



Creative Flow in the Art Room

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Project Seeds

students' struggles
to maintain **focus/**
motivation in the creative
process

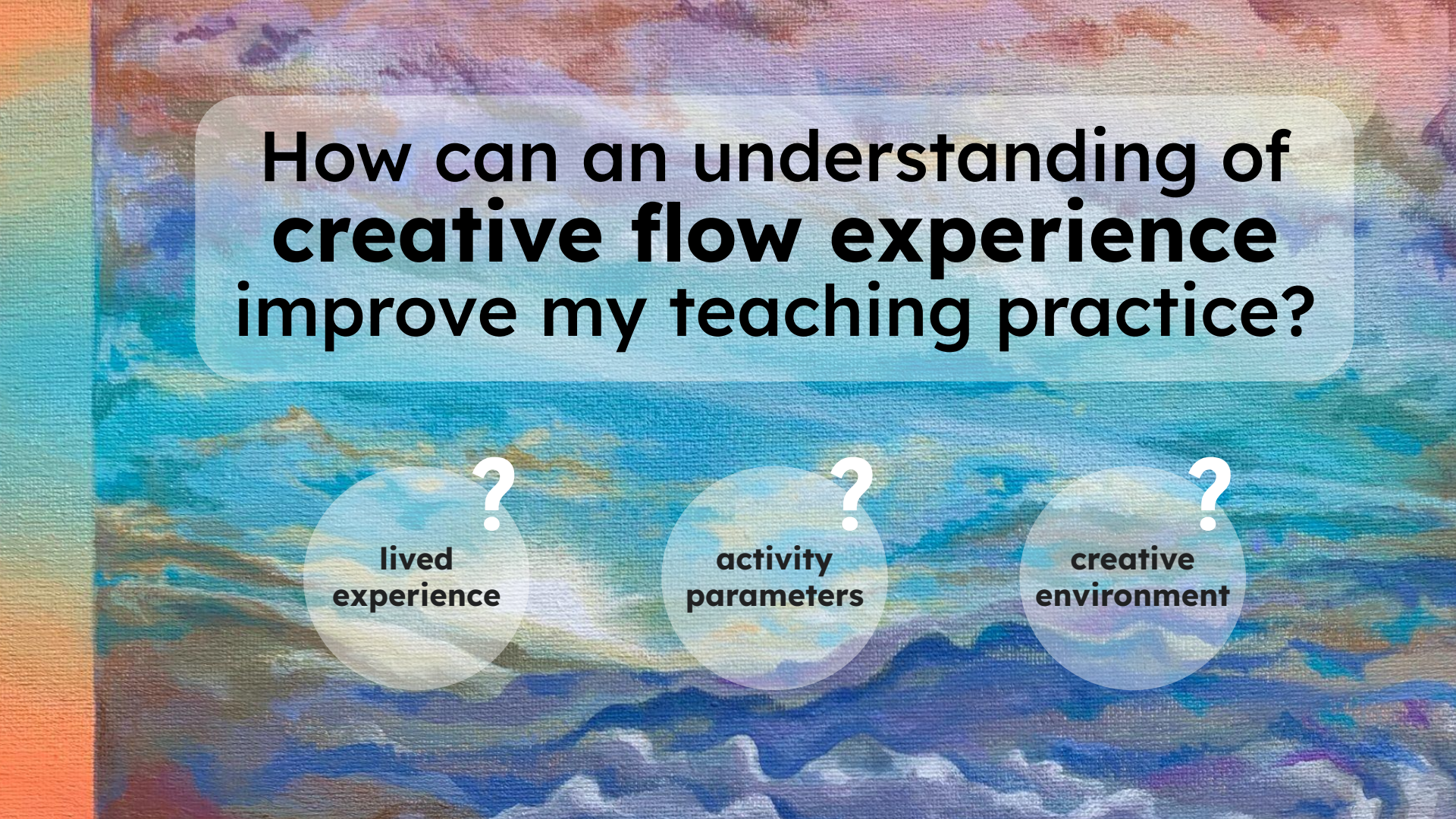
Mihaly
Csikszentmihalyi's
(1990)

FLOW THEORY:
heightened
attention and
enjoyment

my experience
as an art student:

- **personal growth** as a result of art-making
- **creative communities** that protect and inspire





How can an understanding of
creative flow experience
improve my teaching practice?

?

**lived
experience**

?

**activity
parameters**

?

**creative
environment**

Literature Review

The Mechanics of Flow Theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)

- Creative Flow (Doyle, 2017)
- Neurocognition and Flow (Dietrich, 2003)
- Flow Experience in the Digital World (Fauzi et al., 2021; Kara, 2021)

Personal Growth via Creative Flow

- Mental Health and Emotional Intelligence (Sylwester, 1998; Warren, 2006)
- Self-Discovery and Intuition (Eisner, 2002; Gude, 2007)

Practical Applications of Flow in Art Education

- Art Activity Parameters (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Mansour et al., 2017)
- Learning Environment (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Schmidt, 2010)

Art-Based Research Methodology

Visual Journal

- Art Exercises
- Planning
- Reflection



Acrylic Painting Series

Cloudscapes as Psychological Metaphors

Artwork 1



Artwork 2



Artwork 3



Artwork 4



Artwork 5



Work/Flow Log

Checklist Statements
and Written Responses

- Work Session Variables
- Flow Indicators
- Personal Growth
- Artistic Behaviors
- Instructional Connections

Peer Critiques

Mid-Point (12 participants) + Final
(10 participants)

- Perceptions of Flow
- Initial Interpretations of Meaning
- Impact of the Artist Statement

Data Analysis Process

Calculating “Flow Scores” for Individual Work Sessions

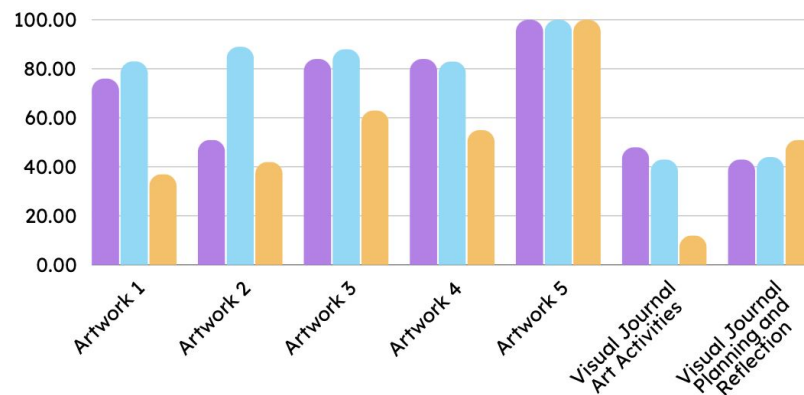
Session: Artwork 1 – June 3, 2024 – 60 minutes

There were moments of the session where I lost the perception of time passing. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)	1 Flow Point	1
I lost the perception of time passing for the majority of the session. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)	2 Flow Points	
I was able to concentrate and maintain focus. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)	1 Flow Point	1
My thoughts were aligned with my actions. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)	1 Flow Point	1
I felt immersed in the experience of creating. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)	1 Flow Point	1
I felt in control of my actions. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)	1 Flow Point	1
I felt a sense of ease and enjoyment. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)	1 Flow Point	1
I felt a lack of self-consciousness. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)	1 Flow Point	1
I felt that my actions were important or purposeful. (adapted from Rheinberg et al., 2023)	1 Flow Point	1
I felt motivated by the process of creating. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)	1 Flow Point	1
My actions felt effortless. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)	1 Flow Point	
I knew what I needed to do. (adapted from Rheinberg et al., 2023)	1 Flow Point	1
My inner critic was quiet. (Martin & Colp, 2022)	1 Flow Point	1
Artist's qualification of flow experience (Abuhamdeh, 2020) Do you feel you reached a flow experience during this session? (Yes/Not Sure/No)	2 Points for Yes 1 Point for Not Sure 0 Points for No	Yes 2
Session Flow Score		13

Average Scores

Art-Based Research Work Sessions

- Flow Indicators
- Artistic Behaviors
- Personal Growth Evidence

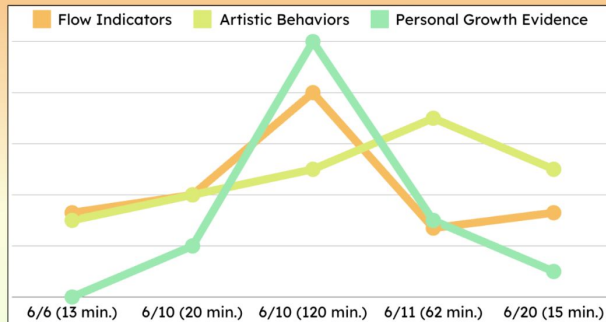


Qualitative Triangulation

“Work/Flow Log”
Checklist Data
(rooted in
Literature
Review)

Artwork 2: A Closer Look

Individual Session Scores



Special Considerations

- First two sessions were split with Artwork 1
- Artwork 2 was in the mid-point critique (after 6/11 session)
- Artwork completed over 14 days



Narrative Responses

6/6, 13 minutes
“The task (painting the base color) was **more functional than creative.**”

6/10, 20 minutes
“The **transition** (jumping between two artworks) and **time constraint** were distracting.”

6/10, 120 minutes
“I was working **abstractly**– I had a reference image to guide my choices, but the **ambiguity** of the sky was open to **spontaneous** brushstrokes and blotches of color. I was attempting to match the colors in the reference, but was **flexible** to accept emerging color harmonies as I worked. I began to connect more deeply to the analogy of the reference image I created. The simplicity of this design provided a **metaphor** for me to ponder and connect to. The action of creating allowed me to **materialize the thoughts** in my head and work through them at a manageable pace.”

6/11, 62 minutes
“This was a more **technically challenging** session and it was harder for me to feel like I was hitting a groove.”

6/20, 15 minutes
“The peer **feedback** was directing my actions, which made me feel a bit **self-conscious** and unsure.”

Narrative
Reflections

Integration of
Peer Critique
Feedback

The Search for Key Insights



Artwork 5 in process

Methods and Techniques Associated with Flow

Non-representational (6/3, Artwork 1)

Abstraction (6/19, Artwork 5)

Observation (6/22, Visual Journal Art Activity)

Playfulness with material (6/22, Visual Journal Activity)

Color blending and mixing (6/13, Artwork 4)

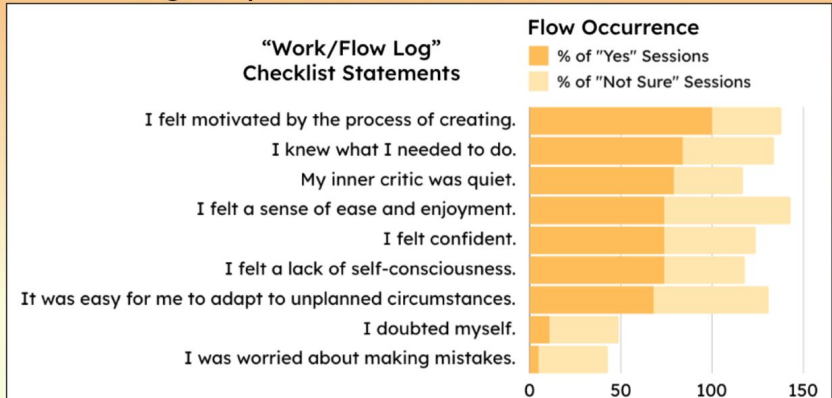
Translucency (6/14, Artwork 4)

Repetition with variation (6/20, Artwork 1)

Mixed media (6/17, Visual Journal Art Activity)

Relaxed mark-making (6/22, Visual Journal Art Activity)

Log Entry Statements Associated with Flow



Time Constraints

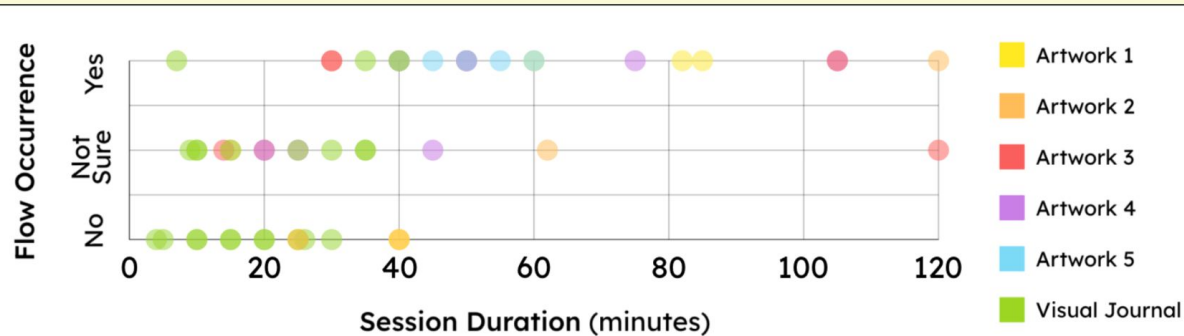
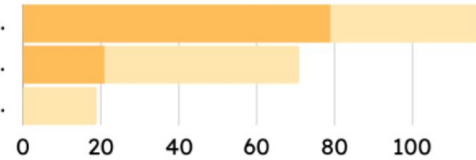
“Work/Flow Log” Checklist Statements

I lost the perception of time passing for the majority of the session.
There were moments of the session where I lost the perception of time passing.
I was conscious of time passing through the majority of the session.

Flow Occurrence

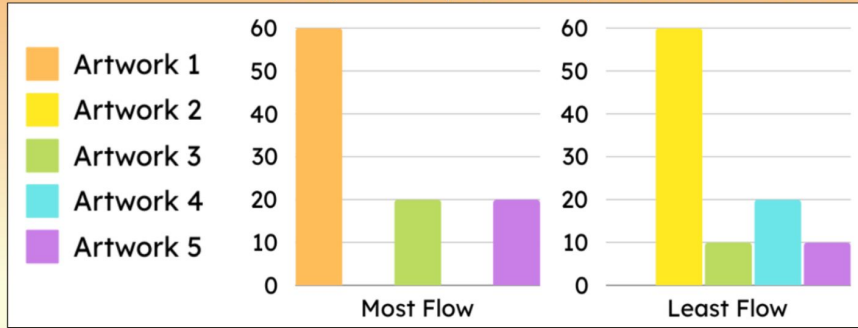
■ % of “Yes” Sessions

■ % of “Not Sure” Sessions



Peer Critique Data Analysis

Critique Participants' Perceptions of Flow in Artwork Series



Of 10 Final Critique Participants:

60% associated **Artwork 1** with the **most flow** experience

60% associated **Artwork 2** with the **least flow** experience

Work/Flow Log Entry Data:

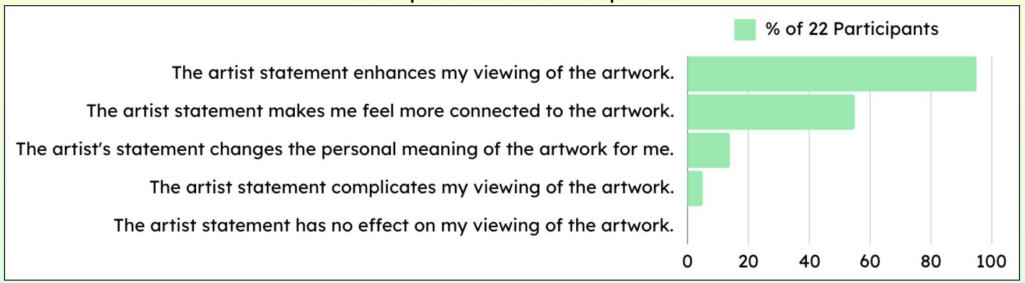
Artwork 5 earned the **highest** "Flow Score"

Artwork 2 earned the **lowest** "Flow Score"

Words Associated with Flow in Participant Narrative Responses



Participant Checklist Responses



Implications: Instructional Practices and Community Norms

experience, practice,
assurance, and ability

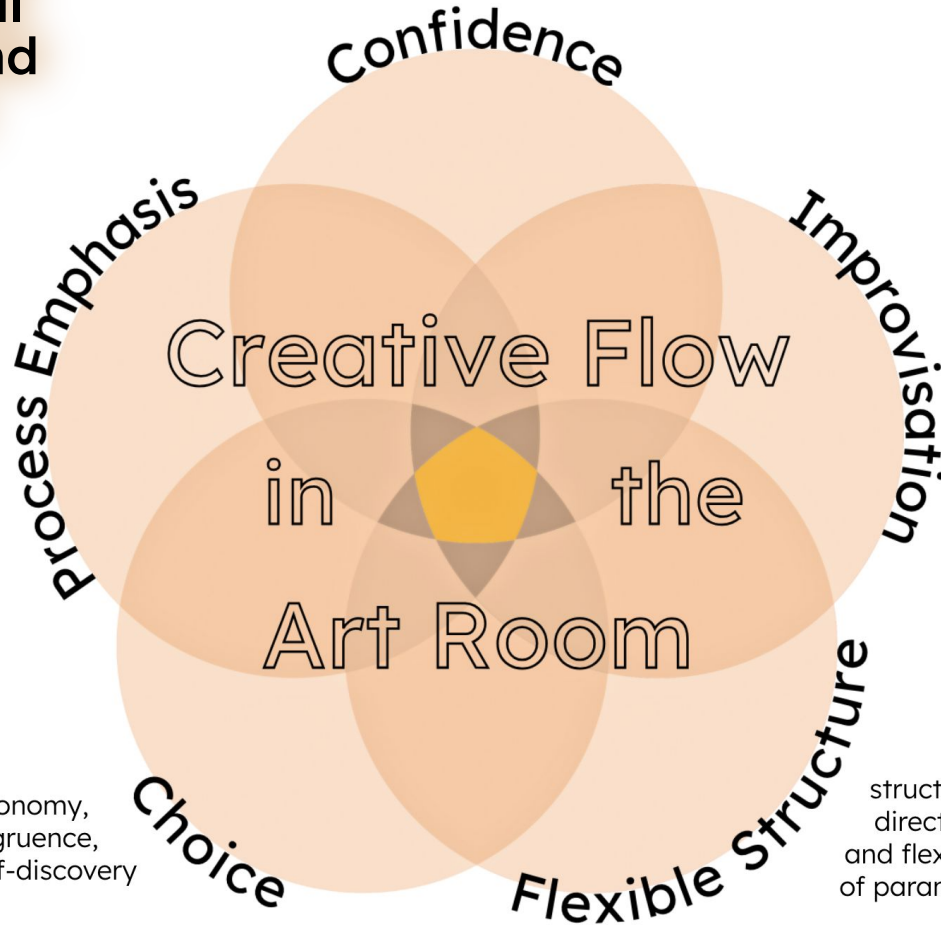
ample focus
on process
(vs. product)

normalcy of
mistakes,
risk-taking,
problem-solving,
and evaluation

spontaneity,
immersion,
enjoyment,
and intrinsic
motivation

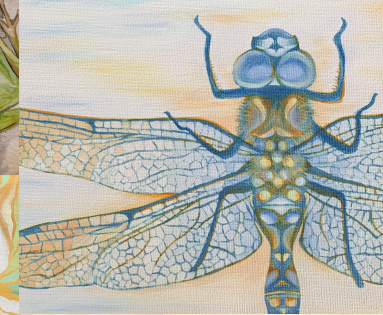
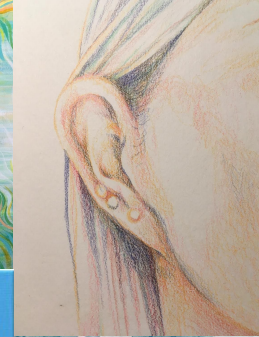
autonomy,
congruence,
and self-discovery

structural
direction
and flexibility
of parameters



Growing with AOEUE

- June 2020 - July 2024
- Reconnecting with myself as an artist
- Gaining confidence: curriculum, instruction, assessment, management
- Action researcher role
- AOEUE Community



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