 2012). This need to develop my own spiritual self was often associated with my desire to find a more authentic self. "It seems quite obvious that stressed, out of balance human beings will never be able to generate in an outer environment what they have failed to generate in the inner world: serenity and sustainability of the overall energy system" (Grace, 2011).

I have been in search of a deeper way of living, creating, and teaching. This began a personal journey of research and understanding of other belief systems outside of organized religions. In the past four years, I have explored a variety of concepts with spirituality. I had a void in my life I felt like I needed to fill. I was hungry for deeper meaning and connections. I began my masters in art education program with an understanding that spirituality is a religious concept. With that in mind, I did a series of three paintings exploring three organized religions I was unfamiliar with to widen my lenses. I studied Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. Through this series of paintings, I learned a lot about each belief system but still had a hunger to learn more. In Figure 1, all three paintings depict a location of worship and traditional practices for each organized eastern religion.

Figure 1 “Spiritual Pathways”*Figure 1: Spiritual Pathways*

Note: This series of oil paintings depicts three separate entrances into a place of worship of three organized religions. On the left is a painting of a Hindu temple, in the center is a Buddhist temple, and on the right is the holiest location of Muslim religion, Mecca. The purpose of these paintings was to take time to study these organized belief systems and architecture.

Studies of Spirituality

Definition of Spirituality

Defining spirituality is a somewhat elusive task; it means different things to different people, and there is often some confusion between “spirituality” and “religion” (Tisdell, 2008). The definition of spirituality is greater than what can be described with language. Historically, the concept of spirituality has been studied by many scholars. “There are many sources, both in popular literature and in scientific research, which explore the concept and uses of spirituality, and its relation to various aspects in life including psychology, education, leadership, and health” (Veith, 1994).

Today, the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines spirituality as “the quality or state of being concerned with religion or religious matters: the quality or state of being spiritual.” The Oxford English Dictionary has a slightly different definition: “the quality of being concerned with the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things.” It is interesting that there is a difference between these two. The Merriam-Webster dictionary concentrates on current, active vocabulary. The Oxford English Dictionary is written from a historical context. There are a variety of definitions of spirituality depending on who defines it. Which one is truly most current and accurate?

Within the past few decades, the concept of spirituality has developed outside an explicitly religious context (Drazenovich, 2004). Spirituality is to be viewed as an emergent concept shifting between traditional notions of institutional religion, as one that is more humanistic, focusing on the intrinsic aspect of individuals (Natsis, 2016). Spirituality is about an individual’s personal experience with the sacred, which can be experienced anywhere. Religion, on the other hand, is about an organized community of faith, with an official creed, and codes of

regulatory behavior (Tisdell, 2008). Spirituality is understood as the internal cohesion of the self, which is common to all human beings and thus a field of connection despite diverse cultural expression (Estabek, 2006). It is concerned with the ‘higher’ side of life in the sense of search for meaning, unity, connectedness, and transcendence (Tacey, 2001).

It seems that scientists, physicians, and psychologists have explored the definition of spirituality to a much greater degree than other scholars (Newberg, 2008). A group of scientists define the criteria for spirituality as essentially the subjective feelings, thoughts, experiences, and behaviors that arise from a search and quest for the sacred (Newberg, 2018). This is an interesting suggestion that spirituality is a search or a quest. Though other psychological and medical scholars have offered different definitions. One research group described spirituality as “the search for transcendent meaning,” which can be expressed as a “relationship to nature, music, the arts, a set of philosophical beliefs, or relationships with family and friends” (Newberg, 2018). This is a more practical definition and is more accurate because it can be measured and more scientifically studied.

Because spirituality has become such an intrinsic concept, it is also about the development of personal identity. This is separate from religious identity. Significant spiritual experiences as specific moments in time, as they are integrated into one’s overall life, clearly can lead to further development in identity (Tisdell, 2008). Just as learning happens from an experience, spiritual connections can also develop from a shimmering moment in time. Many highlight this moment in time as a connection to wholeness and a more authentic self. These are often moments of significant learning that lead to continued development (Tisdell, 2008).

Neurotheology

Neurotheology is the field of combining science with the spiritual, specifically with the brain. It was the studies by Dr. Michael Persinger performed in the 1980's that have defined neurotheology. Modern neurotheology uses brain mapping techniques and suggests that all humans, regardless of religion, may have a common core that makes us open to experiences of a spiritual nature. (Sid, 2009).

Within Andrew Newberg's book, *Neurotheology: How Science can Enlighten us about Spirituality*, brain development is explained with association of spiritual beliefs and experiences. Through a collection of in-depth studies and research, Newberg searches for a greater understanding of frequent questions about spirituality and science. According to Newberg (2008), "Spirituality is by its very nature difficult to grab onto because it generally seems to be focused on the subjective nature of spiritual experiences." The positive emotions associated with spirituality tend to be ones like joy, love, and compassion (Beauregard & O'Leary, 2007). These strong positive emotions are part of what define the essence of the spiritual experience and help mark the power of the experience for the individual (Newberg, 2018).

According to neuroscientist, Antonio Damasio, "the body's and the brain's responses to a given stimulus or experience mark that experience as important" (1999). For example, intense joy might be associated with the activation of the amygdala and the concomitant activation of the hypothalamus, which regulates the autonomic nervous system (Newberg & Iverson, 2003). Since the autonomic nervous system connects the brain and body, the person experiences not only the emotion of joy but also feels it throughout the body (e.g., via increased heart rate and respiration) (Newberg, 2018).

After the spiritual experience is over, the person's cognitive brain processes come back online and try to make sense out of just what happened (Newberg, 2018). Often the person will

try to incorporate their experience into their belief system or organized religion. Using language and rational thought, a person strives to find ways of understanding the experience (Newberg, 2018). Infinite thought is limited because of the desire to understand or find answers. Searching for a solution may lead to a roadblock in your spiritual quest and stifle growth.

The brain houses multiple “Spiritual Faculties.” In Figure 2 is an illustration that shows certain lobes of the brain are activated when a person has spiritual experiences. The frontal lobe is linked to focusing attention and planning and activity in this lobe increases during a spiritual experience through a practice like meditating. Cosmic unity sensations or the feeling of oneness with the universe activates the parietal lobe. The temporal lobe is involved when a person experiences an inner voice or inner spiritual non-ego dialogue. According to researchers, the temporal lobe also responds to spiritual images or symbols when recognized. The final neural activity that is linked to the temporal lobe is when an individual experience a “sense of presence.”

Maintaining a level of presence cultivated temporal lobe activity while I created another series of paintings. This series of paintings are titled “Pause.” This series consists of six paintings. They are paintings of three times of the day: morning dawn, midday, and sunset. I began this series by painting a realistic oil painting of the sky during each time of the day. I then paired each one of those with a painting of the same view fragmented into only horizontal lines. The other three paintings represent the fast pace of life and the disrupted view of beauty and nature when we don’t slow down and appreciate it.

Figure 2: *The Brain’s Spatial Hemisphere “Spiritual Faculties”*

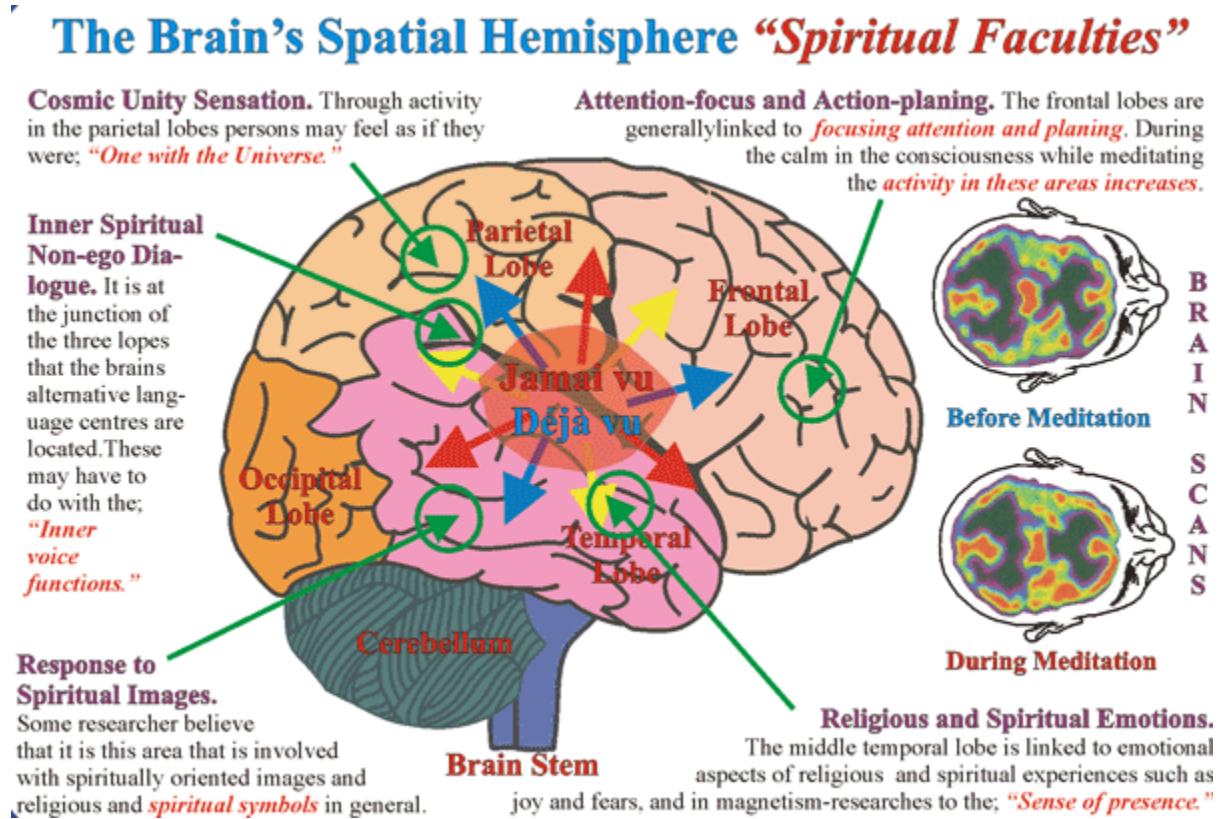


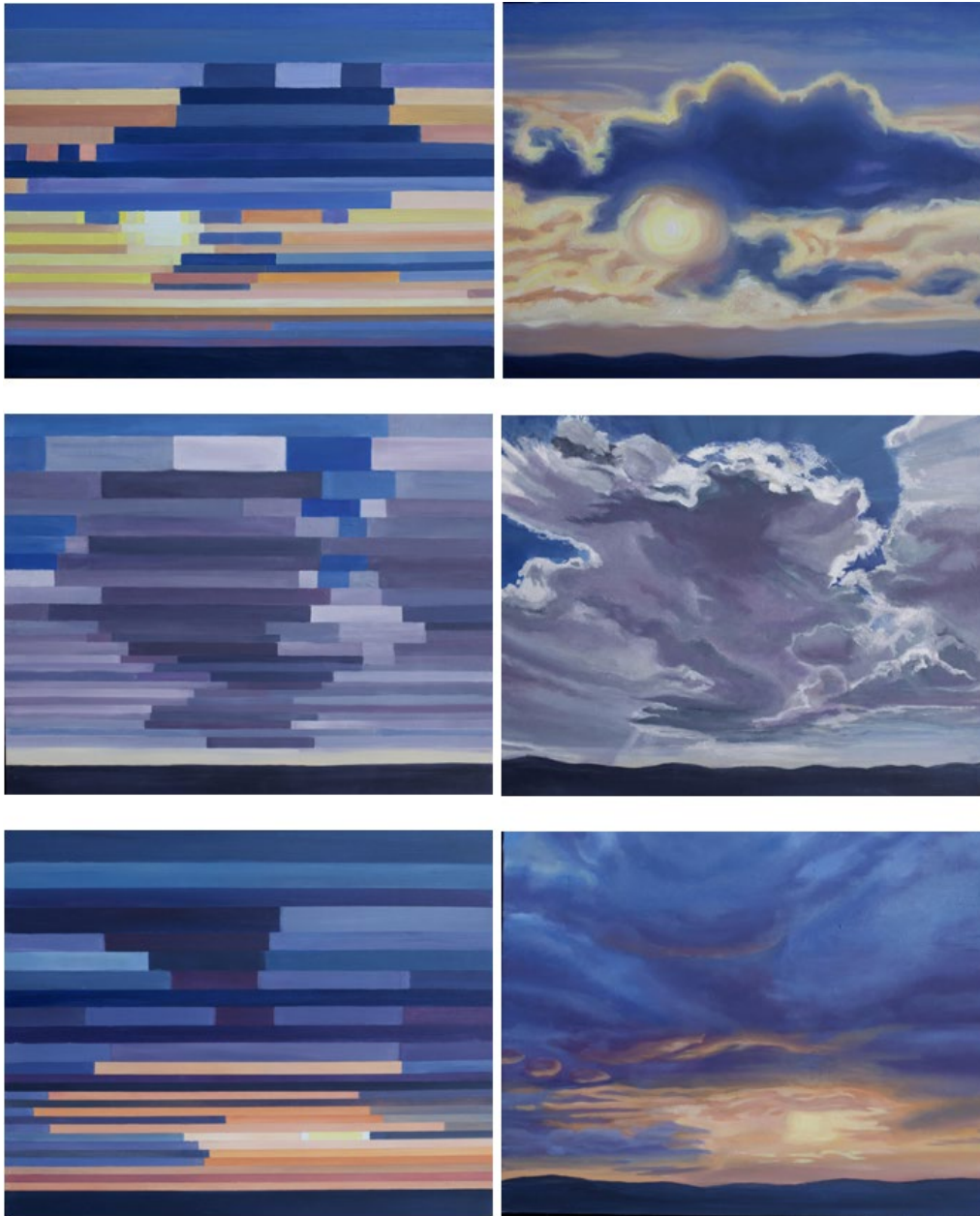
Figure 2: *Spiritual Faculties of the Brain Diagram*

Note: This figure illustrates the different “Spiritual Faculties” of the brain. Each lobe is activated when certain spiritual experiences or connections are made.

Retrieved from <https://sidhere.wordpress.com/2009/04/11/neurotheology/>

Figure 3

“Pause”

*Figure 3: Painting Series titled "Pause"*

Note: This series of paintings create a juxtaposition of two approaches to observing your surroundings. The left side represents the fast pace of society and everyday life. The right-side paintings represent the impermanent beauty seen in nature when you slow down and pause.

Spirituality and Nature

Nature can also bring spiritual experiences and deeper connections to one's true self. Records of an experience of the spiritual in nature exist throughout history (Zinnbauer, 1997). Epic tales about oneness with the natural world to an eternal and timeless land appear in myths, poems, and narratives from around the world (Terhaar, 2009). Earth-centered reverence, with a clear tradition of caring, connectedness, and harmony with nature, was identified in the exploration of ancient wisdom and eastern mysticism, and in the wisdom of Native Americans and the tradition of indigenous peoples (Sisk, 2016). The natural environment offers various opportunities to experience the mysterious and ultimate aspects of existence, commonly described as the sacred, transcendental, and spiritual dimensions of life (Pargament, 2007).

Whether through the landscape itself or the type of activity, nature's immensity and grandeur seem to elicit a relatively unique emotional, spiritual, or self-transcendent experience (Ashley, 2007). These experiences may be brief, as in a fleeting moment of awe and wonderment in the face of nature's power and beauty or long lasting, leading to major self and life transformations (Naor & Mayseless, 2017). Since the experience of oneness as a moment of actual fusion lacks concreteness, a person might assume that such an experience cannot be subjected to scientific methodology (Terhaar, 2009). According to scholars, that assumption is incorrect. There is extensive research pointing to the relationship between spirituality and nature.

According to available research, 15.75% to 18% of surveyed individuals in the United States reported an experience of human consciousness in nature (Terhaar, 2009). An expert in this research, Terhaar explains that "In this study, the research interviewees and other data sources described experiences of unity, wonder, awe, extraordinariness, perfection, goodness, purity, virtue, holiness, or the ideal, in nature" (2009). Terhaar also developed a list of sensations

experienced while surrounded by nature. Six of those sensations are physiological and one psychological. Terhaar explains,

Although many individuals who describe intense spiritual experience in nature define the event by its characteristic of oneness, my analysis of data suggests that intense spiritual experience in nature contains a total of seven characteristics ... These characteristics are: (1) unity, union, or fusion; (2) the presence of an 'other'; (3) ineffability, often described as wonder or awe; (4) a sense of timelessness and spacelessness; (5) intense affect, either strongly positive or negative; (6) paradoxicality, or the sense that something defies logic because opposing facts feel accurate yet only one can be correct; and (7) a noetic quality sensation, usually applied to knowledge and often described as intuitive knowledge.

Scientists cannot study the notion of oneness without a clear definition of its characteristics (Terhaar, 2009). Separating these experiences into characteristics helps researchers gather data in surveys and studies. Through further research, I discovered these characteristics are evident in other studies conducted.

In an article written in the *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Laura Fredrickson also did a qualitative exploration of nature being a source of spiritual inspiration. During this study, on-site observations, personal field journals, and in-depth interviews were conducted after 5 women spent time in the wilderness of Minnesota and 5 other women spent time in the wilderness of northern Arizona. According to Fredrickson, "Journal entries were content-analyzed, exploring the commonalities and idiosyncrasies found between individual accounts" (1999). The results were then used to conduct an interview for each participant. "Participants spoke of the expansiveness of the landscape and an awareness of the sheer powers of nature as contributing to a meaningful wilderness experience, which thereby acted as spiritual inspiration

for most individuals” (1999). In both groups, there were positive interpersonal interactions that lead to sources of spiritual inspiration.

Using this research, I collected my paint supplies and went into nature to paint plein air. I was trained in plein air painting and began a personal search for spiritual experiences in nature. As I travelled, I began to take my paints with me and experienced first-hand the power of immersing myself in nature. By using art and nature, I explored the Terhaar’s characteristics of sensations in nature. I have always felt a deep feeling of tranquility while in nature and really sink into that feeling while I paint. This experience of painting in nature provided me with a better understanding of the fleeting moments of spiritual transcendence.

Figure 4

Plein air studies



Figure 4: Plein Air Paintings of Trees

Note: These four oil paintings were created at four separate locations in Michigan during the summer months.

The Powerful Connection of Spirituality and Creativity

Both creativity and spirituality are important contributors to human well-being and to the overcoming of the indifference that is characteristic of contemporary society (Miner, 2007). If each alone has a positive influence on the same valued outcomes, then it is possible there will be an additional benefit when both are encouraged and expressed together (Miner, 2007). Artistic creativity may provide a means by which novel and more liberating self/world interrelations are experienced by the artist (Raab, 2009). Maureen Miner explains it well, “In the case of creativity, the substance, or focus, is a form of transcendence marked by genuine novelty; in the case of spirituality, the substance or focus is the transcendence of nonphysical power or being (whether experienced in or beyond nature, within human relationships, or in divine beings)”(2007). It is common to find it difficult to consistently develop spiritually over an extended period of time. Many of these enlightening moments can be fleeting. When it comes to spiritual development and creativity, Newberg states the following:

Recent brain studies suggest some areas associated with creativity, and there is some overlap with brain areas involved in spirituality. For example, creativity has often been associated with decreased activity in the frontal lobes. When the frontal lobes have reduced activity, divergent areas of the brain are able to interact more freely, allowing for sufficient cross-interactions to create new ways of integrating concepts and ideas. (2018, p.99)

Howard Gardner writes about experiencing the spiritual during heightened attention in a “flow state.” Under highly desirable circumstances, people become so immersed in the execution of an activity that they lose all sense of time and space (Gardner, 1999). This is a common state

that creators and artists often experience during their art making process. During this state of mind, neural connections are experienced.

Flow state is a path of spiritual development (Hambeukers, 2020). According to psychologists like Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, the flow state depends on two factors: skill level and difficulty of the challenge. People can get into flow states if their skill level matches their challenge level. “It is a very positive psychological state that typically occurs when a person perceives a balance between the challenges associated with a situation and their ability to meet the demands of the challenge and accomplish” (Beard, 2015).

During a “flow state”, it is common for one to be more intuitive with their actions or practice. Intuition is often associated with spiritual experiences. Neuroscientist, Candace Pert, (1997) said that intuition is part of the spiritual realm, and there is a higher intelligence that comes to use via molecules, resulting from participation in a system far greater than the world received from the five senses. The ability to understand something immediately without conscious reasoning is something that can enhance a spiritual experience. In the spiritual view of flow state, it’s about surrendering, letting go of your ego and training your sensibility to your path, training your intuition (Hambeukers, 2020).

In 2018 and 2019 I explored this deep state of flow through the creation of twenty-one oil paintings. The collection of paintings was even titled “FLOW”. These paintings began as a series based on personal adventures and developed into an artistic exploration of multiple interpretations of water. The title FLOW comes from the concept of eudaimonia; that exhilarating encounter between a human being and divine, creative inspiration. Very often artists drift into a mental state of being fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment. I personally experienced the state of flow while working. See figure 5.

Figure 5

Four paintings from my FLOW collection.



Figure 5: Four oil paintings from a series titled "Flow"

Note: These are four of the twenty-one oil paintings mostly created with palette knives. Each of these paintings share a theme of patterns in flowing water.

Spiritual Development

Adolescents

The Harvard psychiatrist and author Robert Coles describes spirituality with respect to children as “the search for meaning in life events and a yearning for connectedness to the universe”(1990). Especially at a young adult or adolescent age, there is a need for spiritual development. During the transitional process of adolescence, which involves biological and psychological changes, the traditional norms are cognitively questioned, and external authority is rejected (Bussing, 2010). Studies addressing the significant decline in spiritual practice among young people suggest that young people are not interested in the present and long-term trajectory of their spiritual lives (Hughes, 2007). In 2010, there was a study conducted by faculty at the Alanus University of Arts and Social Sciences in Germany. This analysis involved 254 adolescents from four different high schools. The purpose of this study was to identify which aspects of spirituality are valued by adolescents. It was also revealed that the importance of more religious aspects of spirituality is known to increase with higher age and are less important to young adults and adolescents. The results from a questionnaire also revealed the following:

We found that they appreciated most conscious interactions, compassion/generosity, and aspiring for beauty/wisdom, while particularly religious orientation/ prayer (trust in God), esoteric transcendence conviction, or quest orientation were of lower relevance.

(Bussing, 2010, p.25)

Most developmental theorists who write about spiritual development connect it with other aspects of development (Tisdell,2008). “Spiritual well-being is a fundamental dimension of people’s overall health and wellbeing, permeating and integrating all other dimensions of health (i.e., the physical, mental, emotional, social, and vocational)” (Fisher, 1998). James Fowler,

known for his linear stage theory of faith development, ties spiritual and faith development strongly to cognitive and moral development (Tisdell, 2008). According to Fowler (1981), “the significance of image, symbol, metaphor, music, or kinesthetic sensory experience that is beyond cognitive or rational realm as central to those meaning-making processes that people often connect to as the spiritual.”

Holistic Education

Education in recent years has tended increasingly to narrow its focus, zeroing in on only those academic skills tested in high-stake assessments while ignoring many other aspects of children’s development (Campbell, 2011). Teaching in a holistic way considers humans as a whole and includes the mind, body, and spirit. According to John Miller, “the key principles that define contemporary holistic education are balance, inclusion, and connection” (2007). Laurell Campbell explains each principle:

Balance refers to the correct relationship between each aspect of the person and the whole person, while inclusion means linking together various educational orientations for authentic learning. Connection results from focusing on the relationships between all dimensions of experience, as well as those between humans and all living things.
(Campbell, 2011, p.18)

These principles benefit learning in the classroom but also reflect the most controversial aspect of holistic education, the spiritual. It has been difficult to discuss issues related to spirituality and religious experience in education because of the implementation of separation of church and state in public institutions and in much of American society (Estanek, 2006). Due to the separation of church and state policy in the United States of America, neither religious education is taught, nor spirituality education promoted in public schools (Ng and Lu, 2015).

This issue concerning spirituality has to do with the association with religion. The meaning of spirituality has expanded in significant ways, which can be legitimately expressed in secular settings (Campbell, 2011). Religion and spirituality are viewed as distinctly different concepts in current discussions about educational theory and practice, including public school contexts (Emmons, 2006). Laurel H. Campbell says this well:

One way to understand the difference between religion and spirituality is that religions typically provide answers to questions and human existence, while at the same time providing prescribed framework for daily life, including rituals, readings, and prayers that reinforce common beliefs. In contrast, being spiritual can be interpreted to mean that the individuals ask questions about value and purpose, allowing multiple perspectives to be voiced. (Campbell, 2005, p.51)

Instead of focusing on progressive and meticulous learning, holistic curriculum focuses on the sense of connectedness and is designed for nourishment and expansion of student's life (Ng & Lu, 2015). Holistic education attempts to nurture the development of the whole person, to foster connections between the inner and outer life, and to keep a harmonious balance between the intra and interpersonal relationships (Ng & Lu, 2015). In John Miller's published book, *Holistic Curriculum*, he suggested that the holistic curriculum was about connectedness. He defined holistic education as the following:

The focus of holistic education is on relationships - the relationships between linear thinking and intuition, the relationship between various domains of knowledge, the relationship between the individual and community, and the relationship between self and Self. In the holistic curriculum the students examine these relationships so that he/she

gains both an awareness of them and the skills necessary to transform the relationships where it is appropriate. (Miller, 1988, p. 3)

The concept of holistic curriculum would be a helpful tool to broaden the concern for children's social, moral, and spiritual development (Ng & Lu, 2015). "By bringing soul more explicitly into the educational process we can have education for the whole person rather than a fragmented self" (Miller, 1998).

Holistic educators argue that personal transformation and social change should first occur within teachers, and then their students (Campbell, 2011). Through a qualitative study by Laurell Campbell, the connection between the spiritual identity of the educator and their approaches to teaching was examined. According to Campbell, "Finding connections between spirituality in art and spirituality in teaching requires inquiry into how spirituality develops within the artist, and ultimately how it manifests in teaching" (2005, p. 51). In her study, three art educators were observed. The researcher viewed the long-term growth of spiritual development in each educator. Then the researcher observed each participant in their classroom to search for connections between the inner self and the person's philosophy of creating and teaching art. All three participants came from different walks of life and demonstrated different approaches to deeper connections with themselves, their students, and their ways of teaching. This study revealed that there was a strong connection between art instruction and a consistent involvement in art making that led to a high degree of personal fulfillment. This study also showed that all three participants had a desire to connect their spiritual development with their approaches to teaching.

Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences was published in 1985 and has been a respected topic for educational theory and practices. Gardner's theory is based on knowledge of multiple and differentiated capacities of the brain as well as on a scientific observation and

analysis of the historical record of the range of human accomplishment (Day & Hurwits, 2011).

There are nine multiple intelligences that educators apply in attempts to broaden the learning and development of students. These multiple intelligences include logical-mathematical, linguistic, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, naturalist, musical, and existential.

Teaching with this theory in mind is teaching a student holistically instead of overemphasizing logical-mathematical and linguistic intelligences. Existential intelligence involves an individual's ability to use collective values and intuition to understand others and the world around them.

Spiritual Intelligence

Spiritual intelligence (SQ) is starting to be an intelligence that continues to gain credence and this recognition is being manifested in business and education (Sisk, 2016). This type of intelligence is outside Howard Gardner's nine multiple intelligences theory. Spiritual intelligence can be defined as the capacity to use a multi-sensory approach, including intuition, meditation, and visualization, to tap inner knowledge to solve problems of a global nature (Sisk, 2016).

Through these methods, there is a connection to a person's authentic self. The need to search for meaning and to search for identity emerged as key elements for individual achievement and fulfillment (Sisk, 2016). Palmer (1991) defined spirituality as a quest for connectedness with self, with others, with the worlds of history and nature, and with the mystery of being alive.

Writing from the inner self is one such strategy in which students explore their core values and their connections to others and the environment (Sisk, 2008). With greater recognition and use of these methods such as imaging and meditation, spirituality will grow naturally in the classroom.

Teachers will begin to view themselves as agents of joy and conduits of transcendence, rather than merely as licensed trainers or promoters of measurable growth (Suher, 1999).

As proposed by Carl Jung (1969), “People who manifest spiritual intelligence are open to a multi-sensory way of knowing in which the psychic and physical are no longer differentiated, and they are able to use the core capacities of meditation, intention, and visualization”. SQ seeks to unify our individual unconscious with our conscious mind and feelings and to unite our individual life with the collective unconscious (Jung, 1969). Brain research has suggested there may be an intrinsic area of the brain, the temporal lobe, that can be considered as the brain’s state of spiritual intelligence (Persinger, et al., 1996).

The early exploration of SQ has been correlated with Howard Gardner’s existential intelligence. Often when researching Gardner’s multiple intelligences, existential intelligence is missing and there are only eight frames of mind. It was not one of the original seven intelligences that Gardner listed in his seminal 1983 book, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. In fact, Howard Gardner stated years later, “Despite the attractiveness of a ninth intelligence, I am not adding existential intelligence to the list. I find the phenomenon perplexing enough to distance from the other intelligences vast enough to dictate prudence - at least for now” (1999). But, after an additional two decades of research, Gardner decided to include existential intelligence. There are connections with existential intelligence that are made to SQ. He recognized skills manifested in SQ as meditating, achieving trance states, and envisioning the transcendental or being in touch with psychic, spiritual, or noetic phenomena (Sisk, 2008).

According to a study by Dorothy A. Sisk, there are seven ways to develop or raise spiritual awareness (2008). This includes emphasis on the core values of community, connectedness and oneness of all, compassion, a sense of balance, responsibility, and service. To

develop these, it is effective for educators to not only rely on the five senses but also include visualization, meditation, and intuition. The seven ways of doing this are depicted in Table 1.

In education, students can make a difference using spiritual intelligence. Engaging the spiritual intelligence of gifted students honors their quest to find out what gives life meaning and integrity, allows them to feel connected, and creates a way to live a life of service to humanity (Dabrowski, 1967). This concept of spiritual intelligence only being taught to gifted students has changed and is needed for all students. Educating Spiritual development and higher consciousness represents a hope and goal to provide opportunities for students to develop and use their spiritual intelligence, and to discover what is essential in life (Sisk, 2016). Students who manifest spiritual intelligence are using their sensitivity to social problems and concern for others to solve problems. Students who are concerned with global or surrounding problems want to make a difference. When teaching students, there are likely traits of spiritual intelligence that can be identified in all children. As shown in Table 2, there are ways that educators can use this concept to strengthen their learning.

Table 1*Seven ways to raise or develop spiritual intelligence*

Seven ways to raise or develop spiritual intelligence

1. Think about your goals, desires, and wants in order to bring your life into perspective and balance, and identify your values;
 2. Access your inner processes and use your vision to see your goals, desires and wants fulfilled, and experience the emotion connected with this fulfillment;
 3. Integrate your personal and universal vision, and recognize your connectedness;
 4. Take responsibility for your goals, desires, and wants;
 5. Develop a sense of community by inviting more people into your life;
 6. Focus on love and compassion; and
 7. When chance knocks at your door, invite it in and take advantage of coincidences.
-

Note: This table illustrates how Dorothy A. Sisk explains the seven ways to raise or develop spiritual intelligence. These approaches can be used in the classroom to enhance spiritual development.

Table 2

Likely traits	Ways to strengthen for learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Uses inner knowing ● Seeks to understand self ● Uses metaphor and parables to communicate ● Uses intuition ● Sensitive to social problems ● Sensitive to their purpose in life ● Concerned about inequity and injustice ● Enjoys big questions ● Sense of gestalt (the big picture) ● Wants to make a difference ● Capacity to care ● Curious about how the world works/functions ● Values love, compassion, concern for others ● Close to nature ● Uses visualization and mental imaging ● Reflective, self-observing, and self-aware ● Seeks balance ● Concerned about right conduct ● Seeks to understand self ● Feels connected with others, the Earth, and the universe ● Wants to make a difference ● Peacemaker ● Concerned with human suffering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide time for reflective thinking ● Use journal writing ● Study lives/works of spiritual pathfinders ● Use problem solving ● Conduct service learning projects ● Use personal growth activities ● Use problem-based learning on real problems ● Provide time for open-ended discussion ● Use mapping to integrate studies/themes ● Develop personal growth activities ● Service learning projects ● Integrate science/social science ● Use affirmations/think-about-thinking ● Employ eco-environmental approach ● Read stories and myths ● Use role playing/sociodrama ● Discussion of goal setting activities ● Process discussions ● Trust intuition and inner voice ● Stress unity in studies ● Use what, so what, now what model ● Use negotiation-conflict sessions ● Study lives of eminent people

Note: This table illustrates the likely traits of a spiritual intelligent child along with ways an educator can strengthen spirituality for learning. These are effective approaches to teaching spiritual development in the classroom.

Contemplative Pedagogy

One approach to teaching a holistic curriculum in education is Contemplative Pedagogy. Contemplative Pedagogy cultivates inner awareness through self-investigations, often called “contemplative practices”. Contemplative practices are broadly defined as the ways that human beings, across cultures and across time, have found to concentrate, broaden, and deepen conscious awareness as the gateway to cultivating their full potential (Roth, 2011). This leads to more meaningful and fulfilling lives (Roth, 2011). Contemplative pedagogy can range from silence at the start of class to exercises that cultivate general mental capacities (e.g., concentration) to support the learning process (Binnun & Tarrasch, 2014). Contemplative practices in the classroom range widely: silent sitting meditation, compassion practices, walking meditation, deep listening, mindfulness, yoga, calligraphy, chant, guided meditations, nature observation, self-inquiry, and many more (Grace, 2011). This approach has grown over the past 15 years, and it advocates guiding students to develop a more spiritual self. This has been integrated mostly in higher education and has shown positive results in young adults. This pedagogy is beginning to be integrated into secondary and elementary education.

Contemplative methods cultivate inner awareness through rigorous first-person investigations (Binnun & Tarrasch, 2014). When introduced in an educational setting, these methods have been shown to encourage experiential and affective learning (Miller, 1994). In Figure 6, you can see the framework of contemplative practices is illustrated in the form of a tree. In this framework, educators are rooted in awareness, communion, and connection. A variety of approaches such as stillness, generative, creative, active, relational, movement, and ritual/cyclical can be used in the classroom. From there, specific practices are implemented such as meditation, journaling, yoga, gratitude, and many more.

Figure 6: Tree of Contemplative Practices



Figure 6: Illustration of the Contemplative Pedagogy Tree

Note: This figure illustrates the rooting concepts of Contemplative practices which are awareness, communion, and connection. Branching up from the roots there are approaches to Contemplative practices including stillness, generative, creative, active, relational, movement, and ritual/cyclical. Within each approach are a variety of practices to implement to create deeper connections.

Without learning the skills of self-inquiry and contemplative awareness, the students remained imprisoned in their own unconscious biases, stereotypes, past wounds, unexamined expectations, and peremptory judgements (Grace, 2011). Many educational institutions accumulate children to squelch their inner questions and conform to the style and preferences of the instructor (Miller, 2006). Contemplative Pedagogy is important in education now more than ever. It is easy for educators to feel more pressure or focus more on high stakes test results instead of shaping their students into self-aware individuals. Due to many factors affecting children, one being social media, students are losing touch with their self-awareness and ability to connect to their world in a more meaningful way. Using contemplative pedagogy, we can invite students to explore connectedness between subjects, develop global awareness, and expand cultural literacy.

Contemplative learning takes many forms and, as with any pedagogy, there are diverse views on how, where, and why it is most effective or needed (Fisher, 2017). In an article written by Kathleen Fisher, Contemplative pedagogy is reconsidered. The following are three problems with integrating Contemplative Pedagogy:

First, many contemplative practices are rooted in religious or spiritual traditions which are easily misrepresented when used outside their communities. Second, contemplative practices can evoke powerful emotional and psychological responses for which one's disciplinary expertise may be inadequate. Third, some contemplative practitioners conclude that what is personally good for them is good for their students. (Fisher, 2017, p. 13)

According to Fran Grace, "Not all educators are intellectually interested or temperamentally inclined to offer contemplative courses (2011). Not all institutions or schools

may be suitable. For some schools and educators, many of these approaches may or may not be appropriate. Although some educators do not see the relevance, Gen Z does. Students are hungry for deeper understanding and finding their true self. It is a decision for each individual educator on how they want to create deeper connections in their classroom.

Conclusion

Spirituality has a long history of being defined and aesthetically studied through the making and the viewing of art. Through this research I have made several personal discoveries. When I began this journey, I was searching for answers to my religious questions. By identifying different perspectives of spirituality through a variety of religious practices, I expanded my views outside the context of organized religion. In my examination of neurotheology, I now have a deeper understanding of how the human brain processes information while experiencing spiritual moments. Deep spiritual connections to nature are universal and creative states of mind overlap with the spiritual experience.

This personal journey has also expanded my proficiency as an art educator. I can approach teaching in a more holistic way, opening opportunities for deeper student learning and universal connections. Quality teaching, while considering spiritual intelligence, helps students not only become more self-aware, but they also deepen their awareness as global citizens. Understanding that they are a small, important piece of something greater is one of the highest goals for education. Novel approaches to Contemplative Pedagogy are propelling the awareness of global citizenship. All individuals deserve the opportunity to reach their full potential. Reaching full potential can no longer be achieved through the accumulation of facts. Cultivating one's own full potential can only be achieved through careful consideration of intellect, emotional quotient, and a balanced spiritual intelligence.

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Figure 7

Final Thesis Painting titled "Pause"



Figure 7: Final Thesis Painting also titled "Pause"

Connecting with Nature through Observation

Spring 2022

Sara Buzzitta-Johnson

Grade 9-12

Allocated Time - ten 60-minute class periods.
(third class period on a field trip in nature)



Figure 8: Sketches of items from nature and a final painting by a student.

Sketches by Sara Buzzitta-Johnson

Artwork by Iryna Zhurauliova

Outcome Statement:

Students will explore drawing and painting techniques while observing their surroundings in a natural environment. Students will be challenged to apply their understanding of sketching from observation along with recordings of their experiences and discoveries made. By the end of this lesson, students will have three complete sketchbook pages of their observations, experiences, and notes along with a deeper understanding of details in their surrounding environment. Students will also have a complete enlarged nature drawing. This lesson is important at this age because it provides the space and time to reconnect with nature.

Objectives

The learner will:

- have the opportunity for the calming sensations experienced in nature.
- deepen observational skills.
- ask questions that spark curiosity for further investigation about the environment.
- demonstrate one or more techniques of drawing or painting from nature.
- reflect and record their experience and findings through note taking and conversation.
- create an enlarged nature drawing based off of their discoveries.

Criteria**Part 1: Field Sketching**

- Create three pages of sketches and notes on 5x7 paper - utilizing one half of the page.
- Record observations through notes, descriptions, and questions.
- Apply color, patten, and textures to capture details of what is being observed.
- Further research about the environment, ecosystem, or item from nature.

Part 2: Enlarged Nature Drawing

- Use a drawing medium other than graphite pencil.
- Create a final enlarged nature drawing on a 12x18 piece of tagboard with three textures.
- Write a five-sentence artist statement.

Visual Arts Standards:

VA:Cr2.1.IIIa

Experiment, plan, and make multiple works of art and design that explore a personally meaningful theme, idea, or concept.

VA:Cr1.2.IIIa

Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices, following or breaking established conventions, to plan the making of multiple works of art and design based on a theme, idea, or concept.

VA:Re.7.1.IIa

Recognize and describe personal aesthetic and empathetic responses to the natural world and constructed environments.

Integrated Standards:

HS-LS2-7

Design, evaluate, and refine a solution for reducing the impacts of human activities on the environment and biodiversity.

HS-LS2-8

Evaluate the evidence for the role of group behavior on individual and species' chances to survive and reproduce.

https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/K-12_Science_Performance_Expectations_v5_496901_7.pdf

Universal Design for Learning and Presentation Diversification

Multi-Sensory Engagement (Gardner)

Visual: Students will view images, history of field sketching, videos, instructions, and procedures on the projector screen.

Intrapersonal

Students will reflect on items and concepts of personal importance.

Interpersonal

Students will discuss and help each other shape their concepts.

Mathematical

Students will use sighting and measuring techniques to draw correct proportions.

Linguistic

Describe ideas and concepts to one another and to the teacher.

Mind Style Consideration (Gregore):

Concrete Sequential - Notes from presentation, presentation on google classroom, resources on google classroom, images and procedures on the projector for reference.

Abstract Random -The opportunity to explore in nature and experiment with new techniques. Take chances, be intuitive and see what happens!

Anticipatory Set:

Sounds from nature will be playing when students come into the classroom.

We will begin class reading a quote from Thich Nhat Hanh. We will interpret when the reading means and discuss the new perspective towards nature.

Peace in Every Step

I asked the leaf whether it was frightened because it was autumn and the other leaves were falling.

The leaf told me, "No. During the whole spring and summer I was completely alive. I worked hard to help nourish the tree, and now much of me is in the tree. I am not limited by this form. I am also the whole tree, and when I go back to the soil, I will continue to nourish the tree. So I don't worry at all. As I leave this branch and float to the ground, I will wave to the tree and tell her, 'I will see you again very soon.'"

That day there was a wind blowing and, after a while, I saw the leaf leave the branch and float down to the soil, dancing joyfully, because as it floated it saw itself already there in the tree. It was so happy. I bowed my head, knowing that I have a lot to learn from the leaf."

" ... So please continue to look back and you will see that you have always been here. Let us look together and penetrate into the life of a leaf, so we may be one with the leaf. Let us penetrate and be one with the cloud or with the wave, to realize our own nature as water and be free from our fear. If we look very deeply, we will transcend birth and death.

Tomorrow, I will continue to be. But you will have to be very attentive to see me. I will be a flower, or a leaf. I will be in these forms and I will say hello to you. If you are attentive enough, you will recognize me, and you may greet me. I will be very happy.

~~ Thich Nhat Hanh

Materials

<u>On site:</u>	<u>During Classroom studio days:</u>
5x7 pieces of paper	All materials used on site
Pencil	Glue
Ultra-fine point Sharpie or various pens	Tape
Watercolor set	Acrylic paint
Paint brushes	Palettes
Water bottle	Oil pastels
Watercolor pencils	Charcoal
Colored pencils	Conte crayon
Paper towel	Mineral spirits or baby oil
Flower pressing book	12x18 pieces of tagboard
Clear packaging tape	

Concepts and Vocabulary

- **Sketch** - a quick drawing capturing the essence of the subject or scene.
- **Rendering**- a realistic and very detailed drawing
- **Articulation** - Drawing with extreme details
- **Suggestion** - Implying textures or details through mark making.
- **En plein air** - the act of painting outdoors.
- **Field Sketching** - the act of sketching on site.
- **Intentional Curiosity**
- **Mindfulness from Nature**
- **Principles of Design** - How to plan and organize elements of a work of art

Procedures

Day 1:

Anticipatory Set (Explained above)

Each table will have an item from nature in a brown paper bag. Students will not know what is in the bag. They will take turns guessing. We will do a body scan on how we are feeling physically when we are excited or curious. Explain how important it is to bottle up that feeling and be grateful for it.

Students will then open up the bags and lay the items on their table. Students will describe the item with three different adjectives without identifying it. Next, students will write down 3 questions they have about their object.

The teacher will do a demonstration under the document camera (recorded) showing the steps of creating a quick sketch from observation.

Students will have three minutes to do a quick sketch of the object in front of them.

Introduce the two-part structure of the lesson and show the timeline of the lesson.

Share the steps of field sketching:

Sparkling curiosity - explore the possibilities

Recording Observations - approaches and techniques

Deepen Inquiry - tools to help you ask questions

Further Exploration - pulling together drawings, questions, and discoveries.

Give lesson criteria for Part 1: Field Sketching

Create three pages of sketches and notes on 5x7 paper - utilizing one half of the page.

Record observations through notes, descriptions, and questions.

Apply color, patten, and textures to capture details of what is being observed.

Further research about the environment, ecosystem, or item from nature.

Day 2:

Revisit what students have learned yesterday.

Teacher will introduce Step 2: Recording Observation - approaches and techniques

Grinnell Method

John Muirs Laws Method

Take notes in sketchbook from “elements on a page” slide

Other naturalist sketchbooks

Show students online resources and videos for students to watch the night before the field trip.

Students will gather materials they plan to use the next day.

Day 3:

On Site:

Students will turn in their devices to the teacher.

Students will be given instructions and review the criteria for the assignment. The teacher will also show students what other materials were brought for the group to use.

Students will then be dismissed to explore and observe their environment and begin their observational field sketches.

Day 4:

Students will be back in the classroom and given time to further investigate answers to the questions they wrote in their sketchbook. Students will also be given time to render their sketches with more materials.

Day 5:

Students will share their story and discoveries in small groups.

Students will complete a written self-reflection on Google Classroom about the entire experience.

Day 6:

Introduce Enlarged Nature Drawings and show examples.

Review the Principles of Design in Drawing.

Give lesson criteria for Part two: Enlarged Nature Drawing

Use a drawing medium other than graphite pencil.

Create a final enlarged nature drawing on a 12x18 piece of tagboard with three textures.

Write a five-sentence artist statement.

Day 7-9:

Work days

Day 10:

Turn in the final project with a complete artist statement.

Resources

Google Classroom: Google Slide Presentations, Rubrics and Recorded Lesson Videos.
YouTube videos about process
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v079W4IZ0TU>

Accommodations:

- All presentations, demos, and videos are on google classroom. Students have a checklist of all the tasks they need to get done on the unit rubric they are given.
- Students who need more time on this project are able to come in early before school or after school for one-on-one assistance.

Closure:

Students will write an artist statement about their overall learning experience throughout this lesson. In this artist statement students must clearly explain what discoveries were made from the beginning part of sketching. They are to describe what materials and techniques they used. Students will then write about the steps they took to create their enlarged nature drawing. They are to also explain the principles of design used and techniques applied.

What is field sketching?

What is the difference between a sketch and rendered drawing?

What type(s) of techniques did you use to complete your sketches?

What is intentional curiosity?

Explain the discoveries made through observational drawing and further research.

Explain the sketching process. What materials and tools did you use?

What are the principles of design?

How did you intentionally use the principles of design in your final composition?

Rubrics/Assessments

PART 1: FIELD SKETCHING GRADING RUBRIC

	Excelling (5 points)	Average (2-4 points)	Unsatisfactory (0 points)
Student created three pages of sketches on 5x7 pieces of paper	Student utilized one half of the page for each sketch.	Student completed sketches but clearly did not spend quality time on them.	Student did not complete sketches.
Student recorded observations through notes, descriptions, and questions.	Student spent time writing and recording their findings from observations in nature. Student asked 3 questions for each sketch.	Student took only a few notes recording their findings.	Student chose not to take any notes.
Students applied color, pattern, and textures to capture details of what was being observed.	Student applied color, pattern, and texture using more than one technique or material.	Student's observations did not explore color, patterns, and textures.	Student chose not to include any color, patterns, or textures to their sketches.
Student further researched about the environment, ecosystem, or items from nature.	Student added to their 5x7 sketches answers to questions they asked and/or added more information relating to their observations.	—	Student chose not to do further research or add to their 5x7 sketches.
Effort and Participation	Student used their time wisely, stayed on task on work days, and kept their work space clean.	Student occasionally got off task or left a mess.	Student chose not to put effort into their work or participate at all.

PART 2: ENLARGED NATURE DRAWING GRADING RUBRIC

	Excelling (10 points)	Average (5 points)	Unsatisfactory (0 Points)
Create a drawing of an enlarged element from nature with a medium other than graphite.	Student completed a drawing using a medium other than graphite.	Student completed the drawing but used only graphite.	Student chose not to complete a drawing.
Create a composition using the Principles of Design	Student was intentional about their composition and identified what principles of design they included.	—	Student did not create a composition using the Principles of Design.
Show texture through a variety of mark making and/or patterns.	Student clearly explored how to create textures in drawing	—	Student chose not to add any texture to their drawing.
Reflection through an Artist Statement	Student completed a well-developed artist statement.	Student completed an artist statement but clearly did not spend time on it.	Student chose not to complete an artist statement.