

# Ending “I don’t know what to do.”

Empowering Student Voice and Teaching Idea Generation



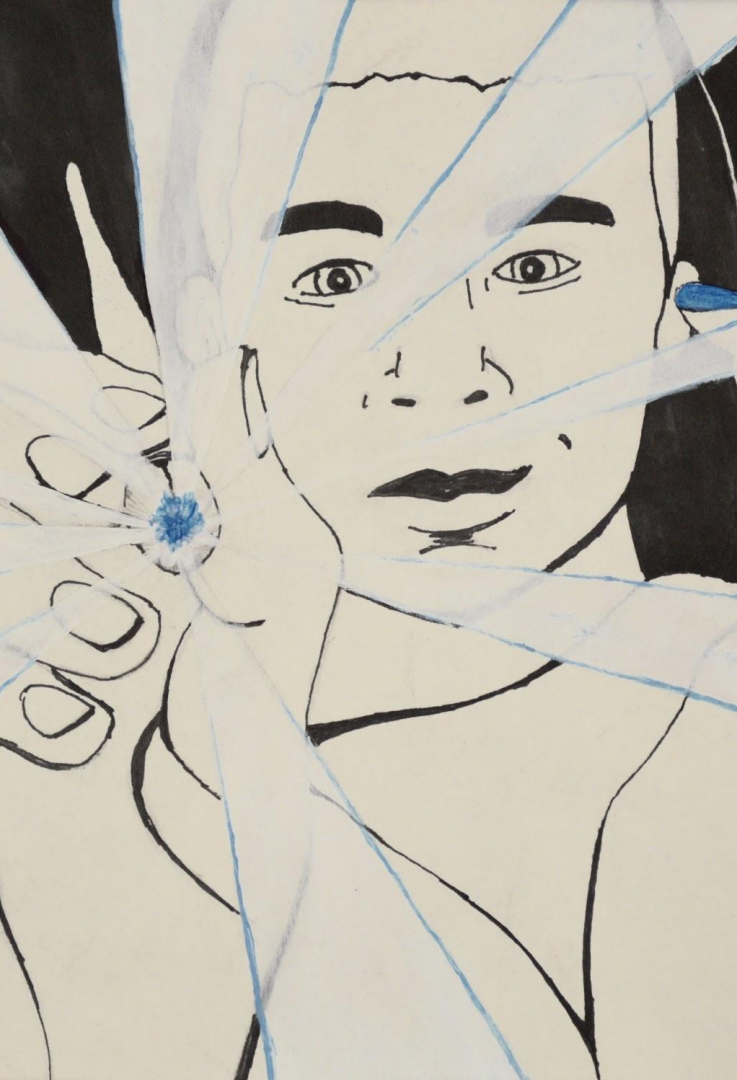


## I don't know what to do...

This is such a frustrating question when we want to get our students to think, express, and create art with meaning. However, many of us have never been taught how to teach idea generation. In this presentation, I will share results from my graduate research project on the topic, and strategies that I have used to get 7-12 students thinking, brainstorming, and making meaning for themselves.



**What does the  
research say?**



Research has shown that one of the most powerful ways we can engage students is to make our curriculum centered on student-choice and allow students to make meaningful connections to artwork through their own creative investigations (Cummings, 2012; Rufo, 2011; Douglas and Jaquith, 2009; Pitri, 2013 ) “There is no one lesson and no way to provide instruction that will satisfy all the curiosities, interests and personality in a classroom of learners.” (Douglas & Jaquith, 2009, p. 1) Therefore, we must be facilitators for our students as they ask their own questions, problem solve, and find their own directions.

The real product of art education is not the works of art, but the child. We have to keep that firmly in mind—though it goes against several grains. If you are an artist and you want to make good art, I urge you to go into your studio and make good art. What you need to do as a teacher of art is create kids who make good art, create kids who think well as artists, who have an artistic mind.

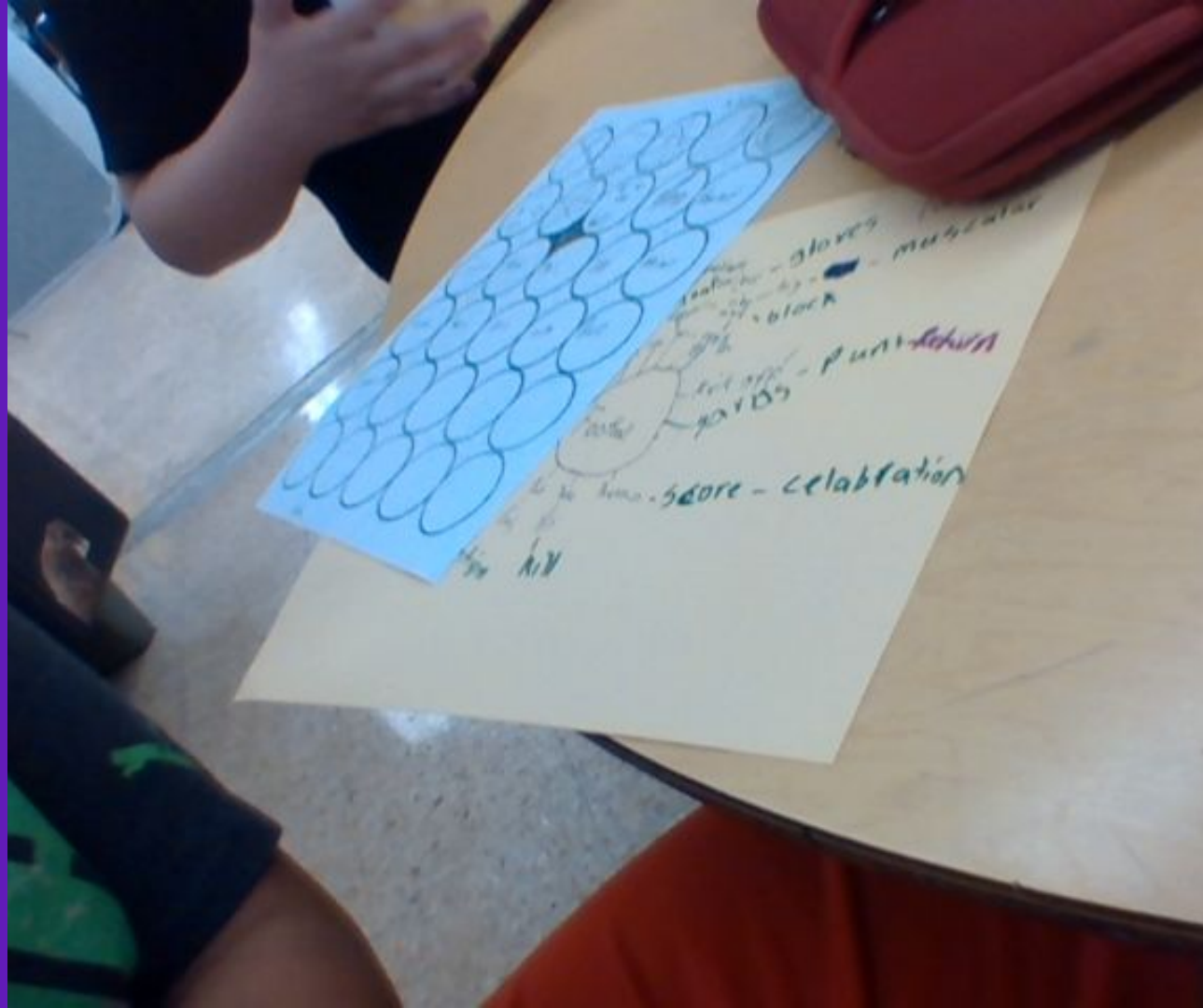
As artists, kids have to learn to chase the quality of their work. Artists must make the best art that they can make, but that's not your job. Your job is to get your students to chase the quality of their own work and make the best work they can make. So it can be confusing. I think we get really trapped and stuck in thinking that it's our job to make really high-quality work, so that we can put it out in the hall and everybody will say that we have a good art program. I think we have to be careful of that trap because you can turn your class into a production factory and then your kids don't develop artistic minds, even though they may be making beautiful work that is hanging in the hall. What I'm really urging here is more autonomy on the part of the student artist—they need to be making the decisions if they're going to make a better mind.

Lois Hetland (Studio Habits)



# Teaching brainstorming 7th Grade

How to bust through creative  
block



## Components of Creativity

1. **CONFIDENCE:** ABILITY TO QUESTION WITHOUT FEAR
2. **OBSERVATION:** SEEING PROBLEMS/IDEAS
3. **HUMILITY:** KNOWING YOU DON'T KNOW EVERYTHING
4. **MINDFULNESS:** THINKING ON HOW TO THINK
5. **CURIOSITY:** EXPLORING AND EXPERIMENTING
6. **RESOURCEFULNESS:** SOMETHING TO TINKER WITH
7. **ENERGY:** TO EXPLORE AND TINKER
8. **ACTION:** NOT JUST THINKING, BUT DOING

## Q WHERE DO IDEAS COME FROM?

**EVERYTHING YOU EXPERIENCE!**



## HEAR



## TOUCH



## TASTE



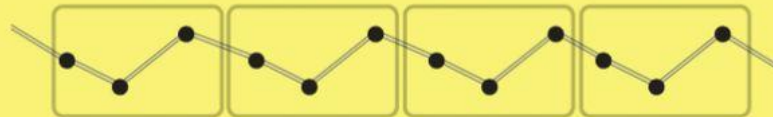
## SMELL

**YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS SORTS AND STORES THESE.**

Then

Then

## YOUR BRAIN CHECKS FOR PATTERNS...

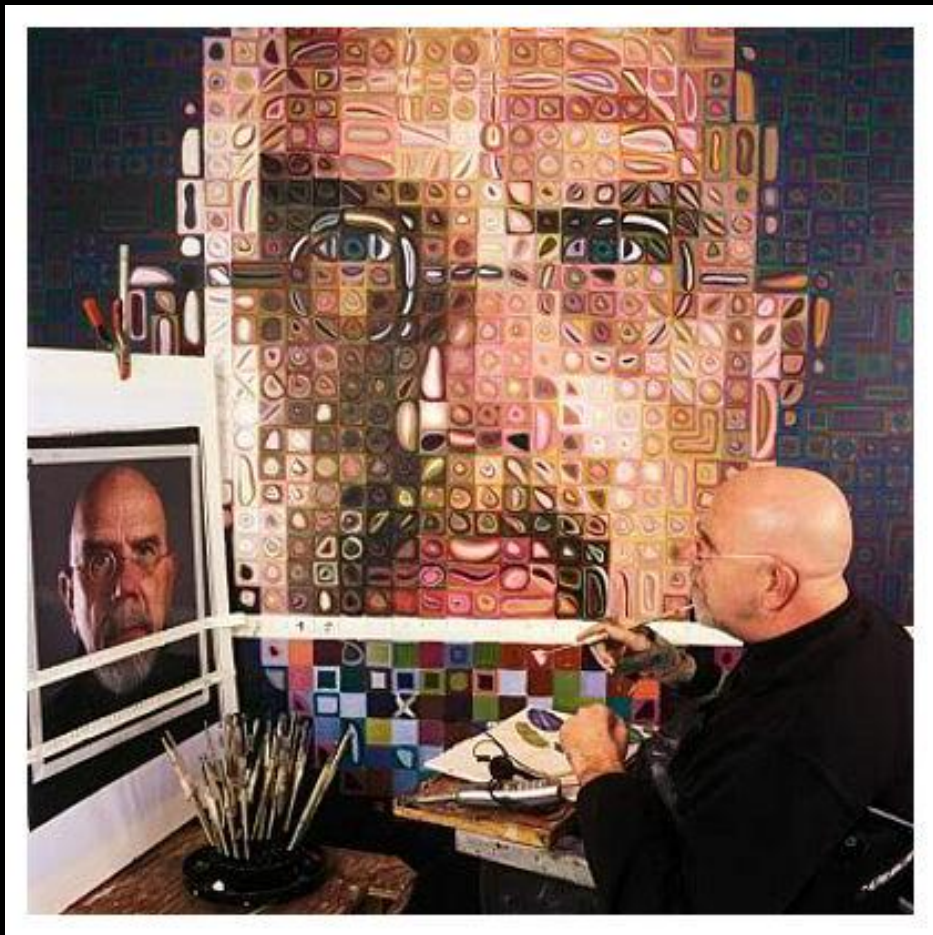


**CONNECTING EXPERIENCES TOGETHER.**



**CONNECTIONS BETWEEN EXISTING CONCEPTS = NEW IDEAS!**





The advice I like to give young artists, or really anybody who'll listen to me, is not to wait around for inspiration. Inspiration is for amateurs; the rest of us just show up and get to work. If you wait around for the clouds to part and a bolt of lightning to strike you in the brain, you are not going to make an awful lot of work. All the best ideas come out of the process; they come out of the work itself. Things occur to you. If you're sitting around trying to dream up a great art idea, you can sit there a long time before anything happens. But if you just get to work, something will occur to you and something else will occur to you and something else that you reject will push you in another direction. Inspiration is absolutely unnecessary and somehow deceptive. You feel like you need this great idea before you can get down to work, and I find that's almost never the case."

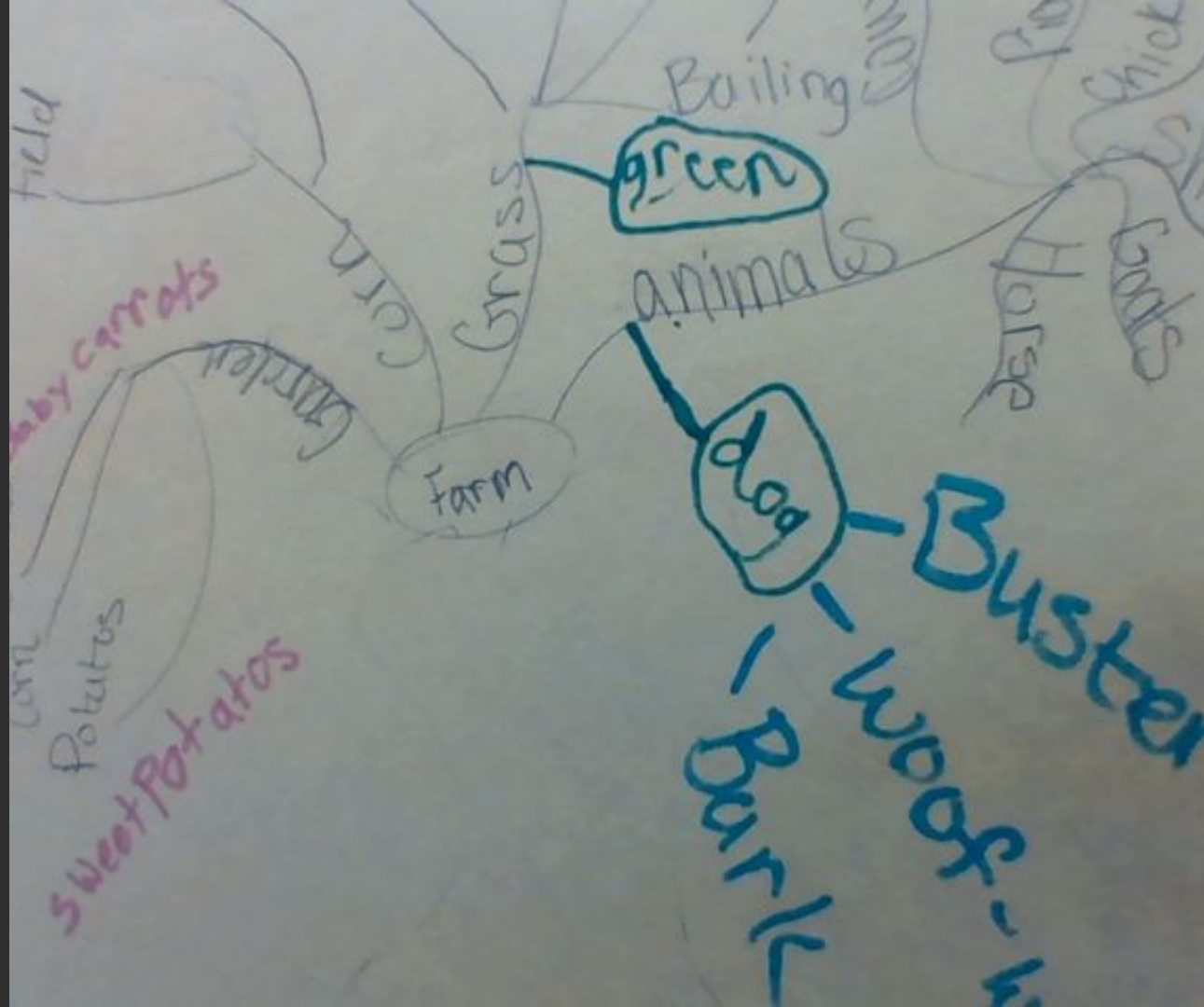
— Chuck Close

# Focus on Quantity

30 circles



## Mind-Mapping



## Helping students go beyond

GO DEEP!

IDEA	DIG DEEPER
I like football	THE FEELING OF EXCITEMENT AND STRESS BEFORE A GAME.
I like country music	RECREATING A MEMORY OF TAKING LONG DRIVES LISTENING TO MUSIC WITH MY DAD.
Feeling sad	FEELING ANXIOUS, ANGUISH, DISAPPOINTMENT, OR GRIEF.
A cool pattern	A PATTERN WHERE EACH PART SYMBOLIZES SOMETHING ELSE.

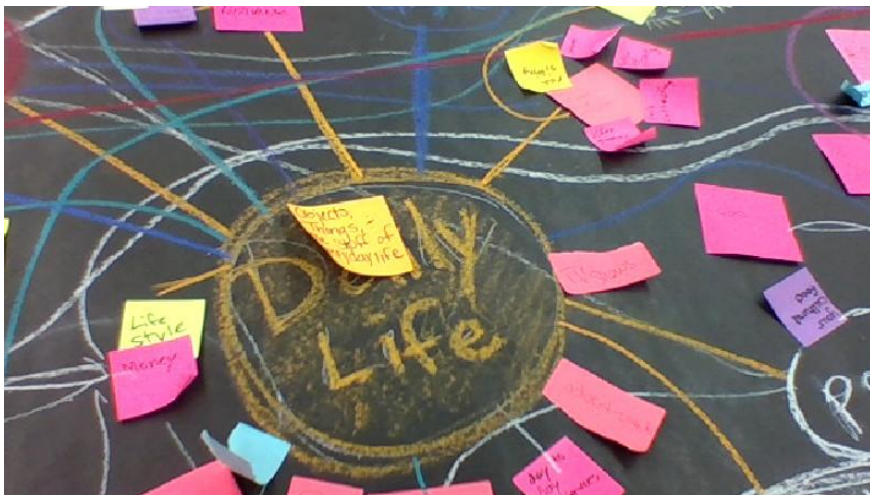


# Intermediate Art

I had noticed that students, especially in intermediate classes, struggled to transition from skill-building with media to planning original and authentic artwork. To improve these skills, I taught mini-lessons that defined voice and focused on voice development.



Voice= Why?  
+What?  
+HOW?



To explore the “What?”, students in all classes collabora

students in other classes had written.

# Creative Bank Accounts



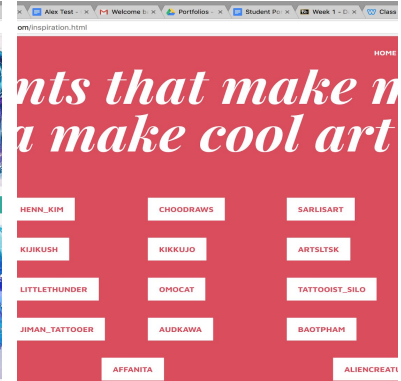
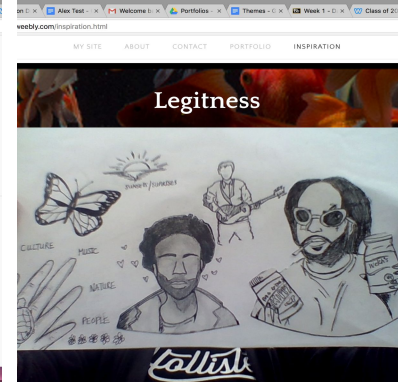
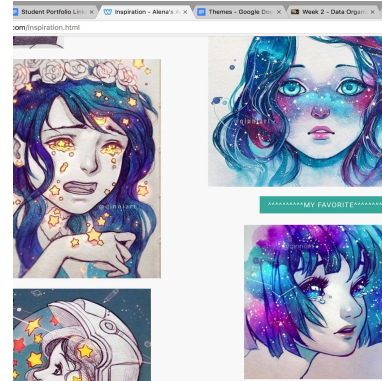
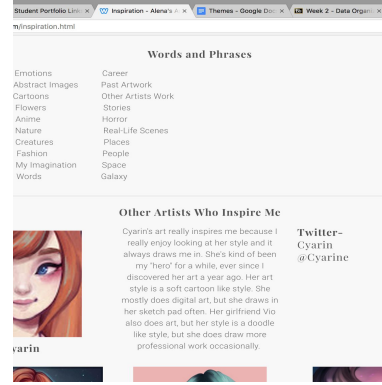


# Creative Bank Accounts

Students created creative bank accounts on their art websites.

I did not define how the bank account had to look, just that it had to be a collection of their inspiration and influences that they could go to if they were struggling to come up with an idea.

Student bank accounts took on many different forms.





**Steal Like an Artist**  
*(without copying)*

# HOW TO LOOK AT THE WORLD ( LIKE AN ARTIST )

Every artist gets asked the question,

**“Where do you get your ideas?”**

The honest artist answers,

**“I steal them.”**

How does an artist look at the world?

First, you figure out what’s worth stealing, then you move on to the next thing.



GOOD THEFT	VS.	BAD THEFT
HONOR		DEGRADE
STUDY		SKIM
STEAL FROM MANY		STEAL FROM ONE
CREDIT		PLAGIARIZE
TRANSFORM		IMITATE
REMIX		RIP OFF

STEALLIKEANARTIST.COM

This conversation comes after three years of discussing copyright and plagiarism

# Postmodern Principles - Artist Trading Cards







**Assessment**

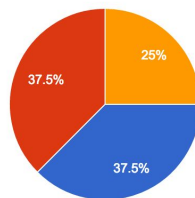
# Assessment

Students were able to articulate if their work was successful or not through their choice of what to put in their top artwork pages, and through their reflective portfolio presentations. Because students got to choose their direction for projects, each portfolio is unique and students are excited to see each other's interpretations of the projects.

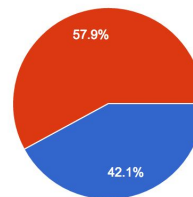
**No students in any of my classes used their grade on a piece as reasoning for why it was a success or failure or as criteria for putting work in their portfolio.**

# Results

I feel comfortable expressing myself in my

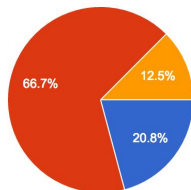


I feel comfortable expressing myself in my artwork (19 responses)

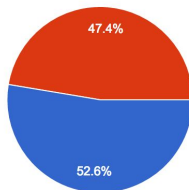


- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I can create a project idea that expresses  
(24 responses)

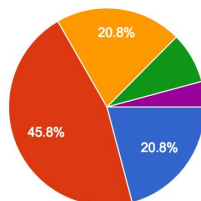


I can create a project idea that expresses feelings or ideas on my own.  
(19 responses)

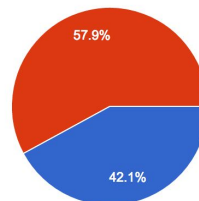


- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I can create art that is unique (24 responses)

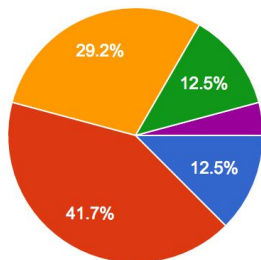


I can create art that is unique (19 responses)

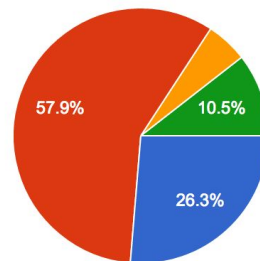


- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I am proud of my artwork. (24 responses)

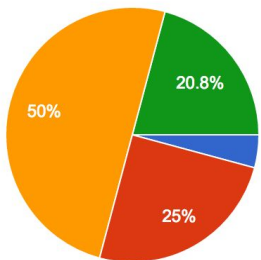


I am proud of my artwork. (19 responses)

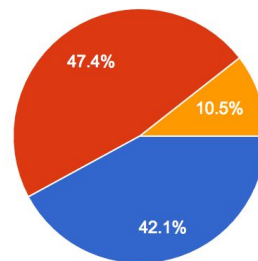


- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I have a unique artistic voice. (24 responses)



I have a unique artistic voice. (19 responses)



- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

## Results



The ideas and themes students self-selected to explore in their work are complex, personal, and more thought provoking than any project plan that I could have written.



When we allow students the freedom and the tools to create and explore, *their choices are better than anything we could have ever planned.*

