DIFFERENTIATION IN ART EDUCATION:
EXPLORING TWO ART TEACHERS’ RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY
IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN TAIWAN

BY
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DISSERTATION
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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the “operational curricula” (Goodlad, Klein, & Tye, 1979) of art teachers in both the general and the artistically talented classes in an elementary school in Taiwan. Specifically, I investigated the responsive pedagogies of two art teachers that focused on the differentiation aspects for diverse learners, including those identified as artistically talented. The value systems embedded in their responsive pedagogies were also explored.

The responsive pedagogies of the two teachers included two facets: curricular modification and instructional adjustment. In terms of curricular modification for the two types of classes, the teachers organized art projects and choices of concepts and products that were appropriate for the students in learning art in a studio-orientated class structure. As for instructional adjustment, one teacher used various instructional strategies to cater to the diverse levels of readiness, interests, and learning styles in art of students in both settings. Her adaptive instructional approaches consisted of occasional exceptions, personalized guidance, student choice, flexible grouping, and station work. The other teacher drew on individualized instruction in the artistically talented class and instructional adjustment was not found to any significant extent in her general class.

I discuss the two art teachers’ responsive pedagogies in light of the Confucian heritage. The community- and issue-based art projects designed by the two teachers aimed to cultivate students’ sensitivity to human concerns. It reflects the concept of nurturing a Jian Zi (君子, a superior person), who has both talent and virtue (才德兼備, Cai De Jian Bei). Through guided discovery, the teachers helped artistically talented students make connections between their intrinsic traits (質, Zh, substance) and disciplined knowledge or dispositions (文, Wen, refinement). The teachers played the role of connoisseurs in personalizing guidance to bridge
different class elements with individual students’ unique readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles. As such, they were not only attuned to multiple dimensions of the students’ “artistic selves” (Walsh, 2002), but they also integrated the students’ unique potentials into a cooperative effort of “harmony but not uniformity” (和而不同, He Er Bu Tong). The two art teachers’ pedagogical approaches reveal the value placed on differentiation in the Taiwanese educational context. The implications for the field and future research are discussed as well.
To my mother and father
Acknowledgments

When I decided on overseas study five years ago, it was with the expectation of broadening and deepening my vision of education and to acquire new perspectives especially in the field of gifted education. Aesthetic education provided the lens for me to explore a person’s being, doings, and becoming. I deeply appreciate those who accompanied, challenged, and inspired me during this journey.

I would like to acknowledge all participants in my study, especially Mrs Wen and Mrs Pei. Mrs Wen was a guide who enlightened me on the artistry of attuned pedagogy. Indeed, I felt the light was brighter, a tree was greener, and my heart was warmer during my field work in her art classes. Mrs Pei treated me as a friend, sharing her doubts and beliefs; she allowed me to reflect on and look for more perspectives to make sense of differentiation. Between a passionate mind and reflective wondering, the dissertation was born.

My advisor, Professor Liora Bresler, truly took care of my academic, emotional, and spiritual life in the United States. She showed me the importance of having the qualities of a scholar over and above being a PhD student. She taught me to have enlightened ears that listen to what I don’t know about what I don’t know. She inspired me towards mutual absorption of this study by orchestrating the multiple dimensions of my dissertation and academic selves. Such aesthetic mentorship!

I am grateful to Professor Nancy Hertzog for challenging me to think beyond gifted education. She encouraged me to expand the pedagogy of gifted education in a broader context. I am still learning her notion of treating all children as gifted means to develop their talent based on their strengths. I saw the notion applied in those “little water drops” in her early-childhood
gifted program. Through that, I came to understand what it means to regard children as human “being” rather than human “beings.”

My sincere thanks go to Professor Michael Parsons and Professor Marilyn Parsons, my dissertation committee members. Professor Michael Parsons’ genuine questioning directed me to discern the essence of what I was looking for in this study. The concept of “third space” I learned in Professor Marilyn Parson’s seminar. It served as a foundation that created a Confucian lens to conceptualize the two art teachers’ pedagogy in the development of art talent. I am also indebted to Professor Robert Stake, Professor Julia Kellman, Professor Chris Higgins, and Professor Norman Denzin, who enriched my intellectual journey at UIUC.

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Let me end with E. E. Cummings’ poem, “I carry your heart with me.” It is a poem that I read before I left Taiwan to embark on my educational journey five years ago. Today it is dedicated to all those I have mentioned and did not mention above.

I carry your heart with me
by E.E. Cummings

I carry your heart with me
I carry it in my heart
I am never without it
anywhere I go you go, my dear;
and whatever is done by only me is your doing, my darling

I fear no fate
for you are my fate, my sweet
I want no world
for beautiful you are my world, my true
and it's you are whatever a moon has always meant
and whatever a sun will always sing is you

here is the deepest secret nobody knows
here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life;
which grows higher than the soul can hope or mind can hide
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart

I carry your heart
I carry it in my heart
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Confucius (551-479 BC) was a well-known Chinese philosopher and educator who established a private school in 522 BC when he was 30-years old. The school provided education for 3000 students of which seventy-two were outstanding. As illustrated in the conversation below, his educational philosophy took special account of students’ individual differences:

Zi Lu: Whether I should immediately carry into practice what I heard?

The Master: There are your father and elder brothers to be consulted - why should you act on that principle of immediately carrying into practice what you hear?

Ran You: Whether I should immediately carry into practice what I heard?

The Master: Immediately carry into practice what you hear.

Gong Xi Hua: Zi Lu asked whether he should carry immediately into practice what he heard, and you said, “There are your father and elder brothers to be consulted.” [When] Qiu asked whether he should immediately carry into practice what he heard, you said, “Carry it immediately into practice.” I, am perplexed, and venture to ask you for an explanation.

The Master: Qiu is retiring and slow; therefore I urged him forward. Zi Lu has more than his own share of energy; therefore I kept him back.

(The Analects\(^1\), 11:22)

Over two thousand years ago, Confucius had already demonstrated how to shape or orient teaching based on individual students’ personalities, interest areas, and abilities. His approach was that “In teaching there should be no distinction of classes” and the backgrounds and interests

\(^1\) The Analects are a record of the words, deeds, and discussions of Confucius and his disciples and have a profound influence on Chinese and East Asian thought and values.
of his students ranged from business (e.g. Zi Gong) to politics (Zi Lu, Ran You), from literature (Zi Xia) to morality (Yan Hui).

As shown, two students had asked similar questions and Confucius responded differently. It is an ancient teaching style rooted in Chinese culture: teach according to the student’s characteristics (因材施教, Yin Cai Shi Jiao). Even today, Confucius’ teaching style is considered the foundation of educational philosophy in Taiwan (Tsai, 2000; Wu, 2000) where teachers recognize students’ differences and adapt teaching to the “interdependent, moral-care, worldly-wisdom, and relationship-centered” (Lu, 2008) education setting.

Indeed, teaching in accordance with student’s characteristics reflects the differentiated instruction advocated in American education today. Differentiated instruction is a responsive pedagogy where teachers modify instruction in response to the diverse readiness, interests, and learning profiles of learners (Heacox, 2003; Tomlinson, 2003). It is an art of teaching in respect to “teacher response, student seeking, and curriculum modification” (Tomlinson, 1999, 2003). Specifically, both Confucius’s pedagogy and differentiated instruction remind educators to be flexible in their use of teaching skills and materials, take note of students’ individual differences and support their progress, and adjust learning avenues in response to student needs.

As an elementary school teacher growing up in Taiwan I was aware of a wide range of resources from Chinese, native Taiwanese, and Western cultures (Chen, 2006; Kuo, 2003) being used in teaching. With Confucius’ teaching rooted in our educational system and having learned differentiated instruction in the US, I wondered how the latter could assist in assessing what has

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2 Chen (2006) studied arts teachers’ folk pedagogy in aesthetic education which in Taiwan operates in a multicultural context. She pointed out Taiwan’s diverse cultural resources that reflect Chinese, native Taiwanese, and Western cultures. Chinese aesthetics refer to the cultivation of humanity and morality and the spirituality of emptiness through the arts. Western aesthetics are introduced to and even integrated with Chinese aesthetics where a combination of both is applied to explore beauty in multifarious forms. Native Taiwanese aesthetics is reflected in daily life—in ordinary artifacts or in the arts of the ceremonies for nature and ancestors (p. 1).
been implemented in Taiwan. Further, how could a similar pedagogy from different cultures inform or even enrich each other?

For me, these questions are like an explanatory dialogue where as I “move into each new present, new aspects of the past begin to seem salient to [me]”; as I “begin to dialogue with these facets of the past, [I] come to understand something about our contemporary horizons” (Higgings, 2002). I expected such a dialogue to help me make better sense of how to be an educator in optimizing students’ learning in the Taiwanese education context. As Bruner (1966) suggested,

For whatever the art, the science, the literature, the history, and the geography of a culture, each man must be his own artist, his own scientist, his own historian, his own navigator. No person is master of the whole culture; indeed, this is almost a defining characteristic of that form of social memory that we speak of as culture. Each man lives a fragment of it. To be whole, he must create his own version of the whole, using part of his cultural heritage he has made his own through education. (p. 116)

In line with Confucius’s teaching, I aim to “create [my] own version of the whole” to learn more about the concept of differentiation. I initiated the explanatory dialogue by investigating art teachers’ pedagogy. Based on Confucius’s teaching beliefs, I researched two art teachers’ teaching approaches which focused on using differentiation for diverse learners, including those identified as the artistically talented, in an elementary school in Taiwan.

According to Eisner (2002), art education appreciates diversity, acknowledges individuality, and allows flexibility. These features match the rationale of differentiation which is to make learning more accessible for students. The arts have been known as an avenue for self-expression by expanding modes of representation, self-understanding through affective development, and self-development by fostering aesthetic sense. Accordingly, I believe that students’ potentials could be enhanced by learning art. Eliciting human potential is the goal in providing education for the gifted. By studying “operational visual art curricula” in a classroom,
I learned about the extent to which teachers responded to artistically diverse learners’ needs and were able to nurture their potential.

**Differentiation for Diverse Learners**

In the US, the pressure upon schools to standardize curricula or to use common evaluation tests tends to promote the “one-size-fits-all” principle in education. Standardized education has been criticized particularly in the gifted education sphere (e.g. Renzulli & Reis, 2008; Tomlinson, 1996; Tomlinson, 2001) or art education (e.g. Burton, 2004; Eisner, 2002). Using appropriate and responsive instruction to attend to individual student differences becomes critical. This issue is emphasized due to the trend towards heterogeneity, special education inclusion, and the decrease in out-of-class services for exceptional learners, combined with the growth in cultural diversity in classrooms (Tomlinson et al., 2004). Differentiated instruction has become an important teaching concept that teachers have to acquire, understand, and be able to practice in today’s classroom.

Differentiation is an emerging issue in the Taiwanese education setting. Due to the laws on normal and flexible class grouping (Kang, 2008), the trend towards inclusive education (Chen, Chen, & Pan, 2008; Huang, 2009; Kang, 2008), and the release of the White Book of Gifted Education (Chen, et al., 2008; Huang, 2009), differentiated instruction is gradually being addressed. The terminology and detailed practices of differentiated instruction advocated by American educators have been applied into the empirical studies of Taiwanese researchers. For example, Huang (2009) applied Tomlinson’s (2003) four dimensions of a differentiated classroom to explore three elementary school teachers’ changing perceptions and applications for gifted learners in general education classrooms. Findings indicate that teaching content, products,
and the learning environment became more flexible as the teachers accepted the concept of differentiation. They changed their teaching styles and established a positive classroom atmosphere. However, in Taiwan there is still a dearth of empirical studies investigating how teachers differentiate instruction for gifted/talented students in specialized or inclusive settings.

Differentiated instruction is evaluated in relation to gifted education (e.g. Kaplan, 1986; Maker & Neilson, 1995; Renzulli & Reis, 2008; VanTassel-Baska, & Stambaugh, 2006). It is defined as modifying content, processes, products, and learning environments in order to elicit gifted learners’ potential and cultivate their talents. However, there is no consensus on nurturing students’ potentials and talents in specialized or inclusive settings.

For those seeking specialized learning opportunities for special populations, differentiated instruction is intended to maximize the learning potential of identified students (e.g. Clark & Zimmerman, 2004; Sabol, 2006; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2006; Winner, 1996). For instance, VanTassel-Baska and Stambaugh (2006) claimed that differentiation is a concept that forms the foundation of gifted education, which recognizes individual differences and talents in learners. In specialized settings, such as self-contained classes and pull-out programs, curriculum and instructional strategies are modified for acceleration, challenge, depth, complexity, and creativity based on the cognitive and learning needs of the gifted.

Yet, the field of gifted education has shifted focus from giftedness to talent development because of a broadening concept of giftedness beyond intelligence. The terms developing talent (Bloom, 1985; Renzulli & Reis, 2008) and talent development (VanTassel-Baska, 2005) is used to describe school-based programs for challenging all students. Teachers use instructional approaches flexibly by providing a broad range of differentiated experiences that take into account each student’s “zone of proximal development” (Vygotsky, 1978). Differentiated
learning experience, according to Hertzog (2009), is provided to focus on how to optimize all children’s learning with regard to their interests and strong points.

In this vein, scholars have challenged the arbitrary nature of giftedness and called for invoking differentiation in a more inclusive setting (e.g. Hertzog, 2009; Tomlinson, 1996; Treffinger, Young, Nassab, Selby, & Wittig, 2008). Hertzog believes that in treating all children as gifted it is not necessary to regard all as gifted; a universal terminology challenged by many scholars, but meaning to develop children’s talents based on their strengths. In fact, diverse learners’ potentials would thrive in a differentiated, responsive, inclusive learning environment as teachers are able to implement gifted-pedagogy, such as project/concept-based instruction, creative problem-finding/solving, and independent study (Tomlinson, 1996).

Beyond the grouping issue, Renzulli and Reis (2008) remind us to look at teachers’ pedagogy and examine “what is done within groups” (p. 50) to see if they challenge all students by a continuum of enrichment services with differentiated learning experiences. This continuum “range from general enrichment for all students across all grade levels to curriculum differentiation procedures, including enrichment and acceleration for rapid learners, as well as individualized research opportunities for identified gifted and talented students” (p. 36).

In light of Renzulli and Reis’s (2008) notion, I explored two art teachers’ teaching in artistically talented (specialized setting) and general (inclusive setting) classes for this study. By investigating their curriculum design and instructional approaches in both settings, the complexity of differentiation is examined and discussed. Not only could I see if differentiated learning experience for all students took place in the teachers’ practices, but I also learned what it means for teachers to nurture diverse learners’ art potential in the “dual-sided” context.
The Arts in Celebrating Diversity and Individuality

In spring 2007, I conducted a case study on an art project in an early-childhood gifted program (Chen, 2008). I learned how a discerning art curriculum could value diversity and individuality. During a series of activities, young children made self-portraits by looking at self-images through mirrors, learned Picasso’s multiple dimensions in representing objects, and created a mural collaboratively. I conducted three in-depth group studies on art at home, artists’ studio, and art we wear. The various artistic ways of exploring art in daily life provided differentiated learning experiences for the diverse learners.

In a specific case, a teacher accommodated varying instructional approaches in guiding a mixed-age group (K-1) to make a mock kiln after their visit to a ceramics studio. Kindergarteners came up with the ideas, first graders drew a plan, experienced and skilled students tried out materials based on that plan, and others used the materials to assist them in making the kiln. The materials used, such as wooden blocks and paperclips, became media that represented the young children’s ideas. Individuals with diverse talents and interests found the right avenue to participate in the collaborative art-making project.

The above demonstrates that carefully-designed art curricula enables teachers even those not trained as art teachers, to respond to diverse learners’ interests and abilities, and fulfill individuals’ unique learning profiles. It made me think of what it is in the nature of art education that makes it accommodate students’ diverse needs as well as draw out their unique potentials? What specific strategies can teachers use to facilitate diverse learners to engage in learning about art? Indeed, the arts encourage us to think within a wide range of media, understand their parameters as well as special challenges. The arts teach us how to use our imagination to conceive of possibilities that are distinct to ourselves. Thus, if teachers “think about teaching as
an artful undertaking, conceive of learning as having aesthetic features, regard the design of an educational environment as an artistic task” (Eisner, 2002, pp. xii-xiii), it would help them carry out differentiated instruction.

According to Gardner (1991), in the art-making process students gain the capacity to adopt different stances towards the work, among them the stance of audience-member, critic, performer, and maker. The ability to take multiple perspectives with a flexible, adaptive mind needs to be supported by instruction that offer multifaceted learning opportunities for in-depth inquiry (Burton, 2004). Differentiated instruction could be one of several pedagogies that encourage learners to seek their own paths and link them to adaptive learning content, processes, products, and the environment.

Hurwitz and Day (2001) and Sabol (2006) suggest that individual children have their own mental and physical strength and weakness profiles where the combination of abilities and their interests and learning styles make them unique individuals. Further, Winner and Martino (2003) pointed out that children with artistic talents are like academically gifted children in three respects. First, they master the first steps in their domain at an earlier than average age and learn more rapidly in that domain. They also have a “range to master” (p. 335); that is, they are intensively interested in making sense of their domain and have an obsessive interest and ability to focus sharply on their area of superior ability. Finally, children with art talents learn faster as well as learn differently than others. They virtually learn on their own, requiring little adult scaffolding with solving problems in their domain in novel, idiosyncratic ways. These unique profiles of individual students’ learning about art could be addressed if teachers can implement differentiation in their classrooms.
In Taiwan, education for the artistically talented had its beginnings in 1980. The goals of such education are to: (a) develop the potential of gifted/talented students; (b) cultivate good living habits and healthy personalities; and (c) teach for high cognitive and/or skill attainment (Wu, 2000). According to the Special Education Law, students are assessed through their performance in the fine arts and through a series of artistic aptitude tests. Those who win awards for distinguished performance in national or international contests are also accepted to enroll in the artistically talented program. Interestingly, little attention is paid to examining how art teachers differentiated instruction to accommodate the diversity of those indentified as artistically talented.

As Worley (2006) pointed out, a relationship between differentiation and the content areas of the arts has not been explicitly established. While some examples of differentiated practices in arts classes are available (Tomlinson, 1999; Tomlinson & Strickland, 2005) or some studies on arts teaching have presented individualized instruction (e.g. Hetland, Winner, Veenema, & Sheridan, 2007), the research focusing on the differentiated practices of art teachers is limited (Drashil, 2006; Wilson & Clark, 2000).

This study aims to fill the gap. Through systematically documenting art teachers’ pedagogy in art classes, I learned more about how they modified curricula or adjusted instructional approaches to respond to student diversities in teaching art. I expected teachers who had extensive art backgrounds and responded to student needs in class would show how the field of art education and the concept of differentiation could enrich each other.
Purpose and Research Questions

The main purpose of the study is to explore visual art teachers’ pedagogy by focusing on differentiation for diverse learners, including those identified as the artistically talented. Differentiation is defined as responsive pedagogy where teachers modify curricula and adjust instruction in order to attend to the diversity of students’ learning in art. Specifically, I explore their “operational art curricula” (Goodlad, Klein, & Tye, 1979) - what and how they teach - in both the general and artistically talented classes in order to understand their responses to the wide spectrum of student readiness, interests, and learning profiles; that is, differentiated instruction. The value systems embedded in the two teachers’ responsive pedagogies are also studied.

The questions I pose in this study evolved and adapted to the interplay between the phenomenon of how art teachers implement art education as well as from the existing literature and issues about differentiation discussed above. It is a process of “progressive focusing” (Stake, 1995) where the inductive or discovery orientation in qualitative study enable research questions to be reformulated. Specifically, I explored what curricula were modified by art teachers for students in the general class and those in the artistically talented class (curricular modification). I also investigated how art teachers adjusted instruction in response to student needs in both settings (instructional adjustment).

Such interplay and the dialectical relationship among Confucius’s pedagogical beliefs, the concept of differentiation and what happened on the site, shaped my investigation and gave rise to the following questions:
1. What art curricula do the art teachers design for all students, including those identified as the artistically talented?
   a. In designing art curricula, what are their considerations?
   b. Do they modify curricula to make art learning more accessible, challenging, or engaging for students?

2. How do the art teachers implement art curricula designed for all students, including those identified as the artistically talented?
   a. Do they pay attention to student needs to adjust to instruction? If so, how?
   b. What conflicts, challenges, and compromises do they face?
Chapter 2

Literature Review

The Master said, “Learning without thought is labor lost; thought without learning is perilous.” (The Analects, 2:15)

In this chapter, I will first discuss the practice of visual arts education in schools. Efland’s (1995, 2004) historical perspective on the change of arts teaching provides the framework to view operational visual arts curricula in field-based studies. Following that, I explore the extent to which art teachers’ teaching might reflect the concept of differentiation, their implementation, and empirical studies on differentiated instruction in Taiwan. Then I will introduce artistically talented education in Taiwan, and review theories and empirical studies on differentiated arts curricula for the development of art talents.

Teaching of the Visual Arts

The development of art education has evolved over the years based on changes in knowledge and beliefs about the nature of art, conceptions of learning, and the values of society as conveyed through arts teaching and educational goals (Efland, 1995; Eisner, 2002; Hurwitz & Day, 1995).

Based on Efland’s (1995, 2004) four models of art teaching—mimetic-behavioral, pragmatic-social reconstruction, expressive-psychoanalytic, and formalist-cognitive, I explore operational visual arts curricula in school settings. Specifically, this study attempts to make better sense of what and how arts specialists teach based on the types of school art, pedagogical orientations, (studio) teaching structures, and arts learning (studio) habits of mind. Pedagogical theories and relevant studies of aesthetic education are also presented to investigate the arts specialists’ visual arts curricula along with their aesthetic qualities.
**Types of School Art.** What types of art is taught in schools? School art, a term coined by Efland (1976), creates a unique genre specific to its goals and structures. He defined school art as a form of art that is produced in school by children under the guidance and influence of teachers, and is distinct from children’s spontaneous art outside of school. School art is an institutional art style with its educative function for students to learn social structures, channels of communication, and people’s behaviors by cultivating the use of symbolic forms.

In this vein, Liora Bresler (Bresler, 1993, 1994, 1998, 2002; Stake, Bresler, & Mabry, 1991) examined the operational and formal curricula in the visual arts, music, drama, and dance in US elementary schools. These studies portrayed school art in terms of its genres, pedagogical orientations, and instructional contexts. I will elaborate on them in the following sections, because they provide a practical framework for me to look at arts activities in River School.

Bresler (2002) suggested that school art, focusing on visual arts, includes “child art,” “fine art,” “child craft,” and “art for children.” Child art highlights self-expression on original compositions created by children in various art forms. With an open-ended pedagogical style, child art reflects a variety of ideas, experiences, and investment. Fine art typically focuses on structured perception and the acquisition of transmitted knowledge. The cultural heritage involves rich aesthetic elements, art history, and art criticism that are to be cultivated. Child craft has similarities to the goals of fine art: the development of perception. The present day version of child craft that revolves around holidays and seasonal themes, is teacher-centered, and has step-by-step pedagogies for implementing for it. Art for children, the fourth genre of school art, regards children as performers (in classrooms/schools) or audiences (outside of class/school). It is created by adults specifically for children, often for didactic purposes; it is supposed to provide materials that are developmentally appropriate, accessible, and relevant to children’s lives. All of
them require knowledge about feelings as well sophisticated knowledge of intellectual, technical, and formal skills. Students therefore need guidance to explore, and to invest themselves in meaningful art making and appreciation in the school context.

The four types of school art—child art, fine art, child craft, and art for children—provide a conceptual framework in understanding the visual arts curricula. On this basis, I will investigate: what kinds of school art types are included in arts activities designed by the arts specialists? How do they consider the “portion” of each school art types to fulfill the goals of arts learning? How do they differentiate instruction to scaffold students’ exploration about each school art types?

**Pedagogical Orientations.** Studies, for example, by Bresler (1993, 1994, 1998), Burton (2004), and Hetland et al. (2007), have documented and conceptualized the operational arts curriculum—the actual curriculum in the classroom in terms of contents, pedagogies, and evaluation processes. Pedagogical orientations reflect teachers’ choices concerning what is meaningful and important for children to know, which pedagogies are the most suitable for these learning opportunities, and how best to organize learning resources and opportunities for children (Bresler, 1993). I will introduce three pedagogical orientations based on Bresler’s (1993, 1994) studies. Not only will they help me figure out art teachers’ teaching styles in this study, they also reflect the historical roots of arts education development and the function of the curricula in the school context.

Firstly, the rote-based, teacher-centered orientation replicates the practice of academic subjects in terms of structures and teaching style. Bresler (1994) suggests that the “didactic teaching style” (Broudy, 1972) aims to have students master a set of skills, which is an industrial,
factory model for art. This pedagogical orientation can be traced to “the mimetic-behavior model” (Efland, 1995) which draws on technical exercise. Art is regarded as an imitation of nature. Through structured activities, the teacher decides what is presented in terms of sequence, level of difficulty, frequency, and intensity.

Second, the open-ended student-centered orientation, influenced by Lowenfeld and Read (Efland, 1995; Wilson, 1992), highlights the child’s natural interests and instincts to manipulate materials and exploration, originality, and imagination in the creation process. Based on Bresler’s (1994) observations, the second orientation is complementary, trying to compensate in teachers’ perceptions for an unbalanced academic curriculum. The “philetic teaching style” (Broudy, 1976) allows students with different backgrounds and talents to succeed and communicate their unique selves with little intervention and even less attention to the social, cultural, and historical context.

Third, the higher-order cognitive orientation consists of scaffolding to facilitate students to interplay with imaginative improvisation and personal ideas around a problem-solving approach and to explore aesthetic concepts. The “heuristic teaching style” (Broudy, 1972) emphasizes artistic activities as creation and interpretation within a cultural context focusing on its values and accumulated body of disciplined knowledge. It can be traced to the cognitive revolution (Bresler, 1994). In Bresler’s view, this orientation is expansive because it aims to enhance the curriculum in ways that are advocated in the scholarly literature, and incorporates into various intelligences and modes of thinking.

In addition to the three pedagogical orientations outlined by Bresler (1993, 1994) cultural pluralism, social justice issues, technology, and gender studies in the 1990s highlighted the need to take into account personal and everyday realities to bring diverse and marginalized voices to
arts education. Irwin and Chalmers (2007) suggested “visualizing culture” as one of the dominant threads in contemporary art education to understand “a variety of sociocultural interests being portrayed across art education” (p. 185). In the sociocultural interest, the visual cultural pedagogical orientation draws on: (a) a broadened canon offering an inclusive list of images and artifacts; (b) a focus on how we look at images and artifacts and the conditions under which we look; and (c) the study of images within their context as part of social practice (Duncum, 2002, p. 17).

The pedagogical orientations along with their historical roots are particularly useful for the current study. First of all, I note that somehow the different instructional approaches implemented in arts education in Taiwan reflect the above orientations. For instance, according to Lin, Chiu, Chu, and Li (2003) as inspired by Read and Lowenfeld, the creativity and self-expression approaches had dominated Taiwanese visual arts education in the 1960s, and still influences current teachers’ pedagogy. DBAE, an example of the “formalist-cognitive” (Efland, 1995) approach was advocated in 1970 to 1980 (Kuo, 1999, 2003; Lin et al., 2003) and emphasized art knowledge, aesthetic experiences and the critique and appreciation of artwork.

Due to the recognition of the importance of diversity and inclusion in arts education, multicultural educational approach (Chen, 2006; Lin et al., 2003), community-based art education (Kau, 1999, 2003), and visual cultural education (Kau, 2003) an integrated arts education system is developing in contemporary arts education in Taiwan. The different approaches will not only help decipher the arts specialists’ teaching styles, but will also illustrate the complexity of their practice.

Furthermore, the pedagogical orientations chosen by the teachers will perhaps affect how they respond to students’ aesthetic preferences, learning styles, and artistic abilities. This study
therefore attempts to explore the art teachers’ pedagogical orientations and, with such understanding as a background, make sense of why the teachers provide such art activities to mediate students’ arts learning in the school context.

**Studio-Teaching Structures.** It is also worthwhile to analyze how arts teachers organize time, space, learning materials, and assignments to set up a teaching structure for students’ learning. Hetland et al. (2007) documented five visual arts teachers’ studio-teaching in two high schools. The five teachers had extensive training in visual arts, such as painting, ceramics, sculpture, and drawing, and students showed interest and promise in the visual arts and received over ten hours of arts instruction per week.

This situation is very similar to artistically talented education in Taiwan. There are arts specialists who have expertise in visual arts and teach artistically talented students. Thus Hetland et al.’s study provides a useful lens for me to look at the teaching structure in the artistically talented class in the current study.

Regarding the *how* of studio teaching, art teachers in studios use three classroom elements to engage students in learning: (a) creating a studio culture by designing physical things (space, light, and sound) and social climate; (b) focusing thinking with studio assignments in which art teachers posed challenges that were open-ended and resulted in varied solutions; and (c) teaching through the artwork of artists and students. These elements in studio classrooms functioned as the context within which art teachers fostered an apprentice (master-craftsman) relationship between them and students in the studio teaching structures in the demonstration-lectures, student-at-work, and critiques.
In particular, Hetland et al. (2007) emphasized that teachers might flexibly vary and sequence these structures depending on their goals and projects. They regarded the student-at-work structure as the heart of studio teaching where teachers could attend to an individual student’s zone of proximal development by differentiating their guidance with students.

**Fostering Arts Learning (Studio) Habits of Mind.** In terms of the *what* of studio teaching, the study by Hetland et al. focused on what kind of thinking was taught in a studio art class. In addition to two basic areas of learning—teaching the craft (techniques, tool use) of the visual arts and teaching about the art world beyond the classroom (art history, visual culture)—at least six other important kinds of general cognitive and attitudinal dispositions were developed in visual arts classes. In total the eight studio habits of mind are to develop craft, engage and persist, envision, express, observe, reflect, stretch and explore, and understand art world.

In fact, as the researchers argued, the essential habits of mind and the presented model (elements and structures) take place in art classrooms where teachers intend to teach the arts intensively. Therefore, in addition to the talented class, I also used the presented teaching model to figure out the art teachers’ teaching structures in the general class. The eight studio habits of mind embedded in visual arts teaching could be observed as well.

**Differentiation as Responsive Pedagogy**

Arts in education provide an approach to develop cognitive and social skills, promote innovative thinking and creativity, and, most important, encourage behavior and values that underlie social tolerance and respect for diversity. Particularly in today’s diverse classrooms, students’ unique cultural backgrounds, interests, and aesthetic preferences call for multifaceted
Art curricula for those “artistically” diverse learners’ needs. In implementing successful arts learning strategies and methods in school settings, differentiated instruction is one of the important pedagogies. Art education for diverse learners should be supported by a continuous education system from the universal to the domain-specific, from the introductory stage to the sophisticated stage, from general literacy to professional development. In this section, I first elaborate on the main features of differentiated instruction. Then, field-based studies on differentiation in Taiwan are reviewed.

**Implementation of differentiated instruction.** Accessibility is the fundamental rationale for implementing differentiation of instruction and to make responsive pedagogy possible in the classroom. According to Tomlinson and McTighe (2006), “Responsive teaching suggests a teacher will make modifications in how students get access to important ideas and skills in ways that students make sense of and demonstrate essential ideas and skills, and in the learning environment—all with an eye to supporting maximum success for each learner” (p. 18).

The artistry of differentiation is an equilateral triangle with teachers, students, and curriculum at each point (see Figure 1). An equilateral triangle is a geometric figure with three equal sides. Thus it has no top, but is interrelated and interdependent, since any one point of the triangle can be at the top. How to make the differentiation triangle dynamic and balanced is the artistry of enacting multiplicity, flexibility, and continuity in a classroom (Tomlinson, 1999, 2003).
I next summarize the recommended practice based on the three dimensions of the differentiation triangle representing student-seeking, teacher-response, and curriculum-modification. I use the three aspects to look at the art teachers’ pedagogy in this study.

**Student seeking.** In a differentiation classroom, students are active partners rather than passive acceptors. They gain self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-advocacy as the teacher responds to their needs by differentiation. Their interests, strengths, and perspectives are acknowledged to build up *self-esteem*. They are a nonnegotiable and interdependent part of a classroom system, and in turn the system requires students to take responsibility for building up an accessible and flexible learning environment. In other words, students own their *self-efficacy* by recognizing their individual uniqueness and possibilities to the group; the group also values and recognizes the individual’s contribution. Consequently, students could become independent and self-directed learners. They come to understand their rights and responsibilities, assess their learning profiles, investigate in-depth experiences, and connect with the people who can bring about change. This is a process of becoming proficient at advocating by them, which is *self-advocacy* (Betts, 2004; Douglas, 2004; Tomlinson, 2004a, 2004b).
Tomlinson (2003) provides several strategies for responding to students seeking self-esteem, self-efficiency, and self-advocacy in a differentiated classroom. In applying those strategies into art education, teachers could help them assess their own progress. By “active noticing” and participation as emphasized by Greene (2001), teachers could guide students to select artwork or reflective journals for their portfolios. Students become their own learning meta-monitors who develop a clear awareness of their own aesthetic experiences and have reflective senses of dialoguing with “doing and undergoing” (Dewey, 1934).

**Teacher response.** The second dimension of differentiation focuses on teacher response. From whole class teaching to flexible grouping, from passive acceptance to active adjustment, from whether to respond to how to respond, differentiation of instruction, for many teachers, first requires a paradigm shift (Tomlinson, 2001). This paradigm shift might include:

From *single to various.* Teachers might: (a) assess student readiness through a variety of means; (b) read and interpret student clues about interests and learning preferences; (c) create a variety of ways students can gather information and ideas; (d) develop varied ways students can explore and own ideas; and (e) present varied channels through with students can express and expand understandings (Tomlinson, 2001, p.16).

From *dispensers to organizers.* Differentiated instruction occurs as teachers become increasingly comfortable with the meaning and structure of the disciplines they teach, and increasingly expert at teaching flexibly in order to match instruction to student needs with the goal of maximizing the potential of each learner in a given area. For this reason, teachers have to move away from seeing themselves as keepers and dispensers of knowledge and class controlling, and move toward seeing themselves as well-prepared and flexible organizers of learning opportunities (Tomlinson, 2001, 2004b).
From isolation to collaboration. The complexity of differentiated instruction requires teachers to look for more resources to enrich their teaching, more ways to exchange their ideas, and more cooperators to support their implementation. A teacher’s professional development moves from isolated pursuit to collaborative team work by co-planning, collaborative teaching, and follow-up (Henning & Kane, 2004; Tieso, 2004). For example, the Catalyst Program (Landrum, 2001) redefined the gifted education resource role, which means teachers could act as a spark to ignite advocacy and service for gifted learners among general education colleagues.

Overall, the teaching paradigm shift on differentiation reveals that teaching and learning are a constructive process (Tomlinson, 2003). It supports the implementation of art education in school settings. The role of the teacher in art education is more a provocative and facilitative role whose function is to help students identify and discuss issues related to the artwork they encounter (Parsons & Blocker, 1993). Greene (1995) encouraged teachers to celebrate the multiplicity of perspectives, the plurality of interpretations to have students experience “wide-awareness.” The teacher recognizes students’ diverse standpoints so as to respond to them by various scaffolds, flexible approaches, and professional collaboration.

Curriculum Modification. The core of curriculum modification is taking account of student readiness, interests, and learning profiles as teachers adjust curriculum and instruction. Specifically, the curriculum modification includes the following facets.

Multiple layers. In terms of students’ diverse readiness, teachers have to deal with their proximity to or proficiency with particular knowledge, understanding, and skills (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). The readiness levels in a class vary, so must the complexity of work provided. Designing curricula with multiple layers allow learners to be involved in a continual assessment and adaptation. For instance, several studies (Sondergeld & Schultz, 2008; Tieso, 2004) used
tiered lessons to differentiate levels of difficulties appropriately challenging and attainable for students as individuals at a given point in the instructional cycle (Tomlinson, 2004c). Tiered activities address readiness effectively; for example, all students study the same concept but complete activities appropriate to their readiness levels. Then due to the multi-layered challenges of tiered activities, students not only work on their readiness levels, but are expected to move beyond their comfort zones as well.

*Multiple dimensions.* Interest becomes a learning catalyst if teachers consider students’ motivation and preferences so as to provide a curriculum with multiple dimensions. Renzulli’s Schoolwide Enrichment Model is considered the model of a multiple-dimension service delivery system which draws on learners’ interests and strengths, and was widely adapted by practitioners modifying their curricula (Hughes, 1999; Menelly, 2000; Smith & Weitz, 2003). Renzulli and Reis (2008) pointed out the SEM’s distinct services: (1) curriculum modification and differentiation; (2) enrichment opportunities of various types; and (3) opportunities for the development of individual portfolios. They enrich students learning through a wide range of educational experiences.

*Multiple identities.* Learning profile refers to preferred modes of learning ways in which students will best process what they need to learn. It is shaped by a student’s gender, culture, learning style, and intelligence preferences (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). When different modes of learning are offered and supported, students could demonstrate mastery of learning in relation to their backgrounds and preferences.

In a dialogic classroom where the teacher engages students in aesthetic inquiry about art, curricula with multi layers, dimensions, and identities are important. It suggests that teachers adapt and devise a curriculum related to two kinds of variables, “the artwork made and studied in
the classroom and the students’ concerns and abilities” (Parsons & Blockers, 1993, p. 175). Students’ readiness on aesthetics informs the teacher to tier activities; their interests in particular artwork or art genres call for the teacher to deliver responsive services; their diverse learning profiles ask the teacher to open up choices of representing what they perceive, make meaning of, and reflect on the artwork they encounter.

To summarize, I conclude that differentiated instruction is a responsive pedagogy by which the teacher provides more accessible educative experiences to elicit students’ potentials. Moreover, it consists of three interwoven features, that is, multiplicity, flexibility, and continuity. Multiplicity indicates that the teacher provides multiple venues to make students’ learning visible and meaningful; for instance, encouraging multiple representations as making meaning of art. Flexibility refers to orchestrating flexible interactions which make learning happen in a constructive atmosphere, such as providing opportunities for independent or group learning. Continuity implies designing prolonged learning experiences by a wide range of service delivery systems so that students continuously enjoy investigating things.

**Differentiation as an emerging issue in Taiwan.** Due to the education law of normal and flexible class grouping (Kang, 2008), the trend of inclusive education (Chen, Chen, & Pan, 2008; Huang, 2009; Kang, 2008), and the release of the White Book of Gifted Education (Chen et al., 2008; Huang, 2009), differentiated instruction is gradually being addressed in Taiwan.

With the trend towards inclusive education in Taiwan, the “one-size-fits-all” teaching approach is no longer appropriate for the diverse needs of students. How to differentiate instruction in response to diverse learners’ needs becomes an issue for teachers in general education settings. Kang (2008) conducted a survey to investigate the implementation of
differentiated instruction by general education teachers in Taipei County. In the questionnaire, Kang explored the current status of teachers’ implementation, the difficulties encountered, and the support needed in carrying out differentiation.

From the survey, Kang noted that general education teachers were aware of students with a broad spectrum of needs and they accordingly modified curricula based on the challenge levels of learning materials and students’ readiness. However, general education teachers paid little attention to students’ interests to engage them in the learning process. Regarding instructional adjustment, the findings indicate that teachers seemed not to vary teaching strategies very often. General education teachers needed support ranging from having more resources, addressing students’ strengths, and knowledge about differentiation.

Similarly, in a survey on resource-room teachers for the intellectually gifted in Taipei city by Chen, Chen, and Pan (2008), gifted education teachers pointed out that the support in terms of additional relevant resources is most critical in implementing effective differentiation. In addition, how to implement the responsive pedagogy with the support of sufficient time, resources, parents, and administrators challenged gifted education teachers in elementary schools. Taken together, the two surveys provide a broad sketch of the implementation of differentiated instruction in Taiwan pointing out the classroom practices and barriers teachers encounter. But we need in-depth studies which document teachers’ operational curricula—what and how they differentiate—to better understand the complexity of interaction among student needs, teacher implementation, and curricular modification.

The studies by Huang (2009) and Kou (2006) fill this need. Huang (2009) explored three elementary teachers’ changing perceptions and implementation of differentiated instruction for gifted learners in the general education classrooms. Before joining the differentiated program,
the teachers stereotyped gifted students and were not able to fulfill their needs because of constraints of time. Teaching content, process, product, and learning environment became more flexible as the teachers accepted the concept of differentiation and tried to carry it out by changing their teaching styles and establishing a positive classroom atmosphere. The teachers further indicated that professional advice, financial and organizational resources, and collaborative curriculum designs are important factors to differentiate instruction for diverse learners.

Unlike Huang’s (2009) study in the general education setting, Kou (2006) conducted a qualitative research project focusing on a teacher’s curriculum implementation in both the general class and the English gifted class. Kou noted that the teacher adopted teacher-centered and form-focused instruction and that only slightly differentiated curriculum and instruction were implemented. Therefore, Kou further interviewed the teacher to realize it. He found that both internal (e.g., teacher beliefs and personality) and external (e.g., content materials, administrative policies, and social trends) factors influenced the participant teacher’s decision-making. He recommended in-service workshops to broaden teachers’ understanding about gifted education and professional knowledge in response to their controversial theory of fairness.

Overall, the concept of differentiation is not new to educators in Taiwan, since there is gifted/special education based on Confucius’ teachings to accommodate student characteristics. However, the terminology and detailed practices of differentiated instruction as advocated by American educators have been applied into the empirical studies of Taiwanese researchers. The surveys by Chen, Chen, and Pan (2008) and Kang (2008) show the current issues on implementation, perception, and barriers involved as teachers apply differentiated instruction in general and gifted education. Both Huang (2009) and the survey studies pointed out that “human,
financial, educational resources” might be an important factor to support teachers in implementing differentiation. Both Huang’s (2009) and Kou’s (2006) in-depth qualitative study noted that teachers’ perceptions on giftedness (e.g., stereotypes) would influence differentiated educational services for gifted learners. Accordingly, I explored the two issues when examining the two art teachers’ practices in this study.

**Differentiated Arts Curricula for Talent Development in the Visual Arts**

Imagine a classroom where there is Wang Yani (Winner, 1996) who was good at the illusionistic, impressionistic style of traditional Chinese brush painting, Holz (Wilson, 2005) who drew comics to represent his imaginative world of superheroes, and Nadia (Winner, 1996), a visual arts savant who traced images in detail and used lines to make a perfectly completed figure. All of them have art talents which require the teacher to provide appropriate curricula to respond to their “ranges of master” (Winner, 1996), while all of them need different services in terms of their unique cultures, mental conditions, and art styles for talent development.

In this section, I first discuss those unique learning profiles of students with art talents referring to theories of talent development in the visual arts. Since this study was conducted in Taiwan, I briefly review artistically talented education there to gain an understanding of how Taiwanese educators respond to the needs of students with art talents. Finally, empirical studies on differentiated arts curricula which are directly relevant to the current study are discussed.

**Talent development in the visual arts.** The diverse needs of students with art talents require teachers to differentiate curriculum and instruction in their classrooms. Understanding
the characteristics of students with art talents and organizing curricula that are responsive to them is a way to consider the concept of giftedness/talent through a curricular lens.

Feldman’s (1992) Universal - Unique Continuum provides a model for educating children with art talents through the developmental psychology perspective. The continuum consists of five developmental domains. The universal domain covers knowledge and skills generally achieved by all individuals. All individuals in a culture are expected to learn certain aspects of knowledge and skills that are found in the cultural domain. Fewer individuals are able or interested in disciplined-based domain that involves the mastery of a particular discipline, such as art, and generally takes place in schools. The idiosyncratic domain is usually represented by sub-domains of a discipline or craft at a professional level, such as graphic representation. In the unique domain achievements are only made by a small number of people and represent new forms of knowledge or organization within a domain, such as Picasso’s cubism art style. According to Feldman’s (1992) observation, almost all student art begins during the cultural domain and develops into the disciplined-based domain. Only motivated students with art talents would be performing in the idiosyncratic domain.

Winner (1996) and Winner and Martino (2003) argue the children with talent in an art form are similar to academically gifted children in the three respects. First, they master the first steps in their domain at an earlier-than-average age and learn more rapidly in that domain. They also have a “range to master” (p. 335), that is to say they are intensively interested in making sense of their domain and have an obsessive interest and ability to focus keenly on their area where they have superior ability. Then children with art talents learn faster as well as differently from others. They virtually learn on their own, requiring little adult scaffolding with solving
problems in their domain in novel, idiosyncratic ways. The psychological perspective of defining talent in the visual arts accurately portrays the innate traits of children with art talents.

How are those psychological traits exhibited in performances by children with art talents in educational settings? Clark and Zimmerman (2004), Hurwitz and Day (2001), and Pariser (1997) drew on learning features and characteristics of the artwork of children with art talents. According to Clark and Zimmerman’s (2004) study in a summer gifted program, students in the visual arts attribute their gifted or talented abilities to hard work and report devoting a lot of time and energy to their artistic ability. The students in this population also recognize an early interest and superior ability in the visual arts as compared to their age peers.

Pariser (1997) further indicated that characteristics associated with artistically talented students include intensity of application and early mastery of culture forms typical of art exceptionality, production of a large volume of work over a sustained period of time, nurturing from family and teachers, and thematically specialized work. Hurwitz and Day (2001) were specific about the artwork characteristics of children talented in the visual arts: (a) verisimilitude (being true to life); (b) visual fluency; (c) complexity and elaboration; (d) sensitivity to art media; and (e) random improvisation with lines, shapes, and patterns.

In sum, talent development in the visual arts has multiple facets based on developmental psychology (e.g., Feldman, 1992; Winner & Martino, 2003), school-based performance (e.g., Clark & Zimmerman, 2004; Praiser, 1997), and the characteristics of artwork (e.g., Hurwitz & Day, 2001). The multiple facets of talent development in visual arts challenge teachers to implement differentiated art curricula in response to them. In particular, as Hurwitz and Day (2001) and Sabol (2006) suggested, every child with art talents has a mental and physical strengths and weakness profile that enable combining of the various abilities, interests, and
learning styles that make them unique individuals. As such, Sabol (2006) claimed, art created by children with art talents may not simply be a matter of superior quality in the technical aspects of the work involving the use of art media, but also may involve a sophistication of ideas and meanings of the work independent of their technical skills with media. In this study, I explore the issue by examining if the art teachers modified curricula and adjusted instruction to respond to the general characteristics of students with art talents and the unique profile of individual students with art talents.

**Artistically talented education in Taiwan.** Gifted/talented programs implemented in Taiwan are mainly for students with high general ability, talent in specific academic domains, and talented in the fine arts, music, dance, drama, and sports. According to Wu (2000), the goals of these programs include: (a) developing the potential of gifted/talented students; (b) cultivating good living habits and healthy personalities; and (c) teaching for high cognitive and/or skill attainment.

Over the past three decades, gifted/talented education in Taiwan has expanded through a series of pilot programs, including specialized classes, pull-out resource rooms, acceleration programs, and enrichment camps. The Special Education Law (SEL) passed in 1984 (revised in 1997 and 2009), where gifted/talented education was incorporated into all levels of schooling along with education for the disabled, is a milestone and guidepost of gifted/talented education development in Taiwan. The SEL sets policy directions for the special education system, curriculum design, teacher development, and resources (Wu, 2000).

Specifically, programs for students talented in the arts began in 1980, and students are taught in self-contained (specialized) classrooms. Currently, there are 175 self-contained classes
for students talented in visual arts at 45 schools (Shih, 2009). Students are assessed through their performance in the fine arts and through a series of artistic aptitude tests. Those winning awards for distinguished performance in national or international contests are also accepted.

Regarding curriculum implementation, Liu (2006) conducted a survey study on the artistically talented class in an elementary school setting in Taiwan that provided an overview of what was taught in such classes. The researcher investigated the development, the goals, and the content of artistic talented classes. Findings indicate that elementary school teachers in artistically talented programs typically referred to the Grade 1-9 Curriculum Guidelines for Arts and Humanities and the Curriculum Guideline for Art and Craft Classes in the Elementary School. They used resources provided by schools and rarely incorporated external resources into the curriculum. Students with art talents in elementary schools attended classes on basic art theories and techniques, and art-making as part of an integrated curriculum.

However, findings reveal that arts teachers gave more emphasis to theories and techniques. Thus, the researcher suggested that they try to incorporate social and nature resources into students’ art creation or appreciation, and encourage students to collaborate on creative performances. According to Lai (2005), representation in art should no longer be restricted to using materials and techniques. Teachers have to nurture artistically talented students’ sensibility and critical thinking to reflect, analyze, and understand the cultures around them. Students should be able to use multiple media, and study and represent social or daily life issues through art-making.

In addition to broad survey studies, there are studies focusing on curriculum innovation in the artistically talented class on aesthetic judgment (e.g., Chen, 2005; Wu, 2008), creative expressiveness (e.g., Chen, 2005; Lin, 2007; Wu, 2005), self-efficiency (e.g., Kou, 2007). For
example, to understand if picture books with rich visual and narrative images could cultivate or evaluate aesthetic judgment of students talented in visual arts, Wu (2008) applied multi-reading activities in the artistically talented and the general classes. The findings reveal that students talented in visual arts tended to evaluate picture books based on pictorial clues. They had better development on aesthetic judgment than their age peers and their development also varied in the same class pointing to the diversity of the student population which requires differentiation in the teaching of art.

Interestingly, when I reviewed relevant studies on artistically talented education in Taiwan, it seemed that there was no in-depth, case-orientated study addressing how art teachers accommodate individual needs and the unique learning profiles of students with art talents and modifying curricula and instruction in their day-to-day teaching. The current study aims to fill the gap. Documenting the two art teachers’ operational curriculum in River School would assist in better understanding the extent to which art teachers in the artistically talented class respond to the diverse needs of their students in Taiwan.

**Differentiated arts curricula.** There are two research lines regarding differentiated arts curricula. The curricula in the inclusive setting use tiered activities, flexible groupings, self-selected learning pathways, and supportive guiding structures to match artistically diverse learners’ readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Differentiated arts curricula targeting artistically talented students in the specialized setting draw on modified content, processes, and products through “acceleration, enrichment, sophisticated, and novelty” (Gallagher, 2000).

Indeed, the two approaches supplement each other in art education in the system. Based on the Structure for Learning Experiences in the Visual Arts (Clark and Zimmerman, 2004),
learners move laterally along the naïve, introductory, rudimentary, intermediate, advanced, and mastery stages. It is a continual developmental process in the arts domains. As such, I envision “the continuum services range from general enrichment for all students across all grade levels to curriculum differentiation procedures, including enrichment and acceleration for rapid learners, as well as individualized studies for identified gifted and talented students” (Renzulli & Reis, 2008, p. 36). In the continuum services, differentiated arts curricula for diverse learners promise a wide range of activities with different challenge levels; curricula focused on talent development highlights specialized experiences (e.g., studio arts, art critics, art history, and aesthetics) whereby all students could develop aesthetic sensibility based on their strength areas. I next review studies regarding those two research lines and how they might help me figure out the differences between and commonalities across the art teachers’ pedagogy in the general classes (inclusive setting) and talented classes (specialized setting).

**Differentiated arts curricula in inclusive settings.** There is little empirical research focusing on differentiated arts curricula in the inclusive setting. Instead of just targeting identified populations, this kind of research showed how the educator considered diverse learners’ art skills, background knowledge, motivations, and interests in order to establish an engaged learning environment. In this line, the researchers usually referred to Tomlinson’s perspectives of differentiation for diverse learners: tiering, flexible grouping, self-selected learning pathways, and supportive guiding structures.

**Tiering for essential art concepts.** The core element in designing differentiated arts curricula is the essential art concepts that students should learn, such as different meanings of beauty. In a differentiated classroom, the teacher allows student to understand the concept based on their readiness, which is a tiered approach. According to Tomlinson (2003), “Tiering assumes
within a particular lesson or product, a wide range of students should work towards the same
knowledge, understanding, and skills. However, it acknowledges the varied readiness levels of
students in approaching the task, and thus presents the work at different levels of difficulty” (p.
79). The teacher can tier activities by challenge levels, complexity, resources, outcome, process,
and product (Heacox, 2002).

Drashil (2006) used tiered activities to provide arts curricula with multiple degrees of
scaffolding and challenge. As a teacher in a career/technical-orientated photography program,
the researcher described his work in organizing and manipulating a multilevel classroom to meet
the diverse needs of students who had a wide range of motivations, prior knowledge and skills,
and learning styles. Drashil emphasized opening a number of different windows on the same
concept.

For instance, a frame is a basic concept in photography. It develops awareness of how a
photographic print is a two-dimensional composition of lines, shapes, and patterns. All students
were introduced to core ideas surrounding the concept such as subject distance, line as a design
element, and foreground-background relationships; however, each individual level of
photography had four differentiated photography assignments based on the complexity of the
concept:

Photography 1: consider how subject-distance, the rule of thirds, and foreground-
background relationships can be used to photograph urban settings or
objects created by humans.

Photography 2: apply these ideas in composing photographs of natural forms, rhythms,
and patterns.

Photography 3: experiment with compositions of their own choice; however, they must
think how to compose photographs that effectively break the rules they
have learned to use to this point.

Photography 4: find a way to legitimately incorporate frame into their self-directed
portfolio work. (p. 42)
From building solid core ideas of frame to breaking the learnt rules in applying their own insights into self-directed portfolio work, the students engaged in creative ways of developing compositions.

*Flexible grouping for exploring diversity of the arts.* Art learning would benefit from flexible groupings not only to enable students to learn from different class members’ art experiences, but also allow for in-depth investigation in small group study. In both homogeneous and heterogeneous settings, students see themselves in a variety of contexts, and teachers observe students at work in different settings (Tomlinson, 2003).

If a teacher expects students to clarify their thoughts on how an aesthetic image expands their imaginative zone and how art teaches them to make meaning of their lives, or if the teacher requests students to demonstrate what artistic skills facilitate them in their artwork, empirical studies illustrate how flexibility makes an essential difference in reaching the goals of art education. Chen (2008) studies a teacher’s pedagogy incorporating aesthetic education in an art project in an inclusive early childhood program. The project *Art All Around Us* aimed at investigating art in students’ daily lives, because the teachers noticed the students’ creativity and enthusiasm in exploring different media. The project approach was employed to guide their investigation. After the teachers and students categorized their initial questions, they formed three study groups. There was a dynamic structure arising from their diversity where the students were welcome to join other study groups’ (small groups) activities and, in group meetings (the whole group), the teachers invited the students to share what they were doing with their classmates. There was much fluidity and interfacing among the students and the teachers. In particular, students with high art potential could explore more art areas based on their interests. It might move them beyond their comfort zones and help cultivate the richness of art in them.
Self-selected learning pathways. For Greene (2001), the goal of aesthetic/art education is to empower learners to actively initiate perceiving closely. Becoming active learners is “in continuous formation through choice of action,” in Dewey’s words. Regarding differentiation, the teacher makes appropriate choices to accommodate arts curricula; students are encouraged to select learning pathways to maximize their learning.

What do students choose in a differentiated arts curriculum? In Drashil’s (2006) differentiated photography program, students were allowed to reach the same learning goal at their own pace (flexible pacing). It made students operate at a pace that fit their learning styles and provided time for trial and error. The teacher is more like a coach and mentor who gives students as much responsibility for learning as they can handle, and guides them to be self-directed learners. The three study groups in the “Art All Around Us” project (Chen, 2008) show that young learners could work on their own interest areas in a long-term art project based on their own choices.

Because of the appreciation of the multiple interpretations of art, students are encouraged to try out a wide range of media in choosing to represent their aesthetic experiences. On one hand, students could explore media through self-discovery, studying artists’ artwork, and working with art experts, and then create works of the same topic by different tools, materials, and skills (Chen, 2008). The process of re-countering the same art production is important for having aesthetic experience. On the other, for some students who didn’t successfully learn in traditional ways, they gained “an alternate form of communication” (Fountain, 2007, p. 133) to represent learning products. The multilayered nature of art afforded students the opportunity to respond to artwork in any way that made sense to them. With the mindset of flexible exploration
in their own learning, students might begin to appreciate diversity in their lives, and figure out how to illustrate the knowledge they learned in a creative way.

**Supportive guiding structures.** According to Tomlinson (2003), a support system for differentiated learning experience involves a teacher continually ensuring that work is slightly beyond a student’s reach, and is able to provide support systems that guide the student to success.

First, technology could establish a learning environment for greater number of learners. Based on the concepts of differentiated instruction and universal by design, Elliott (2007) demonstrated how she created a handbook for school and museum educators to support their development of curriculum material that provided meaningful access to diverse learners through the concept and techniques of the tiered activity and a universal design by interactive technology. With regard to a universal design for learners, the handbook provided multiple examples, highlighted critical features, supported background knowledge, and multiple media and formats (text, images, and video) to consider learners’ needs and learning styles. In order to acquire new knowledge, learners must first have the content presented to them (presentation); then they must engage with that content in some manner (process); and finally, a result of that engagement is produced (product).

Moreover, art itself might provide differentiated learning experiences for diverse learners. Fountain (2007) explored a classroom that used art to differentiate instruction in all subject areas. Art became a teaching tool, aiding an elementary school teacher in differentiation for her diverse learners, including ADHD and ESL students, to see if this combined method improved their creativity. Consequently, art served as a ladder in helping students attain goals by differentiated learning experiences, because: (a) the flexibility and diversity found in these areas of art allowed for differentiation by learning styles; (b) art naturally provided for differentiation by ability—
using different media to show students’ ideas and knowledge; and (c) art’s propensity for abstract thinking as well as concrete references would be successful for differentiation (pp. 227-228). Additionally, the multi-dimensional nature of art integrated into other subjects also engaged students in “aesthetic ways of knowing” (communication, editing, and dialogue), in the words of Eisner (2005). That is, they had to decide what to create, select media and techniques, and consider how to display and share as if cultivating the multifaceted possibilities of representation by making choices.

Finally, the three phases of project approach—exploration and recalling prior experiences, fieldwork investigation, and the culminating event and debriefing—guided students to have prolonged engagement in exploring art in their daily life (Chen, 2008). By listening to students’ questions and observing their interests carefully, the teachers enriched the students’ artistic experiences to cultivate their perceptions. Consequently, not only did they make art, but they also had the opportunity to look back and forth at their works of art when expressing and sharing how to make sense of art in their daily lives. For the children, making and appreciating art became a mutual learning process.

**Differentiated arts curricula in specialized settings.** The other research line of differentiated arts curricula focuses on identified artistically talented students providing insights on what and how of arts teaching in this study. VanTassel-Baska and Stambaugh (2006) outlined instructional strategies to modify curricula for developing aesthetic experiences such as inquiry techniques (asking questions about carefully selected artwork), conceptual and thematic techniques, project-based work, using biographies, and arts integration. They further argued that curricula planned for advanced learners in schools can benefit a wider spectrum of students via
different complexities and challenges. Empirical studies provide examples of some of the instructional strategies.

_Inquiry techniques as aesthetic questioning._ Greene (2002) stated, “In earlier times, an aesthetic encounter was expected to culminate in a feeling of coherence, harmony, and finitude. Today, rarely looking for solutions or resolutions, we seek a sense of aliveness, of wide-awakening. We relish incompleteness, because that signifies that something still lies ahead” (p. 22). How can we make sense of the “incompleteness” of an aesthetic encounter with art? One way is through inquiry techniques/questioning. Aesthetic education is regarded as “a question-centered subject, where we delve beneath the surface of long-held assumptions [about] art…In this respect, aesthetics questioning is similar to the critical process that ask us to defer judgment of an artwork until we have studied the evidence” (Hurwitz & Day, 1995, p. 393). In terms of differentiation for diverse learners, “students are both stretched and supported if teachers ask questions of varying complexity in class discussions” (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 87). The teacher can differentiate the question-answer interaction by coaching students’ responses.

Making meaning of artwork is not an automatic consequence of maturation, but requires extensive investigation (Eisner, 2002; Greene, 2001). Clark’s _Look At and Talking About Art_ (LATA) method, based on theories such as Broudy’s aesthetic scanning, provides a guideline on how to dialogue about artwork with regard to problem-solving and self-expression experiences. This method was examined in Wilson and Clark’s (2000) study of middle school students with limited art appreciation experiences. Particularly, one set of pedagogical strategies were related to aesthetic education: focusing on parts of an image, comparing and contrasting two images, voting on an aspect of the artist’s intent, and like/dislike comparisons (Clark & Zimmerman, 2004). The researchers argued that if the teacher could accommodate the method with regard to
students’ readiness and needs, it could form the foundation for developing studio art techniques and artistic products in general.

**Conceptual and thematic units to guide an inquiry.** The project approach (Chen, 2008) could provide a supportive guide for students to engage in prolonged creation and appreciation. Its focus on students’ answers to their own questions resonates with principles of differentiation and intellectual demand built into the path of inquiry. Access to the knowledge of the learner informs teachers about students’ entry points into the curriculum. Access to the learners’ representations, understandings, and misunderstandings facilitates teachers to recognize strengths and weaknesses so they can differentiate instruction accordingly (Hertzog, 2007).

Similar to the project approach, Costantino’s (2002) study used problem-based learning (PBL) to teach aesthetics in an after-school program for gifted students. PBL is both a curricular organizer and an instructional method that develops learners’ higher order thinking when they investigate ill-structured problems in real-life situations. Also, ill-structured problems are designed by the teacher to ensure that required content and skills are being covered.

This study implied that when implementing aesthetic education, the teacher could consider an issue-based context that motivates students to explore aesthetics naturally so as to realize students’ standpoints and interests. Based on the designed context, it assigns students a role as a way of engaging them in finding and solving problems professionally and authentically. Finally, when representing their small group findings in class, students can learn from each other as if establishing “peer networks” (Tomlinson, 2003) for shared learning.

The “qualitatively different” thematic unit (Clark & Zimmerman, 1997, 2004; Zimmerman, 1994) might present the differentiated features of “acceleration, complexity, depth, challenge, creativity, and abstractness” (VanTassel-Baska et al., 2006). For instance, Clark and
Zimmerman (1997) conducted 3-year projects, ARTS, to serve the needs of students with high interest and abilities in visual and performing arts who attended rural elementary schools in three states. In light of multicultural education, the goal of the projects was to celebrate diversity, emphasize respect for a variety of life styles and human rights, and empower all members of participating groups. Indeed, this culturally responsive arts program exemplified differentiated arts curricula that fit into cultural diverse populations’ needs in today’s classrooms. First, the richness of different cultures became meaningful learning resources to broaden students’ ethnic understandings. Second, when honoring their own cultures, students were likely to gain efficiency in learning in different ways. Finally, Greene (1995) said that aesthetic education is to involve in a dialectic relation “between individual and the environment, self and society, or living consciousness and object-world.” And “each relation presupposes a mediation and a tension between reflective and material dimensions of lived situations” (p. 52). The community-based arts curriculum led students to explore the dialectic relation aesthetically.

Systematic structures supporting accommodations. To implement arts/aesthetic education, Greene (1986) addressed “continuing authentic encounters with works of art, engagements with medium, and critical and aesthetic inquiries.” The continual and interactive encounter with art makes aesthetic experiences educative (Dewey, 1934).

As mentioned, Hetland et al. (2007) documented five art teachers’ instruction for high potential visual arts learners in two high schools focusing on the arts. Along with the structure and habits of mind, students developed “a high degree of successful autonomy” (Tomlinson, 2003) towards a self-disciplined art producer. Interestingly, those students with high potential, as the teachers said, were also “diverse learners” with a wide range of abilities. Thus, they differentiated instruction for them without upsetting the general flow of work for the group. For
instance, a teacher adjusted how he talked to students according to their individual needs. By individualization\textsuperscript{3}, he consulted with a 9\textsuperscript{th}-grader with limited English skills to overcome his initial obstacles and refine his observational habits. In other words, multitasking, multifaceted curricula still need to be conducted in a homogeneous setting, such as the specialized arts school.

Worley’s (2006) study on teachers’ instruction in the performing arts school also shows that arts teachers might already differentiate instruction but not recognize the terminology. Worley found that a few basic tenets of differentiation existed in instructional approaches often used in the performing arts. First, the use of auditions to place students in groups for rehearsals and performances reflected the flexible grouping of differentiation. Second, advanced learners were introduced to repertoire requiring a more in-depth understanding of the arts area; they were also accelerated according to their demonstrated proficiency on performance assessments such as technical excerpts. Third, choice of the extra-curricular activities and opportunities was available to students. In short, the pedagogy of the recognition of individual differences and the modification of content and instruction used by most performing arts educators has been reflected in the features of differentiation.

In the field of gifted education, Reis, Schader, Milne, and Stephen’s (2003) *Music and Minds* curricula were employed in a 10-day enrichment residential summer program for young adults with musical talent affected by Williams syndrome. This study investigated where a talent development approach based on the Schoolwide Enrichment Model (Renzulli & Reis, 2008) could be adapted for this twice-exceptional population. The instructor differentiated instruction

\textsuperscript{3} Here I want to clarify that both differentiated instruction and individualization aim to meet the individual needs of each learner, but they have different configurations and means of implementation. Individualized instruction attempts to create different lessons for each student by recognizing students’ learning needs. Often students work individually on different topics. However, with differentiated instruction, students work on the same topic, but in different ways. Students are placed in small groups, one whole group, or allowed to work individually. The flexible grouping is unlike tracking, which indefinitely groups students by general ability levels without regard to talents or limitations.
based on the progressive structure. They used flexible grouping from group instruction (e.g., chorus) to individual or small group training based on interests (e.g., music compositions by computers) to teach chorus, creative movement, computer skills for music composition, and so on. In addition, allied health and physical therapy professors analyzed physical limitations and developed individual plans for increased mobility and physical fitness for the participants.

Regarding art/aesthetic education for artistically diverse learners, the SEM makes us consider: (a) what general exploratory activities the teacher can provide to enrich every student’s aesthetic experiences; (b) what group training activities the teacher can offer for those who pursue additional training in a specific art/aesthetics area; and (c) what individual or small group investigation can explore the authentic issue/problem with regard to aesthetics.

In sum, differentiated art curricula for talent development in the visual arts draw on multiple, flexible, continual learning experiences to explore the richness of art. The three features of differentiated learning experiences come from teachers’ adaptive instruction responding to artistically diverse learners’ readiness, interests, and learning profiles. This study explores the extent to which the art teachers provide multifaceted activities, flexible learning avenues, and continual and adaptive guidance to engage artistically diverse learners in visual art curricula.
Chapter 3

Methodology

The main purpose of this study is to investigate art teachers’ responsive pedagogies focusing on differentiation for diverse learners, including those identified as the artistically talented. I conducted this qualitative research within a mental framework of thoughtfulness, “a heedful, mindful wondering about the project of life, of living, and of what it means to live a life” (van Manen, 1990, p. 12). Confucius tells us how to apply thoughtfulness into practice, “Look into what a man does. See his motives. Examine in what things he rests. How can a man conceal his character?” (The Analects, 2:10) The three steps – looking, seeing, and examining – guide us to make sense of a person or phenomenon. Accordingly, in this chapter, I look at the methodology regarding my “thoughtfulness” in the research as though the colorful food-shaped mark created by a fourth grader (see Figure 2) guided me to explore the richness of the two art teachers’ responsive pedagogies.

Figure 2. A foot-shaped Mark. A fourth-grader made a foot-shaped print which informed people to go to an in-school Millet Exhibition in River School.

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4 Pseudonyms are used for people and places in this study.
Specifically, I first articulate my methodological approach to this study. I then discuss the selection of the particular site and participants. Several data resources are used to portray the dimensions of two art teachers’ responsive pedagogies. Those methods are the lenses through which I map the constructive spheres. I also discuss the procedure of data analysis and building trustworthiness. Finally, by contemplating who I am, I reflected on how I situated myself in the field. My multiple roles merged to shape my sensitivity as well as to expose any biasness.

**Methodological Approach**

In order to study art teachers’ pedagogy in response to artistically diverse learners’ needs, I conducted case studies of two visual art teachers who modified curricula and adjusted instruction in both the general and the artistically talented classes. The case study method was used to understand the complexity of differentiation in art education by examining its implementation in an elementary school in Taiwan. These cases are instrumental because I intended to understand art teachers’ responsive pedagogy through the specifics of these situations. Stake (1995) explains, “Case study here is instrumental to accomplishing something other than understanding this particular teacher, and we may call our inquiry instrumental case study” (p. 3).

As described in the introduction, the concept of differentiated instruction advocated in today’s American education is similar to Confucius’ pedagogical creed of teaching in accordance with the student’s characteristics. Confucius’s pedagogical creed has been regarded as a rationale of gifted/talented education in Taiwan (Wu, 2000). As Erickson (2002) suggested:

In finer grained analysis we can study the person in a particular situation, identifying the specific interactional practices in which the person participates in specific interactional events in a specific local community of practice. We can identify the practices themselves, considered as real-time, continuous social action, and we can also identify the social participation structures—the configurations of social roles in interaction within the group. When from this point of view we want to study learning, we look closely over time at a given person in a given, recurrent social situation. (p. 304)
The current instrumental case study documented, analyzed, and interpreted art teachers’ teaching in the school setting in Taiwan. By “identifying the specific interactional practices” (Erikson, 2002) in the specific community of practice, we will broaden our understandings of carrying out the concept of differentiation in respect to Confucius’ pedagogical creed in the Taiwanese educational context.

Site Selection

Choosing a site and gaining access. When I considered potential dissertation topics in the summer of 2007, I explored websites of several artistically talented programs in Taiwan. Studying artistically talented programs, I thought, might fit my two interest areas: gifted education and aesthetic education. I came across the artistically talented education program in River School and another school, both of which shared the same feature of bridging gifted education with general education. For instance, when providing adaptive art activities for the artistically talented, they concurrently enhanced the quality of the whole schools’ art education so as to enrich all students’ art experience. A visual arts teacher, who taught both the artistically talented and general classes in River School, joined the Life Curriculum design for the primary grades and tried to incorporate arts education into that curriculum by working with a dancer and teachers in the general class.

At that time, a friend who served as a consultant in an education bureau, described art education in River School after evaluating artistically talented programs in that district: “They

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5 The Grade 1-9 Curriculum in Taiwan encompasses seven major learning areas, including Language Arts, Health and Physical Education, Social Studies, Arts and Humanities, Science and Technology, Mathematics, Integrative Activities. In first and second grade, Social Studies, Arts and Humanities, and Science and Technology learning areas are integrated as Life Curriculum which is usually taught by the classroom teacher. The mentioned arts teacher was trying to develop the school-based Life Curriculum focusing on arts education. According to her, it not only enriched primary students’ arts experience, but also encouraged teachers to make the integrated curriculum more interesting, experiential, and aesthetic by arts.
didn’t just teach drawing and practicing techniques, as most artistically talented programs did in Taiwan. Students explored a wide range of media. We saw students’ creativity in their artwork.” This sparked my interest as I wondered how the teacher engaged students in making art creatively. How did they make marginalized art education so compelling in that setting? It made me more curious about art education in River School.

I contacted Mrs Wen, the team leader of the artistically talented program in River School, and visited her in late June 2008. She replied, “Sure, I’m willing to introduce art education in River School to you. For me, the artistically talented program is like a seed, a little lamp which made the old school find its spotlight again.” Looking at a CD which documented the development of art education in River School, I was eager to learn more about this school.

I kept my relationship with Mrs Wen via a postcard and two phone calls. She accepted my plan to conduct the study in River School. In May 26th 2009, I visited four visual art teachers and did field work for one week. I interviewed them and a director of the counseling division who supervised the artistically talented program so as to get their perspectives on art education. The director described how the four teachers worked as a team to enrich art experiences for students in River School. To get more sense of their teaching and the context, I observed six art classes and one sixth-graders’ graduation dance performance. I got two CDs from the teachers and they showed an emphasis on documenting students’ learning processes and outcomes. I thought exploring the complexity of the art teachers’ pedagogy would enable me and other educators to visualize the possibility of differentiation in arts education.

**Setting—River School.** “You know, this building will be demolished this summer. It is too old. We won’t see this building any more. Let’s say goodbye to the historical building by our
dances!” said Mrs Huei (pseudonym), an art teacher in River School, in the sixth graders’ graduation dance performance (CO_River School_06/09/2009). Mrs Huei’s words revealed two features of River School: an elementary school which has more than a century of history, and a “playful arts gallery between mountains and a river.”

River School is located in an historical district in north Taiwan. On the way to this school, one may easily see historical heritage and cultural landmarks between mountains and a river (see Figure 3). It is a medium-size school providing kindergarten to the sixth grade classes and houses 84 faculty members (five arts teachers—four visual art and one music) and 46 classes (including 4 artistically talented self-contained classes that run from third to sixth grade) of around 1000 students.

Art education, according to Mrs Wen, gave new birth to River School. Historically, it was a junior high school in which the principal drew on visual art education and music education in the middle twentieth-century and hired an artist to be an administrator. They nurtured local artists and established the foundation of art education in this district. For example, Mrs Huei, who graduated from River School, recalled at that time she received art education from her teachers.

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6 CO_06/09/2009 indicates I observed River School on June 9th, 2009. (IN: Interview; CO: Classroom Observation; DU: Document)
In 1996 the River School established four classes for the artistically talented (the artistically talented program) on the basis of two rationales of providing an adaptive learning environment for students with art talents, and popularizing and enhancing art education for all students by rich facilities and appropriate curricula. Besides four arts classrooms, they have four arts studios for ceramics, woodcuts, calligraphy, and storage. To develop the core concept of art education in River School on the theme of *Power of Beauty*, they focused on the following goals:

1. Pursuit of usefulness, manipulation, exploration, appreciation, and practical living aesthetics;
2. Enhancing the quality and promoting the development of the Arts and Humanities Curriculum through the resource of the artistically talented program;
3. Integrating art education into other learning areas and school features;
4. Incorporating local art resources into curricula;
5. Enriching curricula through ongoing artists-in-residence, arts lectures, and field trips about arts;
6. Working with art and cultural foundations to promote arts education;
7. Developing the platform for performing students and teachers’ artwork.

(DU_River School Arts Education-05/25/2009)

The art teachers in River School attempted to build a “playful arts gallery between mountains and a river,” where they incorporated local resources to open a new arts window and provide art education for all students. In the arts gallery, students are expected to immerse in the art, ecology, and history of their community.

Participants

Art teachers. In the artistically talented program in River School, four art teachers—Mrs Wen, Mrs Pei, Mrs Huei, and Mr Huang—worked as a team to design art projects for third to sixth grade students identified as artistically talented. As Mr Feng the director of the Counseling Division\(^7\) said, the four art teachers have been building a collaborative model to be used in the program (IN_Feng_06/02/2009). The team featured the following: (a) Enthusiasm: providing high quality art education for all students; (b) Expertise: exchanging teaching in the artistically talented program and working with resource people to enrich curricula taught in the general and artistically talented classes; (c) Reflection: reflective dialogues taking place regularly in the same staff office; and (d) Identification with the school: working more than ten years in River School.

Since my research interest is in art teachers’ responsive pedagogy to cater to the diversity of student needs in art, I enlisted Mrs Wen and Mrs Pei as the main participants for this study. Based on my pilot study in the summer of 2009, I found the two art teachers: (a) focusing on students’ readiness, interests, and learning profiles and adjusting curricula and teaching accordingly; and (b) willing to accept my constant and intensive observations and interviews in

\(^7\) In Taiwan, the artistically talented program is under the Counseling Division which is in charge of gifted/special education in the school setting.
both the general and artistically talented classes. As I didn’t have the opportunity to observe Mrs Huei’s and Mr Huang’s teaching in my pilot study, I didn’t include them as participants although I did have discussions with them sometimes to get a better sense of the context.

Mrs Wen, in her late-40s, was one of the teachers responsible for the establishment of the artistically talented program in 1996. She has a BA in Art Education and has served as consultant and designer of textbooks in the Arts and Humanities Area. I visited Mrs Wen in the summer of 2008. At that time, she was busy applying for an in-school Millet Exhibition from an art foundation. Her expertise is on art design and creative expression. She continued to make artwork by trying out different media because she loved art-making and hoped to find out more appropriate art materials to engage students in art learning. Being an arts teacher of twenty-two years, she still had a passion to look for resources to enrich students’ learning about art. Before teaching in River School, she taught students with visual art talents in an elementary school in south Taiwan and had received in-service training on gifted education.

In River School, Mrs Wen had 14 years experience teaching artistically talented classes and was very clear about how the program could become an important, experimental resource to develop art education for all learners in the school. In her view, children should learn arts through imagination, creativity, and reading arts books. With that, exploring a wide range of media, learning observations, and enriching life and artistic experiences would become the foundation for students to create artwork and express their ideas creatively. Finally, students have to present their artwork to real audiences to perceive their thoughts. For example, she taught students in a general class to learn from Millet’s work of portraying working people in daily life. She first taught basic photography skills in the classroom and then took students to a street market near River School where they took at least five pictures of working people such as
traffic policemen, fish-ball sellers, and so on. For those interested in this activity, Mrs Wen demonstrated advanced skills and allowed them to take more pictures which were then exhibited in the school’s Millet Exhibition. The subtle guidance demonstrated her differentiation by providing advanced learning opportunities for those who were willing to be challenged. She could be regarded as the best case for my research.

In her late-30s, Mrs Pei joined the artistically talented program as an art teacher ten years ago. She has a BA in Art Education. Her short black hair looks neat and cheerful. She usually wears a pair of jeans and a round-necked sweater. Whenever I visited her class, Mrs Pei gave me a smile and encouraged me to look at students’ artwork to see if I had any questions. She was interested in my experience as a teacher for intellectually gifted students in an elementary school. We shared some similar issues that took place in our settings, such as parents’ high expectations on their children’s performance.

Mrs Pei believed that art education should aim to nurture students to become aesthetic connoisseurs in daily life. After graduating from a teachers’ college where she specialized in visual art education she had been a class teacher in River School and an art teacher in an elementary school in Taipei before joining the program for the artistically talented. Based on her experiences teaching a wide range of students, Mrs Pei found it important for children to develop appropriately with adaptive guidance. In her view, art learning is a process of prolonged engagement through exploring media, pursuit of interest areas in art, and nurturing a sense of beauty. Compared to Mrs Wen who had teaching experience of almost thirty years, Mrs Pei was virtually a novice. Their different teaching experiences would enrich this study by looking at how an experienced teacher and a novice teacher implemented differentiated instruction in art class.
Students and other staff members. To deepen my understanding of the context, the school’s principal, administrators (for interview questions, see Appendix B), and students whose parents allowed me to copy and take pictures of their children’s artwork and portfolios were also included as sub-participants.

Mrs Wen and Mrs Pei’s students were those identified as artistically talented according to the Principles and Criteria of Identification of Disabled and Gifted Students (Ministry of Education, 1998) in Taiwan. Identified artistically talented students are selected based on one of the following criteria: (a) a score above 1.5 S.D. or PR 93 on the art aptitude test, or outstanding performance in the visual art techniques test; (b) rewarded as having the first, second, or third place in international or national art competitions; and (c) recommendations and observations from professionals, teachers, or parents, along with documents which demonstrate artistically talented characteristics and performance.

Students go through a screening process in the second grade and once identified as artistically talented they are placed in a self-contained class from the third to sixth grade. They receive about six to eight art classes per week. In Taiwan, elementary students identified as artistically talented are placed in self-contained classrooms where they receive around 6 to 8 arts classes per week. Students in a self-contained classroom share common requirements and/or abilities - in this case, visual arts. All talented students in a school or school district will be placed in the same classroom based on their grade levels.

During my fieldwork, Mrs Wen taught fourth-grade students in the artistically talented class and the sixth-grade students in the general class. She introduced me to students in the two settings. Mrs Pei taught the fifth-grade students in both artistically talented and the general classes. I made a presentation in Mrs Pei’s class on my interest in art and my research focusing
on the diverse needs of students in art learning and whether modified curricula or adjusted instruction was applied taking that into account.

By looking at the students’ work I was able to determine whether the art teachers responded to students needs, that is, if differentiation of instruction was applied. In looking at student work (e.g., artwork, work sheets, and portfolios), I focused specifically on the teaching practice, that is, to what extent the teachers: (a) encouraged students to explore their areas of interest; (b) provided appropriate comments to challenge students current levels; (c) helped students generate various ways of thinking and making artwork along with their learning preferences; and (d) built a supportive environment to experiment, to discover what happens, to play around, and to try out alternatives.

I expected to see how the art teachers provided scaffolding when a student struggled with art learning, such as providing stabilizing ideas, creative problem-finding/solving, sharing work, and interpretation. How the teachers worked with students’ strength areas and offered in-depth exploration was also observed. I factored in my time constraints and students’ willingness to be observed closely. Two boys (Lin and Zh) in Mrs Wen’s artistically talented class and a girl (Ting) in her general class, and three boys (Chuang, Wang, and Zhe) and a girl (Yuan) in Mrs Pei’s artistically talented class are presented in this study.

**Data Generation and Analysis**

**Data generation.** This qualitative study drew on observations, renewed inquiry, and progressive focusing to investigate the arts teachers’ pedagogy. In terms of the qualitative inquiry on teaching, Erickson (1986) reminded us to pay attention to: (a) identifying the full range of variations in modes of formal and informal interactions and meaning-perspectives; (b)
collecting a wide range of events in the setting, so that typical or atypical events with their attendant characteristics can later be established; and (c) looking at events occurring at any system level (e.g., the art studio, the school) in the context. Applying Erickson’s ideas into this study, non-participant and participant observations, semi-structured interviews, document analysis, etc, are employed.

**Observations.** The major portion of the data generation was based on extensive observations of two art teachers’ teaching in both settings—the artistically talented and the general classes. I observed Mrs Wen’s art class in both the general class and the artistically talented class in the fall semester of 2009. There were 21 students, 12 boys and 9 girls, in her general class, and 16 students (9 boys and 7 girls) in her artistically talented class. Students in Mrs Wen’s general class had two art classes per week on Friday mornings, while students in her artistically talented class had six classes per week on Thursday afternoons and Friday mornings.

While conducting the fieldwork for this study I worked as a teacher in the other elementary school at the same time. Due to time and transportation constraints, I chose to observe the two classes on Friday mornings (8:00am-12:00noon). I observed sixth graders in the general class during weekly 80-minute sessions (10:30am-11:10am, 11:20am-12:00noon) for 7 weeks, and fourth graders in the artistically talented class once a week for 11 weeks during 120-minute sessions (8:00am-8:40am, 8:45am-9:25am, 9:35am-10:15am).

I observed Mrs Pei’s, the other art teacher, art class in both the general class and the artistically talented class in the spring semester of 2010. There were 25 students, 14 boys and 11 girls, in her general class, and 24 students, 10 boys and 14 girls, in the artistically talented class. Students in Mrs Pei’s general class had two art classes per week on Thursday mornings, while
there were six classes per week on Thursday afternoons and Friday mornings for the artistically talented class.

Due to time and transportation constraints, I chose to observe the two classes on Thursday mornings (10:30am-12:00noon) and afternoons (1:25pm-3:50pm). The art classes I observed were for 7 weekly 80-minutes sessions (10:30am-11:10am, 11:20am-12:00noon) for the fifth graders in the general class. I observed the fifth graders in the artistically talented class once a week for 9 weeks comprising 120 minutes each (1:25pm-2:05pm, 2:15pm-2:55pm, and 3:10pm-3:50pm). The observations for the study from spring 2009 to the fall of 2010 are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

**The Art Teachers, Grades, and Number of Art Class Observations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Art Teachers</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Number Of Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Wen</td>
<td>Sixth grade (general class)</td>
<td>7 weeks (80 minutes per week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fourth grade (artistically talented class)</td>
<td>11 weeks (120 minutes per week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Pei</td>
<td>Fifth grade (general class)</td>
<td>7 weeks (80 minutes per week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth grade (artistically talented class)</td>
<td>9 weeks (120 minutes per week)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, staff meetings or lunch time helped me get a better sense of the teacher team’s interaction and curriculum design, so I joined and observed their meetings when it was possible. For instance, I had lunch with the four teachers in the staff office and heard about their plans for an upcoming program evaluation in the spring 2010 semester. Mrs Wen initiated conversations and reminded the other three teachers to think about how to present student artwork and their own teaching documentations in both the general and the artistically talented
classes. By listening to their conversations, I got a sense that they made extra effort to enrich students’ art learning experiences in the two settings, regardless of labeling.

In addition to formal instruction, I also observed when the classes had events relevant to art education, such as the School Games Carnival, the field trip to a Nature Agriculture farm, and an art exhibition by the fifth graders in Mrs Pei’s artistically talented class held at a local museum. According to Mrs Pei, it was like a warm-up exhibition for the fifth-graders’ graduation art show in the following semester. When Mrs Pei showed me the students’ artwork in the exhibition, she specifically described how Tong, a fifth-grade girl in her artistically talented class, composed a watercolor tissue paper collage, and discussed with Mrs Pei and generated a title for her work entitled, “Quest of Hope.” It illustrated that the combination of two media intrigued Tong to apply her introspective thoughts into art creation with Mrs Pei’s guidance.

**Interviews.** To gain multiple perspectives on pedagogy regarding differentiation, I conducted informal and formal semi-structured interviews with the two art teachers to understand their teaching, their viewpoints on student artwork, and the school structure and system. Informal interview were carried usually before or after classes as well as during preparation time. I formally interviewed Mrs Wen 5 times, for about 60 minutes on average, in her classroom or in the staff office. Two formal interviews were conducted with Mrs Pei for 4 hours, in her classroom or in a community cafeteria.

The initial areas of interview questions with the two art teachers included topics such as training in art education or gifted education, the preplanned goal or expectation of art projects, the implementation of activities, the response to those activities, students’ art-making processes and artwork, and their own art experiences (for interview questions, see Appendix A).
The school principal and an administrator were also interviewed in order to understand their position on art education in River School. I interviewed the principal once, for about 50 minutes, to get a sense of her perspectives on the two art teachers’ teaching and the artistically talented program in River School. The director of the Counseling Division was interviewed once, for about 40 minutes. She talked about her observations on the four teachers’ collaboration in the artistically talented program and perspectives on art education in the school. The following table summarizes the number of interviews with Mrs Wen and Mrs Pei and the other staff.

Table 2

The Number and Duration of Interviews with the Art Teachers and Other Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers and staff</th>
<th>Number of interviews</th>
<th>Duration (minutes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Wen</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Pei</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Counseling Division</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For data generation purposes, I conducted follow-up interviews with Mrs Wen and Mrs Pei in the 2010 fall semester. I shared with them my preliminary analysis of their teaching. With Mrs Wen, the interview lasted about 50 minutes, centering on her decision making on independent art-making for students in the artistically talented class, and her vision of artistically talented education. With Mrs Pei, we talked about her expectations on students with art talents, students’ feedback about the art projects focusing on the environmental protection issue, and her guidance to individual students in the artistically talented class. For over an hour, Mrs Pei shared with me her collaborative installation artwork of students in her artistically talented class for an
upcoming graduation art show, which was different from independent art creation I observed during the spring semester of 2010.

**Documents.** Documents included: (a) the art teachers’ lesson plans, letters to parents, and student art exhibition brochures in order to understand their specific pedagogical considerations; (b) the national Arts and Humanities curriculum guidelines, in order to understand how the teachers adapt them and develop school-based arts curricula based on students’ needs, the learning goals developed, local resources, and current arts events; (c) students’ learning portfolios and artwork photographed by me, in order to understand their performance and how they respond to the teachers’ teaching; and (d) documentation made by the teachers, such as film clips and PowerPoint, in order to understand how they formulate and look at students’ learning and the development of arts education in River School. Overall, the data sources for each research questions are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Data resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What art curricula do the art teachers design for all students, including those identified as the artistically talented?</td>
<td>• Art curricula responding to artistically diverse learners’ needs</td>
<td>• Classroom and outside school observations in art activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teachers’ perceptions on differentiated instruction</td>
<td>• Teacher interview, lesson plans, teaching schedules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Community environments</td>
<td>• Resource peoples’ informal conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As designing art curricula, what are their considerations?</td>
<td>• Teachers’ perceptions on differentiated art curricula</td>
<td>• Teacher interviews and informal conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Classroom and outside school observations on art activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher lesson plans, teaching schedules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Student artwork, portfolios</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 3 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Data resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do they modify curricula to make art learning more accessible for diverse learners?</td>
<td>• Teachers’ curricular modification of art projects</td>
<td>• Teacher interviews and informal conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do the art teachers implement art curricula designed for all students?</td>
<td>• Art curricula responding to artistically diverse learners’ needs</td>
<td>• Classroom and outside school observations in art activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teachers’ perceptions on differentiated instruction</td>
<td>• Teacher interview, lesson plans, teaching schedules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do they pay attention to students’ needs to adjust instruction? If so, how?</td>
<td>• Teachers’ instructional adjustment of art projects</td>
<td>• Classroom and outside school observations on art activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What conflicts, challenges, and compromises do they face?</td>
<td>• Teacher implementation of differentiated art curricula</td>
<td>• Teacher interviews and informal conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Artistically talented/ art education in the school setting</td>
<td>• Classroom and outside school observations on art activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Staff meetings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Analysis.** In the field, I kept asking myself, “What does such an event (e.g., teachers’ demonstration or students’ peer critique) want to tell me? In turn, what do I want to tell that event taking place in arts teaching and learning?” With these questions in mind, I jotted down what I was observing immediately in my notebook with reflections or questions. I filled out a contact summary form (see Appendix B) on a weekly basis and reviewed what had transpired to generate some basic codes, such as media exploration, teacher guidance to individual students, and learning from peers. Basic codes not only crystallized what I perceived in specific contexts, but also accumulated common points happening in different settings. For instance, I coded “media exploration” in Mrs Wen’s art class. With the same code in both
settings, I found Mrs Wen drew on organic composition of art elements in the general class, while she challenged students in the artistically talented class so as to emphasize more how to weave art elements complexly. Thus, two sub-codes emerged, organic composition of art elements for students in the general class, and complex weaving art elements for students in the artistically talented class.

Moreover, data from field notes, documents, interviews, and portfolios were coded according to emerging themes, issues, and concepts, such as personalized guidance or individualized instruction, quantitatively as well as qualitatively different, and sequential or interrelated organization of art projects. I looked for patterns across settings and teachers to portray the complexity of art instruction focusing on differentiation. In this regard, I would identify myself as a mapmaker rather than a puzzle collector in portraying multiple realities. Fay (1996) states,

In cartography there is no ‘One Best Map’ of any particular terrain. For any terrain an indefinite number of useful maps is possible, each depending on the aspect of the terrain highlighted as an entity, the mode of its representation itself contingent on the use to which the map will be put, and on the perspective from which the map is drawn. (p. 210)

I mapped the realities (data) in three possible ways. First, weaving the perspectives into the text was aimed at helping me build up a reasonable interpretive framework. Juxtaposing the perspectives in the text enabled me to look at the potential connections among the different sources and perceptions. Finally, I presented my points of view as a way of inviting possible dialogue between the various perspectives.

In the case of Mrs Pei, two layers of student differences—inter-class difference and inter-individual difference—were used as a framework to examine what curricula she modified and how she adjusted instruction in order to attend to the two layers of student differences. When juxtaposing her response to four students’ different learning profiles (inter-individual difference)
in the artistically talented class, I found a tension between her teacher-centered guidance and students’ art-making preferences. The tension emerged as an issue on how art teachers made connections between their expectations and other competing demands on students. Compared with Mrs Wen’s guidance that drew on art learning and teacher-and-student relationship, I assert that personalized guidance, instead of individualized instruction, would be a better term to capture the spirit of individualization. I intend to invite readers to think about the differences and commonality of personalized guidance and individualized instruction.

Based on Miles and Huberman’s (1984) ideas, I generated codes prior to the formal fieldwork to guide me to make direct connections between investigative issues and the data. For instance, the studio orientated teaching structures included three categories: demonstration-lectures, student-at-work, and critiques. The preset categories were expanded, refined, and revised as the research progressed. For example, Mrs Pei regarded students’ learning as akin to plant growth in Nature Agriculture. Through that, I generated a theme, a studio-orientated structure mediating growth. The preset categories were elaborated and intensified in the Demonstration-Exploration session, the flexible purposing by apprentice discovery in the Student-at-Work session, and the metacognitive periods in the Reflection-Review session.

In addition, I wrote four interim reports and discussed them with my advisor, Dr Liora Bresler, one of my committee members, Dr Nancy Hertzog, and a gifted-education teacher group I joined in Taiwan. The first two interim reports provided the main findings and guided me to think of conceptualization with regard to emerging issues. The subsequent interim reports were for elaborating and refining categories and for developing issues. Dr Bresler’s comments guided me to clarify descriptions and encouraged me to conceptualize main findings by thinking of what the art teachers’ teaching might be targeting in terms of the educational context in Taiwan. Dr
Hertzog had two Skype conversations with me, and she reminded me to think about the two art teachers’ teaching differences between the general class and the artistically talented class. I reflected on the issue—good teaching for all or for an identified population. Feedback from the gifted education teacher group in Taiwan inspired me to make possible connections between the art teachers’ differentiation and Confucius’ pedagogical beliefs.

**Establishing Trustworthiness.** Lincoln and Guba (1985) provided several criteria for the qualitative researcher to use in verifying or extending experiential understandings to enhance the integrity of the research project.

**Prolonged engagement and persist observation.** This involved conducting the research project from my inherent aspiration to study gifted education in classrooms, explore the possibility of differentiated instruction in the context of Taiwan, and research art education. I regarded this study as a prolonged inquiry throughout an academic year. The persistent observation provided depth, whereas the prolonged engagement broadened the scope of this study. For instance, I observed the School Games Carnival project for fourth grade students in Mrs Wen’s artistically talented class. For the project, Mrs Wen guided them to make 3D foam-board bird sculptures as well as bobble cloaks featuring a local bird in the River community. Students used the artwork for the carnival as a welcoming show for visitors from Hong Kong, and in decorating the classroom. Along with Mrs Wen’s explanation, I came to understand that she had students learning art who could be used for performances and public events. It might expand the students’ vision of art creation to know art for personal pursuit as well as social responsibility.
**Triangulation.** This study includes data and methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1984). With the multiple data sources and methods to this study, I could examine if the findings remained the same by examining observations on field notes, transcribed or summarized in interviews, and exemplified in students’ artwork. The issues that I triangulated in this study were the content and the methods of the two teachers’ curricular modification and instructional adjustment. For example, to understand curricular modification for students in Mrs Pei’s artistically talented class, I documented her lesson plan and observed the art projects that she designed and taught in class as well as interviewed her on issues relating to curriculum design.

**Peer debriefing.** Using critical friends to judge, discuss, or brainstorm my interpretations or perceptions of the research project were useful ways of extending my “interpretive zone” (Wasser & Bresler, 1996). In Taiwan, I was a member of a discussion group that comprised four teachers and a professor involved in gifted education. I made three presentations on my research focusing on main issues in our monthly meetings, and discussed my findings with the professor by email. Their feedback shaped my interpretations from the perspective of gifted education in Taiwan. In one meeting, we talked about individualization in the two art teachers’ class. The professor thought that the term *personalized*, rather than *individualized*, instruction might be more appropriate to illustrate teachers’ attentive understanding, contextual adjustment, and intimate relationships with students in respect to Confucius’ “teaching in accordance with the student’s characteristics.” It inspired me to examine Mrs Wen’s and Mrs Pei’s guidance to individual students and to articulate its essence with regard to the difference between personalized and individualized instruction.

I also gave a presentation in a “fat data” group comprising UIUC graduate students having a broad interest in education. The group meetings were held monthly, and at each
meeting members presented their research projects for comments and suggestions. Four group members attended my presentation on March 10th, 2011. Based on their questions and comments, I added factual information about the two art teachers’ classes, such as the number of students in each class. Their interest in the content of art projects inspired me to analyze each project with reference to the competence indicators of the Grade 1-9 Curriculum Guideline (Ministry of Education, 2003) in Taiwan. In doing so, art concepts of each project were presented (see Tables 4, 5, 7, 8).

Furthermore, I invited a friend, who received his doctorate from UIUC and is currently a professor in a university in Taiwan, to discuss my study. Her expertise in qualitative research, early childhood education, and aesthetic education helped me in conducting a qualitative research project and how to interpret the art teachers’ curricula. She read two of my interim reports and commented on them. She thought it was interesting that I categorized the instructional strategies the art teachers used with regard to differentiation. She came to understand teachers in the art field use various approaches to attend to student differences, such as flexible grouping and student choice.

**Member checking.** Member checking was done by continuously consulting teachers on the data collection and data analysis process. Their insights, perspectives, and draft report readings were crucial components in reconstructing the meaning of the data. For instance, I shared two diagrams visualizing their teaching in both the general class and the artistically talented class (see p.148 and p.208). They agreed upon my preliminary analysis and described their considerations on the quantitatively as well as qualitatively different art projects for students in the general and artistically talented classes due to time issues, students’ readiness, or their expectations on the students’ performances.
A Researcher with Multiple Roles

A human being is not just something you automatically are, it is also something you must try to be. (Max van Manen, 1990, p. 50)

How could I try to be in the art teachers’ pedagogical world? Three aspects of the research roles should be mentioned here: learning the arts as a learner, and focusing on gifted education as a reflective practitioner, thinking of Eastern pedagogy regarding the Western theory as a transformer. I elaborate them as the followings.

Learning the arts as a learner. Lessons from classes and teaching experiences in Taiwan and U.S. extended my sensitivity as well as subjectivity when I conducted the study. I regarded myself as a learner, who would like to learn in what way art teachers accommodated instruction and curricula to nurture artistically diverse learners’ art talents in the school setting. This study interest came from my past teaching experience. I was an elementary school teacher who tried to integrate the arts in curricula. I once invited a professional actress to teach body language used in drama to my students. Her teaching extended my students’ ways of representation, such as “acting” a poem to perform the images of words. It also made me wonder how effective a teacher with extensive art backgrounds and pedagogical training could engage students in the artistic inquiry.

My doctoral program study in the U.S. emphasized aesthetic education which draws on cultivating an in-depth perception and understanding of the arts and all the facet of a human being’s life. I learned to use art as a frame of mind in thinking of the true meaning of education—the interaction between children’s needs, curricula, and teachers’ pedagogy. Students go through a process of “perfinking” (a David Kresch’s term, as cited in Egan, 2008, p. 46)—perceive, feel, and think together—as teachers guide them to explore the aesthetic quality of the
arts. Yet how does an art teacher motivate students to “perfink”? By looking at art teaching and learning in a classroom, I believe, I could make more sense of the holistic learning experience for developing students’ art talents.

**Focusing on gifted education as a reflective practitioner.** In fall 2006, I took Dr Nancy Hertzog’s Differentiation of Instruction (DI) advanced seminar which discussed relevant issues when implementing DI for all student types. We explored two research lines regarding differentiation proposed by Tomlinson (2004): “One set working more as ‘splitters’ and posing questions about what happens for high-ability students in mixed-ability settings, while the second set functions more as ‘lumpers,’ questioning what common issues and solutions exist for multiple populations in mixed-ability settings (p.xxxiv).”

Though I agreed with the perspectives provided in the seminar, my earlier teaching experiences had been focused on high ability students rather than other student populations. In this study, I observed art teachers’ teaching in both the artistically talented class and the general class. It would broaden my view on how to differentiate instruction for diverse populations in the mixed-ability setting. Dewey (1938/1998) suggests,

> It is the business of an intelligent theory of education to ascertain the causes for the conflicts that exist and then, instead of taking one side or the other, to indicate a plan of operation proceeding from a level deeper and more inclusive than is represented by the practices and ideas of the contending parties. (p. v)

Toward a “deeper and more inclusive” thought, I became a reflective practitioner as clarifying the difference between and similarity across the “splitter” and the “lumper” in terms of differentiation through conducting this study.
Thinking of Eastern pedagogy regarding Western theories as a transformer. As mentioned in the introduction section, differentiated instruction actually resonates with Confucius’s pedagogical concern: teaching in accordance with the student’s characteristics (Yin Cai Shi Jiao). The core of differentiation is to address individual differences. Conceptually, most educators, regardless demographics, agree with paying attention to each student’s needs and providing adaptive learning experience. However, culturally, I became aware that, in Eastern society, we emphasize interdependent relationship in respect to group harmony rather than individualities. In this regard, can we really allow different students to do different things in the same context with teachers’ mindful design? What would be our own pedagogical concerns regarding students’ individual differences? Erickson cited Max Weber’s classic statement:

A social relationship may be said to exist when several people reciprocally adjust their behavior to each other with respect to the meaning which they give to it, and when this reciprocal adjustment determines the form which it takes. (Erickson, 1986, pp. 127-128)

Teaching is social, contextual constructed as if building relationships between teachers, students, and curricula. Through conducting this study about differentiation in my own county, I figured out the “reciprocal adjustment” between “meaning-perspectives of actors (teachers and students) and the ecological circumstances of action in which they find themselves” (p. 127). The current study was enriched by looking at the reciprocal adjustment from culture beliefs, teaching strategies, and students’ individual differences. Regarding what I learned about differentiation in U.S., I might become a transformer who re-thinks, re-imagines, and reflects the ancient pedagogy proposed by Confucius.
Chapter 4

Mrs Wen’s Differentiated Art Classes

Mrs Wen’s art classroom was located on the fourth floor of the Ming Building in River School. I enjoyed walking from the school entrance to her classroom along a tiled pathway on which students had drawn birds they saw at school (see Figure 4). I could get the smell of fresh grass and earth. Light dappled through the leaves and cast moving shadows on the beautiful mosaic bird path.

Figure 4. The tiled path to Mrs Wen’s classroom.

Along the stairs to the fourth floor, the walls were covered with news items on art, such as an exhibition on “A Burning Soul: Vincent van Gogh” while artwork by last year’s graduate students decorated the hallway (Figure 5). Peering through the window, I was impressed by the colorful, transparent images. Inside the classroom, art equipment was stored neatly in the closet. A color-wheel poster and ink paintings by several artists and students were displayed on the blackboard. The visual dialogue between accomplished and potential artists (students), for me, showed how Mrs Wen had carefully created the atmosphere to enable appreciation, perception, and thinking in the art studio. I discovered the artistic minds fostered in Mrs Wen’s class in the fall 2009 semester.
What kind of educational experiences could be fostered in such a beautiful setting? How did those experiences contribute to learning about art? In what way did Mrs Wen mediate art learning in response to students’ diverse needs? In this chapter, I describe and discuss Mrs Wen’s operational art curriculum—what and how she taught. I draw on the curricular modification and instructional adjustment, reflecting differentiation, which took place in her class.

**Curricular Modification in Mrs Wen’s Art Classes**

In the fall 2009 semester, Mrs Wen taught the fourth grade artistically talented class and the sixth grade general class. She encountered two layers of student differences: (a) inter-class differences between the general class and the artistically talented class; and (b) within-class differences between students. This study focuses on the art teacher’s responsive pedagogy towards the diversity of students in the art classes, including those indentified as artistically talented.

Mrs Wen’s curricular modification for inter-class differences would reveal how her art projects were designed to cater to students in the general as well as in the artistically talented classes. In exploring her response to the within-class differences in both types of classes, I...
appreciated the extent to which she took into consideration students’ diverse interests, readiness, and art-learning profiles. In view of that, how did she modify curricula for them? This section will illustrate and discuss the intricacies of Mrs Wen’s curricular modification for both the inter-class and within-class differences.

**Quantity and quality.** The sixth grade students in Mrs Wen’s general class had two art classes per week on Friday (10:30am-12:00pm), while the fourth grade students in the artistically talented class had six classes per week on Thursdays (1:30pm-4:00pm) and Fridays (8:00am-10:15am). The temporal difference resulted in Mrs Wen’s curricular modification for students in both settings.

The sixth-grade general class completed four projects in the 2009 fall semester (see Table 4), which included the Landscape Design, School Games Carnival, the Hand Sketch, and the Surrealism Collage projects. According to Mrs Wen, she focused on the students’ “psychological rhythm of learning” as she believed that it was appropriate for students to experience various rhythms in learning art. For instance, she had a still project, that is, the Hand Sketch with students sketching independently, followed by an instill project (the School Games Carnival) where students worked together to make costumes in an interactive, dynamic classroom environment.

In Mrs Wen’s lesson plan, she didn’t explicitly indicate what on standards the art projects were based as opposed to the Grade 1-9 Curriculum Guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2003) competence indicators used to design the curriculum by teachers in Taiwan. I used the competence indicators to interpret art concepts embedded in each projects (see Table 4). With
regard to the Arts and Humanities Learning Area\textsuperscript{8} Competence Indicators, the four art projects in Mrs Wen’s general class were in the first or second learning stage, which is the introductory or rudimentary level. For instance, the School Games Carnival project enabled students to work together in making a goddess’ costume using a green plant and was eventually used in the school games carnival and displayed in the hallway after that event. It includes three competence indicators: 1-2-5: Try to work with classmates to make art (Exploration and Expression), 2-2-8: Understand local or community art by joining local art activities (Aesthetics and Understanding), and 3-2-11: Decorate environment and enrich personal spirit by making art (Practice and Application).

The fourth grade students in the artistically talented class worked on ten projects - National Art Competition, the Ink Painting, the Graph Design, the School Games Carnival, Ceramics, Sketch in River Middle School, Picture Books, Collage, the Surrealism Collage, and the Print project - and made a field trip to an art museum. The art projects were compiled in terms of themes and media in Table 5. According to the competence indicators of the Arts and Humanities Area, the ten projects would represent the second or third stage, that is, the intermediate or advanced learning level. For instance, Mrs Wen also designed the School Games Carnival project for students in the artistically talented class where students worked independently to make bird polyon sculptures and plastic hats in the fashion of Picasso, Matisse, and Miro. They then used them in a collaborative dance performance in the games carnival.

\textsuperscript{8} Taiwan began implementing the Grades 1-9 curriculum reform with its emphasis on curriculum integration in 2001. The Humanities and Arts Learning Area is one of the seven integrated learning areas. Its three main curricular goals are Exploration and Expression (1), Aesthetics and Understanding (2), and Practice and Application (3), which aim to develop students’ basic cultivation in the arts and the humanities, transmitting and creating arts, and developing cultivated and respectful citizens through the extensive and holistic arts education. Each goal includes four learning stages from the introductory to the advanced levels. For example, 1-2-5 indicates Exploration and Expression (1) – the second learning stage (2) - the fifth indicator (5).
Those lovely bird sculptures were later suspended from the ceiling in Mrs Wen’s art studio, to simulate bird flight.

The competence indicators of the School Games Carnival project in the artistically talented class included; 1-3-2: Think of themes and contents for art creation, and use appropriate media and skills to complete planned, affective, and thoughtful artwork, 1-3-3: Express personal feeling and emotion by skill and form of art making, 1-3-4: Complete artwork by collaboration (Exploration and Expression), 2-3-7: Know about the relationship of environment and life, and reflect on environment’s influence on art creation (Aesthetics and Understanding), and 3-3-13: Apply art knowledge and skills into designing, planning, decorating, or modifying life environments (Practice and Application). The same project including the different learning levels of competence indicators demonstrated how Mrs Wen modified the complexity and depth of projects for students in the artistically talented class.

It was clear that Mrs Wen provided “quantitatively different” art curricula for students in the general and talented classes that took into account her perceptions of student readiness. According to her, the six-grade general class students had less exposure to art curricula prior to their fifth grade in River School. This was because art from the first to fourth grades was taught by home classroom teachers who might not necessarily have the requisite art backgrounds. As most students in the general class lacked fundamental art concepts, such as color contrasts, Mrs Wen’s objective was to introduce basic art concepts rather than to provide high-level training. By working on fewer art projects, they could concentrate on acquiring basic techniques such as observation, tool-use, or imagination.

In contrast, students in the artistically talented class were systematically provided art learning experiences and designed art projects which entailed greater use of media and the
application of complex art concepts. Based on the teaching system for the artistically talented program in River School, teachers in the program were responsible for students’ learning from the third to sixth grades. The following is Mrs Wen’s art learning plan for her students in the artistically talented class:

Third grade: 1. Creativity education drawing on association and imagination; 2. Reading books relevant to art.

Fourth grade: 1. Exploration of diversities in art; 2. Focus on observation; 3. Experiment with a variety of media; 4. Accumulation of visual experience, such as attending art exhibitions.

Fifth grade: 1. Focus on complementation of artwork; 2. Expressing ideas/perspectives through art creation; 3. Reading books relevant to art; 4. Accumulation of experience of art appreciation.

Sixth grade: 1. Involvement in a graduation art show; 2. Incorporating parents in preparing for students’ transition to junior high schools’ learning.

(DU_Wen_10/02/2009)

According to Mrs Wen, the plan for artistically talented students was like an inquiry focusing on creativity, appreciation, and authentic performance, such as the graduation art show. The relatively high number of art projects and classes would match those goals.

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9 DU_Wen_10/02/2010 indicates the document collected from Mrs Wen on October 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2010. (IN: Interview; CO: Classroom Observation; DU: Document)
Table 4

*Art Projects in Mrs Wen’s General Class*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Explored Media</th>
<th>Exploration and Expression (1)</th>
<th>Aesthetics and Understanding (2)</th>
<th>Practice and Application (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landscape Design (10/02/2009)</td>
<td>Campus Landscape Design</td>
<td>Markers, Color pencils</td>
<td>1-2-5 Try to work with classmates to make art</td>
<td>2-2-7 Appreciate classmates’ visual, audio, or kinesthetic artwork, and describe personal feelings about others’ artwork</td>
<td>3-2-11 Decorate the environment and enrich the personal spirit through making art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Games Carnival (10/02/2009)(10/30/2009) (11/13/2009)</td>
<td>Environment Protection Goddess</td>
<td>Foam board, cloth, acrylic pigment, sequin, wire, plastic gauze, crepe paper</td>
<td>1-2-5 Try to work with classmates to make art</td>
<td>2-2-8 Understand local or community art by joining in local art activities</td>
<td>3-2-11 Decorate the environment and enrich the personal spirit through making art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand Sketch (12/25/2009)</td>
<td>Looking at My Hands Carefully</td>
<td>2B/3B pencil, drawing paper, hand</td>
<td>1-1-4 Correctly, safely, and effectively use tools or materials to make art or performance</td>
<td>2-2-6 Appreciate and recognize the beauty of nature, artwork, and artificial work</td>
<td>3-1-9 Feel connections among self, others, and the environment through making art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surrealism Collage (12/25/2009)(01/08/2010)</td>
<td>Students’ choice by reconstructing hand sketches</td>
<td>Drawing paper, magazine, color paper</td>
<td>1-1-1 Awaken imagination by experimenting various media and enjoy visual, audio, and kinesthetic art making</td>
<td>2-2-7 Appreciate classmates’ visual, audio, or kinesthetic artwork, and describe personal feelings about others’ artwork</td>
<td>2-1-8 Appreciate artwork made by diverse esthetic groups, approach multi-culture art, and respect artists’ expressiveness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Dates indicate the days I observed the projects.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Theme</th>
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<th>Exploration and Expression</th>
<th>Aesthetics and Understanding</th>
<th>Practice and Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Art Competition</td>
<td>(Students’ choices)</td>
<td>Water color, ink, brush, marker, color paper, polyon ball, corrugated paper</td>
<td>1-3-2 Think of themes and contents for art creation, and use appropriate media and skills to complete planned, affective, and thoughtful artwork</td>
<td>2-2-7 Appreciate classmates’ visual, audio, or kinesthetic artwork, and describe personal feelings about others’ artwork</td>
<td>3-4-11 Choose art activities that fit personal aptitude, interest, and ability to continue art learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10/02/2009)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ink Painting</td>
<td>Most interesting things in my</td>
<td>Ink, brush, water color, xuan paper</td>
<td>1-3-2 Think of themes and contents for art creation, and use appropriate media and skills to complete planned, affective, and thoughtful artwork</td>
<td>2-3-9 Express aesthetic experience and understanding of art creation by discussion, analysis or judgment</td>
<td>3-1-9 Feel connections among self, others, and the environment through making art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10/09/2009)</td>
<td>memory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graph Design</td>
<td>Imaginative Flowers</td>
<td>T-shirt, cloth, iron, tape</td>
<td>1-3-1 Perform creativity by exploring different kinds of art making 1-3-3 Express personal feelings and emotions through skills and forms of art making</td>
<td>2-3-9 Express aesthetic experience and understanding of art creation by discussion, analysis or judgment</td>
<td>3-2-11 Decorate the environment and enrich personal spirit through making art</td>
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<tr>
<td>(10/16/2009)</td>
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Table 5 (continued)

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<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Explored Media</th>
<th>Exploration and Expression</th>
<th>Aesthetics and Understanding</th>
<th>Practice and Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Games Carnival (10/30/2009)(11/13/2009)</td>
<td>Little Egrets in River District</td>
<td>Foam board, cloth, plastic tube, aluminum, acrylic pigment, plastic hat, bobble cloth, wood</td>
<td>1-3-2 Think of themes and contents for art creation, and use appropriate media and skills to complete planned, affective, and thoughtful artwork</td>
<td>2-3-7 Know the relationship between the environment and life, and reflect on the environment’s influence on art creation</td>
<td>3-3-13 Apply art knowledge and skills into designing, planning, decorating, or modifying life and environment</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1-3-3 Express personal feeling and emotion through skills and forms of art making</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1-3-4 Complete artwork by collaboration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceramics (11/27/2009)</td>
<td>Love (In Memory of Qian Sh)</td>
<td>Clay, engravers, glaze</td>
<td>1-3-2 Think of themes and contents for art creation, and use appropriate media and skills to complete planned, affective, and thoughtful artwork</td>
<td>2-3-7 Know about the relationship between the environment and life, and reflect on environment’s influence on art creation</td>
<td>3-3-13 Apply art knowledge and skills into designing, planning, decorating, or modifying life and environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sketch in River Middle School (12/04/2009)</td>
<td>Beauty of River Middle School</td>
<td>Rotary crayons, drawing paper</td>
<td>1-3-3 Express personal feelings and emotions through skills and forms of art making</td>
<td>2-3-6 Recognize nature, artificial things, and artwork by analysis, description, and discussion</td>
<td>3-2-10 Know life art in a community and choose favorite ways to apply it in life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Explored Media</th>
<th>Exploration and Expression</th>
<th>Aesthetics and Understanding</th>
<th>Practice and Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Picture Books (12/18/2009)</td>
<td>Exploration of picture books: I can &quot;draw&quot; a story</td>
<td>Marker, drawing paper</td>
<td>1-3-3 Express personal feelings and emotions through skills and forms of art making</td>
<td>2-3-8 Explain self and others’ work by appropriate visual, audio, and kinesthetic terminology</td>
<td>3-2-11 Decorate environments and enrich personal spirit by making art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collage (12/18/2009)</td>
<td>Creative Master Cookers (Christmas activity)</td>
<td>Food, construction paper, foam board ball, sequin, wire, plastic gauze, crepe paper, materials prepared by students</td>
<td>1-3-4 Complete artwork by collaboration</td>
<td>2-3-9 Express aesthetic experience and understanding of art creation by discussion, analysis or judgment</td>
<td>3-2-11 Decorate environments and enrich personal spirit by making art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surrealism Collage (12/31/2009)</td>
<td>Incredible World</td>
<td>Construction paper, corrugated paper, wire, magazine</td>
<td>1-3-4 Complete artwork by working with others</td>
<td>2-3-9 Express aesthetic experience and understanding of art creation by discussion, analysis or judgment</td>
<td>3-3-13 Apply art knowledge and skills into designing, planning, decorating, or modifying life environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print (Guest lecturer: Mr Wang)</td>
<td>Magic Color Printing</td>
<td>Acrylic print, wood print</td>
<td>1-3-2 Think of themes and contents for art creation, and use appropriate media and skills to complete planned, affective, and thoughtful artwork</td>
<td>2-3-9 Express aesthetic experience and understanding of art creation by discussion, analysis or judgment</td>
<td>3-2-11 Decorate environments and enrich personal spirit by making art</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Dates indicate the days the projects were observed by me. Mrs Wang’s print project is listed although I didn’t get a chance to observe it.*
In addition to “quantitative difference,” the competence indicators of art projects present “qualitatively different” (Clark & Zimmerman, 2004; Maker & Neilson, 1995) art learning experiences for the two groups. In this regard, I further examine art project components (art forms, composition of art elements, expressiveness, and creating mindsets) aimed at elaborating on how Mrs Wen designed qualitatively different art curriculum for students in both settings.

Art forms. Tables 4 and 5 show the wide range of media explored in Mrs Wen’s art class. I observed that she helped students in the general class to learn organic combinations of art forms through sequencing projects, while she challenged students in the artistically talented class by integrating multiple ways of representation with different media in a single project. The complexity of arranging art forms in art projects was differentiated.

Organic combination for students in the general class. During the semester, Mrs Wen designed two interrelated art projects that involved combining two art forms—sketching and collage—using various media. The six-grade general students spent two weeks sketching hands individually, cut and reorganized hand sketches into alternative figures (the Hand Sketch project), had forty-minute group art appreciation about Surrealism art styles, and applied them into a small group collage by using reorganized hand sketches and images from magazines (the Surrealism Collage project). According to Mrs Wen, as students could lose interest trying out different media that were new, “They will find out how interesting various art forms can be combined organically in order to complete a work of art” (IN_Wen_10/23/2009).

Complex interweaving for students in the artistically talented class. Mrs Wen showed differentiated exploration of art forms for the fourth-grade students in the artistically talented class. For the School Games Carnival project, they practiced metalworking, sculptures, plastic painting, and cloth collage. The bird-hats made by students were painted with acrylic pigment;
the bird sculptures combined foam board sculptures for the body and metalwork for the wings; students wore cloaks made of bobble cloth to represent bird feathers. During the process, Mrs Wen demonstrated how to represent things using a variety of media and also invited a student’s parent to participate in the project. The parents worked with students to select the music and design the dance for the bird costume performance in the games carnival. They worked together to integrate music and kinesthetic movement into the visual arts.

Such integration allowed students to make meaning of the project with multiple forms of representation (Eisner, 1982) and the interdisciplinary teaching presented Mrs Wen the opportunity to integrate art into her curriculum design. According to Mrs Wen, the reasons for integrating various art forms were to: (a) challenge students with art talents so that they would be exposed to a wide ranges of media exploration before trying out alternatives; (b) guide students to understand artistic expression without fixed, predictable ways and encourage them to develop artistic styles meaningful to them; and (c) lead students to make and appreciate artwork through multiple perspectives.

The multiple forms of representation would foster their aesthetic sensitivity in recognizing, manipulating, and make meaning of art forms in their creations. For instance, in the School Games Carnival project, students in the artistically talented class experienced new (e.g., metalworking) as well as familiar art forms (e.g., cloth collage). With Mrs Wen’s guidance, they weaved and shaped those art forms into a performing costume to represent the egret, a kind of bird featured in River district thereby making art meaningful by relating it to their environment.
Composition of art elements. For the general class, Mrs Wen addressed the subtle quality of art elements and applied it into art making. Since students in the artistically talented class already possessed extensive experience in composing art elements since their third grade, Mrs Wen expected them to be able to manipulate art elements as skillfully as professional artists. The following two vignettes show Mrs Wen differentiated art curricula in composing art elements.

Intentional notice for students in the general class. One impressive scenario was how Mrs Wen taught about color in the Hand Sketch project. It seemed that she awakened students’ interests to notice color layers by playing games (color translation and color connection).

Art project: Hand Sketch—Learning about color by black-and-white eyes.
12/25/2009, Cloudy
(Explanation-Demonstration)
Mrs Wen prepared eight sheets of black, gray, and white colors papers. A student was asked to line them from darkest to brightest. His classmates provided ideas at the same time as they learned the concept together. Mrs Wen then said, “Compared with the color wheel on the blackboard, can you really differentiate subtle qualities of colors in our world? Now close your eyes. Imagine you are in a world composed of black-and-white only. Can you visualize that kind of world?” Students closed their eyes and seemed to be immersed in the game of “color translation.”

Immediately following the game of color translation, students applied the concept into the real context as formative evaluation. She called a student to the front of the class. “What we are going to do is to use the eight black-and-white papers to color this boy. What does it mean? Look at his black hair, dark blue coat, and gray sleeves. Show me how you color them using the eight papers.” Three boys raised their hands and joined the
game of “color connection.” Immediately, the student was painted by the eight black-and-white papers. “Anyone wants to make a change? Do you all agree with them?” Mrs Wen invited students to take a critical, careful eye to articulate the nuances within the colorful world.

(CO_Wen_12/25/2009)

The color-translation game motivated students to recognize subtle differences in color in their daily life, while the color connection enabled them to apply the color concept into the follow-up activity in preparation for a hand sketch project. Therefore, color became a verb rather than a noun. Students were expected to use color as language to portray the fine texture of the hands they observed and drew. It showed Mrs Wen guided students to purposefully notice the subtle quality of things as her way of cultivating their fundamental art concepts.

*Skillful manipulation for students in the artistically talented class.* In the School Games Carnival project, students sculpted foam board cubes into figures of birds using saw blades. It was challenging due to the difficulty in operating the saw blades (tool) and the 3-D shaping of foam board cubes (material). Mrs Wen called the students to the front of the classroom and asked them to concentrate on her explanation:

I know you guys had been making wooden sculptures in the third grade. We are going to apply the skills you learned in that project. But look! The tools and materials we are going to use are different. You have to get a sense of how to operate them safely and artistically. You know, last night I just couldn’t asleep because I was thinking how to instruct you to do it.

First, imagine you are shaping the foam board cube. You want it to be the body of your bird sculpture. It’s kind of three dimensional. (Mrs Wen asks a student to get a piece of chalk for her.) Make the contour of the bird body. You don’t want to make it too small. So it is possible to shape it again and again. Do let me take a look at it before you cut.

Then, put the foam board cube on the chair and use your knees to clamp it to make it easy for you handle the cube. You are supposed to cut a rough contour first. And then shape it with the edge of a knife. Finally use sandpaper to smoothen the surface.

(CO_Wen_10/30/2009)
As the students worked on their cubes, Mrs Wen commented on the way in which tools and materials were handled. Ming followed Mrs Wen’s instruction and cut the foam board cubes on the chair. Lin sat on the table and carefully shaped the bird sculpture lines.

“Be careful of the edge of the cube. You don’t want make it too straight. Let me show you again,” Mrs Wen said. She praised a girl and reminded the others to focus particularly on the aesthetic quality of the work, “Do you see the curve? It looks so beautiful! It really made me think of the action of a flying bird. I learned making sculpture when I was in a junior teachers’ college. I know it’s difficult. You are so young to have done it. You are brilliant!” Mrs Wen suggested students practice by cutting fruit at home.

![Figure 7. Mrs Wen’s demonstration on cutting foam board cubes.](image)

Learning to develop crafts provides the foundation for working with purposeful attention and skillful manipulation in various media as an artists’ do (Hetland et al., 2007). Students were shown the use of art tools and materials so that they could choose the right way to carry out their
work plan. For instance, they would know the foam board cube could be used for making sculptures because of its light and malleable quality.

**Expressiveness.** It is interesting that both the sixth grade general class and the fourth grade artistically talented class conducted the Surrealism Collage project. It not only revealed that Mrs Wen emphasized creativity in art making and appreciation, it also made me figure out her curricular modification in creative expressiveness for art making.

**Innovative transfer for students in the general class.** According to my analysis, innovative transfer occurred when Mrs Wen’s intended students in the general class to develop creative quality in their artwork. The following vignette shows how Mrs Wen guided them to break down the normal and to transfer it to the alternative using aesthetic judgment.

After two classes of the Hand Sketch project, Mrs Wen emphasized creativity in students’ work and explained,

For those who have done with the hand sketch, please cut it up and into several pieces. You are going to make a special hand. But do not make the pieces too small that it will be difficult to figure out what is it. Otherwise, your hand will become meat sauce. Make sense? (Students laugh.)…Then you are supposed to sort pieces of your hand and sketch using your creativity. Try it out several times. Because in creativity anything goes you ought to choose the best. You have to learn in what way the sorting would be more aesthetic, interesting. (CO_Wen_12/25/2009)

In converting realistic sketches into a creative collage, Mrs Wen didn’t allow students to do whatever they wanted. Instead, she established several principles, such as leaving the “white ditch”, and nurtured a sense of aesthetic judgment. In making the project, students were provided the start-off point to develop their sensitivity to aesthetic aspects. They received continuous training in evaluating their own work and working process, as well as the work of others (Hetland et al., 2007).
Figure 8. A student’s reorganized hand sketch.

Mrs Wen played mediator in providing space for creativity in art appreciation for the general-class students. Consequently, established art vocabularies talked to children’s art words, whereas student ideas encountered artist’ thoughts. In the final class of that semester, Mrs Wen prepared Power Point slides on Surrealism to help make the connection between individual students’ initial ideas and collaborative creation. First, she simply defined Surrealism as a way “to make the incredible work in unexpected ways.” Upon seeing the students’ puzzled but interested facial expression, she added, “Can you further distinguish realism from surrealism? Basically, realism is like what we did in the previous project. We drew hands based on what you saw with your eyes. However, surrealism draws on imagination. It’s like when you doze in class and your mind flies away. [At that moment], you are in a world of surrealism.”

Why fly? She gave examples of accomplished surrealism artists’ work and let the students’ minds soar with appreciation of artwork and story telling. Mrs Wen introduced Dali to them. She deepened their understanding of Dali’s surrealist artwork. Influenced by Sigmund Freud, Dali was interested in exploring alternative ideas and association in dreams and represented it in his works. Dali engaged in such incredible imagination that he himself behaved
strangely. When students laughed at Dali’s curly mustache and silly facial expressions in a slide, Mrs Wen told a story about Dali wearing diving gear in an exhibition.

   Students were absorbed at Dali’s interesting story and giggled excitedly. Mrs Wen showed them *Persistence of Memory* at the same time.

Mrs Wen: Well. Let’s take a look at this interesting artist’s work. What impresses you in this work?

   S1: That soft clock.

   S2: Unrecognizable animal body.

Mrs Wen: Good. You guys point out meaningful things in the work. In my view, Dali’s work is to investigate “surrealism in the realistic.”

   S3: What does it mean?

Mrs Wen: OK, let’s take a look at the work again. Please give a title to it.

   S1: A tired clock.

Mrs Wen: Interesting! Why do you think so?

   S1: As I said, the clock looks so soft. I can’t feel any energy in it. It is like when I feel tired after doing my homework. (Students laugh.)

Mrs Wen: Good. What else?

   S4: End of this world.

Mrs Wen: Tell us what’s your point? (One student interrupted and said, “That’s because doing homework is also end of your world, right?” Classmates laugh at his mischievous association.)
S4: The whole picture makes me feel death. It’s quiet. The withered branch is hopeless. The clocks don’t work. The unrecognized animal body enhances the death atmosphere in this work. I think it resonates with what I thought about the end of the world.

(CO_Wen_01/08/2010)

Mrs Wen concluded, “You see. Both S1 and S4 talked about the work by linking to what happened to them in reality. In other words, Dali’s surrealistic artwork intrigued them to relook the realistic world or feeling. That’s what I talk about surrealism in the realistic. Similarly, we are going to invent a surrealistic world through modifying hand sketches.” Based on the explanation, students were taught about their work in relation to the art domain. They were expected to transfer concepts explored by established artists into their own work. As mentioned, since it was the last art class of the 2009 fall semester, I was unable to see what they finally did in the Surrealism Collage project.

*Problem-solving orientated transformation for students in the artistically talented class.*

Mrs Wen mediated learning technique and expressive qualities of artwork for students in the artistically talented class. The interplay between technique and expressiveness called for students to have unexpected experiences or surprises. For visitors from Hong Kong, Mrs Wen designed the Surrealism Collage project and showed them creativity in art education. She displayed a lesson plan on the window. It read,

*Theme: Incredible World*

*Goal:*

1. Understanding the features of Surrealism and collage art.
3. *Where:* Exploration of Surrealism space design.

*Material exploration:*

1. Magazine collage
2. Paper texture exploration
3. Mixed media application
I asked Mrs Wen about the rationale for designing the art project. She explained the pedagogical consideration,

What I want to do is to create surprise and challenge for students in the project. Sometimes you prepare so many things for them. You make a perfect plan before conducting your curriculum. Sometimes it works. But it seems to me that students lose opportunities in trying. [In the project], I want to surprise them by taking challenges. I want them to experience how creativity might take place within restrictions. (IN_Wen_12/31/2009)

According to the lesson plan and the explanation, it implied that Mrs Wen tended to initiate an inquiry in which students were required to explore techniques and media in a specific task (project) with reference to creative ideas of Surrealism. And the goal was to challenge students with something unexpected.

What surprised and challenged the students in the artistically talented class? Mrs Wen first assigned homework (12/30/2009) on making an imaginary self-portrait standing board and created a sense of mystery by not explaining what the standing board was for. The imaginary self-portrait symbolized aspects of students themselves. It also required them to cut thumbnail-sized images from magazines so that the objects and people became unrecognizable. The thumbnail images were integrated into the imaginary self-portraits and transformed into pure design elements thereby alerting students to the presence of design elements in familiar contexts.

The following day (12/31/2009) Mrs Wen told students they were going to have an assignment in the whole-day art class (from 8:00am to 3:50pm). They were expected to make an incredible-world theme using the self-portraits they made. Using PPT slides, she guided them to appreciate the works of Surrealism artists, such as Dali, Ryden, Margritte, Chagall, and Delvaux. The unexpected images highlighted in the surrealism project inspired the students to imagine their own incredible world. Meanwhile, Mrs Wen differentiated curriculum by product. Students were separated into two groups and had to discuss what incredible-world they were going to
make by using materials provided, such as construction paper, corrugated paper, boxes, bamboo lines, and wires. Mrs Wen didn’t intervene too much and allowed them to come up with whatever they wanted to do. The boys decided to make a dramatic boat symbolizing their collaboration, whereas the girls designed a skyscraper with fireworks made of straws to represent the New Year’s Eve fireworks display.

Finally, the students had to finish up the surrealism collage and describe the art project to the Hong Kong visitors in the afternoon. A visitor approached Yin and exclaimed, “Amazing! The magnificent building looks so great. Tell me about the part you really like.” Yin gave her a smile and answered,

I like the building and fireworks we decorated. Initially, we tried out different materials to establish a tall building. However, construction papers were too soft and boxes too big. They didn’t really fit our ideas. We told Mrs Wen. We discussed how to solve this problem. She suggested using coasters for paper cups. They are firm enough to stand and flexible enough to shape. We were so happy it worked! In addition, Mrs Wen, Ching, and I came up with the idea of using straws to represent fireworks. My family members and I saw the firework show last year, and we were impressed by its instant shining scenario. We wanted to catch the moment that moved us. (CO_Wen_12/31/2009)

Figure 9. Incredible Worlds by fourth-graders in Mrs Wen’s artistically talented class.

In short, the artistically talented students went through surprising experiences that their imagination encountered in the Surrealism artists’ ideas. Such stimulation facilitated them in creating an incredible world collaboratively. The experience of thinking with materials and
techniques challenged them to solve problems relating to the expressiveness of artwork. Yin’s words implied that she was satisfied with what had been done. She discovered an artistic way in which to express an impressive moment in her lived experience. For her, expressiveness in the creative project conveyed properties such as emotions, a sense of moment, or personal meaning. Thus, she went beyond literal representation to the evocative transformation.

Art-making mindset. The mindset required for art-making played an essential part in Mrs Wen’s general art class where the well-structured program provided a step-by-step plan in making art. It emphasized the importance of planning in any art creations. For students in the artistically talented class, the art-making mindset would require thinking out the processes involved in what was to be made.

Making a plan for art-making in the general class. In the Hand Sketch project, the appreciation of sketch artwork was followed by the color games described above as a sort of a transition to actual individual art making. Students returned to their seats and Mrs Wen showed them her own sketch-work integrated into imaginative backgrounds. Then students turned to the individual work—hand sketch—after gaining a sense of color perception and appreciating artwork together. Mrs Wen elaborated on the steps for the sketch:

1. Observe your hand and find a position you would like to sketch
2. Consider the size of the paper and think of the portion you are going to work on
3. End your sketch at the elbows
4. Plan the outline first, pay attention to joints, do not get into detail too soon
5. Work on details, such as different colors of palms and arms, the mounts between fingers, moles or injuries, based on a second round of intensive observation.

(CO_Wen_11/20/2009)

In the Student-at-Work session, Mrs Wen requested students to look at their classmates’ completed sketches displayed on the blackboard. Students were encouraged to evaluate their work by thinking about choices they had made and to visualize changes that they might make to
their own sketches. She also used analogies to help students make sense of sketch techniques. “A soft eraser is also a pencil, like you are using. It could look lighter if you use erasers to rub a little bit.” “Sketch is like weaving webs. You represent subtle nuances by weaving short strokes.” The step-by-step plan for sketch revealed important concepts emphasized by Mrs Wen: (a) making plans before working on the project; (b) getting a sense of the whole before drilling down into details; and (c) thinking of and looking at the whole and the parts and reviewing them in order to perceive and represent beyond the ordinary.

**Attentive deliberation in art-making in the artistically talented class.** Although a well-structured approach was also used in the fourth-grade artistically talented class, it seemed that Mrs Wen drew also drew on another kind of art-making mindset: thoughtful deliberation. Specifically, this involved students in the thinking-looking-envisioning-making cycle as would a professional artist. The following vignette shows how the cycle embedded a mindset of thoughtful deliberation.

Mrs Wen encouraged students in the artistically talented class to think of the movements of birds flying and then to make them distinctive.

**Art Project: School Games Carnival—Planning, Elaborating, and Deliberation in Making the Wings of Birds by Metal**

11/13/2009, Raining
*(Explanation-Demonstration)*

Mrs Wen gathered students and asked them to reflect on the previous day’s performance… “Today, we are going to make the wings of birds by using aluminum slides,” she said. Students looked excited. They giggled and looked at a slide of aluminum held by Mrs Wen. “Do you want to give it a try? All right, let me make a suggestion. You can use most of it to make the wing, but leave a little piece for the bird’s crest or something decorative. Make a plan before you start. Understand?”

Metalworking was new to these students. Mrs Wen reminded them to arrange materials properly, and then elaborated on the main principle of making it as three-dimensional as possible. With this in mind, she encouraged them to make a creative representation of the wing.
Mrs Wen: Before you do metalworking, you have to put on a pair of gloves to protect yourselves. Remember, you have worked on three-dimensional stuff before.

S (student): Like paper sculpture?

Mrs Wen: Right, you are right. Beyond one- or two-view perspectives, let’s think of things in a three-dimensional way. Take the bird we are making as an example. Show me how a bird flies.
(Lin stretches his hands and waves them as if flying and imitates the sound of flying birds. His classmates and Mrs Wen laugh.)

Mrs Wen: Excellent! (Students are still laughing.) Imagine you are a bird flying on the sky or eating worms on farms. They have different motions. Make your bird sculptures three-dimensional as possible.

Mrs Wen engaged the class in discussing the details of birds’ motions. She was bridging their kinesthetic imagination or observation and visual representation. The perceptive transformation served as a foundation of creative metalworking design.

“One, two, three, Woodenman!” Mrs Wen plays the game with students and has two five-minute Refresh-Reflection sessions while students work on the bird wings. She asks them to stop and take a look at a classmates’ work.

After the second Refresh-Reflection session, Mrs Wen shares, “What motion do you want to represent? Eating? Bending? Giggling? What impressive actions of birds come to mind? Different motions refer to different actions. Depending on that, your bird might have a bent claw and a curved wing like this. (Mrs Wen suddenly stands on the table and acts out what she is describing.) (CO_Wen_11/13/2009)

In showing students how to make their work more three-dimensional, Mrs Wen had students go through the cycle of thinking (how a bird flies), looking (Ling’s performance), envisioning (the gesture of their own bird sculptures), making (metalworking). In discussing, performing, imagining, and continual questioning, the students in the artistically talented class were involved in the cycle which helped them attend to details and focus on their representation. Their representation was not modes of mimetic or conventional signs (Eisner, 1982) but included engagement and consciousness. It became the process of inquiry and their aesthetic experiences.
In short, the differentiation of art project components, including art forms, composition of art elements, and expressiveness, was Mrs Wen’s curricular modification in response to the inter-class difference. I also looked at the themes of art projects she designed for students in the artistically talented class. Four of the projects (School Games Carnival, Ink Painting, Sketch in River Middle School, and Ceramics) were related to the River community or school where they studied and lived. The community/school-based art projects not only reflected Mrs Wen’s emphasis on incorporating life experience in art creation, but also guided students with art talents to make connections with and contributions to the living environment.

**Community-based art projects for cultivating temperament and sensitivity.** It was obvious that Mrs Wen deliberately used the school and the community as contexts and resources to enrich students’ art learning. One of her intentions was to look for what would be appropriate opportunities to make art education visible in the context. She explained, “If we want people to recognize us, we have to do something actively. It makes us visible. We kind of exemplify that
art education could play an essential role in kids’ learning” (IN_Wen_11/06/2009). Consequently, students responded to the environment through making art.

The community-based art projects aimed at having students in the artistically talented class think of the ultimate goals of art: What is it for? In a park near a side entrance to River School there was a statue dedicated to a charitable man, Qian Sh\(^{10}\) who took care of people afflicted by Hansen’s disease and beggars during the Japanese occupation of China. Mrs Wen said, “We have almost forgotten the man’s contribution to the Taiwanese people. Students have little feeling and understandings of him” (IN_Wen_11/27/2009). As such, Mrs Wen designed an art project in which fourth-grade students in the artistically talented class made ceramic objects in recognition of Qian Sh’s spirit as well as to decorate that park. Mrs Wen invited a teacher to lecture on Qian Sh. Images of human, animal, and insect-love were discussed to stimulate students’ feelings. Students then generated types of affection and used them as topics for making ceramics works, such as birds’ feeding their chicks, affection between male and female fish, and mothers’ care of children.

As Mrs Wen noted, “A writer has a pen by which to write and move people. Similarly, a painter has a brush to express the world by images without words” (CO_Wen_11/27/2009). In this regard, Mrs Wen encouraged artistically talented students to take care of their environment and use it as a resource to create art, such as the response to Qian Sh’s generous spirit. “It touched their feeling, that art learning is not just about skills acquisition but also includes cultivating temperament and sensitivity” (IN_Wen_01/21/2010).

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10 Qian Sh (AD 1899 –1944) was born in River District. After graduating from Taipei Industrial School, he worked in the Taiwan Government. Sh sympathized with the condition of the suffering, neglected beggars he saw in Wanhua District and founded the House of Love in 1922 in Taipei County to help them earn a living. After his death, his Japanese wife and family members continued to run the House of Love.
When students made art for school or community events, it revealed Mrs Wen’s educational approach on students’ interactive and continuous involvement with their artwork. For instance, that semester Mrs Wen encouraged students to design an imaginative park for an empty space where once an old school building had stood. She placed a notice saying, “River School kids, the Hui building had been demolished. In its place, we are going to have a ‘secret garden.’ Kids, what would an imaginative park look like in your mind? Show us by writing or drawings. You can present them in the open space. We are going to discuss and work on your great ideas and excellent designs!” At the end of the semester, Mrs Wen made presentation slides with the students’ designs. “They couldn’t wait to see how their ideas were applied in the secret garden,” said Mrs Wen.
Besides the above, the students also had the School Games Carnival project which included hats inspired by well-known artists, foam board bird sculptures, and plastic cloaks representing egrets and other birds seen in River District. They were used in the School Games Carnival and as a welcoming dance for the Hong Kong visitors (CO_Wen_12/31/2009), and exhibited on campus. Mrs Wen said, “But they might also be used in the coming year’s local art festival,” she added. “Probably, years later, they will still remember the scenario and feeling of wanting to join the activity with their artwork. Art seeds are germinating in their minds, I suppose” (IN_Wen_10/30/2009).

In an interview, Mrs Wen told me, “I was impressed by those kids’ behaviors [in the ceramics project]. On that day, we were busy putting glaze, coloring, and using sponges to tidy up the wet ceramics work. While helping them put the objects into the kiln, I cut my finger. The kids were crying, ‘Oh! Mrs Wen is bleeding!’ But they didn’t panic. Some led me to a seat. Others ran to the health center and asked a school nurse to take a look at my finger. How lovely! What they did was so touching!” I commented, “Perhaps it’s just a good example that they learned from Qian Sh’s generous spirit of taking care of others!” Mrs Wen smiled to me (IN_Wei_01/21/2010).

Figure 12. A future park-on-campus design.
The quantitatively different art projects along with qualitatively different components (combination of art forms, composition of art elements, expressiveness, and art-making mindset) demonstrated Mrs Wen’s curricular modification for students in the artistically talented class. In looking at art projects for the artistically talented students, I found that the community/school-based art projects engaged them in approaching the issue of what art is for. They revealed how Mrs Wen differentiated students in the artistically talented class from those in the general class so as to design adaptive art projects for students with art talents.

Besides her response to the inter-class difference, I investigated Mrs Wen’s art curricula a little more: did she align the general and the talented education classes towards applying higher level practices in a range of art learning settings, and still deal with the varied levels of readiness, interests, and learning profiles of students? In probing this, I unfold Mrs Wen’s curricular modification for the second layer of difference: within-class difference in the two settings. I first describe how Mrs Wen compromised on the diversity of students in the general class and modified curricular by collaboration. Then student choice as a catalyst for curricular modification in the artistically talented class is discussed.

Curricular modification through collaboration in the general class. For art projects having different sets of challenges, Mrs Wen usually assigned students into groups to allow each of them to contribute their relative strengths and interact with and motivate each other. A clear example would be the School Games Carnival project. At the beginning of the project, Mrs Wen guided the sixth-graders to discuss what outfit would make the goddess unique to River District. Students thought she should wear a robe decorated with stars surrounded by flying birds. To attend to the community’s environmental issues, they decided on creating a green planet with
blooming flowers, and the goddess would follow the planet during the carnival to symbolize her glorifying and inspiring River District towards an ideal, clean environment.

Meanwhile, Mrs Wen took account of the sixth-grade general students’ involvement, interests in art, and competence in using media and assigned them to five groups in charge of specific costumes. She looked for media to represent each part of the project. She further modified the project by dividing it into five parts: (a) the goddess’ head, (b) the green planet, (c) clothing design, (d) bird making, and (e) flower making. Each group required different complexities of techniques and various degrees of collaboration. In an interview, Mrs Wen told me that the five groups actually could be classified into the three challenge levels of advanced, medium, and basic. I use them as a framework to portray Mrs Wen’s adaptive guidance for each group. In particular, it was interesting to see how Mrs Wen differentiated her role in the five groups to engage them in the art project.

**Advanced challenge: The goddess and green planet groups.** Two groups worked on the costumes for the goddess’ head and the green planet, which required higher degrees of skill and collaboration. Two students who preferred independent work and were good at drawing were assigned to design the goddess’ head. Mrs Wen had them envision a three-dimensional image for the head. She encouraged, “Well done. I like your idea of designing the head with different faces. It’s interesting to see the changing faces when you walk in the playground during the School Games Carnival.” Mrs Wen also repeated that the acrylic pigments they were using were easy to modify. “Just try out whatever you want. Through that, you will get a better sense of how it looks like,” said Mrs Wen. In my view, she was like a motivator urging the two independent workers to continue experimenting, and to constantly encourage them in their creations.
For the other group, five boys covered a piece of white gauze on a bamboo frame. Mrs Wen particularly appreciated the green planet group and told me:

They work together very well. Han (the tallest boy) is a good leader in this group. Initially, we planned to use wires to make a frame of the green planet. We failed. They were too soft to stand. We were not able to put anything on it. They looked very frustrated. Han still encouraged the members and asked for my help. Finally, we came up with the idea of using bamboo instead. It worked! However, it was difficult to shape the bamboo into the contours of a planet. Han took responsibility for keeping their efforts going. . . . I was impressed by their performance.

After completing the frame, they covered it with a piece of white gauze and sprayed green varnish. I saw smiles on their faces. They were satisfied with solving problems successfully. Later on, they discussed how to make the planet look more like an ideal place to live in. Several ideas came to their minds. Finally, they decided to have flowers set on the planet. It symbolized hope blossoming from the green planet. How lovely the idea was! (CO_Wen_10/30/2009)

It was clear that the green planet group required higher degrees of collaboration and ability in solving problems encountered. According to Mrs Wen, Han played an important role by consulting her and keeping the project moving, and motivating his group on the demanding work involved. It implied that the group’s effective learning was the result of Mrs Wen’s adaptive curriculum design which grouped the “right” students to work on appropriately challenging tasks.
Medium challenge: the clothes designing and bird making groups. At the right front corner of the classroom, five girls in the clothes designing group discussed how to design a beautiful robe for the goddess using a long pink cloth measuring 150cm by 50cm. A girl suggested, “I think we can cut round figures with different sizes to decorate it. They can resonate with that planet the other group is making.” “Sounds great!” said another. “What should we do for the round figures? Should we put colorful beads on them? They look very small, but they dazzle! They will make our robe more impressive. What do you think?” Mrs Wen walked over to listen to their discussion.

“What stage are you in?” she asked. A girl answered, “We are discussing how to decorate the robe. Would you please provide us some beads we used in the previous art project?” “Sure. But first tell me what you are going to do.” After listening to the group’s plan, Mrs Wen makes comments, “I like the idea of round figures resonating with the planet. But I would like you to put them on the clothes in different parts. You can put it (Mrs Wen picks up a round green figure) in the corner, but put it (a yellow one) in the upper side. Arrange them differently. Viewers will get interesting as well as unexpected visual effects. Make sense?”

The third group came up with the idea of decorating the clothes. Mrs Wen gave clear instructions on what they needed to stick to the aesthetic principle she taught in the other project. She encouraged them to apply the principle learned into the self-initiated idea. In this case, Mrs
Wen acted as a demonstrator who modeled and provided suggestions for improving the aesthetic quality of the artwork.

Figure 15. The clothes design group.

In the fourth group which was making bird forms, Mrs Wen urged them to look at each other’s work and reflect on what they could learn:

One boy asked a girl to cut small brown pieces as quickly as possible to paste as the feathers of a bird. “Why do you ask me so much? Are you really focused on our project? I don’t think you are concentrating today.” Their argument attracted Mrs Wen’s attention. “What’s going on?” The boy explains, “We seem to have a problem. We plan to make feathers by collecting the small brown stuff. But it’s too time-consuming. Should we keep going?”

Mrs Wen thinks for a while and picks up the brown stuff and puts it on the bird’s body (see Figure 16). She suggests, “If we have enough time and you would like to try, it would be a good idea and make your bird look very delicate. For now, see, you have to spend lots of time to cover the bird’s huge body with that small brown stuff, right?”

She added, “Take a look at the two girls who are making bird feathers as well. They cut round yellow figures and made slides at the bottom. It is much easier than your idea. In addition, as you know, since our costumes are so huge, it would be better to have your stuff bigger. People will appreciate the birds more readily.”

In this case, Mrs Wen didn’t directly demonstrate how to deal with the problem faced by the students. Instead, she asked questions that helped them verbalize their technical difficulties and figure out what in their working process was causing these difficulties. She played a coordinator who bridged students’ different ideas and guided them to see alternativeness. Thus,
the two students had a discussion again based on their initial idea and looking at an alternative way of making feathers. They decided to enlarge the size of the feathers and changed the colors from brown to light green, white, dark green, and yellow, and layered the feathers.

![Figure 16. The bird-making group.](image)

**Basic challenge: Flower making group.** According to Mrs Wen, the fifth group which was making flowers consisted of the struggling learners. From a girl’s monitoring and teaching they made flowers using wires and crepe paper for the green planet group. Mrs Wen praised their efforts and assigned them casual tasks from other groups, such as cutting cloth or sweeping the floor. She played a monitor who made the group remain in the art class by assigning various tasks. Finally, they exhibited and demonstrated the goddess together with a green, hopeful planet in a parade in the School Games Carnival (CO_Wen_11/28/2009).
In the Refresh and Reflection session, Mrs Wen graded them based on each group’s progress and showed them how to review the processes for the School Games Carnival project. She pointed out that the large, long-term art project allowed students to apply and practice their skills, for example, the paper sculpture for the flying birds group. New materials and techniques were also explored to enrich their language of art such as the acrylic pigment and basic ideas in clothes designing. Mrs Wen used the green planet as an example and explained how cooperative team work could solve problems in art making. A student stated, “We have interactions in groups. I particularly enjoy talking and communicating my ideas with team members. It helps me look and think beyond what I am able to do. But we argue so often. We spent a lot of time dealing with conflicts between us” (CO_Wen_11/13/2009). For the students, collaboration helped most of them engage in the project, but the time taken to formulate a cooperative strategy was an issue for them.

Overall, mind-and-thought-dynamics flow took place in the project as Mrs Wen carefully considered students’ ideas, looked for appropriate materials, and engaged competent partners in solving problems with regard to techniques, visual effects, and idea representation. The planned grouping through modifying the art project (dividing it into five parts) demonstrated Mrs Wen’s
differentiation to take into account the diversity of the general-class students. Furthermore, as claimed by Renzulli and Reis (2008), in a differentiated classroom teachers can differentiate themselves by modeling roles that differ qualitatively from the role of teacher as instructor. The flow in Mrs Wen’s art class resulted from her differentiation of roles (apprentice, consultant, demonstrator, coordinator, and monitor) that fulfilled each group’s needs so as to optimize their learning.

It seemed to me that collaborative art making was Mrs Wen’s approach in accommodating general students’ diversity in art learning. She was aware of the differences in the classes, groups, and individual students. She guided them to choose topics and media with appropriate levels of challenges. Therefore, each class Mrs Wen taught might work on different topics under same themes. She also tried to “put the right persons in the right place” so that individual student’s relative strengths could be harnessed and used to good effect. The complexity of collaboration in curricular modification will be further discussed later.

**Choices as curricular modification catalysts in the artistically talented class.** According to my observations, choice in Mrs Wen’s art class functioned as a catalyst for curricular modification to address the diversity of students in the class for the artistically talented. She provided choices for students ranging from drawing impressive scenarios to deciding which art forms were to be used for a project.

**Choice in response to preference.** Choice provides an opportunity in responding to student preferences. In the case of the River Middle School Sketch project, the fourth grade students in the artistically talented class dispersed to the places they chose to sketch, including a church, a building, and an octagonal building. As Mrs Wen explained to me, “Although we
sketched the same school, I suggested they select a building or an angle which interests them most” (CO_Wen_12/04/2009). Choices of buildings resulted in curricular modification in that Mrs Wen differentiated topics for students to sketch. In particular, when working on the same preference, students seemed to find classmates with similar interests to support each other’s art making. For instance, both Lin and Lo chose the octagonal building to sketch. They sat close and compared each other’s work and discussed what elements of the building they could draw such as a roof, windows, and a door. In other words, students who chose the same building didn’t work alone and worked as a team in a small learning community.

Choice in response to challenge. The other kind of choice Mrs Wen set up relied more on her preplanning. In the School Games Carnival project, she had students design plastic hats in the three art styles of Cubism (Picasso), Fauvism (Matisse), and Surrealism (Miró). As I did not have the chance to observe how she helped students approach the three styles, she described it to me. She first had the whole class appreciate the three artists’ work by narrating their life stories and used their artwork to explain the styles. Then students were gathered into three study groups based on interests. In their groups, they looked at the artwork albums of the artists, investigated compositions (lines, colors, textures) together, and discussed how to apply them into image designs on plastic hats. From the whole class appreciation, to small group investigation, to individual art making, Mrs Wen had her talented students make meaning of established artists’ art styles through multiple learning pathways.

Specifically, Mrs Wen’s view was that the three artistic styles not only demonstrated the different ways of art making, that is, three-dimensional (Picasso), imaginative design (Matisse), and poetic lines (Miró), but also provided three challenging levels for students to choose from to investigate further. As she explained:
It’s more challenging for students to work on three-dimensional images, like Picasso. It is because they have to capture a thing from different perspectives and present them at the same time. I would recommend advanced students to choose this kind of art style. For the Matisse art style, what you need is to design imaginative images by skillfully using color blocks. Somehow, it’s more like kids using construction paper to design images. Miró’s style is appropriate for introductory level students. Students can learn how to use lines freely as well as poetically. (CO_Wen_10/30/2009)

Mrs Wen’s explanations revealed that she intentionally manipulated complexities of art styles to challenge students at advanced, middle, and introductory levels of using colors, designing images and lines, and operating three-dimensional concepts. She allowed students a choice on complexities of art styles, thereby modifying the curriculum with various challenge levels. Interestingly, I saw that students eventually chose art styles based on their interests rather than what could fit their aptitude levels. Perhaps it reflected Mrs Wen’s compromise that she drew on student interests for learning motivation rather than being set in her initial pedagogical concerns.

Choice in responding to students’ relative strengths. Mrs Wen modified curricula based on her students’ relative strengths, and they could choose working on art forms they excelled in. The fourth-grade artistically talented students made artwork for the National Art Competition. I noted that Mrs Wen grouped students according to the art forms they were working on. It included cartoons, paintings (watercolor or ink), and 2-D designs. In her view, Yao who had joined a swimming program this summer had a good sense of humor. He created a Superman Swimming Class in cartoon form. The characters in Yao’s work had balloon dialogues which were funny. Lo was particularly good at realistic drawing and chose to do a watercolor painting of a man fixing a motorcycle. He captured the person’s hairstyle, the wrinkles in his clothes, and the motorcycle in amazing detail. Feng was sensitive to colors and liked to integrate different media for collage and chose to make a 2-D design for the competition. In her work titled Ms.
Egg’s Wedding, Juan used dried eggshells to make heads for Ms and Mr Egg and used items such as cotton, fabric, construction paper, and cans to decorate the wedding poster.

Mrs Wen didn’t ask all the students to do work on the three art forms for the competition because she recognized they had different strengths. Instead, she encouraged them to choose and concentrate on one of the art forms. Why did she do that? She said,

Last year I did ask each of them to work on those art forms for the National Art Competition. I felt frustrated! Obviously, students were unable to concentrate on one work of art. The workload was too heavy for them and they were kind of indifferent to the competition. They didn’t enjoy it. This year I changed my approach and allowed them a choice. They just needed to work on a project with an art form they were really good at. (IN_Wen_11/16/2009)

It was clear that Mrs Wen modified curricula according to her perception of the students’ involvement. She seemed to change the pressure of the art competition to the students’ meaningful exploration of art forms. To her, the essence of learning engagement is whether a teacher can vary instructional approaches and curricula to enable students to see their potential brought out in an adaptive learning environment. Mrs Wen changed the concept of one-size-fits-where all students to do the same thing at the same time. She encouraged students to work on their own strength areas in optimizing their learning.

I looking closer at the three choices in response to preference, challenging, and strength areas, I noticed that they comprised several features. First, they came from Mrs Wen’s careful planning and resulted in students’ differentiated learning experiences. Second, the choice planned by the teacher seemed to involve a certain range of challenging levels to allow talented students’ abilities to thrive. Third, students gained ownership of art-making as if nurturing a self-directed artist. Finally, by differentiation of products in the National Art Competition project, Mrs Wen told me that she found Lo was adept at realistic drawing and described things in remarkable detail. Lo demonstrated his ability and worked on his preferred art style and Mrs
Wen took that uniqueness into account. Although I didn’t follow up what Mrs Wen actually did, it does show that making choices becomes a reciprocal process that optimizes students’ learning on their relatively strong areas and, at the same time, informs teachers’ approach to differentiation.

**Instructional Adjustment in Mrs Wen’s Art Classes**

How did Mrs Wen implement art curriculum that was designed for all students? Specifically, how did she arrange elements of art class in order to engage students with art talents in art learning? In this section, I draw on Mrs Wen’s instructional adjustment for the two layers of students differences that she encountered in her art class: inter-class differences and within-class differences. By discussing Mrs Wen’s response to the former within a studio-orientated class structure, I present how she adjusted instructional approaches for students in the general and the artistically talented classes. Mrs Wen’s instructional adjustment for the within-class difference in the two settings demonstrated the extent to which she attended to diverse interests, readiness, and learning profiles of students’ learning in art. I used the two layers of student difference to display the data.

**A studio-orientated class structure as a foundation for differentiation: Inter-class difference.** Both the sixth-grade general class and the fourth-grade artistically talented class shared a similar structure in Mrs Wen’s teaching: (a) explanation-demonstration; (b) student-at-work; (c) refresh and reflection; and (d) clean-up. I paid particular attention to Mrs Wen’s consideration on class elements, such as physical space, social climate (peer interaction and teacher-student interaction), assignments/projects, and learning paths.
The structure served as a foundation for differentiation. Based on the structure, Mrs Wen promoted learning and varied the quantity and sequences of the four sessions in an art project. When a project had multiple technical steps, for example in the School Games Carnival project, Mrs Wen frequently intervened in the Demonstration-Explanation session to refocus students on concepts or skills she intended them to learn. When students seemed to struggle during a section of an art making process, Mrs Wen initiated a brief Refresh-Reflection session within a Student-at-Work session, and brainstormed some possible solutions (e.g., a game where students selected an example of work by their colleague and analyzed the skills involved). Now let me give a glimpse of each session.

**Explanation-Demonstration session: Interesting introduction vs. in-depth discussion.** The Explanation-Demonstration session refers to Mrs Wen’s lively lecture to the class on the concept, technique, and information to be used in art projects. It served as preparatory activities for students to visualize the upcoming art making. As Mrs Wen demonstrated several approaches, students could use them as inspiration rather than for copying. Her explanation using well-known artists’ visual images captured the attention of her students so that they could easier understand complex, multistep art concepts.

I observed that Mrs Wen differentiated the scope of a lecture and question styles for both the general and the talented classes. For instance, in introducing the Surrealism art style to both groups, she spent thirty-five minutes for each class and focused on understanding the differences between the realistic and the surrealistic art style. Mrs Wen used closed, fact-orientated questions, such as “Give me two examples of surrealism artists” or “Which thinker had influence on the work of Dali?” to gauge their understanding.
Beyond a fundamental level of understanding, the fourth-graders in the artistically talented class had the surrealism artwork appreciation for sixty minutes (one-and-a-half class) and drew on inquiry-based questioning and aesthetic judgment: “What if you work on this topic? What materials will you choose to express your ideas? With what do you associate the artwork with magic feelings? Do you like the way that the artist puts a green apple on a man’s face? What do you think he would like to express?”

Mrs Wen explained to me the above differentiation by the depth of art appreciation in the Explanation-Demonstration session:

As you know, not every student in the general class is interested in art. Typically I won’t go deeper when I guided them to appreciate artwork because some students might get bored. What I want to do is to give a brief, interesting, comprehensible introduction in order to motivate them to explore further. And I believe if they are really interested in what I introduce, they will find relevant books to read, or attend exhibitions.

(Mrs Wen_01/20/2010)

Mrs Wen’s words resonated with her pedagogical beliefs of planting the seeds of art in student minds. Metaphorically, her art appreciation in the introductory level for general students provided the “nutrition” to the seed, but the extent of the growth of the seed depends on its interest and self-exploration in art. What Mrs Wen tried hard to do was to make the “nutrition” interesting as well as educational.

**Student-at-Work: Collaboration vs. independence.** The biggest portion of art-class time was with students working independently on art projects while Mrs Wen walked around looking for appropriate moments to teach and consult students on their work through comments, suggestions, questions, or critiques. The Student-at-Work session is the heart of an art class which supports Mrs Wen concept of working effectively with heterogeneous skill levels in one classroom.
Interestingly, Mrs Wen liked to have the students in the general class work on collaborative art projects such as the Campus Landscape Design, the School Games Carnival, and the Surrealism Collage projects. In the Carnival project, she took account of the sixth-grade students’ involvement, interest in art, and proficiency in using media. As discussed earlier, she assigned them into five groups in charge of specific tasks: the goddess’ head, the green planet, cloth design, bird making, and flower making. Each group needed different complexities of techniques and various degrees of collaboration. In the goddess’ head-making project two students worked together and colored the 3-D head using acrylic paint, while in the green planet group five boys worked as a team to drape white gauze over a bamboo frame. According to Mrs Wen, not only did she think that the ability and attitude in collaborating was important to students, she also wanted to engage diverse students through peer learning.

In contrast, I found that except for the Surrealism Collage project, the fourth grade students in the artistically talented class typically worked on independent art projects, such as the National Art Competition, the Ink Painting, and the Picture Books projects. I enquired about this. She replied, “Most of them are capable learners. Through our training from the third grade, they have become skilled in using media and manipulating techniques. I would like to challenge them by independent art making” (IN_Wen_11/27/2009). Challenges were Mrs Wen’s main method in having talented students work independently.

Taken together, the obvious contrast of collaborative art projects for students in the general class and independent art projects for students in the artistically talented class raises the issue of collaboration and independence in terms of differentiation. Regarding the grouping issue, collaboration in the School Games Carnival project for students in the general class is akin to homogeneous grouping, in which students with similar interests and competence work together.
*Refresh and Reflection: Self-constructive critique with teacher-guidance.* After engaging in a period of art making, it was time to pause and look back at students’ work and work processes, or the Refresh and Reflection session. Both settings take many forms, such as group discussion, peer evaluation, and critique modeling. Mrs Wen organized them to fulfill particular student needs or to draw on key concepts for the class as a whole. The Refresh and Reflection session shifted students’ intensive working situation to learning occasions to vary the tempo of the class. This pause helped students think out new possibilities and focus on what could be evaluated in an art project.

According to my observations, the voting game was a frequent Refresh and Reflection activity for students in the general class. During art making, students would face temporary setbacks and difficulties and Mrs Wen might also be challenged on how to guide students to overcome them. Both looked for new ways to redefine the problems they were facing so that new possibilities could occur to them. Mrs Wen relied on peer learning for students in the general class to find solutions. She particularly valued this challenge and provided a short period of time for students to look at each other’s work.

In the Hand Sketch project, the sixth-grade students in the general class cut out hand sketches they had made and modified them into new images. Mrs Wen noticed some students’ work looked like fragments without appropriate interplay between original images and alternative ideas. Mrs Wen decided to play the voting game with students. She said, “Now let’s stop what you are doing. Stand up and move around the classroom. Pick up a work of art you appreciate most and stand in front of it” (CO_Wen_12/25/2009). Mrs Wen reminded them to pay attention to how classmates made creative images reasonable as well as unusual. With that in mind, students selected their favorite pieces. Once they had made their selections, Mrs Wen
placed the work on the blackboard. She didn’t judge their choices but said “Interestingly, I also would have voted for what you chose!” Then Mrs Wen added points and guided them to indicate what they could learn from the selected work.

Besides the voting game, Mrs Wen sometimes held a mini-critique discussion for students in the artistically talented class in the Refresh and Reflection session. She talked about their working (process) and work (product) in terms of attitudes, techniques, and concepts for further learning. For students’ homework assignments, Mrs Wen not only commented but also used stamps as a way of evaluating the quality of work: seven for excellence, five for good job, under five for not matching topics or less creativity. Mrs Wen also held a group discussion on the vessel-design assignment. Those who got seven stamps were asked to show and briefly explain their work. “What do you think of line-rhythm in their work? Did you see a story taking place in Mu’s vessel? Look! Yuin modified his favorite cartoon character to be the outlook of his vessel. How creative!” She held up two pieces of work and encouraged students to compare them and elaborate on what they learned.

![Figure 18. A mini-critique session in Mrs Wen’s artistically talented class.](image)

Essentially, reflection through evaluating work processes and the final products taught students to be flexible and purposeful in arriving at their final output. Mrs Wen raised further
questions for students in the talented class to help them discern details and understand how and what is communicated by works of art and what they were made of, and explain what they went through in the process. It is like an art critique in an art studio. In terms of differentiation, the voting game that often took place in the general class allowed students to construct their own principles of aesthetic judgment with little teacher intervention. Yet, Mrs Wen seemed to set up a dialectic judgment between student’s art taste (the voting game) and the teacher’s aesthetic principles (her stamp evaluation) in the artistically talented class.

**Clean-up session: Affective dimension of a differentiated classroom.** The Clean-up session was held regularly before or after the Refresh-Reflection session in Mrs Wen’s art class. Based on my observations, the general students often rushed to finish a session under Mrs Wen’s supervision, because they had to go back to their home classrooms for lunch. For the artistically-talented students, however, the clean-up session became a meaningful transition where they could take a break after an intensive work session. The following vignette showed how they and Mrs Wen made a Clean-up session interesting.

*Art Project: School Game Carnival—Cleaning foam board chips as aesthetic moments 10/30/2009, Cloudy (Clean-up)*

After two-hours intensive work, Mrs Wen announced, “It’s time to clean up.” Today she allowed a longer clean-up time, because of flying foam board chips. Zh says “The boy group cleans the table and girl group cleans the floor. Let’s start!” He was so different from his struggling situation in the work process. Now he was a leader in charge of the clean-up session. “Lin, please pass me that trash can. It can ‘eat’ those terrible foam board chips,” said Zh. Yin and Xuan are sweeping and picking up a foam board cube cut by somebody and appreciating its interesting shape at the same time. Suddenly, Mrs Wen calls out, “Are you ready?” Students don’t understand what it means. But they immediately stop what they are doing. They look at Mrs Wen with interest. Mrs Wen is turning the ceiling fans on and says, “Falling snow! Falling snow! Let’s play snow!” The classroom fills with white chips. The white chips bring students into an imaginative world where snow falls while students’ feelings get uplifted. The students burst out laughing and are moved by the magic moment. Chi and Tai are running and catching the flying snow. Tong takes Mu’s hands and they dance in the white world.

(CO_Wen_10/30/2009)
The aesthetic moment was intriguing to the students’ playful minds! It was an amazing scenario happening in a dynamic interplay. The unforgettable moment made Mrs Wen’s art class impressive for outsiders like me and insiders such as her students. Although it was not directly relevant to differentiation, it did show how Mrs Wen responded to talented students’ playful minds and emotional traits. In a differentiated classroom, a teacher attends to student emotions and feelings (affect) as well as to student cognition, which helps each student become engaged and successful in learning (Tomlinson, 2003).

Along with the studio-orientated class structure, I have unfolded Mrs Wen’s instructional adjustment in the Explanation-Demonstration, Student-at-Work, and Refresh and Reflection session. In the following, I will focus in on the fourth-grade artistically talented class in order to present how Mrs Wen adjusted instructional approaches to cater to inter-individual difference of students with art talents.

**Self-directed pacing in station work: Within-class difference in the artistically talented class.** In the Student-at-Work session, how does an art teacher effectively guide students with assorted skills to solve problems they encounter, to learn advanced techniques needed, or to introduce higher-level concepts into art making? This issue, indeed, was applicable to the artistically talented class I observed. An example of instruction adjustment is that Mrs Wen set up stationary work in the Costume Design project. With other adults’ help, she adjusted instructional approaches and organized three work stations in accordance with the three stages of designing clothes costume, i.e., making the draft, color designing, and modifying and ironing. I describe the three stations in the following.
Mrs Wen used the Explanation-Demonstration session to illustrate the process of art making, discuss approaches, and to remind students of appropriate attitudes. While introducing the Costume Design project to the fourth-grade artistically talented students, Mrs Wen briefly described the process of images printing on clothes for the upcoming School Games Festival in January. She then assigned adults (parents, the fourth-graders’ home classroom teacher, and myself) to work with students in three stations (CO_Wen_10/16/2009).

In this classroom, adults could monitor students’ proceedings and students were able to move from one completed stage to another in the three working stations. In the Making-Draft station, students were required to complete drawing the designed images on transparent paper. While most students were done with the step, three or four students were drawing creative images by using straight, curly, and curved lines emphasized in the Thursday afternoon class and displayed on the blackboard. One parent sat with them in case they needed assistance. For example, she cut a fresh piece of transparent paper for a student who was not satisfied with his first draft. Those who had completed this stage could move to the Color Design station.

The second station drew on teaching about color. The students had to make clear designs of main figures and sub-parts so that they could choose appropriate colors to make the images more vivid. Mrs Wen provided mini-lectures to students in the station. She used the color wheel to allow students review warm and cold colors and encourage them to choose contrasting ones for the designed images. “See, if you chose yellow for the main figure, it would be much better to have a purple background,” Mrs Wen added. “Color choice is like a doctor’s diagnosis. You must think carefully.” In addition, students ought to pay attention to the texture of the cloth in order to make the design more aesthetic. Due to the stationary arrangement, Mrs Wen could
teach about color in small groups and concentrated on guiding each student to choose the proper cloth through direct communication.

A parent, the home classroom teacher, and I joined the third station which involved Modifying and Ironing. We help students iron images onto the cloth that the students had chosen and finished work on the T-shirts. Before ironing, Mrs Wen and the teacher provided suggestions in terms of image composition. “What do you think if we put the piece on the back of your T-shirt? This piece is too small; I am afraid it may not stick to the T-shirt. Would you like to change it?” Mrs Wen asked questions and had individual or small group demonstrations at the same time.

*Figure 19.* The Modifying and Ironing group in Mrs Wen’s artistically talented class.

In short, the three work stations allowed students to follow their own pace in the art-making process. The dynamics of the stations communicated the skills, approaches, attitudes, and concepts needed. They were be explored and developed in the Students-at-Work and Refresh-and-Reflection sessions of current and future classes. For Mrs Wen, the stationary work allowed her to differentiate guidance for each station; for students, they not only got a clear process in completing the project but also gained ownership of directing learning paths. Perhaps
the stationary work could be the initial stage in nurturing students’ habits of self-directed minds towards becoming independent learners.

It echoes Tomlinson’s (2003) argument of a differentiated classroom which derives its flexibility from routine. The stationary work preplanned by Mrs Wen was like a routine ensuring that students understood how to obtain and put away materials, how to move around the classroom purposefully, how to figure out where they should be, and how to help when she was working directly with others. It was a productive, not disorganized, classroom where Mrs Wen worked with other adults to attend to differences among those students in the artistically talented class.

**Personalized guidance as contextual apprenticeship in the artistically talented class.**

In the Student-at-Work session, Mrs Wen continuously assessed students in all phases of their working process. Consequently, she could determine what guidance should be personalized for a specific student. It happened frequently in a studio-orientated art class where a teacher recognized the diversity of student artwork so as to intervene with a technique or introduce a concept as scaffolding. In my view, it is contextual apprenticeship where Mrs Wen improvised (adjusted) instructional approaches according to her tentative observations in class and her relationship with each student.

**Differentiating for students in various working stages.** Mrs Wen’s personalized guidance included direct modeling, suggestions, guiding questions, and holistic appreciation. They ranged from direct to indirect, part to whole, concrete to abstract, intervening to scaffolding. The River Middle School Sketch project demonstrated how Mrs Wen employed personalized guidance in the artistically talented class.
It was a sunny but chilly Friday morning on December 4th, 2009. Sixteen fourth-grade students in the artistically talented class carried their drawing boards in black bags and walked to River Middle School for finishing up the sketches which they had begun the previous afternoon. They looked like sixteen black butterflies flitting between streets. When they arrived at school, Mrs Wen grouped the sixteen “black butterflies” and informed them of some important concepts to keep in mind before working on their individual projects. Mrs Wen said,

I know you are at different stages. But let me review important concepts I emphasized yesterday. Because of time limit, first, I would like you to sketch the building you chose today. It is the main part of this project. I suggest you add people walking or something moving. It makes your work look more alive. In addition, let’s draw a “living tree” rather than a still one. What you can do is to pay attention to light and shadow, layers of color, and most important how you feel about the tree at this moment. What you feel brings you to envision real and imaginative colors in your mind.

Mrs Wen also reminded them that she would examine their progress every half hour. Students spread out and went to the places they sketched the previous afternoon, including a church, a bell building, and an octagonal building. Mrs Wen differentiated the topics for students to sketch by choice. She further personalized guidance (guiding questions and direct demonstration) for Chi who needed to learn how to express multi-layered colors:

*Art Project: River Middle School Sketch—Mrs Wen’s Personalized Guidance to Students in Various Working Stages*

12/04/2009, Chilly (Student-at-Work)

Situated in the campus with traditional-styled buildings, students perceive, experience, and make meaning of the historical site in their minds. “Chi, could you please take a break and take a look at the building. Did you see different shadows and bright sides on the surface of it?” The boy observes and ponders for a while and gives a smile to Mrs Wen. “Good. It’s just like shadows under the tree near you. You can express the nuance in your painting. Make sense? Come here. Look at how Yin makes that kind of color layers for the bridge in her work.”

Chi walked with Mrs Wen and stood by Yin. Mrs Wen asked several questions to guide Chi in looking at Yin’s work analytically. “What do you see?” “What does it make you think
about?” “I wonder what would happen if you…” The guiding questions seemed to alter Chi’s view and might give him a way to think of his work differently. When they came back to Chi’s seat, Mrs Wen even directly modeled how to make layers of visual effects by using rotary crayons with similar colors.

![Image](image.jpg)

*Figure 20. Mrs Wen’s direct demonstration of making color layers for Chi.*

Mrs Wen also provided guidance for Xuan and Yau:

Taking an angle similar to Chi, Xuan’s work focused on a tree in front of the bell building. Mrs Wen suggested that he take a close look at the texture of the tree he is sketching. Xuan seems a little shy and doesn’t follow Mrs Wen’s suggestion immediately. “Good idea,” says Yau, a boy sitting by Xuan. Yau walks to the tree and touches it. “Look, Xuan! The tree’s texture is different from ones at school,” said Yow. Xuan stops drawing and walks to Yow. They discuss the tree’s texture.

(CO_Wen_12/04/2009)

Mrs Wen’s suggestion prompted Yow and Xuan to directly feel the texture of a tree and transform the sensory perception into art making. Perceiving (appreciation) and doing (making) fitted well under Mrs Wen’s suggestion. Those who had almost finished were asked by Mrs Wen to put their work a meter apart, and she worked with them to discuss the work’s composition going from details to the whole and back. She guided students to appreciate work holistically in order to articulate what they had to edit.
Differentiation is not the same as individualized instruction. But in personalizing instruction in response to particular student needs, a teacher does use differentiation to optimize student learning (Fountain, 2007). As shown, Mrs Wen provided personalized guidance for students in adjusting instructional approaches in response to different working stages or technical levels. Additionally, when Mrs Wen asked Chi to learn from appreciating Yin’s work or when her suggestion stimulated Xuan and Yow’s collaborative exploration, it implied that peer coaching is also a way of initiating differentiated learning experiences for learners. Chi had a single direction for enhancing techniques by looking at Yin’s work, while Xuan and Yow used double direction of improving expressive qualities through discussion.

**Personalizing for students with multiple learning profiles.** In the fourth-grade artistically talented class, there were nine boys and seven girls. Three students came from different cultural backgrounds in Korea, Mainland China, and Morocco. The student from Morocco infused foreign culture into her work. She once drew her “adventure in Dubai airport” which showed passengers from multiple ethnic backgrounds.

Mrs Wen expected the sixteen students to support each other in a learning community. For instance, Mrs Wen taught them to dance with costumes they made for the upcoming School Games Carnival saying, “I know each of you is very special. You all have art potential and uniquely different characteristics. Usually, you do artwork individually. You perform your talent in your way. Now this task calls for you to work as a team and try to remind your classmates if they forget any dance steps” (CO_Wen_11/27/2009). In addition, Mrs Wen invited parents to have weekend activities, such as cycling tours in River district, explaining, “They got closer. They might share information and parenting skills with each other, like a family” (IN_Wen_01/21/2010).
Regarding each student’s unique art potential, cultural backgrounds, and characteristics, Mrs Wen was aware of their different learning profiles and adapted personalized instruction. The following illustrate two mini cases that describe how Mrs Wen attended to individual students’ needs in the artistically talented class.

Lin: From an intimate relationship to reciprocal learning. Lin was particularly good at line drawing and deciphered things in remarkable detail. In his homework art assignment (see Figure 21), the work on the left side entitled “Swedish short vessel” was decorated by wave-shaped, spots, and short lines, and Lin even drew a monster spouting fire and had made fancy 3-D textures using delicate lines. Besides line drawing, Lin enjoyed weaving different media to represent an imaginary world. He showed this talent on the right side of the work. He first used brown and dark-red colored paper to make a mantis’ head and then drew its body and two beautiful butterflies with crayons. Once again he arranged different shapes of lines in the work. Mrs Wen commented: “Two of them are amazing works of art! I saw you arrange lines and colors very well. You showed how carefully you made a plan to draw and compose those elements. Good job!” (DU_Wei_01/08/2010).

Figure 21. Homework assignment by Lin, a fourth-grader in Mrs Wen’s artistically talented class.
Mrs Wen’s comments encouraged Lin to apply this unique talent into art creation. His work usually became Mrs Wen’s teaching material in showing students how to organize art elements in their work. In the Ink Painting project, Lin used subtle lines to represent a scene of him and his family members riding bicycles on weekends. Mrs Wen held up his work and explained,

Look! Lin is good at using lines to compose an image aesthetically. There are various lines in terms of their sizes, directions, and space. In addition, let’s see color in this work. First, it makes the main figure clearer and the background color lighter. It makes your work with multiple visual layers. Then, we have “real color” and “imaginative color.” What does that mean? See. Lin colored his bicycle with gray and black. But he drew leaves with green, purple, yellow, pink, and black. They make spectators perceive how colorful and happy he felt riding a bike on our last weekend activity.

(CO_Wen_10/09/2009)

In short, Mrs Wen used Lin’s work as a concrete and child-orientated example to explain abstract concepts she wanted her students to acquire. Lin’s talent seemed to bridge peer learning with Mrs Wen’s explanation. In addition to Lin’s technical performance in art-making, Mrs Wen also focused on his affective development because she noticed he was somewhat isolated from his classmates due to his sensitive nature. Mrs Wen encouraged Lin to transform his strong emotions into art creation. Mrs Wen shared an example with me,

Lin excels in using lines to portray what he sees and thinks. For example, he raises mantises at home and always observing them. At school, he often shares his mantis-raising experiences with his classmates. In art, he likes to draw vessels with a mantis, make mantis ceramics, and so on. He just loves the mantis! Besides, Lin is very sensitive in some way. One day he told me that he got into a bad mood the previous night because he quarreled with his father. He remained in his room and made a paper sculpture of a mantis to calm himself down. “Do you want to see the sculpture?” Lin asked me the day after that. “Of course!” I answered. We both enjoyed looking at his work. I praised him for calming himself by making art and showed his work in front of the classroom. He seemed very happy. (IN_Wen_01/21/2010)

In terms of developing art talent, Mrs Wen expected Lin to leave his comfort zone and expand his vision of art. In a homework assignment entitled “Mysterious Huge Insects,” Lin
drew a mantis, an insect he drew often, with amazing detail. Mrs Wen invited Lin to share his know-how with classmates and encouraged him to engage his classmates in doing an in-depth study on the insect. In addition, Lin could explore other insects to widen his range of creative topics.

*Figure 22.* Lin’s detailed drawing of a mantis.

The careful observations, technical training, and intimate sharing, based on my observations, created a close relationship between Lin and Mrs Wen. The relationship connected her guidance with Lin’s unique learning profile. Lin once made a birthday card for Mrs Wen. The warm image and words expressed his gratefulness to Mrs Wen!

*Figure 23.* A birthday card made by Lin for Mrs Wen.
Zh: From fostering good attitudes to developing aesthetic sensibility. In my observations, the students’ diverse learning styles in the artistically talented class became an issue for Mrs Wen, but she compromised expectations and instructional approaches for them. For instance, Zh seemed not able to sit more than fifteen minutes. He had little patience in editing his work with Mrs Wen’s comments and was playful in class. Mrs Wen spent time talking with him and to discuss his behavior. In class, Mrs Wen didn’t want to hurt Zh’s feeling so she used cheerful words such as “Hello! Mrs Energy, would you please sit down for a while?” to remind him to control his behavior or emotion. Otherwise, she allowed Zh to walk around in the playground to reward him for his good behavior.

Mrs Wen also had written to Zh’s mother on his behavior in class. Through their communication, one could see Zh’s improvement over the period:

Mrs Wen: Hello! Zh’s mommy, thanks so much for your support of the class activity! I am just wondering why Zh preferred to walk around in class and finds it difficult to concentrate on art-making. Let us work together to help him change his behavior. Thanks!
   p.s. Zh is so talented in performing on stage [in a show for celebrating Teacher’s Day].

Zh’s mother: He is stabilizing. I believe he (Zh) will concentrate more and be more composed. Please give him time. He will improve a lot. Thanks!

Mrs Wen: Hi! Zh’s mommy, I am delighted to inform you that Zh could stay in his seat much longer and concentrate on making art. I know he will be fine with our step-by-step guidance.
   (DU_Wei_01/08/2010)

In terms of art-making, Mrs Wen said, “Zh is too rational. As his home classroom teacher told me, Zh has good logic but is not very sensitive. However, it is sensitivity that allows us to articulate the subtle quality in making art” (IN_Wen_01/21/2010). The homework assignment became an avenue for Mrs Wen to personalize instruction and nurture Zh’s sensitivity. As shown
In Table 6, Mrs Wen commented on Zh’s work and suggested he use curves and fluid lines that could make the images look more rich and mutative. Through such personalized comments, Zh seemed to improve and was more focused on the dynamics of composition regarding lines and colors. Mrs Wen further pushed him to think about using narratives as a form of artwork.

According to Mrs Wen, students had different reasons for enrolling in the artistically talented program. Some were really interested in art while others didn’t really have art talent but were forced by their parents to participate. “The gap did challenge me,” Mrs Wen said. Yet, through carefully observing students’ characteristics and establishing relationships with them, she was able to adjust personalized guidance and make connections between her expectations and students’ learning styles. Referring to Clasen and Clasen’s (2003) interlocking roles of mentors in an apprenticeship, Mrs Wen played a friend and a tutor for Lin and Zh. She was a friend whom they could trust and share feelings with as a source of emotional support, while she served as a tutor who provided systematic feedback on work and helped them push the boundaries of readiness.
Table 6

Mrs Wen’s Comments on Zh’s Homework Assignment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zh’s Work</th>
<th>Mrs Wen’s Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>• The shape of the vessel looks too straight and is not very creative! Try using curves or fluid lines. They will make your work more rich and mutative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>• Zh, you are supposed to use color paper in this homework. Where are they? But the lines you use in the work look better. They are more smooth and fluid. I can feel it’s warmth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>• When contouring, don’t use black. You can try similar colors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>• Zh, you have improved a lot! The composition is mutative. The fluid lines make the image beautiful. It would be interesting if you can express the image like in a story.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Portrait of Mrs Wen’s Differentiated Art Classes

Yan Yuan, in admiring the Master's doctrines, sighed and said, I looked up to them, and they seemed to become more high; I tried to penetrate them, and they seemed to become more firm; I looked at them before me, and suddenly they seemed to be behind. The Master, by systematic guidance, skillfully leads men on (italics mine). He enlarged my mind with learning, and taught me the restraints of propriety. (The Analects, 9:11)

I recalled the above words when I tried to have a deeper understanding of the concept and practice of differentiation through Mrs Wen’s art class. A student of Confucius, Yan Yuan portrayed his teacher as a mentor who “skillfully leads men on by systematic guidance” (循循善誘, Xún Xún Shàn Yòu). It resonated with the essence of Mrs Wen’s beliefs and practice in
developing students’ art talents through a process of systematic guidance (a well-designed art learning plan). Yan Yuan used the word, Yòu (誘), which means “to attract, to entice, to animate” to capture the spirit of Confucius’s pedagogy. It related to how Mrs Wen established a rich and adaptable learning environment in her River School art class.

As an art teacher of almost twenty years in River School, Mrs Wen remained committed to disseminating “the beauty, the goodness, and the truth” (IN_Wen_12/04/2009) for the students, school, and community. For instance, she held an art exhibition in school for those who were unable to attend it in town. She participated in designing the features and spaces of new school buildings as she believed that the environment has an unseen but strong influence on art education. The ceramic creations by her students adorned the wall of a park established in memory of a man who had contributed much to River district. The “Confucius-orientated” approach and the above description of Mrs Wen’s curriculum methods provide the basis and materials to address the main research questions for this study.

Curriculum modification. For the first set of what questions, I explore the extent to which Mrs Wen modified her curriculum in response to the diversity of students’ art learning: What art curricula do the art teachers design for all students, including those artistically talented? What are their considerations in designing art curricula? Do they modify curricula to make art learning more accessible for diverse learners?

Quantitatively and qualitatively different contents: Inter-class differences. With regard to the first layer of student differences, Mrs Wen designed art projects which were quantitatively and qualitatively distinct for the sixth-grade students in the general class and the fourth-grade students in the artistically talented class (inter-class difference). Specifically, Mrs Wen
considered class duration (2 and 6 classes per week for the general and artistically talented classes respectively), student readiness (artistically talented class students had received art education since third grade), and made distinctions in the traits of students with art talent (e.g. high interest in art, capacity for operating skills, and manipulating media) to modified the curriculum for the two groups.

With regard to the structure for learning experiences in the visual arts mentioned by Clark and Zimmerman (2004), introductory and rudimentary learning experiences were provided to most students to enable them to assimilate advanced learning about art. As such, for the sixth-grade students in the general class, Mrs Wen designed four projects which involved making organic combinations of art forms, intentional notice of art elements, and the innovative introduction of established artists’ styles into their own creations. For Bresler’s (2002) four types of school art, two projects in the general class could be categorized as child craft (the School Games Carnival project) and a combination of fine and child art (the Surrealism Collage project which meshed Surrealism artists’ work and original collage created by students’ hand sketch). The projects designed for the general class focused more on structured perception and the acquisition of transmitted art concepts.

Based on the indicators of content modification (Maker & Neilson, 1995; Tomlinson, 1996), I realized that she modified the complexity of art projects (art forms and art elements), organization of learning values (art-making mindset), and abstractness (creative expressiveness) for the fourth grade students in the artistically talented class. Specifically, Mrs Wen designed ten projects which emphasized interweaving multiple media or art forms, skillful manipulation of tools or materials, and seeking transformation through problem-solving-oriented art creations. There were other projects with combined school art types for the talented class. For example, the
School Games Carnival project included plastic hats inspired by three artists (fine art) and mixed-media birds (child craft). The completed artwork of the latter project eventually became a performing vehicle for the River School’s Games Carnival in which the representation of a bird flitted around in search of the identities and addresses of students. The depth and scope of the art projects were in line with the belief that talented students need to have opportunities for intermediate and advanced learning that increases their knowledge, skills, and values beyond most others (Clark & Zimmerman, 2004; Hurwitz & Day, 1995; VanTassel-Baska and Stambaugh, 2006).

**Community resources to enrich art experiences.** The community/school-based projects bridged the gap between River School and River District. The easy availability of resources enriched and broadened the scope of the students’ art world. As noted previously, Mrs Pei helped students make a connection between art-making and the environment. She believed that in this way students in the general class would better appreciate the significance of their art projects as it became part of their life experiences, such as their performance in the school games carnival. Students in the artistically talented class had better opportunities to represent the environment in an artistic fashion. Clark and Zimmerman (2004) note that community-based art programs could deepen artistically talented students through an understanding of their cultures and “what art is and why it is made, the differences in human experiences, and the variety of contexts in which art has been made and continued to be created” (p. 122). Gude (2009) in turn highlighted the role of the arts in generating fresh insights on personal and socio-cultural perspectives:

A quality art curriculum does not just disseminate historical, technical, or formal knowledge. Through a quality art education, students become familiar with, are able to use the langue of multiple art and cultural discourses, and are thus able to generate new insights into their lives and into contemporary times. These abilities to investigate, analyze, reflect, and represent are critical skills for citizens of a participatory democracy. (p. 14)
In the ceramics-arts project, students from the talented class were shown how to present the generous man’s spirit through art. Their art works decorated the park in which the man’s statue stood. Their beautiful depictions of “love” in ceramics (contemporary artistic language from children) spoke of the man’s everlasting spirit (historical humanities discourse from adults). Mrs Wen led the students in approaching the essence of art making. She was cultivating artistic minds which were also sensitive to human concerns. Ultimately, it reflected her expectations on nurturing the students’ art talents in the specialized class. This will be discussed in the sixth chapter.

**Appropriateness or privilege? Inter-class curricular modification.** An issue in modifying curricula for inter-class differences is whether it is proper for Mrs Wen to provide students in the artistically talented class inquiry-based, skill-demanding, and concept-transformative projects but offer perception-structured and concept-transmitted projects for those in the general class? Is this appropriate or is it a form of bestowing privilege on one class over another?

It does make sense for Mrs Wen to take into consideration the two groups distinctive traits in designing a differentiated curricula under the given structure for the general and the talented classes in order to provide rich, engaging, and meaningful art learning experiences for her students at River School. She stated,

> Art can move our minds and record part of our lives…Art teaches us how to sense, articulate, and understand the world. In other words, art teaches us to ‘see’ not just ‘look at’ the world. I would like to have River School kids engage in art learning regardless whether they are identified as talented or not. (IN_Wen_01212010)

For Mrs Wen, providing high-quality art curriculum for all students regardless of their talent levels is the ideal scenario. In this sense, I refer to Tomlinson’s (1996, 2003) “equalizer” as a
continuum for teachers to modify lessons and tasks for students, and use it to chart modified components in Mrs Wen’s art class projects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Art forms</th>
<th>Introductory level</th>
<th>Advanced level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organic combination</td>
<td>Complex interweaving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentional notice</td>
<td>Skillful manipulation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative transfer</td>
<td>Problem-solving transformation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making plans</td>
<td>Thoughtful deliberation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 24. A possible continuum of curricular modification in Mrs Wen’s art classes*

The continuum is Mrs Wen’s conceptional framework in designing art curricula for students having a wide range of readiness, interests, and learning profiles. At the right of the continuum, she provided a task/project more appropriate for students with advanced talents and interest in art and less for those not as talented or interested. To some extent, the idea of equalizing by continual adaptation could apply to inter-class as well as inter-individual differences. As discussed previously, Mrs Wen modified the complexity and scope of the School Games Carnival project with different competence indicators for the general and the artistically talented classes.

On the other hand, through deliberate differentiation in curriculum designs, students in the general class not identified as talented might not have the learning experiences that could appropriately challenge them. From my observation, Ting was highly interested in art and exhibited her art talents in the general class. She was able to respond to Mrs Wen’s questions on distinguishing realistic and surrealistic art styles, and made relevant observations and sketched her hands with powerful, vivid lines. Ting was selected to draw an ink painting about fish marketing for the National Art Competition. Mrs Wen assigned Ting to work with another
student to color the goddess’ head, which would be challenging to Ting who was more disposed towards independent work rather than collaborating with others.

The above strategies of adaptive modification exposed Ting to alternative art learning experiences. However, there was a lack of a continuous, concerted, and systematic training plan for Ting, as opposed to such occasional instances, to cultivate her art talents. Furthermore, Ting’s art potential might thrive better in the inquiry-based, skill-demanding, and concept-transformative projects designed for students in the artistically talented class. This will be elaborated in the case of Mrs Pei in the last chapter. Now, let’s move to Mrs Wen’s curriculum modification for within-class difference.

**Student choice: Sharing responsibilities in differentiation.** The second layer of modifying curricula to accommodate differentiation was when Mrs Wen allowed students in the artistically talented class to choose their preferences during the learning process. In Winner’s (1996) view, talented students virtually learn on their own and require minimum adult scaffolding while solving problems in their domain in original or unusual ways. Choice enables talented students to integrate their strengths and passions into their learning. Kanevsky (2002) indicated,

> Sharing control over the differentiation process with students is as easy as offering students choices. The benefits of giving students a role in the design process include more personalized activities for each of your students, enhanced motivation, increased engagement and achievement. (p. 48)

When considering the diverse preferred art styles and relative strengths of students in the talented class, Mrs Wen further modified the contents of art projects by providing various options. The students in the class had the opportunity to more intensively investigate preferred art styles and to make art with strong art forms. So, instead of a single style for all, Mrs Wen selected three art styles (Cubism, Fauvism, and Surrealism) that required different perceptions
and knowledge of intellectual, technical, and form skills. She shared control over the differentiated process with students by allowing them to choose preferred art styles to motivate them in studying established artists’ works and then apply the chosen art styles into their own plastic hat-making project.

It is pertinent that the artistically talented students in Mrs Wen’s fourth-grade class selected art forms for the National Art Competition. They based their work on the relative strengths of the forms and made creative works using a wide range of media. As described previously, the modification to the curriculum in allowing student choice enabled Mrs Wen to discover Lo’s unique abilities. This supported Hertzog’s (1995) findings that choice (in open-ended activities) offers a promising strategy for learning about individual students’ strengths, interests, and learning styles. By observing students’ performances, teachers become aware of their learning patterns and can use this to make informed decisions about curricular interventions.

**Instructional adjustment.** For the second set of questions, I explored how Mrs Wen adjusted instructional approaches to accommodate student diversity. For instance, how do art teachers implement art curricula designed for all students, including the artistically talented? Do they take into account student needs to adjust instruction? If so, how? What conflicts, challenges, and compromises do they face in doing that?

**Flexible adjustment to pedagogical orientations.** According to instructional orientations proposed by Bresler (1994), Mrs Wen seemed to adjust her approach depending on the content of the art project. For example, for the general class’ Surrealism Collage project she combined step-by-step teaching of hand sketches (teacher-centered orientation) with imaginative collages of reorganized hand sketches and pictures from magazines (student-centered orientation). For the
talented class higher-order cognitive orientations were utilized where students involved in a problem-solving task used materials provided by Mrs Wen and worked with others in creating the work.

Mrs Wen’s pedagogy in the School Games Carnival project for the general class was of a higher-order cognitive orientation which involved guiding them to experiment in solving problems and referring to the art concepts taught. In the talented students’ polylon bird project, Mrs Wen used a didactic, teacher-centered approach in sculpturing the polylon, but had a heuristic, animated explanation to inspire them to express the beauty of flying wings. In short, the flexibility in pedagogical orientations not only showed up the complexity of Mrs Wen’s approach, it also showed her objective of incorporating various modes of thinking into art creation.

**Huge vs. small adjustments.** As shown, both the general and the artistically talented classes shared similar studio-orientated class instruction (Hetland et al., 2007) involving: (a) Explanation-Demonstration; (b) Student-at-Work; (c) Refresh-and-Reflection; and (d) Clean-up session. Yet, I found Mrs Wen responded to inter-class differences by deliberately adjusting instructional approaches in the Explanation-Demonstration (interesting introduction vs. in-depth discussion) and the Student-at-Work (collaboration vs. independence) sessions. A close look at the approaches reveal the various instructional adjustments in response to inter-individual student differences in the setting, such as the occasional exception, personalized guidance, student choice, and stationary work.

Mrs Wen used a pair of vivid analogies - huge and small adjustments - to explain her response to the two layers of student differences. She explained,

Since we teach art to four or five general classes and the artistically talented class, we need to make adjustments. For me, this means both “huge” and “small” adjustments. The
former refers to considering each class’s overall competence, characteristics, and possibilities for collaboration. [Based on those considerations] I will work with students and decide what topics and media [with different challenging levels] they could work on. Small adjustments are where I will observe individuals’ performances and place them in the right place [if it is collaborative art making]…What I am trying to do is to make each student feel they are useful. Their potential could thrive.

(IN_Wen_01/21/2010)

I use the pair of analogies to find meaning in her the way she adjusts instruction to fit the situation.

_Collaboration and independence in the ‘huge adjustment’. _For the “huge adjustment” Mrs Wen focused on sixth graders’ learning motivation and class environment rather than providing complex training. She modeled tool-use and had introductory but interesting classes on artists and their art styles in the Explanation-Demonstration session for the coming art creation project. She used collaborative art projects to cater to different students, employing various technique levels and abilities in collaboration to enable them to learn from each other while she provided guidance in Student-at-Work session.

In contrast, for her fourth-grade students in the artistically talented class, Mrs Wen adjusted instruction and guided them towards the advanced level in the curricular modification continuum discussed above. In the Explanation-Demonstration session, there were more in-depth discussions by “aesthetic questioning” (Hurwitz & Day, 1995) to enhance students’ sensitivity in appreciating artwork. In that case, students identified as talented generally worked independently (except in the Surrealism Collage project) with her personalized guidance and occasional peer discussions in the Student-at-Work session.

An interesting issue that took place in Mrs Wen’s huge adjustment for the inter-class difference was collaboration and independence. Three of the four art projects (Campus Landscape Design, School Games Carnival, and Surrealism Collage) for general-class students
were collaborative art projects while, except for the Surrealism Collage project, students in the artistically talented class typically worked on independent projects. Why was this done so differently? Interestingly, in a follow-up interview with Mrs Wen, she didn’t think that she made a distinction between the two classes in terms of collaboration and independence. As she explained:

Regardless of whether it is the general or the talented class, the goal of independent projects is to work closely on individuals’ abilities and to think and make art on their own. Through collaborative projects, they learn how to be involved in others and how to accommodate themselves for group work…I like to guide students to deal with conflicts in order to come up with more ideas…For me, art-making is an interaction between self and the other-self. I don’t want my students to work alone. At the same time, I don’t want them to lose their unique traits when working with others. (IN_Wen_01/05/2011)

Through flexible shifting of collaborative and independent art-making, Mrs Wen hoped to cultivate each student’s uniqueness to formulate an artistic self. At the same time, in Mrs Wen’s words, students could enhance the ability of collaboration by referring to “the other-self.” Her explanation shifted my focus on comparisons to investigate her pedagogical intention in terms of collaboration and independence.

In my view, besides cultivating students’ ability in collaboration, collaborative art-making might be Mrs Wen’s attempt to arrive at a compromise for the different learning attitudes, interests, and competences of students in the general class. The planned grouping through modifying the art project (dividing it into five parts) in the School Games Carnival project is a clear example. Mrs Wen assigned five students to make a green plant that required a relatively high degree of collaboration and complex techniques. In particular, she relied on a student’s leadership abilities to guide his team members to work on the challenging task and to stimulate motivation among them.
In the collaborative class dynamics, Mrs Wen took the opportunity to adjust her guidance method for each group. As Renzulli and Reis (2008) maintain, she adapted by differentiating her modeling role which was qualitatively different from the norm of teachers as instructors. The flow in the art class resulted from her differentiation of roles (apprentice, consultant, demonstrator, coordinator, and monitor) that engaged students in tasks which had various levels of challenges.

What if collaboration takes place in the artistically talented class with students who had their own unique art talents and who found it difficult to work with others? In the Surrealism Collage project, the only collaborative art project in the class, fourth-grade students were challenged to collaborate in making a collage that included elements of their unique self-portrait standing boards. Mrs Wen noted that Lin argued with other team members as apparently they did not support his idea of making a performing stage where each of their standing boards was a superstar singing on the stage. As he appeared frustrated, she called him aside and comforted him. She asked him to clarify and draw his idea on paper. He returned to the group and eventually his idea became the main theme of the group’s work, a dramatic boat symbolizing their collaboration! With Mrs Wen’s intervention, Lin injected his talent into the group’s needs. Mrs Wen successfully harnessed the students’ individual energies in a cooperative effort that enhanced the overall skills and experiences of the group.

Returning to Mrs Wen’s explanation, overcoming the tension between collaboration and independence requires a balance between students’ individuality and group interests without breaking down the harmony of the class’ dynamics. (This will be discussed further in the final chapter.) Indeed, Mrs Wen’s response to individual student characteristics in the group dynamics reflects her instructional adjustment to cater to inter-individual differences in the artistically
talented class. In Mrs Wen’s words, it is a “small adjustment,” looking for a good match of students’ different learning profiles and teachers’ various instructional approaches.

*Micro- and macro-differentiation in the ‘small adjustment.’* Mrs Wen’s differentiation for the second layer of student differences came about when she attended to the diversity of students in the general and the artistically talented classes by occasional exceptions, personalized guidance, student choice, flexible grouping (flexible pacing), and stationary work.

Tomlinson (1995) states that creating a differentiated classroom is not a *yes* or *no* proposition but rather a continuum along which teachers move as they develop responsive teaching skills. In doing so, they could figure out their place in the scheme, and use it in a way to generate personal next-steps in adjusting instruction based on student needs. Applying Tomlinson’s (1995) idea into my study, I found that each type of instructional adjustment revealed the extent to which Mrs Wen considered the dynamics of individual student needs and whole class structures. I further charted various enacted views of adjustment instruction in Mrs Wen’s art class in Figure 25.

In cases of extreme micro-differentiation, there is a focus on student individual quests within whole class dynamics. It is more like occasional adjustment depending on individual student responses in class. For example, Mrs Wen asked Lin to practice sketching a plant since he had completed the Ink Painting project. This occasional-exception approach encourages individuals to take an assignment further as a way of making minor adjustments in class. It is a kind of micro-differentiation and shows more flexibility and awareness of students than in a non-differentiated classroom.

In extreme macro-differentiation, whole class dynamics are addressed in respect of individual students’ quests. It relies more on teacher preplans which assist students in personal
goal setting. At the same time, teachers serve as coaches or mentors in helping students reach their goal (Betts, 2004). For instance, Mrs Wen designed stationary work in the Costume Design project before classes. She set up three work stations for the three main steps in costume designing of making the draft, color design, and modifying and ironing. Mrs Wen included additional human resources into the class to keep individual student working processes as fluid as possible. Through that, students in the artistically talented class could pace their work flexibly (flexible pacing, Drashil, 2006) and gain learning ownership.

Mrs Wen’s instructional adjustment which ranged from micro- to macro-differentiation in an art project ensured multiple facilitation in optimizing student learning. For example, in the National Art Competition, she allowed the fourth-grade students in the artistically talented class to choose an art form to work on (Student Choice). During the process, she grouped them based on the forms they chose (Flexible Grouping). She encouraged them to learn from each other but keep their own unique ideas or styles. Meanwhile, Mrs Wen kept a close watch on each student’s work and helped them modify their work composition (Personalized Guidance).

Mrs Wen’s personalized guidance to Lin and Zh shows us differentiated instruction that build upon a teacher’s intimate, caring relationship with talented art students. Based on this relationship, Mrs Wen taught them useful and meaningful art-making techniques (practices), conveyed the idea that artists always look for alternatives (values), and that art-making needs careful planning (attitudes). Nakamura, Shernoff, and Hooker (2009) discussed the practice of good mentoring. They stated,

[The] best chance for their cultivation is likely to lie with teachers who embody these values and practices and the learning environments that the teachers create. Through them, orienting values can be acquired—to use John Dewey’s felicitous phrase—in ‘intimate organic connection’ with the associated knowledge and technical skills. (p. 14)
Through “intimate organic connection,” Mrs Wen nurtured those emerging young artists with her caring mind. I noted that “good mentoring” (Nakamura, Shernoff, & Hooker, 2009) was practiced in Mrs Wen’s art class. She encouraged Lin to transform his strong emotions into art creation as if she had found the changing landscape in the district due to pollution or economic development, and transformed this concern into her sketch entitled “My dear residences in River district, where should we go?” Sensitivity to human concerns by artists is reflected in their creations. In Zh’s case, Mrs Wen shaped an artist who focuses on his art-making in a concentrated, self-cultivated, and engaging attitude.
### Micro-differentiation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occasional Exceptions</th>
<th>Personalized Guidance</th>
<th>Student Choice</th>
<th>Flexible Grouping</th>
<th>Station Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ink Painting project:</strong> Asking Lin to draw plants as he had completed his artwork (Talented)</td>
<td><strong>River Middle School Sketch project:</strong> Improvised guidance based on student working progress (Talented)</td>
<td><strong>National Art Competition project:</strong> Choice of three art forms based on relative individual strengths (Talented)</td>
<td><strong>Surrealism Collage project:</strong> Grouping students by gender for collaborative artwork (Talented)</td>
<td><strong>Costume Design project:</strong> Setting up three work stations: (a) making drafts; (b) color design, and (c) modifying and ironing (Talented)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Game Carnival project:</strong> Allowing students who were done with tasks to read art books (General)</td>
<td>**Pulling Ting out to draw an ink painting for the National Art Competition (General)</td>
<td><strong>Landscape Design project:</strong> Allowing students to choose team members to work with (General)</td>
<td><strong>School Game Carnival project:</strong> Assigning students into five groups for collaborative artwork (General)</td>
<td><strong>Landscape Design project:</strong> Allowing students to choose team members to work with (General)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Macro-differentiation

- Individual student quest
- Whole class dynamics
- Relying more on contextual adjustment
- Relying more on teacher pre-planning

*Figure 25.* A continuum of instruction adjustment in Mrs Wen’s art classes.

**Summary.** In this section, I interpret and discuss Mrs Wen’s operational curricula along with research questions I explored in this study. The Analects phrase, Xún Xún Shàn Yòu (循循
善誘，skillfully lead men by systematic guidance), captures the spirit of Mrs Wen’s pedagogy. Through differentiation, Mrs Wen’s curricular modifications and instruction adjustments in both the sixth-grade general class and the fourth-grade artistically talented class could be synthesized as Figure 26. Two layers of differentiation reveal Mrs Wen’s considerations on inter-class and inter-individual differences in designing art curricula for the diverse student population.

The first layer of differentiation drew on Mrs Wen’s perceptions on and responses to inter-class differences. Integrating curricular modification and art-studio class structure with instruction adjustment became the basis for her differentiated art classroom. Mrs Wen designed quantitative as well as qualitative art projects for the artistically gifted students. In particular, the community/school-based art projects guided the students to think of and create art for the environment. It aimed at broadening the students’ vision of art and resulted in a reciprocal relationship between the emerging artists and the environment and the community.

The second layer of differentiation took place when Mrs Wen modified curricula or adjusted instructional approaches which included occasional exceptions, personalized guidance, student choice, flexible grouping, and stationary work in the class for the artistically talented. From micro- to macro-differentiation, Mrs Wen attended to students’ inter-individual differences in interests, competence, and learning styles. Differentiation in Mrs Wen’s art class, as Tomlinson (1995) stated, was not a yes/no proposition but rather involved various responsive degrees used by teachers to develop students’ relative strengths to optimize learning. Specifically, Mrs Wen’s personalized guidance to the unique learning profiles of the artistically talented students showed an “intimate organic connection” (Dewey, 1916/1997) with the associated art techniques, art-making attitudes, and values.
Figure 26. Mrs Wen’s differentiated art classes.
Chapter 5

Mrs Pei’s Differentiated Art Classes

Mrs Pei’s and Mrs Wen’s art classrooms were next to each other on the fourth floor of the Ming Building. As I walked into Mrs Pei’s classroom, I enjoyed looking at the finished artworks and those in progress displayed and kept in the room. The artwork of Mrs Pei’s artistically talented class informed visitors like me that they were going to have a graduation art show in the following semester.

Models of school buildings by fifth-grade students in the artistically talented class were exhibited on closet doors. Ten watercolor pieces for the National Art Competition were posted on a green rectangular bulletin board. I particularly liked the aluminum 3-D design work on the small cabinet close to the hallway window; the fluid lines in the back of a colorful cars made the work look dynamic (see Figure 27). It seems to me that the works of art displayed in the room created the atmosphere for the artistically talented students’ graduation art exhibition in the 2011 spring semester of, and also Mrs Pei intensively documented student artwork in representing their progress in that event.

Figure 27. Aluminum 3-D design by a fifth-grade student.
The art displays were relevant to current learning. In front of the room a blackboard was covered with two printmaking works by previous students. One was a mountain with lovely fringes and had a baby-blue background. Another displayed two birds’ nests with contrasting colors (black and white) and looked vivid. At that time, Mrs Pei had a rubber and an acrylic printmaking project for the general and talented classes respectively, so that the two works of art could be the two groups’ references.

Copies of accomplished artists’ work relating to art concepts that Mrs Pei planned to highlight this semester were displayed on a bulletin board close to the blackboard. For example, in the 2010 spring semester, Mrs Pei emphasized the concept of making layers as establishing multi-dimension space in artwork. Thus there were several relevant examples of works in the bulletin entitled “Artists Use Space Cleverly” (see Figure 28). Mr Pei attached key points for each work, such as “Deep visual perspective space by impressionists,” “Paul Klee’s abstract space,” “M. C. Escher’s unexpected and magic space,” “Rousseau’s incredible space combing the abstract and the real,” and “Kandinsky’s abstract, two-dimensional space.” I saw two girls in front of the bulletin talking about multi-layered colors in Paul Klee’s work, since Mrs Pei just mentioned it when she explained making layers in the Watercolor Collage project (CO_Pei_05/13/2010). These images and words seemed to have students recognize artists’ creative techniques and probably stimulated them to apply them into art making.
The overall pedagogical arrangement in Mrs Pei’s studio manifested a setting which addressed art learning through the documentation of student artwork, the display of students’ printmaking, and the intentional selection of established artists’ work with articulated words. In the educational setting, I would like to explore if curriculum modification and instructional adjustment took place in Mrs Pei’s operational curriculum with respect to the concept of differentiation. What Mrs Pei taught in response to the diversity of students in her class is discussed below.

**Curricular Modification in Mrs Pei’s Art Classes**

Mrs Pei taught in both the fifth-grade general and artistically talented classes in the spring 2010 semester. Just as Mrs Wen, she encountered two layers of student differences: (a) inter-class difference between the general class and the artistically talented class; and (b) within-class differences. I portray and discuss the complexity of Mrs Pei’s curricular modification for the diversity of students with reference to the two layers.

Specifically, Mrs Pei’s curricular modification for the inter-class differences reveal how she adapted art projects designs for students in the general and the artistically talented classes.
By exploring Mrs Pei’s response to the within-class difference in the two classes, I learned of the extent to which she considered diverse interests, readiness, and learning profiles of student learning in art. Taking that into account, how did she modify the curricula? Taking both inter-class and within-class differences together, I illustrate and discuss the complexity of Mrs Pei’s curricular modification in this section.

I first discuss the art projects with binary contents that Mrs Pei designed for students in the fifth-grade general and artistically talented classes. For the latter, Mrs Pei designed a series of art projects centering on environmental concerns. The issue-based art projects guided students to make a connection between art-making and human concerns on environmental protection. In focusing on the artistically talented class, I will describe an example of Mrs Pei’s curricular modification for one of her students, Chuang.

**Art Projects with differentiated organization and contents.** Mrs Pei differentiated the organization and content of art projects for both the general and the talented classes. I explain and discuss them in the following sections. In particular, I refer to the Arts and Humanities Learning Area Competence Indicators of Grade 1-9 Curriculum Guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2003) to show what competencies Mrs Pei addressed in both settings.

**Sequential art projects for students in the general class.** The fifth-grade general class I observed had two art classes on Thursdays. As shown in Table 7, Mrs Pei designed four art projects for the general students to work on, including the Human Body Sketch, the Imaginative Context, the Rubber Print, and Graph Design projects.

According to the competence indicators mentioned above, most of the four art projects in Mrs Pei’s general class were in the first or second learning stage, which are the introductory and
intermediate levels. For instance, the Rubber Print project showed students to use rubber plates to make prints with environmental backgrounds, learn how to use engravers, and appreciate completed peers’ work. It includes three competence indicators: 1-1-4 which is to correctly, safely, and effectively use tools or materials to make art or performance (Exploration and Expression), 2-2-7 relating to appreciating classmates’ visual, audio, or kinesthetic artwork, and describing personal feelings about others’ artwork (Aesthetics and Understanding), and 3-1-9 on feeling connections among self, others, and the environment by making art (Practice and Application).

In terms of content, the first three projects were related to each other. Specifically, the Human Body Sketch project required students to draw their classmates’ poses. Then they had to reduce the original sketch onto a 14.5cm by 20.5cm print paper, and to add an imaginary background in the Imaginative Context project. After that, they engraved the rubber plates with the classmate’s poses in the background and finally made printmaking work in the Rubber Print project. They experienced the process of drawing, engraving, and printing to complete the ink printing work.

Based on Mrs Pei’s lesson plan, the art learning goals for students in the general class were:

For general students, I not only have to change their attitudes of “Art is dispensable,” but also need to start from basic tool-operation training, such as how to use engravers. Perhaps, more important is to enhance art literacy and develop the concept and habits of beauty. In this regard, art curricula for the general students would begin by introducing fundamental art elements, such as lines, colors, shapes, and space, and then extend them to imagination and media exploration. (DU_Pei_03/11/2010)

Accordingly, the above three interrelated projects fitted the learning goals Mrs Pei set for students in the general class. Students learned fundamental art elements (lines, shapes, portion, and contrasting colors) and tool operations (gravers and 2B pencils) as sketching and engraving.
They used their imagination in creating a background based on what meaning they made of their classmates’ poses. They also experimented with rubber print, a media that Mr Pei thought appropriate for fifth graders to operate and explore.

In particular, Mrs Pei provided step-by-step guidance to her students in experiencing a challenging media which they had never tried before. Mrs Pei said, “Most of them seemed to get a sense of achievement in learning a new, challenging media (rubber print) by the step-by-step guidance. They saw how they had progressed in the process” (CO_Pei_05/27/2010). Mrs Pei assumed that it would be more appropriate for students who had fewer art classes before the fifth grade to approach art in a sequential learning process.

**Interrelated art projects for students in the artistically talented class.** As shown in Table 8, the art projects for the fifth-grade students in the artistically talented class are quite different from those for the general class. In the 2010 spring semester, Mrs Pei organized two field trips to a Natural Agriculture farm and a ceramics studio from which seven art projects, that is, the Paper Sculpture, Watercolor, Graph Design, Watercolor College, Acrylic Print, Oil Painting and the Ink Painting projects were designed. I list the art projects with themes and explored media in Table 8.

With reference to the Competence Indicators of the Ministry of Education, seven art projects in Mrs Pei’s artistically-talented class were in the second or third learning stage, that is the intermediate and advanced level. Mrs Pei designed the printmaking project for both the general class and the talented class. Yet, she had students in the artistically talented class work on acrylic plates which required advanced techniques in designing and engraving. And the theme of the project, *A Window in My Mind*, was to have students design a window that metaphorically represented what they wanted to say to make the world a better place.
The Acrylic Print project included five competence indicators, that is; 1-3-2: Think of themes and contents for art creation, and use appropriate media and skills to complete planned, affective, and thoughtful artwork, 1-3-3: Express personal feeling and emotion by skill and form of art making (Exploration and Expression), 2-3-7: Know about the relationship of environment and life, and reflect on environment’s influence on art creation (Aesthetics and Understanding), 3-3-13: Apply art knowledge and skills into designing, planning, decorating, or modifying life environment, and 3-1-9: Feel connections among self, others, and environment by making art (Practice and Application).

In terms of themes, all projects were related to the environmental protection issue in order to prepare for a graduation art exhibition which I will explain later. For instance, the Sounds from Nature Paper Sculpture project required students to express “what you want to say to Nature, and in turn what Nature wants to say to you” about pollution. Students also envisioned a future world due to global warming which they discussed in the Watercolor project. It seems to me that Mrs Pei guided students to express their feelings and thoughts on environmental issues through art making beyond just developing crafts. As for the goals she set up for the students in the artistically talented class, she said:

For artistically talented students, who have high potential and intensive experience in art, I particularly draw on extending art visions, experiencing various media, and fostering aesthetic experience. Consequently, talented students might enjoy learning art and then grow in the art field. (DU_Pei_03/11/2010)

Mrs Pei had the talented students experiment with hand-made tissue papers for watercolor collage, unbleached cotton cloth for graphic design, acrylic plate for print, and two traditional paint materials from western and the eastern cultures—oil pigment and ink. The wide range of media, Mrs Pei explained, allowed the artistically talented learners to see more possibilities of using media in expressing artful thinking. Hand-made tissue papers, for example,
are familiar to students in calligraphy writing. But for the Watercolor Collage project, they were expected to learn to notice the texture of tissue papers and infuse them into watercolor painting. Experimenting with integration of the two media (tissue paper and watercolor), according to Mrs Pei, aimed at having students experience abstract art using materials to express inner thoughts.

Through an overview of art projects in both settings, it is clear that Mrs Pei designed different kinds of long-term projects for the two groups: the general students worked on three sequential units toward a final product—rubber printmaking; the talented students’ art making centered on environmental protection issues by investigating various media. The binary project organization—sequential and interrelated—reflected Mrs Pei’s considerations based on the learning goals she set. I further delve into art concepts explored through art projects for the two groups, composing art elements aesthetically and intensive observation, and issue-based creation. Through this, qualitatively different art curricula are presented.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Explored Media</th>
<th>Exploration and Expression (1)</th>
<th>Aesthetics and Understanding (2)</th>
<th>Practice and Application (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Body Sketch</td>
<td>Close Observation</td>
<td>2B pencil, sketch paper</td>
<td>1-2-1 Explore various kinds of media, techniques and art forms in order to make art</td>
<td>2-2-6 Experience aesthetics of color, image, sound, rhythm, gesture, and motion, and describe personal feelings</td>
<td>3-1-9 Feel connections among self, others, and environment by making art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaginative Context</td>
<td>A World Constructed by Lines</td>
<td>HB pencil, print paper</td>
<td>1-1-1 Awaken imagination by experimenting various media and enjoy visual, audio, and kinesthetic art making</td>
<td>2-2-6 Appreciate and recognize the beauty of nature, artwork, and artificial work</td>
<td>3-2-11 Decorate environments and enrich personal spirit by making art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber Print</td>
<td>Interplay of Black and White</td>
<td>Rubber template, water-based ink, engravers</td>
<td>1-1-4 Correctly, safely, and effectively use tools or materials to make art or performance</td>
<td>2-2-7 Appreciate classmates’ visual, audio, or kinesthetic artwork, and describe personal feelings about others’ artwork</td>
<td>3-1-9 Feel connections among self, others, and environment by making art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graph Design</td>
<td>A Gift for Which I Am Thankful</td>
<td>Nonwoven fabrics, needle, line</td>
<td>1-2-1 Explore various kinds of media, techniques and art forms in order to make art</td>
<td>2-2-7 Appreciate classmates’ visual, audio, or kinesthetic artwork, and describe personal feelings about others’ artwork</td>
<td>3-1-11 Enjoy life and decorate self or life environments by art making</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The dates under each project indicate the days I observed.
Table 8

Art Projects in Mrs Pei’s Artistically Talented Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Explored Media</th>
<th>Exploration and Expression</th>
<th>Aesthetics and Understanding</th>
<th>Practice and Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper Sculpture</td>
<td>Sounds from Nature</td>
<td>Pastel paper, dundee paper, bristol board</td>
<td>1-3-2 Think of themes and contents for art creation, and use appropriate media and skills to complete planned, affective, and thoughtful artwork</td>
<td>2-2-7 Appreciate classmates’ visual, audio, or kinesthetic artwork, and describe personal feelings about others’ artwork</td>
<td>3-1-9 Feel connections among self, others, and environment by making art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graph Design</td>
<td>My Organic Backpack</td>
<td>Unbleached cotton fabrics</td>
<td>1-3-2 Think of themes and contents for art creation, and use appropriate media and skills to complete planned, affective, and thoughtful artwork</td>
<td>2-3-9 Express aesthetic experience and understanding of art creation by discussion, analysis or judgment</td>
<td>3-2-11 Decorate environments and enrich personal spirit by making art</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 8 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
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<th>Aesthetics and Understanding</th>
<th>Practice and Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acrylic Print</td>
<td>A Window in My Mind</td>
<td>Acrylic plate, oily oil link</td>
<td>1-3-2 Think of themes and contents for art creation, and use appropriate media and skills to complete planned, affective, and thoughtful artwork</td>
<td>2-3-7 Know about the relationship of environment and life, and reflect on environment’s influence on art creation</td>
<td>3-3-13 Apply art knowledge and skills into designing, planning, decorating, or modifying life environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(06/24/2010)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1-3-3 Express personal feeling and emotion by skill and form of art making</td>
<td></td>
<td>3-1-9 Feel connections among self, others, and environment by making art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Invited instructor, Mr Cheng)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil Painting</td>
<td>Cherish Our Land</td>
<td>Oil pigment, canvas</td>
<td>1-3-2 Think of themes and contents for art creation, and use appropriate media and skills to complete planned, affective, and thoughtful artwork</td>
<td>2-3-9 Express aesthetic experience and understanding of art creation by discussion, analysis or judgment</td>
<td>3-3-13 Apply art knowledge and skills into designing, planning, decorating, or modifying life environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Exchanged teaching: Mrs Wen)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ink Painting</td>
<td>Along the Tamsui River</td>
<td>Ink, rice paper</td>
<td>1-3-3 Express personal feeling and emotion by skill and form of art making</td>
<td>2-3-7 Know about the relationship of environment and life, and reflect on environment’s influence on art creation</td>
<td>3-2-10 Know life art in a community and choose favorite ways to apply it into life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Exchanged teaching: Mr Huang)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The dates under each project indicate the days I observed. For the two exchange teaching projects, I observed Mrs Pei’s teaching for other graders in her classroom, instead of following up with the fifth graders.
Differentiated art concepts. By examining the art projects Mrs Pei designed for the
general and artistically talented classes, I observed that she differentiated art concepts embedded
in the contents of art projects. The differentiated art concepts included composing art elements
aesthetically, intensified observation for students in the general class, and issue-based art
creation for students in the artistically talented class.

Composing art elements aesthetically. Composing art elements aesthetically was
addressed by Mrs Pei in both settings. The concept of aesthetic composition involved students in
thinking within media and selecting a pictorial repertoire that matched what they wanted to
create. The above vignette shows how Mrs Pei guided students in the general class to explore art
elements in their peers’ work with reference to the aesthetic principle.

Leading questions for students in the general class. In the Rubber Print project, Mrs Pei
used a student’s work as an example to make the fifth graders aware of the beauty of lines and
color arrangement. She guided students to envision black and white parts by looking at lines they
engraved in the rubber plate discuss:

Project: Rubber Print—Envisioning Black and White Parts from Lines
04/08/2010, Rainy
(Review-Reflection)
11:40 am Mrs Pei asks students to stop what they are doing and guides them.
Mrs Pei: I would like to talk to you about how to express lines. Can anyone tell me what
kinds of shapes we can make for lines?

Students: Curly, straight, jagged…
(Mrs Pei shows a graduate student’s work [see Figure 24] to support her explanation.)

Mrs Pei: Good. Let’s look at this work done by my previous student. [In my view] why
the work looks so beautiful results from lines. (One student interrupts: some
lines are thick and some are thin.) Good. By the way, did you see he also
carefully arranged lines loosely as well as tightly? That’s another reason which
makes the work compelling. Anyway, two points you have to remember: line
shapes (jagged, curly, and straight) and line loose-and-tight.
Mrs Pei reminded them to pay attention to the expressive quality of lines, which is particularly important to printmaking. She further involved students in thinking of the interplay between the white and the black by deliberate design of lines.

Mrs Pei: Besides lines, let’s talk about color in this work. What do you think?

S 1: It looks very vibrant.

Mrs Pei: Why do you think so? (S1 doesn’t answer.)

S 2: I like the way that he made two similar things (two ovals). But one has a white background, while the other has a black background.

Mrs Pei: You looked at it so carefully. Very good! For print paintings, we kind of make an interplay of black and white by engraving lines. When you print, the engraved line results in white, while the part you don’t engrave results in black. Go back to the work. He was really good at using the black-and-white idea I just explained. You are supposed to experiment with it when you make print template.

(CO_Pei_04/08/2010)

Figure 29. A rubber printmaking by Mrs Pei’s ex-student.

Mrs Pei finally wrote down key points on the blackboard for the students to refer: (a) the contrast of black and white; (b) changes of line shapes; and (c) loose and tight lines. Essentially,
aesthetic composition by color, line, and shapes was highlighted by Mrs Pei. The art elements analyzed and discussed could perhaps nurture students’ aesthetic sensitivity.

*Heuristic inspiration for the artistically talented students.* Mrs Pei modified the complexity of aesthetic composition concept by introducing more art vocabularies and even tied that concept with the spirits of human beings. Regarding art vocabulary, Mrs Pei emphasized “making layers like musical scales” to make artwork aesthetic (CO_Pei_03/25/2010). Based on Mrs Pei’s explanation, musical scales from high to low make songs sound smooth to listeners; in the same token, color from light to dark makes viewers perceive the richness of artwork. Besides “typical musical scales,” it would be more compelling for producers to make contrasting visual effects in terms of the degree of color, the direction of line, shape, and the size and height of space. She encouraged talented students to apply this principle into their art creations.

For instance, in the Watercolor Collage project students were required to “improvise between pasting handmade tissue papers and putting watercolor until you (students) are satisfied with its visual effect and achieve what you intend to express. As a result, you will see the richness of visual perception because of the layers you made” (CO_Pei_05/13/2010). Tong, a fifth-grade artistically talented student, made a watercolor collage entitled “Quest of Hope” (see Figure 30).

Mrs Pei described the visual layers in this work to me. On the first layer, Tong created a background using a light purple tissue paper with cotton-like texture. Three square-shaped pieces of watercolor paper were pasted on tissue paper from top to bottom and painted by watercolor in the second layer of the artwork. Tong infused tissue papers with different kinds of texture and color into the three images which implied three stages of an inquiry of hope. For the third layer,
Tong used three small black human figures with energetic gestures leading viewers to go through the three inquiry stages.

The multi-layered quality of the work, in my perspective, did show Tong’s artistic talent elicited by Mrs Pei’s curricula with appropriate complexity and challenges. Tong’s work with rich visual perception and spiritual expressiveness made me associate Mrs Pei’s words that she analogized making layers in art as cultivating humans’ temperaments. She explained,

[Making layers in art] is like how we behave ourselves. We don’t want to be shallow, and it’s not very interesting. Instead, you are supposed to have rich innerness so that others could realize it from time to time. It is what we call temperament. For me, making art is like a process of expressing your characteristics. Not only do you demonstrate skillful techniques, but also you are expressing how rich temperaments are in your mind. (CO_Pei_05/13/2010)

Figure 30. A fifth-grade student’s watercolor collage.

Through introducing art vocabulary and layering, Mrs Pei hoped to deepen the artistically talented students’ thoughts. She linked it to the temperament of an artist and how it influences an artwork’s expressive quality. The richer an artist’s innerness in mind, the more “layers” of
meaning are embedded in artwork. So Mrs Pei extended abstractness of the aesthetic composition concept. She seemed to lead students to explore a spiritual meaning of that concept.

*Intensive observation as enlightening general students’ eyes.* One concept that Mrs Pei drew on in the general but not the talented class was intensive observation. Mrs Pei regarded it as an essential concept in children’s visual art learning. The Human Body Sketch project would be a salient example. Mrs Pei first taught students to have an analytic eye in recognizing basic forms of a thing they were going to draw. She asked three students to make different poses (running, standing, and sitting) and demonstrated how to draw them on a blackboard. She asked students to compare the three poses and the relative position of the body sections. She further used geometric figures to help students get the point:

Mrs Pei: Don’t make your sketch as an iron man or a wooden man. (Mrs Pei gives students a smile.) Suppose you are going to draw your classmate who is kneeling. The position of his head, hands, and bent legs present a triangular shape. But look! The running gesture is different. (She points to the figure on the left on the blackboard.) His head and lifted left hand compose the first triangle, his neck and right hand make up the second triangle, and the two running legs compose the third. Does it make sense to you? (CO_Pei_03/25/2010)

*Figure 31.* Three poses used by Mrs Pei to analyze basic forms. (The triangles are added by me)
Mrs Pei further guided students to have a “selective eye” to take a better angle for catching the richness of a gesture that was more meaningful and appropriate to draw. For example, I sat near a small group where it was a boy’s turn to be a model for other group members to draw. One girl suggested, “You can just sit as the Thinker!” (a famous sculpture by Rodin). “Sounds great!” commented Mrs Pei. The boy sat on a chair and made the Thinker pose. Mrs Pei further suggested the other boy who initially sat behind the model to shift to his right side. She explained, “Don’t sit behind him. Would you like to sit here (the right side of the Thinker)? It would be more accessible for you to practice the details of his gesture. You will get lots of his facial expression and how he put his hands and legs.”

Mrs Pei also nurtured students’ “elaborated eyes” and asked each student to draw three kinds of gestures in order to experience sketching thoughtfully. In the class I observed, students were supposed to draw two gestures. Each student produced a longer central line with extended sub-lines (the right figure) and a shorter central line with reduced sub-lines (the left figure). For me, it enriched students’ perceptions and engaged them in portraying the world from multiple perspectives. In Mrs Pei’s view, “through practicing different gestures, they can get opportunities to handle central lines and sub-lines in various situations” (CO_Pei_03/25/2010).

In my observation, the three kinds of eyes—analytic, selective, and elaborated—were Mrs Pei’s way to enlighten students’ visual perceptions and cultivate an art concept they acquired. She explained to me,

The focus I would like to address is on learning how to observe. Last semester we explored some basic art elements, such as color, line, shape, and figure. From observation to drawing, students kind of get to try to integrate those art elements. [For example], in observing classmates’ gestures, they have to look carefully at the gestures’ contours (line), bright and dark parts of faces (color), or the shape of muscle [because of different actions]. Then they have to transform observation into drawing. It is also a way to have students practice concentration. (IN_Pei_03/25/2010)
Mrs Pei added, “not only did fundamental art concepts scaffold students to make and appreciate art in class, they might also serve as a tool facilitating them to approach art in daily life toward self-directed, lifelong art learners” (IN_Pei_07/19/2010).

**Issue-based art creation for extending artistically talented students’ art visions.** River School sixth-graders in the artistically talented class were expected to have an annual exhibition to show their learning results, document their progress in artwork, and disseminate art education for all students (for example, the four art teachers will have their general classes visit the exhibition). It was Mrs Pei’s plan that the fifth-grade artistically talented students’ artwork center a issue—environmental protection—so as to present its uniqueness of a graduation art exhibition to be held in the 2011 spring semester.

Specifically, Mrs Pei generated a wide range of activities for engaging students with art talent in responding to environmental issues. She encouraged these young artists to initiate interactive-dialogue images they presented in artwork. For example, in the Paper Sculpture project Mrs Pei noticed that a girl concentrated on making beautiful things, such as flowers, to enrich the visual effects of her artwork, but seemed not to directly respond to the Sounds from Nature theme. She crossed over and asked, “Hey, Ching, would you please tell me what you would like to express in the work?” The girl thought for a while and said, “A polluted earth surrounded by beautiful flowers.” Mrs Pei replied, “Sounds interesting! But we are not just making a beautiful image. The theme you are supposed to express is ‘Sounds from Nature.’ Let’s think about what Nature wants to say to you and what you want to say to Nature. It will make your work look like an interactive dialogue” (CO_Pei_03/11/2010). She thought of issues through manipulating media. With Mrs Pei’s comments, the girl made a weeping earth with gauze symbolizing that it was hurt due to pollution (what Nature wants to say to her). She also
made a running river with swimming fish and fresh flowers with flying ladybugs implying that she wanted to heal the injured earth by making the environment clean and ecological diversity possible (what she wants to say to Nature).

Mrs Pei also arranged a field trip in order to increase her students’ awareness of environmental protection issues. Natural Agriculture\(^\text{11}\) was one of the environmental protection issues that students were involved in under her guidance. They had a field trip to a Natural Agriculture farm in the spring semester (CO_Pei_04/29/2010). Before the field trip, Mrs Pei showed a book (*Fortune Dining Table*) published by the farm host to students, and disseminated a sheet about the differences among normal farming, organic farming, and Nature Agriculture. During the trip, students learned the concept of farming without using artificial or organic fertilizer by listening to a lecture, planting carrots, and weeding. Mrs Pei then asked them to write reflective journals in notebooks and think about a connection between the ideas of Natural Agriculture and art making.

\(^{11}\) According to the website of the Natural Agriculture farm that Mrs Pei and students visited, “Natural Agriculture is a way of farming based on a deep respect and regard for nature. It puts us in touch with the natural forces so that we can work in harmony and partnership with nature. Although it begins with the growing of crops, Natural Agriculture is a philosophy and way of life, encompassing the way we eat, cook and think about food. It is practiced by farmers and consumers alike, by individuals as well as whole communities. Natural Agriculture is not just a set of actions or techniques, it is a way of interacting with the earth and our environment, brought to life through our relationship with food.”
(http://www.shumei-na.org/index.html)
For the Watercolor project, Mrs Pei’s students watched a documentary on the impact of global warming on life in Taiwan. Students commented, “What! We are going to have no place to live in a few years.” “What should we do?” “Is it a good idea to live in a boat house if all land is covered by water?” After that, Mrs Pei guided them to review the reasons for global warming and to generate several ideas which they can implement in daily life, such as taking public transportation or using environment-friendly toilets. The students were then required to share their thoughts with family members and come up with ideas to overcome global warming. Based on the warm-up discussion, Mrs Pei then had students work on a watercolor project titled “Imagine a New World” which envisioned a scenario of a better life in the future (a new world) and draw it in the center of a watercolor painting. The better-life scenario was to be surrounded by several small images in which students present what they actually could do for the new world. In doing so, “students don’t make art for its own sake. They get an opportunity of deepening their reflective thinking and responding to life through art making” (CO_Pei_03/25/2010).

In addition to art projects in class, the artistically talented students also kept journals about environmental issues. At the end of the spring semester, Mrs Pei shared their journals with me. One student responded to the questions raised by Mrs Pei after visiting the Natural...
Agriculture farm. And she also attached illustrations which presented important ideas she learned from the field trip, such as the difference fertilization makes to plant growth (see Figure 33). Another student wrote a journal after watching a documentary which portrayed landscape and life changes on earth. It read,

06/18/2010

*Documentary: Home (director: Yann Arthus-Bertrand, Producer: Luc Besson)*

In this documentary, everything is disappearing, disappearing. We human beings have destroyed three-quarters of the beautiful earth...The Amazon Forest used to be equal in size to several areas of Taiwan. But in the past forty years it has disappeared around twenty percent due to people’s greed...I felt so sad that those trees filtering the air for us were cut down to satisfy our daily needs...I should protect the earth and pay attention to the environmental issue. [In this regard] I would like to eat local food rather than imported ones. [By doing so] we don’t need to cut trees to be fuel for transporting food from outside districts.

Reflective writing, in my observation, provided the verbal entry point for students to make sense of the environmental issues they were exploring in art projects. The enrichment activity might fulfill talented students who look for in-depth knowledge and experience.
After I was done with my research fieldwork, I visited Mrs Pei on January 5th 2011. She showed me five objects that students in the artistically talented class had worked on together using recycled materials to express their evolved perspectives on environmental issue. One impressive work was made by red, yellow, and orange recycled candles and students assembled them into a tower. Mrs Pei said, “They are going to light up candles during the graduation art show. Candles with different colors imply their wish to protect the environment in this district. For instance, lighting up red candles means their passion for solving river pollution problems near our school.” The art practice intentionally required students to use the arts as the content emphasis for their higher-order thinking with affective and motivational power.

Basically, as Mrs Pei told me, she liked to engage students in gradually thinking of the environmental protection issue. The talented students seemed to explore the issue through a process of conscious awareness to action practice to spirit inquiry. Specifically, the Paper Sculpture project might awaken their consciousness about environmental issues by envisioning pollution’s impact on Nature. They came up with environmental protection ideas in the Watercolor project and designed environment-friendly packages (unbleached cotton cloth) in the Graph Design project. Both the Watercolor Collage and the Acrylic Print projects involved talented students in disseminating reflective, generous spirits to the world. Mrs Pei guided the talented students to investigate art in sociocultural practice, a trend critical to visual culture art education (Duncum, 2002; Irwin & Chalmers, 2007).

What did students learn in the issue-based art projects? I saw that Yuan presented her critique and reflection on environmental pollution in the Paper Sculpture project. In moving to the Watercolor project, she was required to come up with ideas for solving pollution problems and, perhaps, metaphorically those chrysanthemums could bloom again if humans start to take
care of the environment. In the Acrylic Print project, Yuan designed an opened hope-window to shed light on a world in which trees grow and dandelions float in the air. The series of works made by Yuan seems to narrate her artistic development on the environmental protection issue. Perhaps working over time on meaningful issues, the temporal dimension of Mrs Pei’s organization of those art projects could nurture those artistically talented students’ growth by practice and repeated efforts, and the richness of the cycles of making work, revising it, and reflecting on those experiences. Their diverse talents thrived and responded in sufficient time for authentic artistic work (Seidel et al., 2009).

The evolution of Yuan’s work also make us see how materials become media when they mediate what Yuan intended or discovered and chose to leave (Eisner, 2002). Besides, Tong looked like a thoughtful, introspective artist in skillfully infusing the fabric of hand-made tissue into her watercolor work to poetically create her inner pursuit of hope. Zhe’s paper sculpture work presented his aesthetic sensibilities of composing color, shape, space for multi-layered visual effects. Jin showed her genuine art-making style and used recycled cans and bottles to make a lovely blue deer. As Eisner (2002) claims, when children recognize the material’s potential and their technical skills live up to their expanding conceptions of what they want to create under teachers’ guidance, the quality of their artistry would increase. Students’ fruitful creations that present their relative strengths or preferred art styles also revealed that differentiation occurred in Mrs Pei’s class because of their responses to a wide range of media explored in those art projects, and not so much because of curricular modification to inter-individual differences.
A case of curricular modification in the artistically talented class. In addition to modifying curriculum in respect to inter-class difference, Mrs Pei adjusted her instructional approach and designed a mini-unit for Chuang, a fifth grader in the artistically talented class. Based on my observations, it is a clear example of Mrs Pei significantly modifying curriculum in terms of inter-individual student difference.

Chuang: A struggling learner. In the fifth-grade artistically talented class, Chuang drew my attention. In a small group near to the blackboard, he was the only boy who sat with four girls. I found he seemed to be “two different persons” during and after class. During recess, I heard Chuang talk loudly to his classmates about playing basketball in the morning PE class and his face was radiant. However, he looked quite different when Mrs Pei worked with him to edit his artwork in class.

In the Watercolor project, students were asked to imagine a new world along with environmental protection ideas they generated. Chuang drew two or three robots and several tall buildings in a center oval. According to his explanation to Mrs Pei, he thought high-tech things, such as robots, could help people deal with environmental problems. His voice was soft. Mrs Pei praised him, “These images (robots) look very interesting! Your idea is very different from others,” she added, “Let’s look at your composition. Do you feel that they look separate? You know what I mean? We don’t feel they fit together in the work. Try to think of using a line or anything else to link them. It’s like a story line that we can follow” (CO_Pei_04/01/2010). I didn’t hear how Chuang responded to these comments. I started to wonder how he perceived Mrs Pei’s guidance in art learning.

I shared with Mrs Pei my observations of Chuang, and she told me,

In my view, Chuang is one of three struggling learners in this class. You see, many students in the fifth-grade artistically talented class could ask me good questions or think
of advanced ideas to improve their work. But I feel Chuang seems to have little sense in art. I wonder how much effort he really puts on art making. I really want to help him develop self-awareness. It can facilitate him to figure out art-making problems on his own. I expect he can monitor his work in the process and learn from peers. Indeed, I do hope to spend more time with him and two other kids. But I easily neglect them when I focus on whether the whole class achieves what I address in that class. (CO_Pei_04/22/2010)

Based on Mrs Pei’s words, she did recognize inter-individual differences between the fifth-grade artistically talented students. Having taught them since third grade she could see the performances of the students with some improving while others were still struggling. Although she would like to pay more attention to individual students’ difficulties, she seemed to have little time to do so. Interestingly, I did find that she modified curriculum and facilitated Chuang to recognize and overcome problems he might not be aware of.

**Connection or disconnection?** Returning to the Watercolor project, Mrs Pei had been encouraging Chuang’s improvement and invited other students to brainstorm how to modify his work. She held a brief explanation session for him on color visual effects:

*Project: Watercolor—How to modify Chuang’s work?*
*04/08/2010, Cloudy*
*(A mini-Demonstration-Explanation session during the Student-at-Work)*

Mrs Pei: We can see Chuang’s improvement. In this work, he showed his careful arrangement of a main feature (a future world that Chuang imagined and showed some “environmental-friendly” robots solving pollution problems) surrounded by a series of sub-images (such as a high-tech company, scientists studying robots, and so on). It shows that he thought technology development might be a way for us to solve environmental problems and look for a better life. Very creative! However, what do you think of the aesthetic aspects of his work? (Nobody answers.) Do you feel his work seems too chaotic? What’s wrong with it?

S 1: I guess that’s because of colors?

Mrs Pei: I agree with you. (Mrs Pei shows a set of color cards she prepared for this class.) Let’s see. As we learned before, the three primary colors are…
S 2: Red, yellow, blue.

Mr Pei: We can make different colors by combining the three primary ones. As you know we can make green by using yellow and blue colors; we can make purple by using red and blue. Besides, we can make dark purple by using less red but more blue. So applying this principle, what can we do if we want to modify Chuang’s work?

Mrs Pei: (Nobody answers. Mrs Pei explains by herself.) First I suggested to Chuang to distinguish cold and warm colors in his work. You don’t want to put two contrasting colors too close and it makes the work look chaotic. Then consider putting similar colors neatly as you arrange them. Thus the visual effect would be smooth in this case. Make sense?

(CO_Pei_04/08/2010)

To guide Chuang to improve the aesthetic quality of his work, Mrs Pei practically stopped the class session and took his work as an example to initiate a mini-lecture about color. She gave concrete methods for Chuang to modify his work. She was modeling to Chuang (even other students) on how to see and solve problems in art making.

Did Chuang make sense of Mrs Pei’s point? The following week, Chuang was the first student to hand his work to Mrs Pei. She asked him to put the work on a drying rack and get new paper. “Let’s learn how to match colors,” she said. She held a mini-lesson about color mixing for Chuang individually. She first put a poster of a color wheel on a table for his reference. Then he was asked to draw several leaves and ladybugs on them. After about thirty minutes, Mrs Pei came to Chuang again and said, “Look. Green leaves actually have different kinds of green on them because of the light. Besides, we can see leaves with different colors in the four seasons, right? Suppose you want to present autumn leaves. You could add a little red into green so that you can present a feeling of withering…” Mrs Pei demonstrated and at the same time examined if Chuang followed her by asking questions: “How do you feel?” “Does it make sense to you?” Finally, the color practice became Chuang’s assignment for that weekend (CO_Pei_04/15/2010).
In order to enhance Chuang’s sensitivity to color, Mrs Pei guided him to discern the visual effects of using color in a group discussion. Figuring out that Chuang seemed not to make sense of the previous explanation, Mrs Pei modified her initial approach and designed an individual mini-unit in which Chuang was expected to explore how colors could represent things vividly. Mrs Pei carefully fulfilled Chuang’s need—improving the concept of color by providing concrete methods for his reference. Mrs Pei’s direct, adaptive guidance to the struggling learner made her associate it with her own oil-painting learning experience in college.

Mrs Pei described an instructor who just graduated from an art university in New York who taught oil painting in the college where she studied. For Mrs Pei, he brought new insights to her and made her understand that making art could express reflection on humans’ existence besides mere representation. However, she questioned his pedagogy saying, “He let us draw whatever we wanted without any direction. He said ‘People who learn art should have their own perspectives, instead of learning from teachers. Learning art is your own business. You should explore on your own’.” Without sufficient scaffolding, Mrs Pei struggled with the open-ended instruction, although she tried very hard to consult with the instructor. In Mrs Pei’s view, “At least, he could have given us direction or a clue (as a transition). For example, he might ask us to express loneliness by drawing a chair. We might learn how to express abstract feelings by drawing concrete things. By that, we can see how to adjust our previous learning experience which was more traditional, didactic” (IN_Pei_07/19/2010).

Mrs Pei’s reflection on that experience included two important points. The first is about giving direction to art learners. Mrs Pei thought that it is important to provide a clue or direction because it might help struggling learners to see a possibility which they can engage in. Otherwise,
they would lose confidence and even give up. Probably that’s why she initiated that unit for Chuang and did not hesitate in offering him technical clues, such as color mixing.

Second, the more teachers could connect students’ intention with their readiness, the better students could make meaning of why it was important to leave their learning comfort-zones. In Mrs Pei’s case, she did take the aesthetic quality of work as a persuasive goal and guided Chuang to realize the importance of paying attention to color use. But I am not sure whether she made a connection between that goal and Chuang’s intention. Perhaps that personalized mini-unit would be more engaging if Chung could explore the color concept along with his favorite robots.

**Instructional Adjustment in Mrs Pei’s Art Classes**

How did Mrs Pei apply art curricula she designed for all students, including those identified artistically talented? As for instructional approaches, in what way did she respond to inter-class and inter-individual differences discussed in the previous section? *How* Mrs Pei taught in art class is explored below.

Like Mrs Wen, Mrs Pei carried out a studio-orientated structure in both the general class and the artistically talented class. Typically, as discussed previously, Mrs Pei had students first play around essential concepts rather than immediately introducing techniques in detail. Students were expected to get the overall picture of their art project and envision a plan for making art with reference to essential concepts. Later, particular techniques, such as engraving, watercolor collage, or folding, were discussed and demonstrated for specific art projects to enable students to make a connection between concepts and techniques. Mrs Pei operated a similar instructional
structure of Demonstration-Explanation, Student-at-Work, Review-Reflection, and Clean-up in both classes.

Based on my observations, this structure allowed students to stay within a framework and work as artists producing, perceiving, and reflecting work. Art making is the core activity and perception and reflection grow out of and feed into the making. As for differentiation explored in this study, I wanted to know more if Mrs Pei accommodated students’ differences in the same structure as for most students. Key instructional approach adjustments were found in the Demonstration-Exploration and the Student-at-Work sessions.

**Adjusted visual information in the Demonstration-Explanation session.** Not surprisingly, visual information played an essential role in mediating students’ learning in visual art, such as examples, peer artwork, and established artists’ work. It could be copies of established artists’ work in the bulletin motivating students to think of art through expert eyes. It would be bright blue, yellow, and red water bottles replacing water drops from the ceiling on a rainy day. It might be Mrs Pei’s brown, furry shawls with delicate flowers on a chilly afternoon. They all made the classroom visually educative. What impressed me is the differentiated intent that was embedded in the visual information that I documented in the study.

**Transmitting processes in the general class.** As described earlier, Mrs Pei demonstrated examples and introduced concepts and techniques for general students’ references on the blackboard. Indeed, she provided more information on the blackboard in the general rather than the artistically talented class during the Demonstration-Explanation session. Table 9 is a compilation of photos of information on the blackboard for fifth-grade general students, such as examples of sketches with analytic lines and explanation and printmaking of various kinds of
lines. Accordingly, it initiated a process of transmission in which Mrs Pei defined, provided demonstration samples, and made the explanation of the process as clear and concrete as possible.

For instance, she provided a definition of print on the blackboard using templates made of various materials (gold, paper, wood, polystyrene, and foam board) to print figures. She explained that different print materials refer to different challenge levels which required different techniques. “It would be meaningful for students if they can try them out from the easier (such as paper) to the tougher (wood). It’s a unique domain in visual arts” (CO_Pei_04/08/2010). Perhaps students expanded their knowledge about printmaking and were also motivated to try out other printmaking materials in addition to the rubber materials they learned in class.

For sample demonstration and process explanation, Mrs Pei typically drew visual examples to facilitate her explanation of art concepts or techniques for students in the general class. For example, she highlighted an art element or shape, to guide students to observe their classmates’ gestures in detail. In particular, she used scale lines to analyze the face. She also drew a girl sitting and added “Observe shape.” The two examples in relation to shape also resonated with using geometric shapes to analyze the three different poses I described earlier. It implied that students attained the same concepts with different avenues (geometry and proportion) under Mrs Pei’s various instructional approaches.

Overall, the visual information, in my view, was like a navigational aid which students could use to determine “where they were” (to what extent they applied art concepts and techniques emphasized by Mrs Pei), whereas Mrs Pei used it to navigate “where they were going” and to stay on track with essential learning goals. It fulfilled Mrs Pei’s structured, transmission-orientated teaching for students in the general class.
### Table 9

**Information on the Blackboard for Students in Mrs. Pei’s General Class**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information on the Blackboard</th>
<th>Art Project</th>
<th>Demonstration Example</th>
<th>Process Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Body Sketch (Close Observation)</td>
<td>Three different poses (running, standing, and sitting)</td>
<td>Use geometric concepts (triangles) to analyze components of each pose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(03/25/2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human Body Sketch (Close Observation)</th>
<th>Top: Face with scale-lines and words “Shape of Face”</th>
<th>Use proportion-lines to guide students on portions of human body</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bottom: A frontal pose of a sitting girls (whole body) with words “Observe Shape”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(04/01/2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubber Print (Interplay of Black and White)</th>
<th>A paper print example at the center of the blackboard</th>
<th>Definition of print: Use templates made of various materials (gold, paper, wood) to print figures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

(04/08/2010)

(continued)
Table 9 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information on the Blackboard</th>
<th>Art Project</th>
<th>Demonstration Example</th>
<th>Process Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rubber Print (Interplay of Black and White)</td>
<td>• Three print paintings made by previous students at the top of the blackboard</td>
<td>• Color in print painting: black, gray, and white</td>
<td>• Make different line shapes (straight, curly, jagged)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• An example of a sunflower in sunshine</td>
<td>• Make various loose-and-tight types of lines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(05/13/2010)

*Dynamic scaffolding in the artistically talented class.* The salient visual information in the artistically talented class was the artwork by the students’ peers discussed under Mrs Pei’s guidance. I observed that Mrs Pei examined each student’s work before the afternoon class to select those which did or didn’t satisfy the concepts or techniques she utilized. Those selected became material for discussion in the Demonstration-Explanation session and were used as scaffolding through which students learned from each other.

In the Paper Sculpture project, Mrs Pei chose five students’ works displayed on the blackboard to see what they could learn from them (see Figure 34). The following scenario illustrates the discussion:
Project: Paper Sculpture—Learn from each other
03/11/2010, Sunny
(Explanation-Demonstration)
The class begins with an introduction to the fifth-grade artistically talented students. After that, Mrs Pei led a discussion of last week’s homework assignment and then moved to the day’s project, Paper Sculpture. She walked around and selected five works of art which she had examined before class and displayed them on the blackboard.

S 1: They all look beautiful!

Mrs Pei: Why do you think so, Wang?

Wang: It’s colorful…um…I just feel in that way.

Mrs Pei: That’s fine. Do you know why I display these five works of art? (Silence for about one minute.)

S 2: I feel the three works on the left are more 3-dimensional than the ones on the right.

Mrs Pei: Right! You get my point so quickly. Let’s see what we can learn from them. As you just said, they look different in terms of 3-dimensional feeling. (The first work on the left) Zhe finished up very quickly. I asked him, “What do you think you can improve so that the work would be more 3-dimensional?”

Zhe: I found heights (such as mountains, rivers, or trees) were too similar.

Mrs Pei: Right! Since we are doing paper sculpture, we are not restricted to a 2-dimensional world. As you can see the work on the right, it’s too flat. It doesn’t
show interest in presenting multiple layers in a picture. (Turning back to Zhe’s work.) Finally, Zhe came up with an idea and made a bird with two paper springs. It not only enriches layers in the picture, but also makes it fun for viewers (since the springs can make the bird bounce).

In addition, what we can learn from Mi’s work (the second on the left) is to stretch vehicles to a frame. The dazzling red flower stretches to the frame, which makes us extend our feelings, our imagination beyond the whole rectangular picture. It’s an excellent technique.

(CO_Pei_03/11/2010)

The above scene showed what students could learn from Zhe’s work with Mrs Pei’s explanation. Her guidance, in my view, modeled how an artist gains perceptive insights by reflective thinking to enhance the quality of artwork. Also students did apply their classmate’s advanced techniques to their own artwork. For example, inspired by Zhe’s idea, a girl added stretched black branches and a red ladybug “flying into” a forest. The visual information made by peers and selected by Mrs Pei provided an avenue for artistically talented students seeking higher-level learning experiences. Mrs Pei explained:

Learning art, in my view, is a unstated process in some ways. It requires introspective thinking to be aware of what stages you are in. It also needs interactions with other artists so that you get to know what you can commit in advance. Grouping those talented students in a class might be a good way to make the implicit process explicit for them. It’s because they have lots of examples [in terms of classmates’ art learning conditions]. They get opportunities to modify by referring to others. They can learn from each other.

(IN_Pei_07/29/2010)

**Station work as self-directed pacing in the Student-at-Work session.** With human resources, teachers might set several work stations and more easily organize a dynamic class while student needs are attended to by a flexible interaction, as in Mrs Wen’s case. As for students, they gain the ownership of directing learning pathways in the stationary work based on self-evaluated learning pace.

Mrs Pei invited Mr Tai, an elementary school art teacher who was experienced in printmaking and had helped during her teaching for the fifth-grade artistically talented students,
to her class. I noted that Mr Tai divided the students into three groups according to their level of progress. The first group was ready for print work so that they were allowed to go to a print studio; the second group had printed their works previously but they needed them to be revised for better visual effects; the third group hadn’t yet finished engraving plates and had to work on them based on Mr Tai’s observations. In this case, Mrs Pei played as an instructor’s assistant helping Mrs Tai organize the three groups with different needs in the same time slot (CO_Pei_06/24/2010).

Mr Tai worked with the first group in the print studio and taught them how to fill ink in templates they made and operate a print machine. Mrs Pei documented the learning process by taking pictures and asked the first group to document their print paintings in a drying rack for the graduation art show. Mrs Pei also accompanied the second and third group in the classroom and worked individually with two students, Chuang and Rou, from the third group. Mrs Pei checked to see if Chuang had engraved lines delicately to make them and the colors clear in his printing, and, at the same time, reminded Rou to speed up her work and spend less time talking to her classmates.

As VanTassel-Baska and Stambaugh (2006) suggest, teachers can differentiate art curriculum by utilizing community mentors and artists for specialized classes. By doing so, gifted young artists can elevate their work to higher levels of interpretation and technical skills. Consequently, Mr Tai’s participation not only allowed Mrs Pei to work with students whom she regarded as struggling learners, but he also provided fresh learning insights for the artistically talented students.
Personalized guidance toward attuned cultivation. There was an interactive environment between Mrs Pei and students in the Student-at-Work session. Mrs Pei worked on their artwork and they received suggestions at overcoming specific problems. When students came to Mrs Pei, they took their work and indicated what they intended to express through lines, colors, shapes, and so on. Mrs Pei then worked with them to express their ideas explicitly and aesthetically in terms of forms and themes. The “dual coming” resulted in attuned cultivation, in which Mrs Pei and students listened to each other and she was able to personalize instruction with multifaceted tasks that accommodated individual needs.

I portray the attuned cultivation by discussing Mrs Pei’s guidance to the following three fifth-grade artistically talented students who had relative strengths in the art field.

The gap between talking and making: Wang’s art learning. Wang, a student whom Mrs Pei identified as a struggling learner in the artistically talented program, attracted my attention because of his friendly nature. Although he was not as good as his classmates at art making, he actively joined discussions in the Demonstration-Explanation session. He spoke on the art concepts that Mrs Pei mentioned when she guided students to appreciate recognized artists’ work. He volunteered to try out new techniques in front of the class so that Mrs Pei might get a sense of students’ understanding of her explanations.

However, Wang seemed to struggle with applying art concepts to his own art making. Mrs Pei had a method for Wang to follow directly. In the Paper Sculpture project, Wang was making a dragon stretched onto a frame. In Mrs Pei’s view, the dragon looked too flat and said, “Wang, how do you make this dragon more three-dimensional?” His looked confused but replied, “I can put foam stickers under the dragon so that it sorts of pops-up from the work.” “It would be,” Mrs Pei urged him, “But how about cutting some triangles on the dragon’s body to form its
scales and lifting (one of the techniques Mrs Pei taught) them?” Simultaneously she demonstrated how to do it (CO_Pei_03/11/2010).

The following scenario shows how Mrs Pei adjusted her instructional approach for Wang from direct demonstration to step-by-step guidance:

*Project: Watercolor—Differentiate subtle differences of color in a sky*  
04/08/2010, Cloudy  
(Student-at-Work)  

2:34pm Mrs Pei notices Wang is using a single, light-blue color for the sky in his work. She walks to Wang and asks him to think about what types of skies he has seen. The boy shares his experience on looking at skies at noon, at sunset, before a thunderstorm, and during a typhoon. He describes he saw gray, chaotic, speedy clouds before a typhoon. Mrs Pei replies, “You have such good observation. Why not express them in your work? Suppose you are going to draw a sunny sky. Think about different colors in it. Try to discern subtle differences of colors in a sunny sky.”

Although Mrs Pei tried to awaken Wang’s perception of skies, his facial expression showed that he didn’t really know how to do it at that moment. A girl sat by him and commented, “Wang’s hands are always unable to follow his mouth.” But Mrs Pei left him alone and said, “Do whatever you know. Let’s see what we can do later.” After about ten minutes, Mrs Pei returned to Wang:

2:45pm Mrs Pei comments, “Ok. Now I get to know what we can work on in advance. You see you did put different colors in the sky. But they seem not to fit very well. Here is a block of blue, there a block of purple. What we can do is to brush a layer of water. Before it dries, put blue color first and then add purple. You might find they can mix together more aesthetically.”  
(CO_Pei_04/08/2010)

As we can see, Mrs Pei sensitized Wang’s perceptions before intervening with techniques. It could allow Wang to digest Mrs Pei’s “perceptual guidance” and looked for appropriate skills he learned to present his understanding in art making. Mrs Pei’s “technical guidance” adaptively provided a scaffold to Wang so that expressiveness in his work could reach a better
aesthetic quality. Mrs Pei played the role of facilitator by reducing the gap between Wang’s talking (mouth) and making (hands) by scaffolding.

A superior learner who needs to be challenged: Zhe’s precocious techniques. When I first entered Mrs Pei’s classroom, she described Zhe as “one whose aesthetic sensitivity is best in this class” (CO_Pei_03/11/2010). As shown earlier, Zhe’s work was recognized as an example or benchmark which Mrs Pei used in her peer-learning process. Zhe is such a superior learner who joined a studio outside school and presented his talented techniques in art making. I found he enjoyed Mrs Pei’s art class very much. For instance, in the Paper Sculpture project, Zhe made a bird, crosses, trees, rivers, and mountains using colored paper and carefully arranged them from near to distant, from top to bottom, from high to low. His work clearly exhibited the layer-making concept emphasized in Mrs Pei’s explanation. He was good at applying art concepts taught by Mrs Pei into his creations. In the work process, he actively came to Mrs Pei and consulted her on turning a tree made by him more vivid.

Figure 35. Zhe’s paper sculpture work with multiple layers.

Based on my observations, Zhe’s activeness and interest in art motivated him to look for more challenges in Mrs Pei’s class. At the same time Mrs Pei’s praise and responsiveness reinforced his confidence and encouraged him to look and plan things beyond his comfort zone.
For instance, in the discussion on the *Rhythm of Images* assignment, Mrs Pei explained to the class that Zhe excelled in applying Kandinsky’s technique into his own art making and arranged lines and color blocks in his work in two to three directions instead of randomly (see Figure 36). As such his work looked rhythmic rather than chaotic. However, she told Zhe, “You definitely did a good job. You skillfully adapted Kandinsky’s method. This is good. We don’t want to copy a master’s work thoughtlessly. Next time, I would like to see more of your own ideas, your creativity” (CO_Pei_03/25/2010).

Actually, Mrs Pei expected Zhe to not only utilize accomplished artists’ concepts and skills, but also for him to pay more attention to his own uniqueness and infuse it into art making. She encouraged Zhe to think creatively, instead of just focusing on improving his skills. As Mrs Pei told me, some artistically talented students continually looked for advanced learning in an art studio outside school so as to master art techniques, receive more individual guidance, and have chances at participating in art contests to show their progress. “The outcome-orientated learning might allow parents and students see their progress immediately,” Mrs Pei added, “but unfortunately it conflicts with our goal of motivating kids’ interests in art without ‘over’ intervention” (CO_Pei_04/29/2010). Mrs Pei was keen to confront such skill-based, outcome-orientated ideology, but seemed to face a problem of how to challenge students by providing ample art making experiences in her class.
Figure 36. Zhe’s work as inspired by Kandinsky.

**Difference for difference’s sake? Yuan’s creative style.** Yuan revealed her creative side through her artwork. Compared with most students who visualized “positive” scenarios like sunshine, clean water, and flowers blooming in the Paper Sculpture project (A Sound from Nature) Yuan displayed reflective thoughts in her artwork. She made a white skull with dark-brown water spouting through its mouth and polluting rivers, gardens, and so forth. Human figures were swimming in the polluted water illustrating how pollution affected people’s life. I heard a visitor to the local museum where Yuan’s work was exhibited during summer break remark to Mrs Pei, “Although this work (Zhe) looks more skillful and smooth, I like that one (Yuan’s) much better. I can feel that the work really makes me think about pollution’s effects. It is very creative!” Mrs Pei replied, “I agree with you. She always thinks differently from her peers. That’s her strength” (CO_Pei_08/28/2010). How did Mrs Pei respond to a student whose creativity is more pronounced than her art techniques?

For the Watercolor project, Yuan drew a chrysanthemum across the picture from the right-bottom to the top and a ladder with human figures stepping from the left-bottom to the chrysanthemum. Yuan showed it to Mrs Pei who commented that “It looks uneven. I mean your flower looks very slender since you drew such a long stem and it needs details. In contrast, the
human figures look so small we couldn’t even recognize what they are, although you drew them in detail.” Before Mrs Pei could comment further, Yuan interrupted, “But I think it is ok. The chrysanthemum lacks detail because it is going to disappear due to pollution by humans. And human figures are in detail showing their hideous facial expressions and body movements to portray their evil nature.”

My impression was that Mrs Pei’s guidance focused on aesthetic composition whereas Yuan seemed to insist on creative expressiveness in her work. Was Mrs Pei’s guidance really appropriate for Yuan? How did they negotiate with each other and achieve “adaptive” guidance? Mr Pei gave me a smile. Their conversation had to stop since there were five or six students waiting in line, but they continued their discussion during recess. Although I was unable to listen to their conversation, I noticed that Yuan added a couple more chrysanthemums on the right side of the work and made them look withered with shriveled leaves and falling petals. She also drew different-sized human figures that were crying, angry, or with hideous facial expressions. It looked like that Yuan kept to her creative ideas but also integrated Mrs Pei’s aesthetic perspectives (CO_Pei_04/01/2010).

Afterwards, Mrs Pei and I discussed Yuan’s situation. She said, “You know sometimes I feel that artistically talented students might look for difference for difference’s sake. Ann might be that way. I do appreciate and encourage students’ creativity. But without sufficient experience or knowledge and techniques, I wonder if they could really generate insights in art” (CO_Pei_04/01/2010). Mrs Pei believed that looking for alternatives in art should be based on well-disciplined training. Yuan’s seeking creative expressiveness while having little attention on aesthetic principles somehow challenged Mrs Pei’s pedagogical beliefs.
Hurwitz and Day (2007) note that artistically-talented students might have their own learning agendas. When a student is praised for the ability to draw in a creative fashion, why should flattering responses be relinquished for new and unknown realms of expression? It is a “difficult, but necessary, task of the teacher to make a new material, process, or idea so challenging that the student will be willing to suspend the results that have earned him or her acclaim” (Hurwitz & Day, 2007, p. 96). Therefore, the interactive structure—Yuan coming to Mrs Pei and vice versa—left a negotiated space which allowed Mrs Pei to be attuned to Yuan’s need. Ann helped Mrs Pei make sense of creative ideas in the context of her art making, while Mrs Pei provided technically orientated suggestions to enhance the aesthetic quality of Yuan’s work.

A Portrait of Mrs Pei’s Differentiated Art Classes

Mrs Pei’s operational curriculum—what and how she taught in art class—provided insights on how art teachers attune to the diverse art-learning needs of students with regard to “developmental appropriateness,” a term she emphasized during our interview. Developmental appropriateness in Mrs Pei’s classroom is akin to growing plants (see Figure 37). The plants are rooted into the ground, not on the surface, and thrive depending on the various stimuli which nurture and value the capacity of self-cultivation.
What does adaptive guidance or a responsive context look like in Mrs Pei’s art class? Let me answer by returning to the research questions I explored for this study.

**Curricular modification.** The aim of the first set of what questions is to understand how Mrs Pei treated the diversity of students’ art learning in terms of curriculum design: What art curricula did she design for all students, including the artistically talented? In designing art curricula, what were her considerations? Did she modify curricula to make art learning more accessible for diverse learners?

As noted before, Mrs Pei taught both the fifth-grade general and artistically talented classes in the same semester. She encountered two layers of student differences: (a) inter-class difference between the two general and the talented classes, and (b) within-class difference in the two settings. I use them as a framework to answer and discuss the complexity of curricular modification in Mrs Pei’s art class.

**Whose learning system? Inter-class differences.** Mrs Pei differentiated the organization, product, and concept of art projects for both the general and artistically talented classes. She regarded students’ art learning experiences in the school context as a basis for designing
differentiated art curricula. She was particularly concerned with whether students received systematic training by teachers who had art backgrounds.

Mrs Pei once asked the fifth-grade students in the general class if they had art classes during the first to fourth grade. “You know what? There were just five to six students who raised their hands, and even they pointed out that sometimes their teachers skipped art classes and taught other academic subjects instead” (CO_Pei_04/08/2010). On that basis, she thought it was more appropriate to provide them introductory-level art instruction.

Specifically, Mrs Pei drew on introductory, exploratory levels of concepts, media, and techniques, such as developing intensive observation abilities by sketching their peers’ gestures, composing art elements, and the safe and proper use of engravers. Students were taught the fundamentals of art forms, media, and techniques in sequence before moving to higher skill levels and artistic expression. For instance, the sequential, cumulative organization of the Rubber Print project could be categorized as “child craft” (Bresler, 2002). Mrs Pei not only developed students’ artistic perceptions through discerning lines, colors and geometric forms, but also engaged them in the theme (studying classmates’ gestures and imagining a background for the impressive gestures they drew) which allowed self-expression.

In contrast, Mrs Pei modified the curriculum for students in the artistically talented fifth-grade class who had received intensive and structured art training since their third grade. In line with Bresler’s (2002) four types of school art, the interrelated organization of art projects with a wide range of media includes child art and fine art. In the Watercolor Collage project, Mrs Pei had the students discuss the fine texture, techniques, and the rich aesthetic elements in a well-known artist’s work and reflect on what makes it innovative (fine art). The shaping of hand-made tissue papers and infusing them in watercolor work was to express students’ inner feelings (child
art). Eventually the work created by those emerging artists was exhibited in a local museum and could probably help clarify viewers’ mind through its thoughtful, aesthetic watercolor infusion and become a kind of art for children.

Mrs Pei’s artistically talented students went through a series of authentic art making and exploration. It responded to their need to examine the knowledge, values, experiences, and feelings derived from life and translating them into unique and meaningful portrayals and explanations of their existence (Seeley, 2004). One example was Tong’s “Quest of Hope.” Based on Mrs Pei’s description, Tong used three layers of collage to aesthetically present a spirit of human inquiry into hope.

Yet in examining Mrs Pei’s curricular modifications on the inter-class differences between the two classes, several issues emerge. As Wilson (2005) claimed, there are three visual cultural sites from which children learn art. The first is the conventional art classroom in a school where teachers direct students’ art-making. Mrs Pei’s main concern for students’ art training in River School fits this category. I asked Mrs Pei about her concerns on training students based on the learning plan. She explained:

I felt that in Taiwan children get little visual stimulation. It’s rare that they have paintings at home. What they see is terrible. Look! Don’t you feel buildings look chaotic, not in harmony? The new jostling with the old. Then, new buildings don’t integrate in the old district very well. As you know, excellent architects know how to use local materials for making buildings. They respect local culture and know how to refine their work at the same time. (IN_Pei_01/05/2011)

Mrs Pei had her own criteria to judge which visuals are worth observing and learning from. She criticized the environment which seemed not to provide good examples to reflect the aesthetic principle, such as harmony. Therefore, she conveyed a strong sense of commitment to guide students to see “beauty” through her art learning techniques.
However, if she believed that art-making aims to make a connection between students and their life and environment, why did she not incorporate their learning experiences beyond the school classroom? Based on Wilson (2005), there are two other pedagogical sites that are needed to be considered: (a) informal spaces outside of and beyond classrooms where students construct their own visual cultural texts and consume such texts made by others; and (b) a site between school classrooms and students’ self-initiated visual cultural spaces—where adults and kids collaborate in making connections and interpreting webs of relationships among the images that students make for themselves and those that adults ask them to make (p. 18). In my observations, I didn’t really see Mrs Pei respond to the latter two pedagogical sites where students learn “informally” about art.

Mrs Pei’s systematic art learning program seemed to enable her to draw a line between the two classes. During a lunch, I heard the four art teachers talk about identification of artistically talented students in that semester. Mrs Pei said,

A girl in the fifth-grade general class expects to join our artistically talented program if she gets accepted. I teach her this year. I know she is talented since she has a very good color sense. But I wonder if she is qualified to enroll in our program at this time. As you can see, the fifth-grade students in my talented class receive very systematic training under my guidance. Now they kind of are applying their learning into art creation for an upcoming graduation art show. Once that girl gets into our program, what can I do for her? Can she catch up with the other classmates since she was not in our training program? (IN_Pei_06/03/2010)

I was surprised at Mrs Pei’s view. On the one hand, I can sympathize with her about the student having difficulty in integrating into the fifth-grade artistically talented class. By enrolling in this program, she was expected to join the graduation class art show that was documented and displayed from their third to sixth grade. The new student might not be ready for that yet. On the other hand, if differentiated learning experience aims to optimize students’ potential through their interests and relative strength areas, why is there no inherent flexibility in modifying the
systematic learning plan to meet that student’s need? This complicated boundary between the general and talented classes that shapes art teacher’s pedagogic considerations will be discussed further in the final chapter.

**Issue-based art creation as attentive living curriculum for students in the artistically talented class.** The other significant point on inter-class difference is the issue-based art creation that Mrs Pei designed for the fifth-grade students in the talented class. The issue-based art-making about environmental protection echoes the social-reconstruction oriented curriculum for the gifted (Clark & Zimmerman, 2004; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2006). The objective of art-making is to think through problems so as to engage with the community and social issues. Such a purpose foregrounds inquiry, learning, and the integration of disciplines, with art as a tool for investigation, synthesis, and representation (Seildel et al, 2009). Gude (2007) suggested an “attentive living” art curriculum:

> Attuning students to vitally experiencing everyday life should be a goal of any systematic art education. Students will learn to notice and to shape the world around them. Whether creating a community garden, setting the table, arranging tools in a garage, or remarking on the architecture in their home towns, students will understand that artistic thinking is not separate from daily life, but rather can inform and enrich every aspect of one’s life. Attentive Living curriculum can take many forms, including such diverse areas as the study of nature, design studies, household arts, traditional crafts, and built-environment curriculums. (p. 10)

Indeed, in issue-based art creation, students in Mrs Pei’s artistically talented class experienced an “attentive living curriculum” (Gude, 2007) where they investigated the issues of water pollution, global warming, recycling, and nature agriculture. With her guidance, they appreciated the impact of global warming on their future by watching and discussing a documentary. They further generated environment-friendly ideas that could be implemented in daily life, and thereby envisioned a new world with their watercolor work. In their graduation art show, they even designed a poster entitled “Genesis” (see Figure 38). They made a visual
contrast between a polluted world and an eco-world to encourage people to reflect on what they should do.

Figure 38. “Genesis,” a poster by students in Mrs Pei’s artistically talented class.

Why did Mrs Pei design art projects related to environmental protection issues? In fact this was derived from Mrs Pei’s observations on students’ characteristics. She said,

As you know, they (artistically talented students) receive a lot of resources from parents and schools. I just feel they take them for granted too easily. Through studying the environmental protection issue, I want them to reflect on that attitude and learn to cherish what they get from others in daily life. They also can learn how to make art by using recycled materials, such as metal wires they used in a previous project. In exploring it, they can know that an artist might have the power to lead themselves and others to see the world differently. (IN_Pei_01052011)

Mrs Pei’s statement reveals that she would like to inculcate positive values on environmental issues to her students through examples such as using recycled vehicles in their projects. It was also her intention to guide those potential future artists to think about how art can make a difference in the world. As suggested by Kaplan (1986), orientating differentiated curriculum towards societal issues is a way of making gifted students more aware of their responsibilities and obligations. The issue-based art projects imply that Mrs Pei’s viewed the gifted/talented in the context of social responsibilities.
How did those talented students perceive the issue-based art projects? Did they really feel that their artwork could make a difference to the environment? As shown earlier, students described how they recycled in their daily life. As they collected recycled cans, candles, boxes and so on from time to time, they used them as materials in their art creations. Yet, Mrs Pei told me,

After finishing up artwork for the upcoming graduation art show, Zhe suddenly said, “In fact the whole thing is false. We didn’t really do environmental things in our classroom. Our classroom teacher once conceded, “You see. You guys still mindlessly throw papers into a non-recycled trash can.” I felt frustrated when I heard what Zhe told me. It made me reflect on my own teaching. Was I successful in teaching them to value things? I might need to adjust my approach in wanting them to engage in those kinds of issues in their art projects. (IN_Pei_01/05/2011)

In my view, maybe it was good that Mrs Pei guided students to reflect on the way artwork can implicitly or explicitly influence people to think and act. Gifted learners typically have an affinity for making meaning and connections (VanTassel Baska, 2004). This trait challenges teachers to provide appropriate guidance in disseminating knowledge and generating new ideas for creatively synthesizing existing perspectives.

**Differentiation and fairness: Within-class differences.** Based on my observations, Mrs Pei’s differentiating for Chuang is a clear example of modifying the curriculum for within-class difference. As shown, Mrs Pei raised leading questions to direct Chuang and asked him to add a visual narrative line. She then carefully initiated a group discussion for Chuang where she guided him in aesthetically composing art elements. When she noticed that Chuang did not seem to understand what she was trying to say, she designed an individual mini-unit to enable him to explore how to vividly represent objects with colors.

Mrs Pei used the above strategies to modify the curriculum in response to Chuang’s needs. She tried to make a connection between Chuang’s readiness and the aesthetic principles
she expected him to adopt. Yet, Chuang didn’t really make sense of Mrs Pei’s teaching. I noticed that he waited for Mrs Pei’s direction on what to add or modify in his work rather than explore the color concept on his own. The issue here is whether Mrs Pei could “psychologize” (Dewey, 1956/1990) curricula and motivate Chuang to engage in an interactive zone between his readiness and subject-matter’s discipline. Dewey (1956/1990) reminds us,

[W]hat concerns him, as teacher, is the ways in which that subject may become a part of experience; what there is in the child’s present that is usable with reference to it; how such elements are to be used; how his own knowledge of the subject-matter may assist in interpreting the child’s needs and doings, and determine the medium in which the child should be placed in order that this growth may be properly directed. (p.23)

What should Mrs Pei do to make the subject part of Chuang’s experience? One way is to consider Chuang’s interests. According to Tomlinson (2003), interest refers to topics or pursuits that evoke curiosity and passion in a learner. It invites students to invest their time and energy in the pursuit of knowledge, understanding, and skills. As discussed, Chuang could engage in exploring the color concept by studying how animators used color in designing robots (one of his favorite objects) in a movie. Mrs Pei could guide him in figuring out how an animator’s design connects with aesthetic principles. Then Chuang could apply or even modify that principle into his own artwork. In this way, his interest and artistic sensitivity would be tapped and deepened.

Not only did Mrs Pei have to make connections in terms of learning content, she also had to take care of the learning process. What surprised Mrs Pei and me was Chuang’s response. As Mrs Pei described,

You know what? I got a call from Chuang’s mother a few days ago. She said Chuang did not feel comfortable. He thought I treated him unfairly. He didn’t like to do that mini-unit I designed for him in class. He wondered why he had to do things different from his classmates. (IN_Pei_07/19/2010)

Chuang looked upon Mrs Pei’s attempt at differentiation as giving him an unfair advantage since he was singled out for special treatment to overcome his weakness. Chung was
uncomfortable with that as what he wanted was a sense of belonging when learning something different. The subtle-affect dimension of a differentiated classroom has been discussed (Tomlinson, 2003; Renzulli & Reis, 2008). Differentiation focuses on the needs of students collectively as well as individually. Specifically, Tomlinson (2003) said the learner in a differentiated classroom needs assurance that: (a) what I learn is useful to me now; (b) I understand how this place operates and what is expected of me here; (c) I know what quality looks like here and how to achieve it; and (e) there is dependable support for my journey here (p. 18).

In my view, the station work in the Acrylic Print project provided a supportive and dynamic environment that motivated Chuang to work at his own pace and level of readiness without being isolated from the class. With Mr Tai’s participation, the class structure functioned through three work stations along the printmaking process. Students in Mrs Pei’s artistically talented class got a general picture of what they were required to do and process it at their learning pace. Under Mrs Pei’s supervision, student needs were fulfilled as she worked with them individually. In the flexible class’s dynamics and environment, individual quests were accepted and respected in the process of integration. As such, I saw Chung engaged in modifying and elaborating his work under Mrs Pei’s guidance (first station), consulting Mr Tai in the printmaking studio about his draft, and then modifying it again (second station). Finally, he was excited at the chance to use the printmaking machine and complete his work (third station). In this case, the individualized curriculum is supported in a flexible and dynamic class structure and students are empowered to learn individually as well as collectively.
Instructional adjustment. The second set of how research questions investigated in Mrs Pei’s art class included: How did Mrs Pei implement art curricula designed for all students? Did she pay attention to student needs and adjust instructional approaches? If so how? What conflicts, challenges, and compromises did she face? By examining how Mrs Pei taught in art class, I got to know her instructional adjustment in response to inter- and within-class differences in both the general and artistically talented classes.

Instructional approaches orientated to the complexity of art concepts: Inter-class differences. Mrs Pei operated a similar studio-orientated structure in both the general and artistically talented classes. It reflected the three elements of perception, production, and reflection identified in Winner’s (1993) ARTS PROPEL. Specifically, the development of artistic perception and technical analysis was achieved through Mrs Pei’s guidance to students as they reviewed the art work of their peers and accomplished artists in the Demonstration-Explanation session. For instance, during a discussion on an earlier work by a student Mrs Pei guided her students in the general class to discern the subtle qualities of black and white. Students were helped in deepening their aesthetic perceptions of the expressions of their peers and seeing the link between their work and that of the others. Students could experience the flexible purposing (Dewey, 1934) - the flexible manipulation of media along with purposeful making - when they worked with her to elaborate on or alter their initial ideas in the Student-at-Work session. Their productions were inspired by the techniques and aesthetic principles of composition when they put their ideas into visual form. For instance, when Zhe’s paper sculpture looked flat Mrs Pei guided him in thinking of ways to enhance its visual quality. He eventually figured out how to use paper springs to enrich the visual layers of the work which also was a source of amusement for viewers! In the Review-Reflection session, Mrs Pei discussed the
problems some students encountered. They got a chance to think back and relook their work processes and were shown how to assess their work in terms of personal goals and standards of excellence set by Mrs Pei.

For the similar class structures, Mrs Pei adjusted her instructional approaches and took into consideration the students’ readiness (e.g. amount of art learning experience in school, knowledge of art vocabulary) and the complexity of art concepts. The printmaking project which both the general and the talented classes worked on is an example. For the former, Mrs Pei got students to work on the Rubber Print project since the material used could be more easily shaped by beginners. As mentioned earlier, based on the Grade 1-9 Curriculum Guideline’s competency indicators, the art concepts in the Rubber Print project are at the introductory, rudimentary learning level. In particular, the examples and supporting information were Mrs Pei’s way of transmitting important concepts and skills for students in the general class. The information somehow fitted with Mrs Pei’s structured activities in the step-by-step guide in the Rubber Print project. The didactic teaching style is teacher-centered pedagogical orientation (Bresler, 1994). Mrs Pei followed what was presented through the sequence, level of difficulty, frequency, and level of intensity stages.

On the other hand, students in the talented class conducted the Acrylics Print project. According to Mrs Pei, they were already familiar with using rubber materials and potatoes to produce printmaking. Acrylic, a material that requires skillful manipulation of engraved pins, would challenge these students. Instead of inking by rollers, students learned to use the printmaking machine. The theme and art concepts of the Acrylics Print project are applied in the intermediate and advanced learning stages based on the competence indicators. The higher-order cognitive pedagogical orientation (Bresler, 1994) was employed in the artistically talented class.
Compared with providing information as for the general students, peer work in this case was typically used in the Demonstration-Explanation session and facilitated talented students to figure out methods of using techniques or concepts highlighted by Mrs Pei.

Students in Mrs Pei’s talented class seemed to be involved in dynamic scaffolding which helped them improve their artistic skills or the quality of expression through peer learning. As Chen (2008) noted in his study of an art project in a K-1 class, young children learned from each other and extended the scope and depth of exploration when they were inspired or taught by superior learners within or across study groups. In a mix-aged group, a more talented kindergartener came up with the idea of representing a kiln by using materials in the classroom, such as wooden blocks, paperclips, and clay. His idea interested other group members. The teacher guided first graders in making a plan for realizing the kindergartener’s idea. The kindergartener would learn from the first graders about how to arrange and plan for presenting ideas, while the first graders learnt how to generate creative ideas for artwork from him.

Peer learning took place in Mrs Pei’s artistically talented class, when she guided students to discuss their artwork. According to Mrs Pei, students could make senses of complex art concepts by looking at their peers’ work as well as thinking of their own. Talented students could gain direct learning opportunities when there are others at similar learning levels or more advanced so that positive synergy would be attained from a peer group of highly motivated students (Burney, 2008). As described earlier, Mrs Pei displayed five selected students’ artwork to generate discussion on the techniques and concepts of making multiple visual layers in the Paper Sculpture project. Inspired by Zhe’s skill a student added stretched branches and a ladybug “flying into” her artwork. In return, Zhe, the superior learner, modified his work and made trees that had delicate textures thereby expanding the concept and his art work.
Attuning to individual needs: Within-class differences in the artistically talented class.

The other significant instructional adjustment that took into consideration individual students’ diverse levels, styles, and backgrounds was Mrs Pei’s personalized guidance to the four talented students discussed previously. According to Clasen and Clasen (2003), “Most mentorships involving the gifted and talented are one-on-one, the relationship most supportive for providing specialized, individual attention to a protégé’s development” (p. 255). The dual educative interaction between Mrs Pei and her students seemed to develop a relationship of apprentice-mentorship which was attuned to their unique needs in art learning. In line with the roles of a mentor as proposed by Clasen and Clasen, I observed Mrs Pei’s multiple academic relationships with talented students. It demonstrated her efforts at instruction adjustment, although it was challenging for her to fulfill talented individual students’ needs.

For Mrs Pei, Chuang needed to be motivated in making sense of fundamental concepts for composing art elements aesthetically. Mrs Pei seemed to play a role of an expert (Clasen & Clasen, 2003) who designed special learning opportunities (e.g. the mini-unit on color mixing) and introduced Chuang to an expert’s view of composition in the field. What might challenge Mrs Pei was to make a connection between Chuang’s interest and learning motivation. This has been discussed earlier.

As Mrs Pei noted, “Wang is smart. He is good at academic learning but has little art sense.” So although his intellectual ability made him understand art concepts easily, he may have difficulty in practical applications. His mind was faster than his hands. He needed to connect between acquired art concepts and hands-on creating, and Mrs Pei was his guide (Clasen & Clasen, 2003). She knew his obstacles in reaching goals and demonstrated the path to success, while allowing for his individual exploration on linking perception to production.
According to Hurwitz and Day (2001) and Sabol (2006), every artistically talented child has a mental and physical strengths and weakness profile that is a combination of various abilities as well as a profile of interests and learning styles that make the child a unique individual. Thus, Wang’s talent might not flourish in an art class that emphasizes art-making rather than other visual art activities. This provides scope for educators to explore ways to differentiate the art curriculum in response to the diverse attributes of artistically talented students.

For Zhe who has precocious skills and good aesthetic sensitivity, Mrs Pei might be like a tutor (Clasen & Clasen, 2003). She helped him push the boundaries of knowledge and skills he learned in studios outside school and coached him into introducing more imaginative qualities in his work. What Zhe needed was a connection between his external and inside-classroom learning experiences. The external art studio’s influence on Zhe’s artistic development seemed to challenge Mrs Pei. However, Winner (1996), Wilson (1995), and Sabol (2006) suggest that many students exhibit their art talents in activities outside the classroom and art teachers are often unaware of their students’ strength of expression there. Seidel et al. (2009) justify the teaching of arts externally rather than relying solely on schools. They argue that school programs provide limited access and time allocated to art works, while out-of-school arts programs are not constrained by school schedules. The alternative is to have informal learning arrangements which treat learners as young colleagues rather than students to be managed. Out-of-school sites allow for adult artists’ practice, and students can thus more easily see the link between what they and professional artists do. And arts programs outside of schools could routinely offer genuine linkages to contemporary and personalized content that are less constrained by school systems.
Therefore, it is worthwhile to investigate why and in what way art learning outside of schools can attract talented student looking for additional challenges.

Yuan had a unique art background. According to Mrs Pei, “One of her parents is an art specialist who is better at creative ideas than in manipulative art-making. The parents value Yuan’s original ideas and always encourage her to think and do things differently” (IN_Pei_01052011). Perhaps that was why Mrs Pei sometimes thought that she looked for differences for the sake of being different but neglected basic aesthetic principles. A connection between her personal creative art style and the skills of expressive artistry is what Yuan needs. Mrs Pei became Yuan’s advisor (Clasen & Clasen, 2003) on her expectations and possibilities and introduced Yuan to the values and critical aspects in art. Mrs Pei’s guidance might enable Yuan to expand her art visions without abandoning her unique attributes.

Taken together, Mrs Pei played various roles as a mentor who differentiated instruction to accommodate each circumstance’s learning needs. Mrs Pei differentiated her roles in order to make various connections in the differentiated classroom. Indeed, in attending to the various connections derived from talented students’ learning profiles and challenges, Mrs Pei’s teaching method reflected the essence of differentiation.

This section illustrates Mrs Pei’s differentiated art class in terms of the inter-class and inter-individual differences she encountered in both the general and talented classes. I describe her binary curriculum design along with the studio-orientated instruction structure in Figure 39. Although the complex line between the general and the talented classes impacted Mrs Pei’s implementation of differentiation, the concept of appropriate development still attracted me. It connected with Mrs Pei’s interest in Natural Agriculture.
In an interview, Mrs Pei specifically articulated two essential concepts of Natural Agriculture in relation to her pedagogy. First, “appropriate facilitation results in self-cultivation which (metaphorically) roots in the ground. It’s like Natural Agriculture plants seeking nutrition deep in the ground rather than being satisfied with surface nutrition from fertilization” (IN_Pei_07/19/2010). She explained that the reason for not using fertilizers in Natural Agriculture is to induce plants to develop their own ways of overcoming the challenges from nature, such as typhoons or floods. As Mrs Pei stated, “Too much artificial fertilization will limit plants’ ability to adapt. Fertilization is similar to ‘over’ intervention in children.” Instead, Mrs Pei would like to “provide appropriate facilitation to students to nurture their ability and competency to self-adjust.”

However, what is “appropriate facilitation”? Mrs Pei pointed out the second prominent feature of Natural Agriculture: weeding and love. She clarified that not fertilizing doesn’t mean that anything goes. Natural Agriculture farmers still need to be aware of the appropriateness of the environment for plant growth. How to do that? In practical terms, farmers have to weed so that plants can get enough nutrition from the ground. Spiritually, they have to say nice words to the seeds and plants. It creates a connection between the farmer’s love and the plant’s growth. We could probably say that love is the only fertilizer used in Natural Agriculture. (CO_Pei_04/29/2010)

According to Mrs Pei, weeding implies that teachers guide students to decide what to discard and what to keep in their art works; speaking pleasantly to the plants is akin to taking good care of students’ feelings; and nurturing their sensitivity with positive attitudes is the affective dimension emphasized by Tomlinson (2004b).

In discussing Mrs Pei’s work with talented students, I realized that good mentoring is the result of the alignment of the teachers’ objectives and values with students’ learning intentions and potential. It means that teaching becomes an eclectic pedagogical decision of weighting and scaffolding that extends beyond intervention. Conceptually, it resonates with Mrs Pei’s pedagogical beliefs which were influenced by the concept of Natural Agriculture, nurturing the
children’s talents by providing appropriate guidance over and above intervention. In practical terms, she was still challenged to practice the concept in her art class.
Seven Art Projects
- Organization: interrelated
- Goal: preparing for the Graduation Art Show in 2011
- Content: environmental protection issues in art making

Artistically Talented Class
- Learning background: intensive training from the third grade
- Six art classes per week
- Learning goals: (a) extending art visions; (b) exploring various media; and (c) fostering aesthetic experience

Inter-class Differences

Aesthetic Composition of Art Elements
- Abstract (multiple layers of composition)
- Concrete (composing colors and lines aesthetically)

Four Art Projects
- Organization: sequential
- Goal: gaining a sense of achievement through step-by-step learning
- Content: accumulative projects for completing printmaking

General Class
- Learning background: lack of formal art curriculum till the fifth grade
- Two art classes per week
- Learning goals: (a) basic tool operations; (b) learning fundamental art elements; (c) media exploration

Intensive observations
- Three methods of enlightening eyes
  1. Analytic
  2. Selected
  3. Elaborated

Within-class Differences

Issue-based Art Creation
- Multiple entry points: field trips, watching documentaries, writing reflective journals
- In-depth art creation: conscious awareness + action practice + spirit inquiry

Figure 39. Curricular modification in Mrs Pei’s art classes.
Chapter 6

Discussion:
The Development of Art Talent in the Context of the Confucian Heritage

Excellence in Talent Development

The descriptions and interpretation of Mrs Wen’s and Mrs Pei’s operational curriculum in the previous chapters portray what and how art teachers modified the curriculum and instruction in response to diverse students’ needs in art learning. I drew on two layers of student differences — inter-class and within-class differences — which the art teachers encountered in teaching both the general and the artistically talented classes. The two layers of student differences prompted me to ask: (a) what art curricula did the art teachers design for all students including those who are artistically talented (curricular modification), and (b) how they implemented the curricular designed for all students including the artistically talented (instructional adjustment). In answering the two interrelated questions, I understood differentiation in art education in the Taiwanese context.

As I discussed in the first chapter, Confucius’ teaching style is still considered the foundation of educational philosophy in Taiwan (Tsai, 2000; Wu, 2000) where teachers recognize students’ differences and adapt teaching to the interdependent, moral-orientated, and relationship-centered education setting. In this chapter, I expand upon what I learned from the two teachers’ responses to the diversity of students’ learning about art. I particularly explore the possible connections between their teaching and the Confucian heritage. I aim to investigate teaching for the development of art talent in the context of the Confucian heritage in Taiwan.

Excellence is an essential issue in the field of talent development. In gifted education, for example, Feldhusen (1985) pointed out that the goal for the gifted and the talented is to develop a sense of the pursuit of excellence in performances and endeavors. He regarded excellence as
personal characteristics or exceptional performance. The quest for excellence combines with the desire to create, to solve, to innovate, and to produce in a field of specialization (pp. 1-3). In the GoodWork project, Gardner and his research colleagues expanded the concept of excellence (Gardner, 2010). They provided three connotations of the word good: work that is excellent technical quality, work that is ethically pursued and socially responsible, and work that is engaging, enjoyable, and feels good.

In the Analects, Confucius pointed out his own teaching principles for nurturing a sense of excellence in Chinese culture. He states, “Let the will be set on the path of duty. Let every attainment in what is good be firmly grasped. Let perfect virtue be accorded with. Let engagement and enjoyment be found in the arts.” Through the four interrelated learning pathways—devotion to duty, seeking goodness, perfecting virtue, and engaging in the arts, teachers cultivate learners’ minds toward attaining excellence. Based on my observations, the two teachers in this study engaged students by using techniques and concepts, and cultivating students’ dispositions and art-making attitudes. They guided students to look for goodness and beauty, and be sensitive to human concerns by conducting community/issue-based art projects. It reflects the above four learning pathways toward excellence in art.

In this regard, I discuss the two teachers’ responsive pedagogy and generate three themes: (a) excellence and responsibility; (b) excellence and fittingness; (c) excellence and guidance. Essentially, the three themes based on the findings in the study present the complexity of “teaching in accordance with the student’s characteristics” (因材施教, Yin Cai Shi Jiao), a Confucian teaching belief that is rooted in the Taiwanese educational context and echoes the differentiation currently advocated in American education. They are discussed below.
**Excellence and Responsibility**

In both Mrs Wen’s and Mrs Pei’s art classes, students created art in relation to school events such as the School Games Carnival project, community history (ceramics project) and environmental issues (a series of projects about environmental protection). They broadened the students’ art vision by seeing art-making as social and communicative activities. As Confucius claims in the Analects, “The superior man is not a utensil.” A superior person has to explore a wide range of subjects for excelling in specific domains, enriching life experiences, and expanding visions, instead of narrowing himself into a trivial thing (a utensil).

Similarly, the community- or issue-based art projects engaged artistically talented students in a “social reconstructed curriculum” (Clark & Zimmerman, 2004; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2006). The art projects challenged students to think of and create art with sensitivity to human concerns beyond transmitting technical and formal knowledge. Being a good artist (superior person) is to think of personal pursuits such as self-expression as well as human concerns using the art media.

This section discusses how discipline-based, studio-orientated, and context-sensitive art curricula nurtured the students’ art talents in the two art teachers’ practices. Specifically, I first refer to Confucianism and the concept of Excellent, Engaging, Ethical (ENA) as propounded by Howard Gardner (2010) to discuss how the art teachers cultivated students’ sensitivity to human concerns. Based on Confucianism, the concept of the gifted embedded in the community- or issue-based art projects, Jian Zi (君子), is explored as well.

**Cultivating sensitivity to human concerns.** School events, community history, and social/environmental issues in art creation affects and could empower students to understand
their roles in the community and society (Seidel et al., 2009). As a statement in the webpage of the program for the artistically talented in River School states,

*Environment influences cultivation of personality and presence*

By joining the school and community-based art projects, children develop their capacities of collaboration, understandings of environment, and expression of viewpoints. At the same time, it empowers children to open their minds to create art without limitation. It fosters children’s achievement sense and confidence.

(DU_River School Website_01/10/2011)

Cultivation of students’ aesthetic sense, art techniques, and temperaments by acquiring the arts from life, the environment, and culture are core rationales for the curriculum guidelines in the Humanities and Arts Learning Area in Taiwan:

The arts originate in life and also blend into life. Life is the source of cultural development. As a result, art education should offer opportunities for students to explore the relationship between human beings and the living environment; to observe and discuss various artistic works and natural scenery in our surroundings; to distinguish the uniqueness of works of art and construct meaning with their senses, consciousness, and feelings; to interview artists; and to understand the relationships of time, culture, society, life, and the arts…Through more practice and deliberation, students learn to create and perform their works of art, as well as enrich their lives and spirit. (Ibid)

The community/issue-based art projects engage students in creating an organic relationship with human beings, the living environment, and perhaps their own spirit. Community-based art curriculum has been supported in the field of gifted education (Clark & Zimmerman, 2004; Sabol, 2006) or art education (Adejumo, 2000; Gude, 2007; Ulbricht, 2005). Ulbricht (2005) points out that community-based art education has a continuum of purposes. At one extreme of the spectrum reside programs that teach traditional art skills and knowledge and appreciate local cultures; at the other extreme are projects designed for social reconstruction.

As discussed, Mrs Wen intentionally incorporated community history (Qian Sh’s generous spirit), local architectures (historical buildings in River Middle School), and district features (bird polylon sculpture representing an egret) into students’ art creation. Similarly, Clark
and Zimmerman’s (1997) ARTS project celebrate diversity and emphasize respect for a variety of life styles and human rights. It encourages the participation of students with high interests and abilities in the arts to investigate their communities’ cultural and art heritages. It empowers artistically talented students to be involved in a “dialectic relation” that “presupposes mediation and a tension between the reflective and material dimensions of lived situations” (Greene, 1995, p. 52).

In particular, the fourth-grade ceramics project in Mrs Wen’s artistically talented class seemed to use artistic language to echo Qian Sh’s generous behaviors in the local community. “These abilities to investigate, analyze, reflect, and represent are critical skills for citizens of a participatory democracy” (Gude, 2009). Mrs Wen cultivated students’ sensitivity to caring (one kind of human concerns). To some extent, Mrs Wen’s pedagogical approach in fostering students’ self-expression through artistic techniques and sensitivity to human concerns reflects Confucius’s concept of a “holistic person” (Pan, 2001). Confucius states, “Now the man of perfect virtue, wishing to be established himself, seeks also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others. To be able to judge of others by what is nigh in ourselves—this may be called the art of virtue” (The Analects, 6:30). It implies that cultivation of personalities and expertise is to make self growth possible and at the same time to prepare for serving the public.

In this line, students in Mrs Wen’s artistically talented class were guided to discern and appreciate how artwork expressed a sense of caring or love that makes a “human being as human beings” (Pan, 2001). Not only did their ceramics work represent self-expressions of love, but the exhibition also transformed students’ self-expressions into its possible prolonged influences to the public. The issue-based art projects focusing on the environmental protection issue in Mrs
Pei’s artistically talented class also resonates with Confucius’s concept of fostering a holistic person.

The fifth-grade students in Mrs Pei’s artistically talented class conducted interrelated art projects focusing on environmental protection issues. As described earlier, different aspects of investigation of the critical issue along with a wide range of art media had the students experience a systematic process of conscious awareness to action practice to spirit inquiry. It is “attentive living-art curriculum” (Gude, 2009) that guided students to understand that artistic thinking could connect, inform, and enrich aspects of one’s life. The in-depth issue-based art creation were aimed at nurturing students’ sensitivity and critical thinking to reflect, analyze, and understand the cultures around them.

Along with intensive training in art techniques, the differentiated art curricula by the two teachers that involved students in community and environmental issues reflect the concept of ENA propounded by Howard Gardner (2010). Gardner worked with Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and William Damon to conduct the GoodWork project. The research team carried out in-depth semi-structured interviews with over 1200 professionals in the fields of genetics, theater, journalism, law, medicine, pre-collegiate education, tertiary education, philanthropy, and business to understand what it means to be a good worker. Borrowing imagery from genetics, they see good work as the integration of three standards—Excellent, Engaging, and Ethical.

According to Gardner (2010), “Good work is good in the Excellent, technical sense; the worker knows his stuff, is highly skilled, and keeps up with the latest knowledge and techniques. It is good in the phenomena sense: it feels good, feels right, is personally Engaging, yields experiences of flow. Finally, in a moral sense, it is carried out Ethically, in a way that is
responsible and serves the wider good, even (indeed, perhaps especially) when it goes against the immediate interests of the worker” (p. 5).

The concept of ENA is to develop a good worker who has excellent techniques, engaging flow experiences, and ethical sense. Interestingly, in Chinese culture there are the Six Arts which are Confucius’ suggestion on nurturing a superior person: rituals, music, archery, chariot-riding, calligraphy, and computation. To be a superior person in Chinese culture is to develop moral consciousness, artistic/kinesthetic spirit, and excellent artistries. Through them, teachers cultivate students’ moral, kinesthetic, artistic, and mathematical minds. In particular, Confucius regarded “ritual” (moral consciousness) as the priority, which is different from Excellent as the first strand of ENA. Therefore, Mrs Wen and Mrs Pei guided students to think of ethical issues in artistic ways through the community or environmental projects. With such ethical (moral consciousness) concerns, they helped students become technically excellent by aesthetically exploring a wide range of media and craft materials. It yielded experiences of flow when they made the connection between established artists’ ideas and their own compositions.

Reframing concept of giftedness. Why did the teachers emphasize community/issue-based art projects in their systematic teaching plans? According to Mrs Pei,

In those projects [focusing on the environmental issue], I expect students in the artistically talented class to become artists who really can make a difference for the world. In my view, a “real” artist has to experience and express what moves him/her. An artist should cultivate his/her moral sensitivity. When we look at his/her artwork, we move by his work. We will feel how wonderfully the artist inspires our life. In some way, that’s their social responsibility to be an artist. That’s why we provide so many resources and put so much energy in them. (IN_Pei_01/05/2010)
Based on that explanation, I came to understand that the community/issue-based art projects actually embedded her perceptions on the talented/gifted. She took the social-responsibility perspective to design differentiated art curricula. For Mrs Wen,

…the goal of nurturing those students in the artistically talented class is to guide them to see truth, goodness, and beauty. I want them to see how art connects with life, and how art can make a contribution to human beings. For example, the ceramics work, entitled ‘Love,’ they displayed in the community park might make visitors pause. Visitors might be interested in the kids’ lovely ceramics works. One by one scenarios portraying love in the ceramics could motivate them to associate with Qian Sh’s spirit. [By doing so], they are engaging in feeling people’s love in an artistic way. (CO_Wen_11/27/2009)

Her intention was to train artistically talented students to become artists who can make contributions to the community. Renzulli (2003) has discussed the concept of giftedness within the perspective of social capital. He stated, “Investments in social capital benefit society as a whole because they help to create the values, norms, networks, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation geared toward the greater public good” (p. 77). He pointed out that little is known about the relationship between the characteristics of gifted leaders and their motivation to use their gifts for the production of social capital.

However, according to Jian, Tsai, and Chen (1995), a unique feature of giftedness in Chinese culture is to focus on a person’s competence in serving the public:

In Chinese history, there are various concepts of giftedness. Ancients in our culture use genius, instead of giftedness. In particular it refers to people who have wisdom in politics. The gifted (genius) cultivates temperaments towards a harmony in human and nature and performs well in the political area. It reflects Confucius’s viewpoint of giftedness…In modern times, Mu Quan, a Confucian in Taiwan, identified the gifted (genius) by his/her historical contributions. In his view, the gifted is an influential person who makes a difference to his country. (p. 5)

The concept of giftedness as rooted in Chinese culture draws on the social responsibility of giftedness. They are persons who have special talents and a moral commitment to benefit the community, and the Chinese concept of giftedness, is to some extent, reflected in the teachers’
social responsibility viewpoint of talent development. The issue of nurturing children with talents in Taiwan is based on “excellence and responsibility;” developing talents along with social responsibility.

After examining creative individuals’ sense of responsibility, Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura (2007) claim “responsibility as a call to excellence.” They expand the concept of responsibility beyond “a contractual obligation that develops between a person and a community that imposes certain moral expectations.” “The term itself (responsibility) derives from the noun response and connotes a feeling that one must answer a call, a summons, that comes from somewhere outside the person.” It is a process of self-actualization informed by the sense that a person must answer a call and take on a task that a higher power expects him or her to fulfill. In short, creative individuals internalize the “duty to do excellent work as defined by the traditions and current standards of the particular activity in which they are engaged” (p. 67).

Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura (2007) draw on internalizing a sense of responsibility outside from a person in order to respond a call to excellence. Yet, according to Pan (2001), Confucianism regards persons as “ethical person” or “moral being.” Confucian ethics based on virtue is different from Western ethics which focus on human rights (or self actualization). Education based on virtue and ethics emphasizes cultivating a person’s talents and moral sense simultaneously to achieve a harmony between being and self, being and others, being and nature, and being and Heaven. For example, Mrs Pei took multi-layered visual effects as an analogy and reminded her students to cultivate their innerness in order to present “multi-layered” richness in their own artwork. Beyond training techniques and transmitting knowledge, Mrs Pei guided her students to explore the environmental protection issue for art-making as well as fostering
awareness of social responsibilities. To be a good artist is to dwell in a moral being that facilitates the establishment of a harmonics or dialectic relationship with the environment.

Based on the art teachers’ differentiated curricula for students in the artistically talented program, I would state that the term “Jian Zi (君子)” (a superior person) captures the spirit of the gifted in Taiwanese culture. Confucius said of Jian Zi,

He has four of the characteristics of a superior man - in his conduct of himself, he was humble; in serving his superior, he was respectful; in nourishing the people, he was kind; in ordering the people, he was just. (The Analects, 5:16)

Essentially, “Jian Zi (君子)” means a person who has both talent and virtue (才德兼備, Cai De Jian Bei). The concept of nurturing a Jian Zi was embedded in the goals of the teachers’ community/issue-based art projects. They cultivated students’ sensitivity to human concerns by exploring caring behaviors through the global warming issue; they guided students to transform those explorations into art creations which aim to inspire spectators to perceive, ponder, and reflect; students developed their talents through learning about craft with structured, demanding art activities. They were doing, being, and becoming a Jian Zi in the field of art. As quoted at the beginning of the chapter, excellence in ancient Chinese culture indicates developing a Jian Zi who is devoted to duty, seeks goodness, has perfect virtue, and engages in the arts. It is educational imagination for talent development in respect to the cultural roots in Taiwan. In the next section, I will discuss how the two art teachers fostered a Jian Zi in the field of art in the two layers of context—the inter-class difference and the within-class difference.

**Excellence and Fittingness**

In this study, inter-class and within-class student differences with the subtle dynamics of group classroom interactions influenced the nature and extent of understanding in Mrs Wen’s
and Mrs Pei’s art classes. Their classrooms were mixers in which students’ developments constrained and were constrained by the dynamics of every other student and of the classroom as a whole (VanTassel-Baska, 2004).

Confucius reminds us, “The superior man, in the world, does not set his mind either for anything, or against anything; what is fitted he will follow” (The Analects, 4:10). In other words, there is nothing absolutely positive or negative in a superior person’s mind. What is fitting in the circumstance is his measure. The nature of fittingness (義, Yi) is interdependent and situated. In applying Confucius’s idea of fittingness, the issue for the two art teachers is how to orchestrate the developmental mixers to “fit in” the inter-class difference or the within-class difference in operating a differentiated classroom; that is, a tension between excellence and fittingness. Based on my findings, the tension includes: (a) contextual appropriateness regarding the inter-class difference, and (b) harmonic integration in terms of the within-class difference.

**Contextual appropriateness regarding the inter-class difference.** Mrs Wen and Mrs Pei considered the number of art classes per week (two for the general and six for the talented classes) and students’ readiness (i.e., whether they were taught by teachers who had art backgrounds). They organized art projects (sequential or interrelated) and choices of concepts and products to engage students in learning art that was appropriate to them. In terms of “appropriateness,” Maker and King (1995) differentiated “age-appropriate” and “individual appropriate” curriculum. They argued that a teacher could elicit children’s giftedness by managing the two kinds of “developmentally appropriate practices” in a classroom.

According to Maker and King (1995), age-appropriate curricula take into account different children’s abilities and are designed to incorporate adaptive learning opportunities that
fulfill overall student needs. As such, it was appropriate for the two art teachers to differentiate their curriculum to fit the two different student groups’ readiness. Readiness is the students’ learning entry points relative to a particular task. Mrs Pei, for example, was careful in selecting appropriate materials for the printmaking project. Students in the general class used rubber plates which are malleable enough for novice printmakers, while acrylics plates were used to challenge students in the artistically talented class since they required the skillful manipulation of pin engravers.

Yet, the boundary between the general class and the artistically talented class raises the grouping issue in the context. According to Renzulli and Reis (2008), the debate of the grouping issue is a distraction from providing appropriate and meaningful learning activities for all students. Slavin (1987; cited in Renzulli & Reis, 2008) studied special programs for the gifted and argued that if positive growth is the result of curriculum adaptations, class size, resources, and goals, why cannot we apply the same explanation to cases in which growth is not shown? As discussed previously, the two art teachers stressed less on inquiry and more on transmission, or less choice but more prescription in the general class’s projects. Does this mean that inquiry-based, creative projects were not appropriate for them?

Hertzog (2005) applied a project-based approach into general education settings in order to obtain underrepresented students’, such as African Americans, potential in the gifted program. Hertzog concluded “the combination of inquiry-based activities with a structured way to capture students’ engagement and curiosity may raise teachers’ expectations of potential, which ultimately may lead to closing achievement gaps between groups of students” (p. 255).

Applying Hertzog’s findings into my study, it is possible that when teachers looked more positively and had higher expectations of students in the general class, there was a greater
likelihood of recognizing their talents and identifying them for gifted and talented programs. In initiating reforms, the potential of all students is targeted for growth and development. All students’ potential will thrive when curricula embrace higher level thinking, problem-based learning, and the inquiry process of learning.

Indeed, the two art teachers hoped to provide high quality art education to as many students as possible. Yet, why did they design more inquiry-based art projects embedded with concepts in the medium or advanced learning stage for students in the artistically talented class? Does this mean that the two teachers provided “gifted curriculum/pedagogy” to students identified as artistically talented while downplaying those in the general class? Perhaps, the two art teachers’ pedagogical considerations reflect Confucius’s statement,

> to those whose talents are above mediocrity, the lofty subject may be announced. To those who are below mediocrity, the lofty subject may not be announced. (The Analects, 6:19)

Confucius reminds us to modify the challenge-level of subjects to match learners’ readiness. He further differentiated learner’s readiness, “Those who are born with the possession of knowledge are the highest level of men. Those who learn, and so, readily, get possession of knowledge, are the next. Those who are dull and yet encompass the learning are another level next to these. As to those who are dull and yet do not learn—they are the lowest of the people” (The Analects, 16:9). In fact, Confucius addresses people’s learning motivation and efforts rather than classifies them in terms of inborn talents. For instance, Mrs Wen adaptively provided alternative learning activities for Ting, a sixth grade general-class student with good art abilities and motivation.

The two art teachers’ adaptive curricula for students in both settings seem to reflect Confucius’ words where they engaged students by providing appropriate curricula. Their
differentiation for the inter-class difference could be “contextual appropriateness” in response to the boundary between the general class and the artistically talented class. The complexity of where the boundary for general and gifted/talented education influences teachers’ practices needs to be considered in Taiwan. Renzulli and Reis (2008) suggest,

Until these larger issues [about grouping] are addressed, and until dramatic changes take place in the funding of education, in the levels of preparation of our teachers, grouping will continue to be a practice for accommodating the broad range of diversity that characterizes our school population. We believe that grouping per se is not the issue. Rather, the issue is what is done within groups, regardless how they are organized, to help all students maximize their potentials and view learning as both a valuable and enjoyable experience. (p. 50)

Renzulli and Reis’s insight deepened my thinking of the grouping issue. It prompted me to look at “the criteria for group effectiveness”: commonality of purpose, reciprocal respect and harmony, group and individual progress toward goals, and individual enjoyment and satisfaction (p. 47). The considerations of harmony and a balance between a group norm and individual quest took place in the two art teachers’ practices of differentiation. I discuss them below.

**Harmonic integration in terms of the within-class difference.** The rationale for differentiation of talent development in American society is based on two contradictory values: excellence and equity (e.g., Gallagher, 2003; Hertzog, 2009; Renzulli & Reis, 2008). Brown (2008) suggested that proponents of gifted education maintain that excellence should be viewed as an individual quest for higher learning. She thought true equity cannot disallow opportunities to pursue excellence at appropriate ability levels, areas, and interests for the individual learner. Instead, the educational community is supposed to provide equitable experiences founded on excellence for all learners. Indeed, educators in gifted education advocate differentiation and claim the need to provide equitable, higher, engaging learning experiences in the individual quest
for excellence. Maker and King (1995) claim that “individual-appropriate curriculum” can help shape responses to individual and collective needs and build a flexible and supportive learning environment. To some extent, the rationale of differentiation in American society is based on Western ethics focusing on human rights and self actualization.

According to the findings in this study, the issue of differentiation in Taiwan relates to how teachers can assist individual students develop their unique talents without breaking down the fluidity of a class structure, that is, mitigating the tension between excellence and integration. Confucius claims, “The superior man aims at harmony but not at uniformity; the mean man aims at uniformity, but not at harmony” (The Analects, 13:23). Students are expected to cultivate their talents and apply them to the situation to achieve harmony between self pursuits and group intentions.

Specifically, a possible counter-argument that differentiation may support or clash with the idea of building a community in the classroom has been discussed in differentiation practices (Eris, 2005; Tomlinson, 2003). Eris points out that responding to individual learning needs of students does not mean compromising group needs as long as individual students carry a sense of responsibility towards other members of the group and follow a cooperative rather than a competitive approach.

The above perspective might be true in case of the Surrealism Collage project in Mrs Wen’s artistically talented class. With Mrs Wen’s facilitation, Lin contributed his talents into the groups’ needs in the collaborative art project. Mrs Wen was able to successfully pool students’ individual energies in a cooperative effort that enhanced the skills and experiences of the group. In the case of Ting, a sixth grade student with high art potential in the general class, Mrs Wen used several strategies to accommodate her interests and advanced techniques in art-making. Mrs
Wen was aware of the tension between individualizing curricula for Ting and maintaining a harmonious environment in the classroom. As Mrs Wen told me, the tension in class derived from Ting’s poor relationship with peers, and it made me think about the dynamics of differentiation and integration.

Independently, Mrs Wen valued the two children’s unique art abilities and delivered differentiated instruction to optimize their learning while paying attention to how their uniqueness could be integrated in the classroom without compromising its harmony. Students’ unique potentials will bloom when their talents are pooled into a cooperative effort. In short, when thinking of differentiation, Mrs Wen considered integration at the same time; when considering integration, she thought about differentiation simultaneously.

Thus it is important for us to think about how to implement differentiation which highlights individual quests in a social culture that draws on the “interdependent self” (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Markus and Kitayama explained,

[The] interdependent self takes a view of the self as part of an encompassing social relationship and recognizing that one's behavior is determined, contingent on, and, to a large extent organized by what the actor perceives to be the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others in the relationship....An interdependent self cannot be properly characterized as a bounded whole, for it changes structure with the nature of the particular social context. Within each particular social situation, the self can be differently instantiated. (p. 227)

Then, the pedagogic tension between the interdependent and independent selves is related to Confucius’s words, “The superior man aims at harmony but not at uniformity.” Responsive pedagogy in the Taiwanese school setting supports the development of harmonious characteristics but also challenges teachers to modify the curriculum or adjust instruction to accommodate the tension between excellence and integration.
What did I learn about integrating individual quests into group dynamics from the two cases in this study? A continuum of instructional adjustment in Mrs Wen’s art class provides a salient framework to discuss the issue. The instructional continuum stretches along the two extremes of micro-differentiation and macro-differentiation. With careful designing, Mrs Wen was able to accommodate individual student needs into whole class dynamics.

Micro-differentiation focuses on students’ individual quests within whole class dynamics. It is more like an adjustment depending on individual student responses in class. Such an adjustment was to encourage individuals to take an assignment further as a way of making minor accommodations in class. At the other end of the macro-differentiation, whole class dynamics in respect to student individual quests were addressed. It relies more on the teacher’s plans which assist students in personal goal-setting. At the same time, teachers serve as coaches or mentors in helping students reach their goals (Betts, 2004).

One salient strategy that could ease the tension between excellence and integration is flexible grouping. This strategy relies more on teachers’ pre-planning. For instance, Mrs Wen grouped students by gender for a collaborative collage project in the artistically talented class, while she had students who chose the same art forms for the national art competition sit together. In doing so, they were expected to learn from each other. Renzulli and Reis (2008) said,

[There] are many other factors about grouping that should be taken into consideration in addition to achievement level…These factors include motivation, general interest…and specific interests in a general area…, complementary skills…, career aspirations, and even friendships that might help promote self-concept, self-efficacy, or group harmony…Flexible cluster grouping allows students to participate in group instruction when the unit presenting reveals wide differences among students with regard to mastery of learning objects for a given unit of study. (pp. 47-49)

As discussed, we can see Mrs Wen flexibly manipulating both micro- and macro-differentiation in the art project. She modified her guidance and roles to students at the various
working stages in specific tasks. Regarding students’ preferences, she allowed students to choose team members in working on the Landscape Design project by assigning them group work according to their competence in manipulating art media, the ability to collaborate, and engagement in art class. With her guidance, the unique needs of individual students were integrated to some extent into group collaborations. Her differentiation within groups shows teaching skills in responding to the issues of excellence and integration. Next I will discuss how the two art teachers attended to individual students’ needs within groups/classes, particularly those in the artistically talented class.

**Excellence and Guidance**

The development of talent is dependent upon exposure to the fluid needs of artistically talented students (Bloom, 1985; Clark & Zimmerman, 2004; Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1996). Such students have their unique learning profiles because they learn differently from their peers (Winner & Martino, 2003) and have a multitude of abilities, interests, and learning styles (Hurwitz & Day, 2001). Guiding these emerging artists into expanding their intrinsic traits along with disciplined knowledge or dispositions is an issue for art teachers.

As Confucius states,

"Where substance is in excess of refinement, we have rusticity; where the refinement is in excess of substance, we have the manners of a clerk. When substance and refinement are equally blended, we then have the superior man. (The Analects, 6:18)"

In applying Confucius’s idea into developing art talents, I think “substance” refers to students’ intrinsic traits that make them unique individuals. Disciplined knowledge or dispositions are methods to “refine” those emerging artists. Only a well-balanced mixture of substance and refinement will result in a “superior man”; in this case, a profound, influential
artist. It relies on teachers’ attentive guidance to reach the well-balanced mixture. With reference to the two art teachers’ practices, two issues are discussed here: (a) an “intimate organic connection” (Dewey, 1916/1997) through guided discovery; and (b) personalized guidance as “connoisseurship” (Eisner, 1998).

An intimate organic connection through guided discovery. Art-making as a process includes an intensive cultivation of aesthetic sensitivity, applying techniques into creation, and involvement in generating ideas or themes. It requires teachers’ guidance for students to interplay with the three elements of art-making.

In light of Dewey’s (1916/1997) notion of “intimate organic connection,” art-making for the development of art talent is a connection between “substance” and “refinement” to formulate an educational experience. For instance, in Mrs Pei’s artistically talented class, Yuan presented her intrinsic creative art style rather than used established aesthetic principles in the Watercolor project. Her “substance” (creative art style) was in excess of refinement (the aesthetic principle). But Yuan’s insistence on her own preference challenged Mrs Pei as she didn’t want to dampen Yuan’s creative idea in portraying pollution by human beings. In contrast, Zhe manipulated art materials skillfully and presented the aesthetic quality but showed less reflective or creative thoughts in his work. His art style was highly influenced by his art learning experience in an art studio which drew on skill training. Mrs Pei expected him to reach a well-balanced mixture of excellent techniques (refinement) and personal styles (substance). It challenged Mrs Pei to guide them to blend substance and refinement equally.

Therefore, the issue here is how a “negotiable space” could occur in “the complex interaction between moments of intervention and withdrawal and of critique and encouragement
as a learner strives to match skills to challenges” (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1996). In the negotiable space, art teachers guide students to dialogic multiple dimensions of “artistic selves” (Walsh, 2002). In Yuan’s case, her parents valued creativity. From my observations, Yuan was perfectionist who composed exquisite art elements, had motivation to improve her artwork, and insisted on her ideas to some extent. Yuan was also an apprentice who learned skills and art concepts from Mrs Pei’s mentorship. In this regard, when art teachers think about art education for those emerging artists, they are “developing children with a well integrated collection of varied selves, one of which is artistic” (Walsh, 2002, p. 104). The well integrated selves are situated and highly contextualized.

In Walsh’s (2002) view, the development of artistic selves is more than the acquisition of skills but involves change. This change needs to be guided and expanded. Specifically, in line with Vygotsky’s concept of scaffolding, “competence should be defined not in terms of what children can do on their own but what they can do with support” (p. 109). Brown (1992) further suggests the notion of “guided discovery” that presents the dynamic process of scaffolding. She explained,

Guided learning is easier to talk about than doing. It takes clinical judgment to know when to intervene. Successful teachers must engage continually in on-line diagnosis of student understanding. They must be sensitive to overlapping current zone of proximal development, where students are ripe for new learning. Guided discovery places a great deal of responsibility in hands of teachers, who must model, foster, and guide the “discovery” process into forms of disciplined inquiry that would not be reached without expert guidance. (p. 169)

The disciplined inquiry by heuristic guidance relies on a teacher’s flexible and dynamic attention to students’ learning toward their zones of proximal development. By “on-line diagnosis of student understanding,” teachers document students’ learning patterns in specific tasks. Based on these learning patterns, teachers differentiate instruction by scaffolding “the
discovery process into forms of disciplined inquiry.” In terms of teaching strategies, it requires teachers to manipulate the dynamics of “modeling, fostering, and guiding.”

Mrs Wen’s guidance to Chi in the River Middle School sketch might be a good example. In order to have Chi express multi-layered colors in his drawing, Mrs Wen first guided her to observe the dark and bright sides of a building. When Chi seemed to understand what Mrs Wen was trying to show, she further fostered Chi’s techniques by encouraging him to look at his peers’ work. Meanwhile, several questions lead Chi to figure out what might be a better way to express multi-layered colors in his own work. After about ten minutes of Chi’s self-exploration Mrs Wen showed how to make layers of visual effects by using similarly colored rotary crayons.

The process of guiding, fostering, and modeling represents Browns’ (1992) notion of “guided discovery.” Mrs Wen seemed to do “on-line diagnosis of [Chi’s] understanding”; for Chi, he seemed to play around the concept of multi-layered color in his zone of proximal development. Such intimate organic connections with associated knowledge and technical skills benefits from teachers’ guided discovery. In particular, with regard to teaching mindset, Confucius’s pedagogical concern extends the concept of guided discovery, “There were four things from which the Master was entirely free. He has no foregone conclusions, no arbitrary predeterminations, no obstinacy, and no egoism” (The Analects, 9:4).

In involving students in the process of art learning, art teachers are supposed to get a balance between students’ self-expression and disciplined knowledge or dispositions without speculation, absolute definitude, inflexibility, and selfishness. As described previously, Mrs Pei used “perceptual guidance” and “technical guidance” to fill Wang’s gap between his understanding of art concepts and manipulating art elements. Mrs Pei opened a space that allowed Wang to explore on his own and then based on his position provided adaptive guidance.
In Mrs Wen’s general art class, she created a supportive climate for students’ collaboration in the School Games Carnival project through flexible instructional adjustment. Mrs Wen shifted her roles from one to another to optimize students’ learning in each group.

The flow of scaffolding took place in the two art teachers’ classes. Using nature as an analogy, a teachers’ instruction in guided discovery is like a flowing river that adjusts its speed in response to the rocks it encounters and shifts directions without losing its main aim. Taking a running river as a pedagogical image, teachers strived to avoid the four things from which Confucius was entirely free. Teachers’ guidance becomes a contextual apprenticeship that helps students to be refined “into forms of disciplined inquiry.” In next section, I further discern the essence of contextual apprenticeship is personalized guidance rather than individualized instruction in light of Eisner’s (1998) concept of connoisseurship.

**Personalized guidance as connoisseurship.** What specific roles do teachers play when they attempt to make an intimate organic connection with the associated knowledge and technical skills for students? Why can that role make the connection happen? In fact, certain types of teachers would be more appropriate at certain stages of the talent development process. Bloom’s (1985) studies of several talent fields suggest that in the early stages of talent development, teachers who are effective cultivate an individual’s interest in and passion for art. Effectiveness in the middle stages provides challenging instruction (Bloom, 1985) and connects technique and expression (Bloom, 1985; Clark & Zimmerman, 2004). In the third stage, the role of an effective teacher in Bloom’s (1985) study is to help talented students identify imperfections and overcome difficulties while they develop an individual style and a depth of understanding of their domain and repertoire.
In the two art teachers’ classes, students developed at different rates and in different ways and stages. The diversity of student needs resulted in the teachers’ differentiated guidance and modified their roles in response to students’ stages of talent development (Bloom, 1985). In Table 10, I refer to Tomlinson’s (2003) student traits—readiness, interest, and learning profile—and take five students as examples to present the diversity of students in the two teachers’ art classes. I also analyze those students traits based on artistically talented students’ characteristics (Clark & Zimmerman, 2004; Paiser, 1997; Sabol, 2006). I point out in what way the teachers responded to the diversity of the talented students.

For instance, Zh in Mrs Wei’s artistically talented class represented the early stage so Mrs Wen played tutor by cultivating his interest and aesthetic sensibility that engaged him in art-making. Wang in Mrs Pei’s artistically talented class was in the middle stage. He had strong memory and understanding and was able to apply critical insights into his own work. Mrs Pei was a guide for Wang to help him overcome his difficulty in linking perception and production. Yuan could be positioned in the later stage of talent development. She displayed individuality and creativity and generated sophisticated themes or ideas. Mrs Pei thereby played an advisor to her on expectations and possibilities and introduced established aesthetic principles in the art field.

Chuang’s response to Mrs Pei’s individualized units about color mixing made me think about how a teacher’s guidance can become a contextual apprenticeship for personalizing learning opportunities. Eisner (1985) distinguished two words - personalized and individualized - with the latter being harsher and more bureaucratic in character than personalized which is softer and more intimate. “When combined with instruction, individualized instruction takes on a connotation that is more technological than personalized teaching” (pp. 181-182). Eisner thought
the heart of individualization is a form of pedagogical adaptation that “use no mechanical means—no workbooks, test forms, color-coded boxes of reading material—yet...represent one person’s effort to try to communicate with another. Each child, so to speak, is a custom job” (pp. 182). The communicative relationship is the essence of personalized teaching.

Based on Eisner’s insight, I thought “personalized teaching” might be a better term that captures the essence of individualization in differentiating instruction. Mrs Pei applied “individualize instruction” for the artistically talented students as described above. Yet, she did not seem to successfully link her expectations with other competing student demands. Chuang, lacking both incentive to learn and aesthetic sensibility in creating art, might be motivated to explore the color concept based on his interest. Mrs Pei could work with Chuang’s home classroom teacher who appreciated his aptitude in sports, and make an association between sports and art learning, such as studying rhythm in visual effects and kinesthetic movement.

In contrast, Mrs Wen engaged talented students in art learning with reference to several contextual factors. For instance, Mrs Wen knew when and how to calm Zh and guide him to concentrate on art-making by using comforting words, and by involving his mother. She established a bond with Lin by listening to his “love affair” and encouraged him to transform his frustration into art creation. I was really impressed by her genuine comments on each fourth grade students’ efforts and the improvements that were realized in the artistically talented class.
### Table 10

**Student Traits and Teacher Responses in the Artistically Talented Classes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Readiness</th>
<th>Interest</th>
<th>Learning profile</th>
<th>Teacher Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lin</td>
<td>• Good at line drawing (superior manual skill, compulsion to organize to satisfy desire for precision, skill of visual perception, completion of specific ideas, confidence and comfort with art media and tasks, subtle use of line) • Generating creative ideas (Independence of ideas)</td>
<td>• Investigating and representing mantis (high interest in drawing representationally, willing to explore, directness of expression, specialization in one subject)</td>
<td>• Boy</td>
<td>(Mrs Wen: friend and tutor) • <em>Readiness</em>: appreciating and encouraging Lin to develop skills of line drawing, taking Lin’s artwork as exemplars in the Demonstration-Explanation session, helping Lin integrate his idea into group work • <em>Interest</em>: encouraging Lin to establish a mantis study group and study other insects to expand topics to draw • <em>Learning profile</em>: encouraging Lin to transform intensive emotion into art creation, appreciating and encouraging Lin to develop skills of line drawing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zh</td>
<td>• Logic thinking with little aesthetic sensibility</td>
<td>• Performance (directness of expression)</td>
<td>• Boy</td>
<td>(Mrs Wen: friend and tutor) • <em>Readiness</em>: direct guidance to Zh about how to compose art elements aesthetically • <em>Interest</em>: encouraging Zh’s motivation of “performing” ideas • <em>Learning profile</em>: humorous reminding, flexibility which allowed Zh to move around, on-paper communication with Zh’s mother</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Readiness</th>
<th>Interest</th>
<th>Learning profile</th>
<th>Teacher Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Chuang  | * Need to improve understanding and manipulation of art elements* | * Drawing robots (specialization in one subject)* | * Boy* | *(Mrs Pei: expert)*
|         |           | * Little motivation on elaborating or improving the quality of artwork* | | *(Mrs Pei: expert)*
|         |           | * Sports (Does well in other subjects)* | | *(Mrs Pei: expert)*

| Wang    | * Good understanding of art concepts but hard to represent them by hands (Clear understanding of structure and sense of the interrelationships of parts of artwork)* | * Math (Does well in other subjects)* | * Boy* | *(Mrs Pei: guide)*
|         | | * Superior memory and reasoning (applies critical insight to own work)* | | *(Mrs Pei: guide)*

| Zhe     | * Superior skills of manipulating art media (superior manual skill, compulsion to organize to satisfy desire for precision, confidence and comfort with art media and tasks, skillful composition)* | * Art-making (directness of art-making, completion of specific ideas)* | * Boy* | *(Mrs Pei: tutor)*
|         | | | | *(Mrs Pei: tutor)*

*(continued)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Readiness</th>
<th>Interest</th>
<th>Learning profile</th>
<th>Teacher Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zhe</td>
<td>• Good aesthetic sensibility (subtle and more varied graphic vocabulary, clear understanding of structure and sense of the interrelationships of parts in artwork, bold use of the elements of art and the principles of design) • High motivation of art-making (Desire to improve their artwork, ambitious for an art career)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• The influence of art learning experience outside of the school: emphasizing techniques rather than creativity (intense desire to fill extra time with art activities)</td>
<td>• Learning profile: reminding Zhe of creativity in his work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuan</td>
<td>• Creative ideas and quality in her work (independence of ideas, high adaptability, intuitive dynamic imagination, sophisticated themes or idea, creativity) • High motivation of art-making (desire to improve their artwork, ambitious for an art career) • Exquisite composition of art elements (elaboration and depiction of details)</td>
<td>• Art-making (directness of art-making, completion of specific ideas, visual narratives used for self-expression)</td>
<td>• Girl</td>
<td>(Mrs Pei: advisor) • Readiness: questions to guide Yuan to think of improving the aesthetic quality of his work • Learning profile: questioning as well as praising Yuan’s creative art-making style, communication with Yuan to pay attention to the aesthetic principle as making art</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Mrs Pei: advisor)
The close relationship seemed to deepen Mrs Wen’s “qualitative judgment” (Eisner, 1985) in considering individual students’ unique learning profile. She read their emotions, stretched the boundaries of their readiness, communicated with their parents, adjusted comments on their artwork, and found moments to animate their playful minds (the “snow falling” scenario). I thought Mrs Wen was like a “connoisseur” who personalizes teaching for students in the artistically talented class. Eisner (1998) explained the concept of connoisseurship:

The ability to make fine-grained discriminations among complex and subtle qualities is an instance of what I have called connoisseurship. Connoisseurship is the art of appreciation. It can be displayed in any realm in which the character, import, or value of objects, situations, and performances is distributed and variable, including educational practice (p. 63)…To be a connoisseur in some domain means to notice or experience the significant and often subtle qualities that constitute an act, work, or object, and typically, to be able to relate these to the contextual and antecedent conditions. (p. 85)

In light of Eisner’s concept of connoisseurship, I saw Mrs Wen taking care of Lin’s affections in his art learning. She seemed to know about his sensitivities influencing how he situated himself in his life. She discerned the different situations that existed for Lin and decided to engage him in art-making. For instance, she praised him for transforming his frustration into making paper sculptures of mantises as a way of expressing his intensive feelings through art. She also encouraged him to establish a mantis study group and explore other insects for expanding topics to make into art. Mrs Wen’s appreciation of Lin’s creativity drew him out and helped clarify his thoughts when he was unable to work with team members in the Surrealism Collage project. Mrs Wen was like a connoisseur who carefully nurtured Lin’s artistic mind, valued his unique art-learning profile, and at the same time bridged the talents with his emotional response, team work, and peer relationship. For art talent development, personalized teaching provides a holistic approach to the artistic-self, doing artwork, and becoming an artist. The holistic match results in a mutual tuning-in relationship.
Confucius had shown his careful observations and comments on students’ capabilities. He served as an educational connoisseur as well,

Meng Wu asked about Zi Lu, whether he was perfectly virtuous. The Master said, "I do not know." He asked again, when the Master replied, "In a kingdom of a thousand chariots, you might be employed to manage the military levies, but I do not know whether he be perfectly virtuous." "And what do you say of Qiu?" The Master replied, "In a city of a thousand families, or a clan of a hundred chariots, Qiu might be employed as governor, but I do not know whether he is perfectly virtuous.” "What do you say of Chi?" The Master replied, "With his sash girt and standing in a court, Chi might be employed to converse with the visitors and guests, but I do not know whether he is perfectly virtuous." (The Analects, 5:8)

Confucius discerned the above three students’ politic competence. He repeated saying “I do not know whether he is perfectly virtuous.” It implies that not only did Confucius value each student’s different strong areas, he also intentionally reminded students to seek higher spirits (virtue) to enhance their competence in an era where people’s sensitivity to human concerns needed to be developed. Practically, being a connoisseur in personalized teaching is to bridge different classroom elements into a whole artistry which involves a teacher’s ability to discern the different dimensions of situations and experiences, and the methods they use to relate one to another. A teacher is able to place his experiences and understandings in a wider context, and connect them with values and commitments.
Chapter 7
Implications and Reflection

A Review of the Study

“Teaching in accordance with the student’s characteristics” (因材施教, Yin Cai Shi Jiao) is a Confucian teaching belief rooted in the Taiwanese educational context and echoes the differentiation advocated in American education. In this study, I explored art teachers’ responsive pedagogy that focuses on differentiation for diverse learners, including those identified as the artistically talented. Specifically, I studied two art teachers’ “operational art curricula” (Goodlad, Klein, & Tye, 1979) in both the general class and the artistically talented class in an elementary school in Taiwan. I was able to understand the art teachers’ curricular modification and instructional adjustment in response to the wide spectrum of student readiness, interests, and learning profiles in art learning.

In terms of curricular modification for the general class and the artistically talented class, the two art teachers considered the number of art classes per week and students’ readiness and designed quantitatively and qualitatively different projects. The teachers organized art projects and choices of concepts and products that were appropriate for the students in learning art in a studio-orientated class. Regarding instructional adjustment in the general class and the artistically talented class, Mrs Wen, used various instructional strategies to cater to students’ diverse readiness and art learning styles, such as occasional exceptions, personalized guidance, student choice, flexible grouping, and station work. Mrs Pei, in turn, drew on individualized instruction in the artistically talented class and significant instructional adjustment was not applied to any significant extent in her general class.
I discuss the two art teachers’ responsive pedagogies in light of the Confucian heritage. In the interdependent, moral-orientated, and relationship-centered Taiwanese education context, the community- and issue-based art projects the art teachers designed aimed to cultivate students’ sensitivity to human concerns. It reflects the concept of nurturing a Jian Zi (君子, a superior person), who has both talent and virtue (才德兼備, Cai De Jian Bei), in ancient Chinese culture.

The two layers of student differences - inter-class differences and within-class differences - shaped the art teachers’ responsive pedagogies. Situated in the complicated boundary between the general class and the talented class, the art teachers designed contextually appropriate curriculum to engage students in art learning. To some extent, it resonates with Confucius’ notion of modifying the challenge level of subjects to match learners’ readiness. Yet, students in the general class might not be appropriately challenged because the art projects designed for them stressed less on inquiry and more on transmission, or provided less choice but more prescription.

Within-class student differences challenged the teachers to assist individual students to develop their unique talents and maintain the harmony of a class structure at the same time. Through guided discovery, the teachers helped students talented in art to make organic connections between their intrinsic traits (substance) and disciplined knowledge or dispositions (refinement). The teachers played the role of a connoisseur who personalized guidance to bridge different class elements with individual students’ unique readiness, interests, and learning profiles. In doing so, they not only responded to multiple dimensions of students’ “artistic selves” (Walsh, 2002) but also pooled students’ unique potentials into a cooperative effort of “harmony but not uniformity.”
Implications for the Field

In Taiwan, students with talents in areas such as the visual arts, music, and dance, have been trained in specialized settings such as self-contained classes from elementary to high school levels since 1980 (Liu, 2006; Shih, 2009). Although the specialized program for the gifted has been criticized by those in the field (e.g., Tomlinson, 1996; Treffinger, Young, Nassab, Selby, & Wittig, 2008), this study will provide insights for implementing high-level instructional opportunities for all students in school settings.

Being a “flow teacher” for optimizing students’ learning about art. In the fieldwork for this study, I was impressed by the two teachers’ roles as artists and art teachers for children. Mrs Wen said, “It is important for art teachers to join art events and make artwork continuously. In doing so, I got to know what material might be appropriate for students to work with, the kind of artwork that could stimulate their creativity, and contemporary art development” (IN_Wen_01/05/2011). Mrs Pei told me, “I like to make artwork at home and share my experiences with students” (IN_Pei_07/19/2010). They even brought their own life experiences (e.g., community events to Mrs Wen, Nature Agriculture to Mrs Pei) into curriculum design to enrich students’ art learning.

In this sense they are “flow teachers”: (a) in nurturing their interests in art so as to challenge their own abilities they most often inspire the young to express their unique talents; (b) by focusing on intrinsic rewards in balancing outcome-orientated feedback and informal feedback for students’ ongoing activities; and (c) looking for a harmony between teachers’ expectations and other competing demands on students (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen,
1996). To that I add one more trait of being a flow teacher: incorporating rich, reflective life experiences with expanding students’ artistic visions.

Confucius was in Qi (a country) and heard the music of Shao. He was impressed by it and for three months did not know the taste of flesh. He said, “I did not think that music can have been made as excellent as this” (The Analects, 7:14). Inspired by that experience, Confucius concluded, “It is by the Odes that the mind is aroused. It is by the Rules of Propriety that the character is established. It is from Music that the finish is received” (The Analects, 8:8). Thus, in developing artistic talent it is important for educators to look for flow experiences that keep their lessons alive and introduce it into students’ learning. In doing so, the art potential of students might be drawn out and the teachers’ commitment preserved.

**Designing community/issue-based curriculum for nurturing a Jian Zi in the field of art.** River Middle School is located in a community having a strong cultural heritage where many local artists live and many community events held. Both Mrs Wen and Mrs Pei incorporated those rich resources into their curriculum design and guided students to explore relevant issues through field trips, lectures, reflective journals, and field-based art-making. As discussed earlier, the community/issue-based art curriculum nurtured those emerging artists who developed excellent art techniques and aesthetic sense, engaged in perceiving and creating artwork, and took account of human concerns.

In nurturing students’ art talent to be Jian Zis who cultivate talent for self pursuit as well as social contributions, school art projects could guide students in thinking of and making art based on community-related developments. As Gude (2007) suggests,

*Artists create social spaces—temporary and permanent opportunities for people to connect and interact. Art teachers can become community-based artists—identifying*
community themes, working with students to make aesthetic investigations of content, and creating new spaces for discourse through engaging local and dispersed communities through student artwork. (p. 13)

The authentic context for art creation could nurture students’ artistic minds that value differences and diversity. Through the concept of “empowered making” (Gude, 2007), talented students would not only be equipped with technical or formal knowledge, they would also be able to “use the languages of multiple art and cultural discourse, and are thus able to generate new insights into their lives and into contemporary times” (p. 14).

**Layering differentiated services for the development of art talent.** Renzulli and Reis (2008) suggest that “the continuum services range from general enrichment for all students across all grade levels to curriculum differentiated procedures, including enrichment and acceleration for rapid learners, as well as individualized studies for identified gifted and talented students” (p. 36). In my view, the two art teachers in the program for the artistically talented had in mind a school-wide enrichment art curricula for all students of River Middle School.

Mrs Wen designed systematic art projects and incorporated local resources to enrich art projects for students. The program for the artistically talented differentiated curricula for students identified as such. Personalized guidance was used to individualize instruction for the diverse strengths and talent areas among students. What enriched the curriculum were the generous resources available the enhancement of students’ art learning potential in the program, while the “artificial” boundary between the general and the talented classes influenced the teachers’ practices. Is it, then, possible to layer differentiated services beyond the artificial boundary?
Treffinger, Young, Nassab, Selby, and Wittig’s (2008) Levels of Service (LoS) approach might be a good model for us to visualize an inclusive talent development program. In LoS, the multiple layers of differentiated services for art talent development include:

Level 1 (All) - Exposure examples:
Students take part in developmentally appropriate creative art projects.

Level 2 (Many) - Voluntary participation:
Students are invited to join the after-school art club.

Level 3 (Some) - Limited participation:
Advanced art projects are selected for exhibition in local art galleries.

Level 4 (Few) - Targeted programming:
Opportunities provided to study with renowned professionals.

By layering services, teachers might come to label the services rather than the students as gifted/talented. Instead of a single program, a continuum of programming services will be available for talented learners. Flexible groupings of students might be developed to facilitate differentiated instruction and curricula.

**Sharing the art of differentiation for staff development.** As Eisner (1985) states, the “qualitative judgment in teaching” actually captures the essence of differentiation:

[Teaching] is an art in the sense that teachers...make judgments based largely on qualities that unfold during the course of action. Qualitative forms of intelligence are used to select, control, and organize classroom qualities, such as tempo, tone, climate, pace of discussion, and forward movement. The teacher must “read” the emerging qualities and respond with qualities appropriate to the ends sought or the direction he or she wishes the students to take. In this process, qualitative judgment is exercised in the interests of achieving a qualitative end. (p. 176)

The dynamics of “selecting, controlling, and organizing” classroom qualities creates a responsive learning environment in which teachers attend to student differences. In this study, both teachers carefully managed differentiated instruction in terms of content, process, and
product. By anchoring the same art concept, they adapted the content of art projects taking into account students’ diverse art preferences or readiness (content). In incorporating additional human resources in the classroom, they allowed students to work on the same project at their own paths (process). Based on the nature of art in celebrating “diversity, individuality, and flexibility” (Eisner, 2002), they guided students to produce various kinds of artwork that expressed their feelings and thoughts about the community’s history or environmental issues (product). Systematically documenting those differentiated artistic approaches and sharing them in staff meetings not only provides concrete, specific strategies for teachers’ reference, but also helps in formulating a community of practice that refreshes their “qualitative judgments” (Eisner, 1985) in day-to-day teaching.

**Attuned pedagogy through the “mutual absorption” relationship.** Generally, the two art teachers forged close relationships with students in the talented classes. The relationships made them have a “mutual absorption” (Armstrong, 2000) with students so as to attune (rather than respond) to a “holistic child.” It made the teachers see students as “being” more than human “beings.” In this regard, teachers can implement attuned pedagogy though the mutual absorption relationship. The two art teachers’ instructions provide us the following methods to establish the relationship.

The teachers and students in the talented classes shared a commitment to art. As Mrs Wen told me, “in the artistically talented class, we want to make students regard art as one of the possibilities in their careers. They can be artists. They can be ‘artists’ in other fields” (IN_Wei_02/95/2011). The teachers shared their expertise with students who were guided to regard art as a career possibility in the future; students were learning art excellently, engagingly,
ethically with the teachers who loved art as well. Confucius once discussed his commitment with his students:

Yan Yuan and Zi Lu being by his side, the Master said to them, "Come, let each of you tell his wishes." Zi Lu said, "I should like, having chariots and horses, and light fur clothes, to share with my friends, and though they should spoil them, I would not be displeased." Yan Yuan said, "I should like not to boast of my excellence, nor to make a display of my meritorious deeds." Zi Lu then said, "I should like, sir, to hear your wishes." The Master said, "They are, in regard to the aged, to give them rest; in regard to friends, to show them sincerity; in regard to the young, to treat them tenderly." (The Analects, 5:26)

In my sense, the sharing dialogue of commitment made the mutual connections between teachers’ expectations and students’ pursuits possible. It results in an educative moment and builds a learning community between teachers and students.

Time also could contribute to establish the mutual absorption relationship. As mentioned earlier, students in the talented classes had six art classes per week. Indeed, they didn’t just spend time working on art projects. When Mrs Wen listened to Lin’s love affair, she was touching the boy’s heart. When Mrs Pei struggled with guiding Yuan, she was dialoguing with the girl’s multiple artistic selves. It is more than transmitting techniques and knowledge. Besides, the art teachers in the talented classes taught the same group of students from the third to sixth grade. The four years of “prolonged engagement” in guiding those emerging artists made possible for them to be a “connoisseur” attuned to the individual students’ needs. As noted in the chapter on methodology, “‘Look into what a man does. See his motives. Examine in what things he rests. How can a man conceal his character? How can a man conceal his character?’” (The Analects, 2:10) Looking, seeing, examining, and then guiding make “attuned pedagogy” possible. In the development of art talent, the mutual absorption relationship by sharing commitments and prolonged engagement should be considered.
Exploring the Confucian heritage for differentiation practices. In this study, the term differentiation was not used by the two art teachers. Yet their responsive pedagogy presented how we attend to the diversity of students’ art learning in the Taiwanese education context. In the context of the Confucian heritage, I made meaning of the teachers’ responsive pedagogy and found connections between their practices and Confucianism.

Eisner (1985) pointed out, “[The] terms we use in educational discourse not only reflect different assumptions about the means and ends of education, but the terms cluster—that is, individual terms tend to have conceptual links to other terms” (p. 181). As shown, Jian Zi might be a term that captures the essence of giftedness in the Taiwanese context. I used Yi (fittingness, what is fitting in a specific circumstance) to interpret the two art teachers’ pedagogical considerations regarding the context they were situated in. Indeed, the two terms have “conceptual links” to the Chinese cultural assumption: nurturing a person who has both talent and virtue in a harmonic, interdependent, moral-orientated relationship.

“The school curricula and classroom ‘climates’ always reflect inarticulate cultural values as well as explicit plans” (Bruner, 1996, p. 27). Hence, it is meaningful for teachers to explore cultural beliefs, such as the Confucian heritage, and use them as conceptual and practical resources in implementing differentiation in classrooms. For instance, in the discussion group I joined in Taiwan and mentioned in the chapter on methodology, we discussed the Analects and read Bruner’s (1996) The culture of education closely. We reflected on what would constitute talent development education in Taiwan through a lens of our cultural beliefs. We are an inquiry group that aims to trace back to wisdom and richness from those ancient classics and figure out (or live up) their meanings in contemporary education in Taiwan.
Implications for Future Research

This study investigated two elementary-school art teachers’ responsive pedagogies for developing artistic talents in Taiwan. Specifically, I explored their modifications to the curriculum and instructional adjustments in response to the needs of diverse learners in art, including those identified as the artistically talented. The findings raised several questions for future inquiry.

In documenting the two art teachers’ approaches in their classrooms, I found that they did not always seem to respond appropriately to individual students’ needs. For instance, the art learning experiences gained in a studio outside school had an impact on the art of Zhe, a student in Mrs Pei’s class for the artistically talented. Winner (1996), Wilson (1995), and Sabol (2006) suggest that many students exhibit their art talents in activities outside the classroom and art teachers are often unaware of the students’ strength of expression beyond the classroom. Out-of-school art programs provide genuine connections to contemporary and personalized content that are less constricted by school mandates. It would be interesting to explore students’ with art talents learning experiences beyond a school setting and how those experiences could inform art teachers’ instruction in their classrooms.

In looking at the two teachers’ pedagogy, I found that student choice is a relevant instructional approach. Mrs Wen allowed students to select art forms based on their strengths in the National Art Competition project and she found that Lo was impressive in realistic drawings and deciphered things in amazing detail. Both Mrs Wen and Mrs Pei worked with another art teacher in the printmaking project and set up stationery work that initiated self-directed learning pathways for students in the artistically talented class. Yet, when students have a choice, does it mean that their choices challenge them appropriately? Is choice “flexible enough to permit free
play for individuality of experience and yet fixed enough to give direction towards continuous
development of power” (Dewey, 1938, p.65)?

As Hertzog (1995) suggests, “Once teachers become aware of their students’ learning
patterns [in open-ended activities], they may use this knowledge to make informed decisions
about curricular interventions. They may make conscious decisions to break learning patterns,
limit or increase choices, or manipulate the social structure as well as the academic pursuits of
students” (p. 200). I suggest that researchers document student “work” and “workings” of art
(learning patterns) as they generate themes, select materials, or operate art skills. In doing so,
teachers might figure out a balance between praising artistically talented art making styles and
expanding art visions by introducing new and unknown challenges.

In documenting the learning of talented students in both the general education setting and
the artistically talented program, this study reviews a critical issue in the field of gifted education.
According to Dai (2009), in a democratic society, there are concerns as to why only some
individuals or groups own privileged access to resources for achieving excellence and cultural
distinction, while others are marginalized or even disfranchised. He further raises the following
question: “[Shall] we still retain an identification system but use more inclusive criteria or should
we adopt a more radical ‘gifted education without gifted children’ approach that Borland
advocates?” (p. 70). I wondered if Ting, a high-potential art student in Mrs Wen’s general class,
could get a chance to join the enriched art projects in the artistically talented program to enable
her potential to blossom. Is it possible to shift the artistically talented program from a segregated
setting to a resource center that is open to students like Ting to enable them to take advanced art
courses with art teachers who have expertise and passion in drawing out students’ art potential?
This is an educational reform issue that needs to be addressed for gifted education in Taiwan.
By applying the Confucian heritage into this study, I found how richly Confucius’ wisdom could help me contextualize the teachers’ practices in a cultural lens. Culture is viewed as a dynamic system of sharing meaning, where conceptions of talent development are part of a shared repository of meaningful knowledge (Phillipson, 2007). As discussed earlier, Taiwan’s diverse cultural resources reflect Chinese, native Taiwanese, and Western cultures (Chen, 2006). Besides the Confucian heritage discussed in this study, it is worthwhile to study the commonality and the difference of differentiation practices influenced by other cultures in Taiwan. For instance, how teachers in the native Taiwanese education setting conceptualize students’ differences and in what way they consequently differentiate instruction.

Different cultural roots would shape what and how teachers respond to the diversity of students. In the field of gifted education, Borland and Wright (2000) argue that if the role of gifted education is to maintain each unique conception, then greater effort is needed to understand the various conceptions and to develop instruments for talent development that are dependent on cultures. Studying differentiation in a sociocultural perspective can deepen our understandings of the dynamic relationship between Taiwan’s multicultural resources and teachers’ implementation. For example, three girls in Mrs Wen’s artistically talented class were from the different cultural backgrounds of Korea, Mainland China, and Morocco. It would be meaningful to explore whether or in what way Mrs Wen’s teaching was akin to Confucianism as she attended to students with diverse cultural experiences.
Reflection

Wei-Ren: Is there any way that I can conceptualize my findings in the study?

Liora: Take your time. Think for a while. Think of why you came back to Taiwan to do this study. It (conceptualization) is a leap. Not step-by-step.

Wei-Ren: (say to myself in mind) It’s leap? But how far? (Dissertation discussion_02/17/2011)

How far? It’s really far!

While I was studying the conceptualization of Mrs Wen’s and Mrs Pei’s rich practices, my advisor Dr Bresler encouraged me to reflect on my reasons for conducting a study in Taiwan, my home country. The question motivated me to retrace and review my research intentions. Since differentiation is a concept advocated in America, why did I want to adopt and focus on it to make sense of the two art teachers’ teaching in Taiwan? And if differentiation is from other countries, why apply it to Taiwan where we already cherish and try to practice Confucius’s pedagogical belief of teaching in accordance with students’ characteristics (因材施教, Yin Cai Shi Jiao)?

Then I came to realize that maybe that is the way to gain an appreciation of the two art teachers’ responsive pedagogies in the context of the Confucian heritage. Confucius’s words in the Analects enabled me to “leap,” in Liora’s word, into the complexity of the two art teachers’ teaching.

Conceptually, I found the teachers’ differentiated curricula for students in the program for the artistically talented seemed to reflect the concept of Jian Zi or superior person possessing both talent and virtue in Chinese culture since they draw on creating an artist who promotes his talent and at the same time is sensitive to human concerns. In practical terms, with regard to students’ uniqueness in interdependent classroom dynamics, the two teachers were involved in a
pull between excellence and integration; that is, pooling individual energies into group efforts without breaking down the fluidity of classroom interactions. It is like what Confucius said about Jian Zi: harmony but not uniformity. Then, in taking into account individual students’ unique learning profiles for disciplined learning, the teachers’ personalized guidance supported students to become Jian Zís having both accomplishments and solid qualities.

Indeed, gifted education in Taiwan is highly influenced by the same field as in the United States. Even Wu (2000) claimed that the main factors contributing to the development of gifted education in Taiwan includes the educational philosophy of teaching according to individual differences and a society that values intellectuals and wisdom. In my sense, we rarely think about talent development from our cultural perspectives. Confucius’s notion of being, doing, and becoming a Jian Zi provided a perspective to reframe my conception of giftedness based on the interpretation of the two art teachers’ responsive pedagogies. As Hugo (cited in Said, 1991) states,

It is therefore, a source of great virtue for the practiced mind to learn, bit by bit, first to change about invisible and transitory things, so that afterwards it may be able to leave them behind altogether. The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign land. The tender soul has fixed his love on one spot in the world; the strong man has extended his love to all places; the perfect man has extinguished his. (p. 365)

By contemplating the possible linkage of the art teachers’ responsive pedagogies and the Confucian heritage, I hope I am initiating an intellectual, aesthetic, and spiritual journey that informs me to be “a tender beginner,” to “a strong man,” to “a perfect man” in the field of gifted education.

How far? Not so far.
References


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Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (pp. 119-161). New York, NY: Macmillan.


Appendix A

Interview Questions

Teacher Interview Questions

Background information and art experience

1. What types of teaching experiences have you had other than the present school in which you are teaching?
2. Types of training: in gifted education, art education, or other inservices
3. Perceptions or experiences on gifted/talent education
   (1) How many years have you served as a specialist in the artistically talented program? Why do you choose to teach in the program?
   (2) In your experiences, how can we nurture students’ art talents?
   (3) What do you see artistically talented education in this school? What suggestions do you have?
4. Perceptions or experience on art education
   (1) Can you tell me about your own art experiences?
   (2) What arts subjects do you teach? Tell me about your impressive teaching experiences in relation to the arts (could be in or outside school).

Art Curriculum Design

1. How would you describe art curricula for all students, including those identified as the artistically talented?
2. What is your purpose of providing such art curricula?
3. How do art curricula fit the needs of various students in your classrooms, including both the talented and general classes you teach?
4. What is involved in your decision process when you design art curricula?
5. How do you see your role when students are engaged in art learning?
Principal and Administrator Interview Questions

1. How many years do you serve as a principle/administrator in this school? What is your educational goal as a leader of the school?

2. Tell me about the artistically talented program in this school. What are your perspectives as supervising the program?

3. What do you see that art education became the school’s feature? Why do you think so?
Appendix B

Contact Summary Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Time:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site:</td>
<td>Event:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- A brief description of events and people.

- Salient points which impress me.

- Reflection on interactions with participants, methods, subjectivities…

- Questions or issues in further fieldwork.

- Basic codes that I could use for this field-observation.