



Growing Roots, Stretching Wings: An Exploration of Identity and Voice for English Learners

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Introduction

While discussing her most recent novel, *Refuge*, on NPR's "All Things Considered", Dina Nayeri recalled a professor once telling her, "you can either have roots or wings, but if you try to have both, you're probably going to fail." This metaphor of giving a child roots and wings is one I have heard from time to time throughout my teaching career. It wasn't until I heard Nayeri's words, however, that I considered how to balance the two. Parents help their children establish "roots" as a way of understanding their past while nurturing the growth of "wings" that will enable them to soar freely in the future. It is a beautiful metaphor to describe both the role of a parent and a child. For my tenth grade students, who recently immigrated to the United States, this metaphor is also a poignant reminder of how accelerated their growth into adulthood has become--leaving home not as a choice, but as the sole option for survival.

Is it really impossible to sustain both the nurturing of strong roots in our lives and planning pathways to the future? This is a notion that my newcomer students grapple with as they construct new lives in the United States. Coming from over 32 different countries around the globe, many of my students have endured the pain of severed roots through years of war or felt their roots slowly poisoned by the infiltration of gang violence.¹ These destructive forces have shaped many of my students' early childhood experiences, yet they still carry with them the places and people they come from. When faced with a dilemma, I have witnessed my students draw upon their strong roots--nurtured in the richness of cultural values, family traditions, spiritual beliefs, and the languages of the places they call home to guide them. These roots often rise to the surface as my students navigate the new landscape their wings have taken them to in Oakland, California.

As recent immigrants, my students are continuously swaying between the past and the present while a future full of uncertainty hovers above them. When they first arrive, my students are immersed in newness; where they live, the people they see, what they eat, the language they hear and must now learn how to speak are all part of the present. Just a short time before, sometimes just a few weeks, they were living a completely different life in a different place that has now become part of the past. When the present quickly dissolves into the past, the uncertainty of the future raises questions that cannot be answered. Will I be allowed to stay in this country, in this apartment, in this school, in this job? I cannot help but wonder how this rapid change and often letting parts of themselves drift away impact my students' perceptions of themselves. If everything is

new how can they not feel confusion about their identity? Levine says, “Identities are never finally established; rather, they are always in the process of being constructed and reconstructed”.² This dilemma, coupled with changes and transitions that mark adolescence, causes me to wonder how I can guide my students to find that balance.

As a teacher of English Learners my responsibility is to immerse my students in reading, writing, listening, and speaking experiences to help them develop strong English communication skills as quickly as possible. The way I do this through my teaching practice is to integrate language activities into art-making using Art Based Research. Every class that I teach is rooted not only in a Visual Art content objective but also an English language objective. Through hands on art-making my students are building upon their experiences and growing individually as both verbal and visual communicators. Through this unit my students will read passages of immigrant narratives that are similar to their own experiences. While they read, students will identify the perspective each story is told from and practice writing about themselves in first, second, and third person point of view. Each point of view that students explore will also deepen their understanding and use of pronouns. Through careful reading and discussion students will also consider how time is described in the passages they read and write letters to themselves in the past, present, and future while strengthening knowledge of verb tense. Utilizing prior drawing and painting skills to illustrate their writing, students will examine how color, texture, and shape can tell stories visually. As a culminating project, students will first record themselves reading the three passages they wrote to their past, present, and future selves. After transferring their recordings to sound chips, students will imbed these chips into sculptural mobiles that will balance images, colors, textures, and shapes to tell the stories of each student.

Background

My school, Oakland International High School (OIHS), is an alternative public high school within the Oakland Unified School District and a member of the Internationals Network of Public Schools, a non-profit organization that grew out of the work of a group of International high schools in New York City. All teachers at OIHS are language acquisition teachers serving 100% English Learners and recent arrivals to the United States. Students in my school come from 32 different countries and speak over 30 different languages combined. Many of our students are transnational, meaning they have lived in multiple countries and may therefore more closely identify with countries other than those of their parents. Approximately 30% of our students are undocumented, 15% of students are refugees, and 12% are asylees, individuals who have fled their country due to persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. 27% of our students are unaccompanied minors who crossed the border into the United States without parents and were apprehended by immigration authorities. About 12% of our students have lived apart from their parents for five or more years. Over 95% percent of students qualify for free/reduced lunch. Students at OIHS come from more that twelve Oakland zip codes and 40% of students have a daily commute to school longer than 45 minutes. When asked, 32% of students said they worked to support their family and 11% say that they miss school often because of work.³⁴

While these statistics help paint a picture of my students, perhaps the most significant fact to consider when trying to meet their individual learning needs is that approximately 44% of OIHS students are classified as SIFE, 2 students with interrupted formal education, who have a gap of over two years in their formal

educational settings. To meet the unique needs of recent immigrants, who have historically been underserved, teachers at my school follow the Internationals Approach Model and believe that English language acquisition is best fostered in an academic environment in which students participate in heterogeneous groupings, engage in project-based curriculum, and experience English development integrated into all content areas. To ensure that students begin with a strong foundation of support, for their first two years at OIHS they remain with the same team of five teachers.⁵ For this reason the ninth and tenth grade students are combined in classes together, and the curriculum for all their academic classes loops on a two-year cycle. Students have a Visual Arts class only during their tenth grade year.

Content Objectives: The Power of a Narrative

When I read or hear aloud the stories of others, I usually cannot help but transport myself into the role of the storyteller. Even if their narrative is completely different from my life experience, I feel compelled to try to look at the world from someone else's perspective. I think that many of us find ourselves trying on the lives of others while keeping parts of our personal lens still on and focused on what happens next to someone else. I suppose this isn't authentically taking on someone else's perspective, but I think it is within our nature to look at someone else's journey like this because it how we relate to each other. I would like my students to immerse themselves in the stories of others as they explore telling their own stories and understand how the arts, both written and visual, enable people to reach each other. As they are reading, I want my students to consider what it feels like to be the person whose story they get to be woven into for a few short pages. My hope is that my students do not just see characters, but begin to see and understand the humans before them, and ultimately that is what humanizes all of us.

This unit intertwines reading portions of Thi Bui's Illustrated Memoir *The Best We Could Do* with writing and art-making exercises that guide students to tell the stories of their own journeys through spoken word and visual art. Similar to Bui and her family, my students have moved away from the roots of the places and people they knew as home and journeyed to this country on wings that were in some cases on their maiden voyage and perhaps not quite ready to fly. Although this story begins in Vietnam, a country where only a few of my students are from, the thread I anticipate my students weaving for themselves as we read is that they can see parts of their personal stories in the story of the Bui family despite differences in geography and time. Like their stories, this is one of roots and wings.

As my students are reading they will identify two literary devices: the voice or perspective the author uses to tell the story and setting, with a focus on the past, present, and future tense verbs. Additionally, while reading, students will be guided through four writing and art-making exercises to help connect the text they are reading with events in their own lives. Each exercise will correspond to a different moment in the story that students can clearly relate to their own experiences: the family's decision to leave Vietnam, the rough journey on the boat, and life in the United States. Following reading portions of the graphic novel students will complete a final writing and art-making exercise as they envision their future. Students will then edit their texts while applying their growing knowledge of past tense verbs and use of pronouns. Next students will select three passages to record onto a sound chip that they will imbed into a wire and fabric mobile. Each student's mobile will have three balancing components, representing three time periods in their life through their spoken words and images that came from their sketchbook work.

Graphic Novels

Graphic novels have the power to reach a diverse audience, and for my adolescent English Learners they often provide access to texts that are out of reach while deepening my students' understanding of language. With complex plots and powerful juxtapositions of text and images I have come to rely on graphic novels to help me teach students who are at multiple reading levels at the same time. As a visual arts teacher I closely identify with the way both Bui tells her family's story through strong images. Bui's illustrations are full of delicate black pen lines and brushstrokes that allow for variations in value with hints of watercolor washes that blend text and image seamlessly.

Scott McCloud, author of *Understanding Comics*, discusses using words and images interchangeably when we were children and acquiring and mastering language, and he claims that it really didn't matter if at the time you used words or images or even a combination to communicate with others.⁶ For my students, who are developing their use of the English language, using words and images interchangeably not only often helps them get their point across to others, but it is also how they make meaning of what they are learning. Bui unites text and image to tell her story, varying the relationship between text and image throughout her book. Sometimes images are as McCloud describes, "word specific" when a picture doesn't bring anything significant to the reader's comprehension of the text. Often my students rely heavily on what McCloud calls "picture specific" combinations to communicate when words add only a little background to the storytelling, a strategy that Bui employs through her narrative. McCloud also identifies what he calls "duo-specific" illustrations, in which words and text take a parallel approach to delivering a message.⁷

It is in her duo-specific illustrations where Bui's work takes on more complex messaging. Through these frames her storytelling becomes more layered, not just by a balance of text and image, but in the way text is broken down and communicated. Bui utilizes a basic comic anatomy, with captions, speech bubbles or word balloons. Captions, where words appear in a box isolated from the rest of the panel, allow for narration and sometimes for clarification of characters' thoughts where a word balloon or speech bubble gives each character's voice an opportunity to be heard. This simple structure allows readers to absorb a great deal of information about each story as they read and one that I plan to break down for my students as we are reading aloud and in small groups by assigning different students to take on different portions of the text. For example, one student could assume the voice of the narrator as they read the captions, which are often incased in rectangles. Other students could take on the words of different characters that are clearly marked by text balloons that point to the person who is speaking. By dissecting this comic structure, there is an opportunity for our class read aloud activities to have a more engaging performance quality. Reading aloud for English Learners affords students time to not only practice pronunciation and fluency, it also invites them to listen to English being spoken by others and reflect upon what they are hearing.

The Best We Could Do: An Illustrated Memoir

Thi Bui details her family's journey from Vietnam to the United States at the end of the Vietnam War through a powerfully illustrated graphic novel. Vivid textures and lush scenes are poetically depicted through black pen and ink drawings that layer atop washes of warm rust-colored tones. Bui's use of the warm washes varies from heavy and deeply saturated to lighter cloudlike textures on a page, challenging the reader's perception of each scene's emotion. Bui's approach to composition brings the reader along on her family's journey. The

number of frames per page ranges throughout the book from nine equally sized rectangular boxes to not just a full page, but one luxurious double page image that soothes us into taking breathing in the moment just as a character might. Bui's use of scale in this manner also plays with the reader's sense of levity within the heaviness that permeates a story that is ultimately about a family's at times desperate survival.

The text of *The Best We Could Do* presents readers with the often uncomfortable interactions of the Bui family as they navigate a new culture while trying to sustain their family dynamics. Throughout the book, readers are carried to different time periods in the past through the voices of each family member's recollections of the past. The book begins by jolting readers into a New York City hospital room, where Bui is enduring an agonizingly long labor with her son. Her uncomfortable and frustrating hospital stay gives way to an abrupt shift ahead to several years later in Berkeley, California where her family is remembering events that shaped their early years in the United States. As recalling builds for the family, the reader is taken back to Vietnam to Bui's parent's, Bõ and Má's, childhood. The author's voice is heard throughout the book as Bui's narrations jump back and forth from her recollections of events to reconstructed moments she's been told about from before she was born. Bui invites readers to step back as she does at times and listen to the conversations of family members from the third person. Occasionally Bui shifts the perspective again with examples of dialog that slips into the second person. Bui supports readers' understanding of the Vietnam War throughout the memoir by explaining historical events in separate frames. Almost totally solid black backgrounds with white text laid on top fill these frames. These stand-alone frames do not necessarily interrupt the family dialog, rather they add context to the conversations they share a page with.

Through this unit students will focus their reading on the family's departure from Vietnam and their experiences rebuilding their lives in the United States in the last quarter of the book (pages 215-329). We will begin our reading as Bõ and Má are making the difficult decision to leave Vietnam. The reader is instantly brought into the tension of the decision to begin the family's departure preparations by boat without letting on to others that they are in fact leaving Vietnam for good. Bõ and Má's words to each other completely fill multiple round, white speech bubbles that collect and sometimes overwhelm the individual frames on the page. These frames contain a great deal of text and convey the anxiety that Bõ and Má must feel at this desperate moment, as each text bubble seems to come from several different directions at the same time. For readers who learned to read from left to right, this is not quite as disorienting, but some of my students, who are learning to reading in this linear direction, may need some guidance.

I believe that all readers, and in particular my students will identify with the fear and anguish Má feels as she worries that the books they own and clothes they wear may be scrutinized by communist soldiers at any moment as capitalist propaganda. It is at this moment that the things the Bui family has filled their home with are no longer simply things. They have become liabilities because they represent something greater: independent thinking. Má assuages her own fears at this point in the narrative as she calls out to her older daughters to read as many books as they can now before they all "get burned".

Upon reading about the Bui family's decision to leave Vietnam I plan to facilitate a discussion and writing exercise with students about when they or their family made the decision to leave their home country. Some students may have been involved in the conversation to leave, while others may have been just been told and possibly abruptly that they were leaving the places they called home. Whatever events led to my students' departures, the act of preparing to leave is a significant memory to honor and allow space for reflection through writing and drawing or painting within the private pages of sketchbooks.

As we return to the reading the text during a different lesson, we are invited along as the Bui family manages

to get themselves on a departing boat that suddenly has no captain. During this ordeal, Bõ becomes less of a fragile character as he's been previously described as he heroically pilots the boat through international waters and safely to Malaysia--although not without being thrown off the boat and separated from his family by the ocean's menacing current. He is weakened by this journey, physically and psychologically, and this reaffirms Má's role as the parent who makes things happen for not just the Bui family, but for other refugees trying to find their way as well. Má makes sure that the family is registered for the proper documentation, has food to eat, and a safe place to sleep. She speaks more English than most of the other refugees and is called upon to help translate, often leaving open the possibility of her own family's demise. The family is separated a few times, but eventually they are reunited and join Má's sister's family in Hammond, Indiana.

While reading about the family's journey to the United States, I anticipate that my students will reflect upon their own travels, many of which were very traumatic. Some of my students traveled with their families through several other countries to arrive in the United States. Other students began their journeys with their parents and were separated, leaving them orphans in a new and strange country, while several of my students began their travels alone or with other children whose journeys took them across a dangerous network of secret pathways. As with the Bui family, each of my students experienced the feeling of not knowing what would happen to them next.

Taking inspiration from Phoebe Gloeckner's lesson "Writing About Painful Things" in *Don't Forget to Write: 50 Enthralling and Effective Writing Lessons Ages 11 and Up* by 826 National, I plan to invite my students to take some meaningful time to write, draw, or paint about their crossing into the United States. Gloeckner acknowledges that "writing is hard" and because it is hard "it is worth it". She goes on to inspire young writers in a powerful way that I believe will speak to my students"

Here's why it's worth it: writing is about love. It really is. It's about loving life, and wanting to preserve it, cling to it, understand it. You want to distill experience, and make it like the earth makes diamonds from coal: you want to compress it until it's this moment in life that people can understand. Not necessarily understand you -just understand something. When my work is done it's not me. If it has any life at all, it's because of people who read it. Writing is about love, and feeling happy to be alive, but being aware all the time of life's fragility and impermanence.⁸

The components of Gloeckner's lesson are written more like advice to writers rather than how to write about pain. She instills the value of giving some distance between one's self and one's writing, and absolves any writer of feeling that they always have to tell the truth, instead giving acceptance to changing a story. Perhaps the piece of guidance she offers that may be the most influential to my students is that even in the most painful stories, not everything has to be negative or sad.

In the final portion of the book we will read we find the Bui family out-migrating as Bõ and Má are busy taking night classes, the older girls begin attending school. Despite their best efforts, the family stands out as the newcomers they are when the children are teased by their cousins for dressing and eating like "refugees". Life in the Midwest is difficult for the family to adjust to. The allure of the first snowy days of winter fade as the family is plagued by recurring bouts with pneumonia and a declaration is made that it's time "for the family to make their own way" and move to San Diego, California.

Life in San Diego is much different for the Bui Family. They quickly find an apartment of their own, and begin to fill that home with things that represent their "America" -a Christmas tree, a television, and numerous toys.

Má is working many hours at a low paying job and while the older girls are in school Bui and her younger brother are at home and stay indoors with Bõ much of the time. During these early days in California it becomes clear to the reader through Bui's childhood recollections that while Má is thriving at night school and advancing in her career, Bõ is challenged by his new surroundings and there are hints that he is haunted by the past. In one frame both of Thi's parents are seen giving advice. The caption reads, "We learned what was important to survive." Each parent is seen with a similar look of concern on their face, yet their lesson for survival was drastically different. Má's speech bubble cheerfully reads, " Always be the best in your class!" while Bõ's cautions in slightly larger and bolder letters, "Lock the door!" The Bui's life in America is now about blending the new with the old, not only in the things that fill their apartment, but in the words and values that Bui's parents instill in her and her siblings.

The Bui family's "most important possession" is a brown file folder. In it are birth certificates, green cards, and social security cards. As each child entered school they received a brown folder of their own to hold report cards, certificates, and class pictures. One evening when Bui is fourteen years old, the family is startled by a commotion outside of their apartment and the words "GET THE PEOPLE UPSTAIRS!" This is one of the few times Bui uses all capital letters, so the reader knows that something terrible is about to happen and that the family is in great danger. Bui explains that a "normal response" would be to see what was happening, but her family's was to immediately lock the door and rush to the bedroom to hide. However, a loud booming sound alerts them to a fire outside and using a few small frames, Bui depicts her family hastily escaping down the stairs of their second floor apartment clutching their essential brown file folder. The next page is filled with just two frames divided in half by a horizon of waves and a small folded paper boat adrift between them. The top image is filled with firefighters hosing down what is presumably the outside of family's charred apartment building alongside paramedics loading a patient strapped to gurney into a waiting ambulance. The lower image is of an empty, but smoke filled bedroom inside the apartment. The text that cascades down on this page uniting the two opposite frames in addition to the frames on the preceding page detailing the family's escape are not incased in caption boxes as most narration throughout the book is; rather these words are floating within roughly wiped away negative spaces on the page, as if Bui herself had to wipe the smoke and soot from the fire away to tell us this part of her family's journey. The words Bui chooses to tell the story of this night are perhaps universal to many immigrants whose stories of survival have no real permanent end.

This is the night I learned what my parents had been preparing me for my whole life. This-not any particular piece of my Vietnamese culture-is my inheritance: the inexplicable need and extraordinary ability to RUN when the shit hits the fan. My Refugee Reflex.⁹

This realization is powerful and leaves the reader holding their breath for a moment, but this feeling is immediately tempered when we turn the page to see the Bui family returning to their smoke-filled home, discovering that everything inside their apartment is just as they left it. Safe inside, we see can see the family looking weary as the file folder of documents is put away and everyone goes to sleep. This moment, when everything that was once thrown up in the air is now safely back in its place may seem anticlimactic, but then we as readers realize that the "refugee reflex" as Bui calls it is cyclical. It will be activated again, and for her and her family everything will be thrown up in the air again, and again, and again.

This notion of a "refugee reflex" or a trigger is a mighty driving force within many of my students. It is what causes them to halt when the rest of the world urges them to keep moving, but it also what propels them to persevere through the unimaginable.

Teaching Strategies

Art Based Research

The practice of making art to form a greater sense of self and understanding of the world is not a new concept in Art Education. However, examining Art practice as research asks educators to look at art-making under a new lens: that of art-making as a form of inquiry. As art educators guide students to develop an inquiry focus within classroom learning experiences, students establish a personal focus in their work and greater understanding of how their work is connected to a larger world. Marshall and D'Adamo suggest that an Art-based research practice that borrows from three well established approaches in education--experiential learning, inquiry-based learning, and project-based learning--has the power to engage students in a learning journey that "introduces the celebration of personal interpretation or subjectivity in a realm that often strives for clarity and objectivity."¹⁰

Concept Mapping

Students create visual and verbal connections to ideas, facts, and thoughts. As they reflect on their experiences and envision their futures, students will represent observations of places, people, and events. By connecting images and words or sentences English Learners are constructing meaning and understanding of concepts and ideas. Conversations rooted within the concept maps allow students to share their thinking verbally and visually.

Making Learning Visible

Wall space within the classroom to post student observations, questions, notes, photos, artwork, and newly discovered information about the topic that students are exploring is ongoing. This visual representation of student learning expands as student knowledge grows through out the unit.

Pre-Teaching Vocabulary

Pre-teaching vocabulary that is new for English Learners can help lay the foundation for deepening understanding of a text and help students build upon their vocabulary.

First choose a few new words from a text that will be read by students. Create a slide or poster with: the new vocabulary word in large bold print, a student friendly definition, a visual illustration that represents the word, and a sentence using the word in context. Then explicitly teach each word by engaging students in dialog, using gestures, and connecting text to world examples while expanding on word meanings. Provide students with time to practice saying the new word, writing sentences with the new word, and speaking to other students using the new word. Keeping new words on a word wall can remind students of the new vocabulary words they are learning.

Visible Thinking

Think, Pair, Share

Think Pair Share involves posing a question to students, asking them to take a few minutes of thinking time and then turning to a nearby student to share their thoughts.

This routine encourages students to think about something, such as a problem, question or topic, and then articulate their thoughts. The Think Pair Share routine promotes understanding through active reasoning and explanation. Because students are listening to and sharing ideas, Think Pair Share encourages students to understand multiple perspectives.

See, Think, Wonder

This routine encourages students to make careful observations and thoughtful interpretations. It helps stimulate curiosity and sets the stage for inquiry.

The routine works best when a student responds by using the three stems together at the same time, i.e., "I see..., I think..., I wonder...." However, you may find that students begin by using one stem at a time, and that you need to scaffold each response with a follow up question for the next stem.

Visual Thinking Strategies

Using the three VTS questions: What's happening in this picture? What makes you say that? What more can we find? Students will draw out information from photographs and artwork depicting migration. These questions take the emphasis off of a dissemination of facts and focuses on a student directed conversation that encourages observation, and inference. During VTS discussion, teachers only ask the three stated questions, leaving opportunities for quiet observation and debate among students. As a classroom routine, this practice deepens student critical thinking, vocabulary, and communication skills.

Classroom Activities

Writing Activities

My Story

Students are encouraged to reflect through out this unit and what they chose to reflect upon is up to them. Intertwined with the passages they read of *The Best We Could Do*, student will be asked to pause and connect with their own experiences. Each writing exercise will correspond to a different moment in the story that students can clearly relate to their own experiences: the family's decision to leave Vietnam, the rough journey on the boat, and adjusting to life in the United States. Following reading these portions of the graphic novel students will complete one final writing and art making exercise as they envision their future. Each of the four writing experiences will follow similar steps encouraging students to visit the past, present, or future. What may seem like repetition can actually help guide English Learners to understand new vocabulary, grammar, and content concepts better. Each time students are asked to write they will also be encouraged to draw, paint, or collage an illustration to accompany their writing. As they are reflecting and creating, students will be encouraged to consider vivid sensory images: a smell, a taste, a sound, a physical feeling, or something they saw to enrich their writing and illustrations.

Grammar: Past, Present, Future Tense Verbs

Verb tense can be very confusing for English Learners. In my art classes I've found some of the biggest

confusion is linked to the fact that many of the verbs we use are also nouns. For example, the word *brush* is a noun referring to a tool to apply paint with, and *brush* is also a verb when we are using it to apply paint. My attempts have brought me to explicitly pre-teaching anticipated new verbs in my classes. I follow some best practices for pre-teaching vocabulary, create a physical poster to hang on our wall, and refer back to it and word to text connections constantly so that students are immersed in practicing using that new verb. It takes a lot of practice, so I tend to limit new verbs. For this unit, I anticipate that many new verbs for students to master will come from the text of *The Best We Could Do* in addition to verbs they generate once they begin writing.

Grammar Pronoun Use

Students will immerse themselves in pronoun use activities as they play matching games in small groups and in teams as a whole class, in addition to partner activities. These exercises will encourage students to select the appropriate pronoun for different contexts and practice speaking and writing sentences using pronouns.

Editing Writing and electing passages to record and illustrate

Upon completing writing exercises that focus on the past, present, and future. Students will select three writings that they want to edit, record, and illustrate in their culminating mobile project. As a way of deepening student understanding of pronoun use, students will be encouraged to think flexibly about these editing exercises and to consider rewriting their original text to reflect a change in voice. For example when writing about their future, a student could write from the perspective of their future child who is addressing them and their experience.

Read, Record, Listen, Re-record

Reading texts aloud is a valuable practice to support students who are developing their reading comprehension skills. To hear proper pronunciation and tone can help students not only build their comprehension of content, but for ELLs, it can also help with English language development. Throughout this unit, students will hear teachers and peers read texts aloud, but they must also hear themselves reading aloud. Using smartphones and voice recorders students will record themselves reading three passages they have written and edited. In addition to perfecting their pronunciation, fluency, and volume student will learn what makes a technically strong recording with regard to clarity, sound quality, and background noise. Upon achieving quality recordings of their three written passages, students will upload their recordings onto a laptop and transfer their recording onto a sound chip via a USB drive. The sound chip will ultimately be imbedded within their culminating mobile project.

Art-Making Activities

Material Exploration: Wire

Students will explore how wire bends, moves, and how to change the shape of wire by making simple constructions. Once students understand how to manipulate wire, a teacher led demonstration on how to connect pieces of wire together will take place.

Material Exploration: Fabric

Students will examine how fabric can be deconstructed, cut, and reshaped as they learn how to sew and stuff fabric to create depth. As needed, a teacher will lead demonstrations on cutting and stitching techniques will

guide students understanding of ways to manipulate fabric.

Imbedding Sound Recordings

Upon creating quality digital recordings of themselves reading, students will transfer their digital files via USB to a recordable sound chip. Students will choose how their recording will play on the sound chip. For example different recordable sound chips can be activated through touch, motion sensor, or light sensor. As they are selecting their sound chip, students will consider how they want a viewer to interact with their mobile. After transferring their recording onto the sound chip, students will select a location for the chip to be attached on their mobile.

Culminating Project: Narrative Mobile

Students will draw upon all aspects of their writing and art-making experiences to create a three tier mobile that reflects images and stories from their past, present, and future. The mobile will consist of three tree branches that are hung together with fishing line. The branches will be balanced and allow for fluid movement. Upon each branch are images or textures that reflect different moments in a student's story. Images and textures can be created with wire, fabric, or paper. Students will consider the geometry of the shapes they are constructing as well as balancing the weight of their materials. In addition to the physical construction of their mobile, students will need to think carefully about where and how they will imbed a sound chip that contains recording of them reading their story aloud.

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Appendix

Images

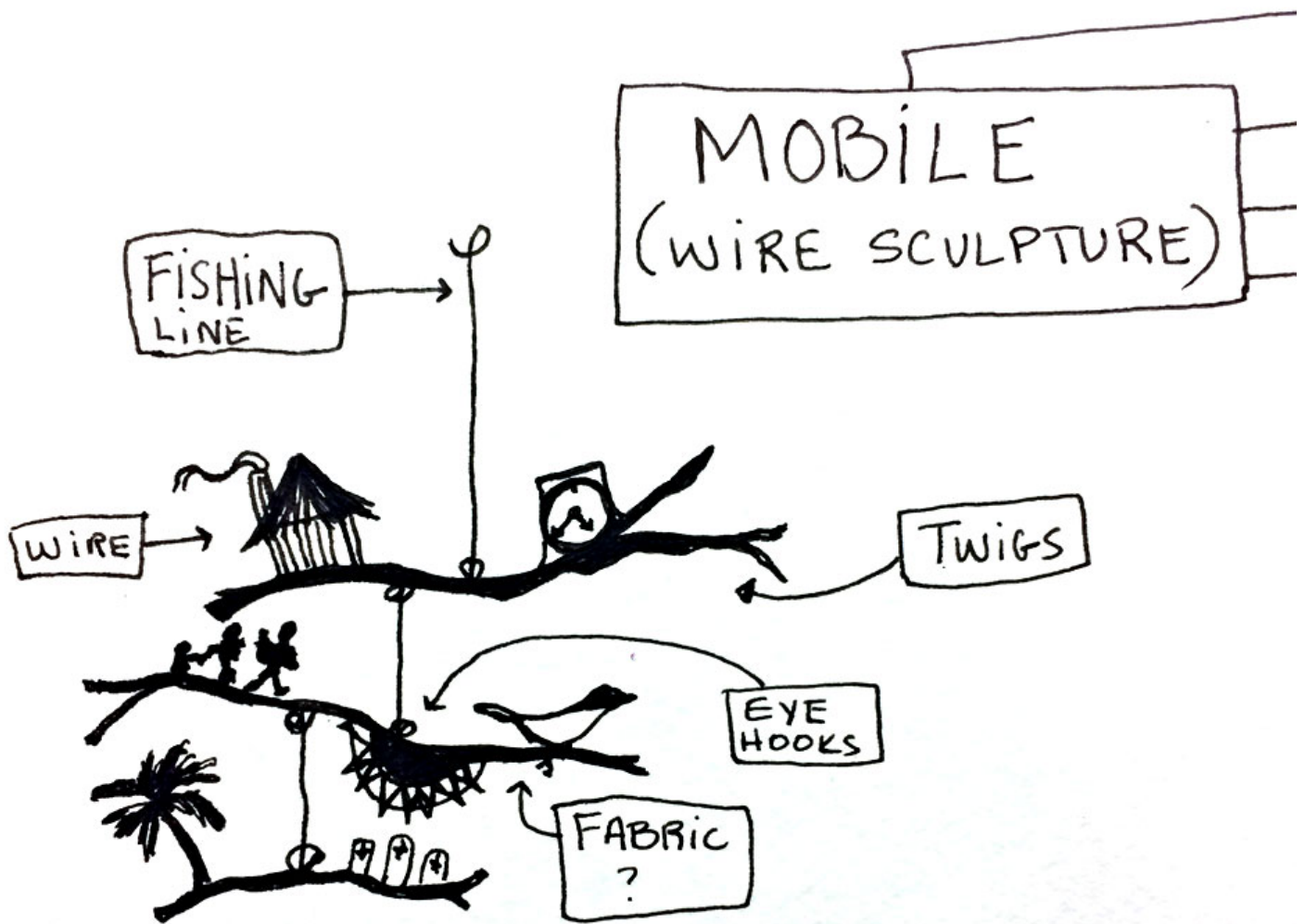


Figure 1: Sketch of culminating mobile project.

Teaching Standards

As a Studio Thinking Framework Classroom, my students are familiar with the eight Studio Habits of Mind and incorporate them into their daily studio practice. The Studio Habits of Mind are: Develop Craft, Engage and Persist, Envision, Express, Observe, Reflect, Stretch and Explore, and Understanding the Art World. Much of

what the Studio Habits of Mind bring to my classroom is a language for us to communicate about our individual and collaborative learning experiences about art and through art making. The Studio Habits of Mind are a critical part of my classroom structure and support my teaching of the California State Standards for Visual Arts.

California State Standards for the Visual Arts

1.1 Identify and use the principles of design to discuss, analyze, and write about visual aspects in the environment and in works of art, including their own.

1.4 Analyze and describe how the composition of a work of art is affected by the use of a particular principle of design.

2.1 Solve a visual arts problem that involves the effective use of the elements of art and the principles of design.

2.6 Create a two-or three-dimensional work of art that addresses a social issue.

3.4 Discuss the purposes of art in selected contemporary cultures.

4.1 Articulate how personal beliefs, cultural traditions, and current social, economic, and political contexts influence the interpretation of the meaning or message in a work of art.

4.4 Articulate the process and rationale for refining and reworking one of their own works of art.

5.2 Create a work of art that communicates a cross-cultural or universal theme taken from literature or history.

Endnotes

1. Oakland Unified School District, Enrollment Data 2016.
2. Charles Levine, "What Happened to Agency? Some Observations Concerning the Postmodern Perspective on Identity," *Identity* 5, no. 2 (2005)
3. IBID.,1.
4. Oakland International High School,11th Grade Survey 2016.
5. "Oakland International High School." *Oakland International High School*.
6. Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*. Ch. 6.
7. IBID., 4.
8. Jennifer Traig, ed., *Don't Forget to Write for the Secondary Grades: 50 Enthralling and Effective Writing Lessons (Ages 11 and Up)* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 39
9. Thi Bui, *The best we could do an illustrated memoir* (New York: Abrams Comicarts, 2017), 304-305.
10. Julia Marshall and Kimberley D'Adamo, "Art Practice as Research in the Classroom: A New Paradigm in Art Education," 12.

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