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THE HAPPINESS WORKSHOP FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS:
THE EXPERIENCE OF LEARNING FLOW
THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHIC STORYTELLING

by

Karen M. Meyer

An Applied Research Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
Specialization: Applied Psychology

REGIS UNIVERSITY

August, 2021

THE HAPPINESS WORKSHOP FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS:
THE EXPERIENCE OF LEARNING FLOW
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Abstract

The Happiness Workshop for Middle School Students:

The Experience of Learning Flow through Photographic Storytelling

The aim of this research project is to fill a gap in understanding regarding the benefits of learning flow experiences for adolescents, and in particular, middle school students in educational settings. The workshop model contained in this document uses photographic storytelling as a creative activity for middle school students to experience flow. What has not been covered is an application for learning flow experiences in a content specific subject such as math which has been identified as a topic for future research. The research contained in this study provides evidence to support the need for incorporating flow experiences for students in classroom settings, to achieve academic learning and success.

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CHAPTER 1

Saint Pope John Paul II shared his desire for the people of the world in his letter to artists when he wrote: “The (genuine) intuition itself springs from the depths of the human soul, where the desire to give meaning to one's own life is joined by the fleeting vision of beauty and of the mysterious unity of things” (1999, para. 20). It is from this place of giving meaning to one’s own life that this project was conceived in the mysterious combining of ideas into something concrete intended to promote eudaimonia or, more commonly, happiness.

The Happiness Workshop Defined

This applied research project, called *The Happiness Workshop* (THW) will develop a new curriculum at the middle school level, focusing on learning flow and creativity, using the process of photographic storytelling for the purpose of promoting eudaimonia (happiness) for adolescents. Csikszentmihalyi (2014) defines learning flow as the feeling or experience one gets when one is doing something so enjoyable such as a learning activity, one wants to continue it for its own sake, repeatedly. Time has a way of either expanding or contracting because one is completely absorbed in the enjoyable learning activity. This new curriculum will be designed as a 2-day immersive workshop experience for 10 – 12, students all in the same middle school grade level. The curriculum for students in grades six, seven and eight, will align with the Archdiocese of Denver (AoD) 2020 objectives and standards for Language Arts as well as the 2021 Catechesis and Theology objectives and standards (<https://archden.org/schools/office-catholic-schools/curricula/>). Upon completion of this project, the new curriculum will be presented to Ms. Lisa Taylor, principal of Our Lady of Fatima Catholic School (OLF) in Lakewood, Colorado. The presentation will have four primary goals. First, to introduce the

concept of flow theory and learning flow. Second, to identify the benefits of learning flow for students and teachers. Third, to identify the importance of creative activities for student success. Lastly, to identify the specific 2020 Language Arts and 2021 Catechesis and Theology objectives and standards set forth by the AoD which align with THW for students in grades six, seven and eight. Together these four goals will provide evidence to support incorporating this new curriculum into existing curricula at the middle school level. Ms. Taylor, as the primary decision-maker, will determine the feasibility, merit, and need for incorporating THW into existing curricula. It is foreseeable that there are several outcomes of the presentation. One outcome is a conditional acceptance based on specific criteria to be identified following the presentation for implementation of THW in either the Fall or Spring semester of the 2021 –2022 school year or a future school year. It is important to note that implementation of the curriculum cannot occur without approval from a primary decision-maker.

THW will provide opportunities for teachers to learn about and understand their students on a deeper level as they engage with and guide each individual student to tell their personal stories using photographic storytelling (Haines, 2015). Through the processes of writing and then translating their personal stories using photographs, students establish their own perception of who they are, from their own point of view, providing insight into how they negotiate peer relationships and make sense of one another (Kluth et al., 2003). Learning about and using photography as a pedagogical tool for students has two important benefits. First, the photographs authenticate their stories because they establish context in terms of time and place and secondly, they create a concrete text for viewing an event which can be shared with others which may not otherwise occur (Hannam & Ryan, 2019). In addition, translating written narratives into

photographs links students and spaces on a deeper level because they connect the experience to emotions more than the simple documentation of a space and its use (Puttilli et al., 2016).

Contribution to the Field of Education

THW can make an important contribution to the field of education through an exploration of the learning flow experience (a deep level of engagement in a learning activity where goals are specific, teacher feedback is immediate and student skill level is well-matched to activity), identifying benefits to student learning, as well as describing the contributions learning flow makes to eudaimonia (happiness) and well-being. In doing so, it will address how learning flow through creative activities can help students reduce anxiety, stress, and worry. Lastly, this project uses photographic storytelling to help students reflect on the context and the landscape of their lives using the lens of “What have I done for Christ? or What am I doing for Christ?” (O'Brien, 2020) as they tell their personal stories through photographic images.

Statement of the Problem

Schools are ideal settings for promoting learning, human development, creativity, and flourishing (Ruini et al., 2020), making the environment a key part of student engagement and learning. However, Csikszentmihalyi (2014) proposes the idea that children do not *want* to learn because they do not *want* to get involved. Simply put, Csikszentmihalyi postulates that what gets in the way of learning are issues related to affect, motivation and emotions rather than issues related to cognition or intellect. Furthermore, Csikszentmihalyi opines that distraction sets in when students do not know what they need to do nor how well they are doing on an assignment or project. In addition, Csikszentmihalyi notes an essential element of learning from the student's perspective, is knowing that they have the skills to complete assignments. On the other hand,

Csikszentmihalyi suggests when a student perceives their skill-level to be inadequate for completing an assignment, they will disengage from learning. One conclusion from this is that teachers need to design assignments using open-ended solutions to meet the skill level of all students with the goal of academic success for each student.

Overview of the Problem

Csikszentmihalyi (2014) digs deeper about learning when he delves into the emotional aspects of being a student by stating that the worst moments in life are when one feels self-conscious. Csikszentmihalyi notes it is these moments, for a student, which are the ones that steal attention away from learning. Feeling self-conscious, causes one to feel defensive, and smaller in some way than one's peers (Csikszentmihalyi). This feeling is challenging for anyone, but more so for adolescents because they are constantly worrying about what their peers think (Csikszentmihalyi). When students are feeling self-conscious in the classroom environment, they do not process content specific information. Csikszentmihalyi suggests this occurs because their attention is focused on appearing to be someone or something they are not to match the image their peers have of them. Warr et al., (2019) propose one of the essential elements of education is the understanding that students depend on their teachers and peers for help to develop the ability to cope. Thus, making opportunities for expression, creativity, and either artistic or physical flow engagement crucial (Warr et al., 2019).

Creativity is a key area for education due to its ability to address the whole person with special emphasis on the social and emotional aspects of learning. Warr et al., (2019) suggest that creativity can be thought of as a backdoor approach to problem-solving making it highly relevant to education and work in the 21st century. Warr et al., propose that creativity is not only

important but necessary for students to experience because as humans, it is integral to one's sense of purpose, well-being, and ability to thrive.

Warr et al., (2019) point out the difficulty schools have historically had making contributions to meaningful and intrinsically motivating experiences which foster student motivation and enjoyment in class. Furthermore, Warr et al., point out the value of creativity by describing its deep connection to learning flow. This feeling that comes from learning flow produces eudaimonia or happiness, well-being, and healing, all of which are necessary for adolescent development. Because of these specific benefits, a case can be made for implementing a middle school curriculum focused on providing creative experiences and activities which promote opportunities for students to achieve a learning flow experience. Csikszentmihalyi (2014) makes a connection between learning and learning flow experiences by offering the idea that each individual student chooses to allow content, or information, to come into his or her head. This choice engages the student, offering a reason to process the information. Teachers can prepare and deliver instructional content based on the learning styles of their students, but that does not guarantee transfer which is the shifting of information from the instructor to the student. Simply put, a student can be present in the classroom physically and be nowhere in the room mentally because they have intentionally chosen to focus their attention elsewhere (Csikszentmihalyi). Therefore, the development and implementation of curricula such as THW which focuses on the creative learning activity of photographic storytelling for middle school students to experience learning flow is crucial to academic achievement and success because of its ability to promote learning through student engagement.

Purpose of The Happiness Workshop

Middle school students in schools across the United States experience worry, anxiety, fear, and stress daily. Experiencing these emotions, coupled with the staggering statistics that half of all children have experienced one or more severe forms of childhood trauma also known as adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), (Warr et al., 2019), provides ample evidence to support the need for new curricula. This curriculum should be developed with the purpose of providing students with creative experiences to mitigate negative emotions, feelings, and experiences. Additionally, research indicates learning flow experiences reduce worry, anxiety, fear, and stress because of the ability to be completely absorbed in an activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). This deep level of absorption occurs when one loses oneself in the experience leaving little or no room for negative thoughts or ideas (Csikszentmihalyi). Considering the effects of learning flow on students in terms of benefits, it would be reasonable to conclude that incorporating new curricula focused on creativity is necessary because of its ability to produce happiness, well-being, and healing in students. However, it is important to note that the ability to investigate and understand the psychological well-being of adolescents may be difficult to achieve due to the absence of a sound theoretical framework for this age group (Gao & McLellan, 2018). This suggests the need for review of established well-being models, in terms of suitability, for application in adolescent studies (Gao & McLellan).

One solution developed to fill the gap in an age-appropriate theoretical framework is Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-being (SPWB) (Gao & McLellan, 2018). A theoretical model developed using six dimensions of positive human functioning. The six dimensions are: environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, autonomy, positive relations with others, and self-acceptance (Gao & McLellan). For middle school students, all the dimensions

play a crucial role in the development of a positive sense of identity (Gao & McLellan). According to Ruini et al., (2020), Ryff's theoretical model fits well under the heading of eudaimonic/psychological well-being. This is important because the descriptors associated with each dimension identify positive characteristics which contribute to one's happiness. For example, a sub-dimension of personal growth and environmental mastery is accomplishment described briefly as feeling capable of performing daily activities with a sense of achievement, which is vital for student learning.

Storytelling in either written or spoken form, allows students to learn about and interpret the world in which they live which is connected to the dimensions of self-acceptance, purpose in life and personal growth identified in SPWB (Gao & McLellan, 2018). Ruini et al., (2020) discuss the importance of relying on narrative techniques for psychosocial interventions aimed at increasing well-being and resilience because they provide flexibility for managing emotions. In addition, creativity, self-realization, problem solving, resilience and personal growth, as components of positive psychology, can be illustrated through a variety of narrative methods such as storytelling, creating another connection to SPWB. Individuals struggling with mixed emotions as well as developmental challenges could learn positive coping strategies through storytelling and narrative techniques. A key point by Ruini et al., is the finding that children 8 – 12 years of age were in fact able to discuss complex issues such as well-being in thoughtful and coherent ways, disproving earlier research indicating the opposite. These findings support the development of THW, as age-appropriate for adolescent students in middle school.

Photographic storytelling allows individuals to translate their personal stories into photographic images capturing symbolism, descriptions, and people associated with an important moment, place, or space giving authenticity to their story (Hannam & Ryan, 2019). The concept

of authenticity is key to photographic storytelling because it validates and gives merit (Hannam & Ryan) to one's life experiences from the photographer's perspective. In other words, photographs provide evidence of time and space as well as establishing practical relationships using one's memories as a guide. For middle school students who have not processed a life experience fully or who wish to make sense of their life, photographic storytelling provides them an opportunity to engage deeply in a creative process enabling a learning flow experience to occur through the telling of their personal story authentically.

One of the key steps in photographic storytelling is the process of translating a written narrative into a visual format. This is the process of moving from written text to imagery in the form of original photographs taken by each student individually. This process requires time to think fully and deeply about specific contexts which tell one's story. Puttilli et al., (2016), describe the translation process as the step where participants wrote either a themed storyline or personal narrative of an important moment or event which had occurred in the participant's daily life. In the same study Puttilli et al., point out the students then spent two days taking photographs, capturing an autobiographical account of their story successfully.

According to Puttilli et al., (2016) photography is a pedagogical tool which can promote self-reflection as well as active involvement, observation, and creativity. As each photograph is analyzed, one's imagination and spatial creativity is stimulated creating a connection between the experience and the image producing feelings of happiness or eudaimonia (Puttilli et al.). Photographs provide both the viewer and the photographer a way to "see things with different eyes" (Puttilli et al., 2016, p. 91) spotlighting the many layers of meaning and awareness depicted through the relationship of space. It is in the "...poetic, artistic code of storytelling and

images (which) created a common language, a meeting point...” (Puttilli et al., 2016, p. 93) and mutual understanding without the need for verbal exchanges.

Conclusion

Evidence exists to support the development of new curricula for middle school students, which will focus on creativity to achieve flow, using photographic storytelling. Its importance and success have been established through current literature on the topics related to positive psychology of creativity, well-being, and happiness. In addition, the connection between photographic storytelling, positive adolescent development and achievement predicts a positive outcome of incorporating curricula in support of creativity and happiness, measured in terms of a reduction of stress and anxiety increasing overall positive demeanor among students. Each of these individual contributions when combined can result in a positive and impactful experience for students during the school day.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

According to Csikszentmihalyi (2014) *learning flow* is what one feels when one is doing something that is so delightful, such as a learning activity, that one wants to chase it for its own sake without consideration of a reward for doing so. The intent of this literature review is to document current knowledge on the topics of flow, learning flow and middle school students; flow and personality predictors of adolescents; flow and well-being; creativity; and photographic storytelling for the purpose of supporting the design of a middle school curriculum known as *The Happiness Workshop*. The curriculum will be designed to use photographic storytelling as a medium for experiencing learning flow through a creative activity.

The electronic databases of the Regis University Library were accessed using the following keywords: adolescents, flow, flow conditions, flow theory, optimal experience, creativity, middle school students, instructional methods, curriculum, narrative strategies, storytelling, photographic storytelling, personality, well-being, resilience, psychological well-being, and childhood in a variety of combinations. An importance was placed on both scholarly (peer reviewed) journals and current literature which was obtained by setting search parameters for only scholarly journals and for the years 2014 to the present. It was necessary to combine keywords to find relevant literature. However, these tactics resulted in limited literature on the three topics of flow in adolescence, creativity, and photographic storytelling. In addition, Google Scholar was accessed electronically using the same keywords with less success in terms of applicable literature. The body of literature in this review consists of nine separate original research studies on the topics of topics of flow, learning flow and middle school students; flow and personality predictors of adolescents; flow and well-being; creativity; and photographic storytelling conducted between the years of 2015 to 2021, with the primary understanding of

learning flow produced by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, a Hungarian American psychologist best known as the originator of flow, in addition to his work on happiness and creativity, in 2014. Mr. Csikszentmihalyi emigrated to the United States in 1956 at the age of 22.

Although there are nine research studies in this review, together they do not represent a deep understanding of learning flow as it applies to adolescents due to the limited number of studies found on the topic. However, because these studies were produced in the last six years it provides strong evidence that it is a topic for future research.

Learning Flow and Middle School Students

Schools are ideal environments for promoting many aspects of student growth such as learning, human development, creativity, and flourishing (Ruini et al., 2020). From this point of view, the study by Ruini et al., compared two intervention programs for promoting well-being and creativity in elementary age children. One of the intervention programs was based on storytelling and narrative writing techniques while the other was a control program. The strengths of this study were that the children in the narrative intervention program reported a higher level of well-being and lower levels of depression, anxiety, and somatization than the students in the control group. However, there are several weaknesses of this study which include a small participant size of 165 students in elementary school with a mean age of 9.3 years equal to students in the fourth grade which is two years younger than students in middle school. Also, participants represented middle to upper middle class in socioeconomic status, there was no representation of lower economic conditions or underserved populations. In addition, the study used self-report measures for gathering data which according to Salters-Pedneault, (n.d.) requires validation of the data by another research method.

In contrast to the study by Ruini et al., (2020) is an interview by Warr et al., (2019) which identified a dominant concern within education. This concern is the historical difficulty schools have had in providing meaningful, intrinsically motivating experiences for students designed to foster student motivation, and at the same time encouraging students to have fun during the learning process. The interview with Dr. Vicki Jaque and Dr. Paula Thomson produced by Warr et al., aimed to tie a psychological with a physical perspective of wellness, creativity, and the arts. Warr et al., did not produce a research study however, they did conduct an interview with creativity scholars with the intent of understanding the link between creativity and flow experiences. One answer to this concern lies in developing curricula to support student engagement in flow experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, M., 2014).

An important aspect of student growth in terms of research is the need to understand if a relationship can be found between positive affect in school and learning flow and if there is an added benefit over time. This was addressed by Wu et al., (2021) in their study which examined the longitudinal relationship between positivity, positive affect in school and learning flow. As well as the mediational role positive affect has on positivity and learning flow. The strengths of the study produced by Wu et al., are two-fold. First it provides evidence for education professionals as to the bidirectionality of learning flow with positivity and positive affect in school settings. Second, Wu et al., determined that positivity and positive affect in school are indicators of student well-being which is important because previously education professionals relied solely on academic performance and mental health as indicators. However, this study did not examine the relationship between academic achievement outcomes and learning flow which is important as it would provide evidence which supports the ability of learning flow as a positive effect on academic performance within a school setting.

In support of the study by Wu et al., (2021) is the study produced by Annalakshmi et al., (2020) which examined how personality characteristics were predictors of learning flow among adolescents. Annalakshmi et al., identify the bidirectionality of academic achievement and both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational beliefs which are outcomes of the flow experience. This study combined with Wu et al., confirm the bidirectionality of learning flow in both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and positivity and positive affect in school on academic achievement. These two studies together provide compelling evidence to support the development of new curricula for students to experience learning flow. In addition, Annalakshmi et al., raise a strong question for future research regarding whether decreasing learning flow experiences would negatively affect academic achievement due to a lack of developing intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. This is an important question because of the need to understand the impact of a decrease in learning flow experiences on academic performance.

Learning Flow and Personality Predictors in Adolescents

The ability to predict the likelihood of an adolescent experiencing learning flow due to gender and personality type would help educators design open-ended subject specific projects and activities which support engagement and learning for all students. Research conducted by Annalakshmi et al., (2020) is aimed at understanding how gender and personality factors influence learning flow experiences. Regarding gender, their findings include a difference in the level of flow experience between adolescent females and males indicating that females experienced higher levels of flow than males. Interestingly, Annalakshmi et al., also indicate that there are previous studies concluding the opposite findings but do not provide evidence corroborating this statement. A conclusion drawn from the data produced by Annalakshmi et al., may support societal definitions of gender roles due to the idea that females often view their role

as task-oriented while males often view their role as ego-oriented. In terms of public opinion this conclusion speaks to societal definitions of gender roles.

Educators would benefit by understanding how personality characteristics can be used as positive predictors of experiencing a flow state in adolescents. Research by Annalakshmi et al., (2020) determined that there is a diverse range of traits and characteristics that positively predictor the flow state which are: Honesty-Humility (someone who is sincere, modest, fair, and unselfish), Conscientiousness (someone having the desire to work hard in an organized manner), and Openness to Experience (someone demonstrating ingenuity, curiosity, tolerance, depth, intellectual efficiency, and aesthetics). Additional details describing each of the three findings is provided by the researchers but is not necessary for inclusion in this review because they have been determined to relate more to adults than adolescents. These findings could be beneficial to educators in determining which student are more likely to experience flow in any given activity. However, just because a student does not exhibit these traits or characteristics does not mean they will not experience flow because their development is incomplete, allowing room for change (Csikszentmihalyi, M., 2014).

Learning Flow and Well-being

Understanding the connection between learning flow and well-being is important to educators because of the effect of well-being on learning in adolescents. Warr et al., (2019) identify a correlation between experiencing flow and increased mental toughness, resiliency, and self-efficacy, all characteristics of well-being and necessary for academic engagement and achievement because they provide the ability to manage trauma, anxiety, stress, and depression. In this light, the study by Gao and McLellan (2018) aimed to examine the applicability of Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-being (SPWB) to adolescents as a theoretical framework for

determining well-being, because it was originally developed for application with adults. Gao and McLellan created an adapted SPWB, as a 33-item survey for use with children. However, the result of the study indicate there was little success matching previous research. Currently, research does not indicate that a modified model has been formulated for use with children. One problem with research conducted by Gao and McLellan, is that the survey data relied on participant self-report which allows for ambiguity regarding the determination of well-being. The importance of understanding adolescent well-being has been established through the research of Ruini et al., (2020).

Learning Flow and Creativity

Understanding the key role of creativity in education particularly with adolescents can motivate educators to seek new ways of including creative activities as an age-appropriate method of assessment for subject specific content. However, Keenan-Lechel et al., (2018) note regarding creativity and adolescence there is little being done to understand its implications. Although there may be little research on the topic there are three areas of strength from the work of Keenan-Lechel et al. One of which is the pursuit of making meaning of one's life through creative endeavors. This is important because it directly connects creativity with creative experiences linking both to well-being, which has already been established as an outcome of the learning flow experience by several research teams in this Literature Review. Second, is a framework for understanding creativity developed by Dr. Kaufman and presented as the *Four C Model of Creativity* (Keenan-Lechel). This model identifies mini c as the creativity that occurs inherently in learning and involves the unique intuition found in student learning thereby establishing a significant connection between creativity and education. Dr. Kaufman's framework further establishes the diverse ways in which creativity positively effects individuals

across different domains through the many forms of creative expression and experiences. In support of the work by Keenan-Lechel et al., are the findings by Wu et al., (2021) which support the idea of mini c in terms of student engagement in the classroom relating to optimal experience and learning flow. The inherent creativity in student learning supports the need for the development and inclusion of creativity into current curricula at the elementary and middle school levels. Lastly, a significant strength of creativity based on the work produced by Keenan-Lechel et al., is the ability of creativity to achieve fairness and equity among individuals. Keenan-Lechel et al., explain how the outcome of creativity tests at the college level, are not affected by ethnicity, cultural background, or gender because anyone has the potential to be creative and to think creatively. Keenan-Lechel et al., suggest the outcome of including creativity as part of the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) would increase equity and fairness for all, further supporting the importance of creative experiences and/or creative activities in education.

Further positive connections between creativity and learning flow strengthen the argument for the development of creative endeavors for adolescents to experience learning flow. Warr et al., (2019) establish three important connections between creativity and learning flow. First, creativity is critical in the twenty-first century as an approach to problem-solving due to the ability to look at a situation or issue from several points of view. Second, because schools help students develop coping skills and strategies, the incorporation of artistic and physical forms of creative expression are crucial to their engagement and success. Lastly, there exists a relationship between creativity and psychopathology, specifically dissociative experiences. Concerning psychopathology and creativity Warr et al., state that trauma may not affect creativity making it a strong choice for treating anxiety, stress, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) thus making

opportunities to engage in creative experiences a method for healing trauma, particularly in children and adolescents.

Photographic Storytelling

The topics of storytelling and photographic storytelling regarding learning flow, at either the elementary or middle school level, as it pertains to education, are not highly researched. Current literature by Puttilli et al., (2016), and Haines (2015) address the use of photographic images by school age children to elicit personal memories and emotions from a detached point of view. Research by Puttilli et al., aimed to verify the effect of urban projects within neighborhoods of adolescents who live there on their everyday lives. There were several strengths from this study. First, it uncovered hidden and often invisible landscape elements which link adolescents to time and space. Second, it identified creative, critical, and aesthetic capabilities of the adolescent's ability to express their relationship with spaces found in their everyday lives. Lastly, the use of photography created a common language for adolescents, peers, and communities to view and share their stories establishing a relationship between photographs and educational experiences. In this way, photographs become a pedagogical (related to teaching) tool because they are enduring documents of time and space.

In addition to the above research is the study by Haines (2015) which aimed to investigate the use of photography to stimulate as well as increase students' connections to their writing. Several strengths of this study were identified such as the use of photographs helps adolescents make sense of and explore the world around them. Also, the use of photography helps adolescents develop communication skills in addition to literacy skills. Haines discusses two benefits of storytelling using creative visual images. First is an increase in language acquisition establishing an important finding for English Language Learners (ELL) and second,

the development of a sense of community and safety due to the feeling of belonging. Using photography as a creative activity can produce learning flow in adolescents by providing opportunities for deep engagement producing well-being.

Strengthening the argument for using photographs as pedagogical tools is the research conducted by Hannam and Ryan (2019) which offers the idea that photographs are powerful tools for two reasons. First, because of their ability to add authenticity to a material event, place, or a time and second, because they endure for all time. The recording of history through photographs allows the viewer to use their imagination to recall or reflect on a particular experience making a compelling argument for using photography to promote learning flow.

Gaps in Research

Annalakshmi et al., (2020) point out the need for further research in two areas. First is the role demographic variables play in the effect on the relationship between personality and flow. Specifically, it will be important to determine how age, ethnicity, location, and level of education affect the ability to achieve flow, and their effect on the flow experience itself. Second is the inclusion of experience sampling in research models. This is important because of the insight into how adolescent creativity skill-level is affected by challenges which has been postulated by Dr. Kaufmann as being greater during school age than any other stages in life.

Ruini et al., (2020) suggest the need for larger participant sample sizes along with greater heterogenous sampling to increase validity of data particularly as it relates to adolescents regarding flow. This suggestion supports further research targeting demographic variables identified by Annalakshmi et al., (2020).

Warr et al., (2019) postulated that creativity may not be affected by trauma. However, there is no evidence provided to support this notion. It would be important to determine the veracity of this statement for two reasons. First, to understand the *how* and *why* creativity is not affected by trauma and second the findings from answering *how* and *why* could then be used to develop applications for helping individuals, in particular students, heal.

Keenan-Lechel et al., (2018) concur with Dr. Kaufman in his recommendations for future research regarding creativity. Specifically, the need to identify what is known about creativity is essential to its understanding but more importantly, *why* it matters to both individuals and the wider global community is considered, by Dr. Kaufman, vital for the future.

Conclusion

From a research perspective there is a small body of literature that has been completed regarding the topic of flow as it relates to individuals, particularly elementary and middle school students within school settings.

The concept of flow was first introduced in 1997 by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. Since then, it has grown in its validity through research performed primarily abroad, now making its way into mainstream conversations in US post-secondary institutions due to its connection to creativity.

Research provides positive evidence which support the benefits of experiencing flow for adolescents even though it is limited. Dr. Kaufman is a proponent of future research on creativity because it is applicable to all. Furthermore, he underlines the value of creativity as a research topic by pointing out there are a variety of research agendas currently underway.

Educational methods have been in the spotlight for the past several decades primarily as they related to student achievement and engagement. Csikszentmihalyi's (2014) flow concept is an important contribution to education because of its ability to foster student engagement and learning through creative experiences. It then seems natural to conclude that increasing opportunities for students to engage in creative activities is vital to learning.

Research also indicates the importance of using photographs to not only record but also to make sense of one's life experiences. Photographic storytelling is a valuable tool for adolescents because it not only authenticates their life story, but it provides an opportunity to look at and see the world around them differently. The experience of creating a story using imagery obtained through photographs provides adolescents with an opportunity to experience flow through its connection to creativity.

It can be concluded from this body of literature that flow is beneficial, promotes creativity and reduces anxiety, depression, and stress in adolescents which prompts several important rhetorical questions. Are educators aware of the value and benefits of incorporating flow experiences into current curricula? If educators are aware, to what degree do they incorporate flow experiences through creative activities into their lesson plans? Is there a reason that is keeping educators from incorporating flow experiences, through creative activities into their lesson plans and activities?

CHAPTER 3

Choice of Method

This applied research project will develop a curriculum designed specifically for a single class of middle school students from grades six, seven, or eight, which uses a two-day workshop model named *The Happiness Workshop* (THW), for application. This curriculum is designed with the intention that students participate in the workshop at the beginning of a new school year. This is important because it will focus their attention and create an engaging opportunity to experience flow through a creative activity and establish connections to one another through shared stories. This workshop model can be repeated either simultaneously or in succession, to ensure all students in a single grade level have an opportunity to participate. The selection of THW as a two-day workshop model is intended to provide students with an enrichment experience that fosters intensive discussion, engagement, and creativity (France, 2020), builds relationships between peers and teachers, and connects participants through shared storytelling experiences (Haines, 2015). All with the underlying intention of experiencing flow throughout the workshop.

Description of Method

From an educational perspective, the THW will combine components from three workshop models which are: invitational, (inviting students to apply learning), constructivist (students solve a problem), and reflection (students self-report experience, growth and reflect on feedback), (France, 2020). These formats include teacher led mini-lessons, student applications, sharing of ideas through whole group discussions and reflection. THW will span two complete and consecutive school days. Short breaks are included for both morning and afternoon snack/recess, as well as a longer break for lunch.

The purpose of THW is to provide students with an opportunity to engage in a flow experience while validating and authenticating personal stories from their own life experiences using photographic storytelling. Each student in THW will participate in all mini-lessons and activities as well as complete the designated three outcomes which include writing a personal story as a narrative, translating the written narrative into photographic images formatted for exhibition, and a written self-reflection identifying and describing flow experiences, areas of growth, the effects of both positive and negative feedback on outcomes as well as the process of authenticating a personal story, and the stories of others.

The essential questions of THW are: Why is experiencing flow important? Why is it important to use photography for storytelling? Why is it important to tell my personal story? What will I learn about myself or others from the process of photographic storytelling?

The essential resources for THW are digital cameras, tables and chairs for each individual participant (arranged in either a single or in multiple “u” shape(s) to promote collaboration), projector, Chromebook/laptops for each participant and instructor, pencils, notebook paper, printer, and access to color printing for either 5R (5 x 7) or 6R (6 x 8) photographs.

Rationale for Method

From an educational perspective, using a workshop model for this applied research project is an appropriate choice for three reasons. First, the workshop model is designed to accommodate a small group (France, 2020), in this case, it would be made up of about 10 – 12 students, all in the same grade level. Second, the workshop model promotes student learning independence which is important because it creates equity among students while releasing students from typical learning structures due to the change in the role of the teacher from lecturer

to guide (France). Third, embedded into the workshop model are mini lessons consisting of short, concise steps or techniques for students to use and apply directly to their work allowing for collaboration with peers and immediate feedback from teachers (France). In addition, THW will use curricula standards for the Archdiocese of Denver. Specifically, the 2020 Language Arts Curriculum Standards and the 2021 Catechesis and Theology Curriculum Standards for grades six, seven and eight.

THW has two main objectives. First to provide students with an opportunity to achieve flow resulting in the intrinsic feeling of happiness. This feeling can be achieved through the process of telling a personal story using the creative process of photographic storytelling. Second, to validate and authenticate each student's unique story using photographic images (Hannam & Ryan, 2019). It is important to note that the determination of students achieving flow will be made through teacher observation and student survey. Teacher observation of students during all aspects of THW is essential to the success of the workshop. In addition, teachers as observers are trained to pay attention to all aspects of the school day. In this light, the teacher facilitating THW will observe the students during each mini lesson, collaborating and at work producing the various parts of THW. Students who are deeply engaged in the activity at hand will demonstrate unbroken concentration as they move through each individual step of THW. Teachers will make note of when they observe individual students deeply engaged in THW. This list will be compared to each student's self-report of learning flow experiences obtained through the reflection process at the end of each day.

Alignment with Curriculum Standards

The implementation of THW into existing curricula will be done using the 2020 Language Arts and 2021 Catechesis and Theology standards and objectives for grades six, seven and eight set forth by the Archdiocese of Denver (Archdiocese of Denver, n.d.). THW will focus on using the *Guiding Principles of 3-8th Grade Writing Curriculum* (Archdiocese of Denver, n.d.), specifically items 1, 2, and 4 as well as the *Guiding Principles for K-12 Speaking and Listening Standards*, specifically items I, II, IV, V and VI. In addition to the Language Arts Standards, THW aligns with the Catechesis and Theology Standards for Part III, Life in Christ for grades six, seven and eight. (See Appendix B for complete verbiage.)

The above listed standards will inform the curriculum design for THW. Special emphasis on narrative writing to *naturally order thoughts, align them with truth, communicate experience, and accurately express intent, knowledge, and feelings* (Archdiocese of Denver, n.d.) and to provide students with an opportunity to increase their writing skills to demonstrate the ability to *write well, using language as a bridge for communication with one's fellow man for the betterment of all involved* (Archdiocese of Denver, n.d.). In addition, *students need to know a concept deeply in order to speak about it well* (Archdiocese of Denver, n.d.), and when *we listen to others*, particularly during times of collaboration, we do so *to develop empathy, understanding, and love of others. We serve a God who listens to us, and we imitate God when we seek to understand the heart and mind of others* (Archdiocese of Denver, n.d.). Lastly, writing standard 3 for narrative writing techniques along with sub-parts: a.b.c.d.e support the decision to use narrative writing to begin the storytelling portion of THW.

Catechesis and Theology curriculum standards will focus on Strand III: Life in Christ for grades six, seven and eight. Students will be asked to reflect on a personal life event or

experience using the lens, “What have I done for Christ or What am I doing for Christ.”

Reflecting in this way provides each student an opportunity to look at a situation from a different perspective, changing how they view the outcome as being one in which God designed.

Participant Assessment in THW

Assessment for THW will be based on participation and completion of the different components of the workshop rather than following traditional grading methods in terms of students earning a single grade such as an A, B, or C, based on proficiency of skills. The rationale for this type of grading system provides greater validity in terms of student gains because it supports the experiential nature of the workshop design. Therefore, proficiency in techniques does not reflect the purpose or the objectives of the workshop outcomes which are the flow experience and the validation and authentication of students' unique personal stories.

Reflection by both the students and teachers is an essential component of THW because it allows the students to pause and think about their experiences over the length of the workshop paying attention to flow experiences, identifying areas of growth, feedback, and the process of authenticating personal stories and the stories of others as they share the workshop experience. For teachers, reflecting on the workshop elicits shared memories, while making individual connections with students, as they guide them through the process of photographic storytelling. Lastly, reflection for both teachers and students will identify strengths and weaknesses of the workshop for future participants.

Data Analysis Summary

Data was analyzed from five separate research studies using the following criteria: participants within the ages of 10 - 17, socioeconomic status, participant group size, research

methodology was self-report, topic related to flow, flow theory, learning flow, positivity, positive affect in educational settings. Using these criteria, data was analyzed for commonalities among studies, specific attributes, and characteristics which were present or predictors of learning flow experiences. Refer to Appendix A for the complete analysis.

Chapter Four

The Results

The results for *The Happiness Workshop* consist of two separate parts which are a PowerPoint presentation developed for decision-makers and educators, with the purpose of building background knowledge on the relationship between flow theory, learning flow, creativity, photography as an educational tool, and photographic storytelling. In addition to the PowerPoint presentation is a second document which is a script for educators to facilitate the workshop. It is important that the PowerPoint presentation be viewed prior to reading the workshop script because it lays the foundation needed to understand the concepts and relationships identified above. Of particular importance are the implications for education as they apply to teachers and students. *The Happiness Workshop* script has been developed and formatted for a two-day workshop model for middle school students within the Archdiocese of Denver.

The PowerPoint Presentation

The PowerPoint presentation has been developed for decision-makers with two purposes in mind. First, to explain the importance and benefits of flow theory, learning flow and creativity for educators and students. Second, to connect the concepts of flow theory and learning flow to both creativity and photographic storytelling in an educational setting. Bound together, these two purposes lay the foundation for understanding flow theory and learning flow as they apply to middle school students. In addition, these two purposes provide important information for discerning the viability of incorporating *The Happiness Workshop* into existing curricula for middle school students within the Archdiocese of Denver.

The Happiness Workshop

The Experience of Learning Flow through Photographic Storytelling

KAREN MICHELE MEYER

REGIS UNIVERSITY

AUGUST 2021

Why?

- Because The Happiness Workshop
 - ❖ Aligns with the Archdiocese of Denver Curriculum Standards for Writing and Catechesis and Theology
 - ❖ Provides middle school students an opportunity to engage in the process of Photographic Storytelling to reflect, validate and authenticate their own personal stories.
 - ❖ Is intended to be a place where students can ask their own questions as they look for how God at work in their lives.

Flow Theory and Learning Flow

Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi (2014) defines **flow and learning flow** as **the feeling or experience** one gets when **one is deeply engaged in** doing something, such as **a learning activity**, which is so **enjoyable** one wants to **continue it for its own sake repeatedly**.



Research on Flow Experiences in Education



Annalakshmi et al., (2020):

Understanding gender differences in flow experiences

How personality factors affect flow experiences

Ruini et al., (2020):

Efficacy of two intervention programs:

Benefits of promoting well-being and creativity

Using storytelling and narrative techniques

Wu et al., (2021):

Relationship between positive affect in school, positivity and learning flow

Role positive affect in school plays in moderating positivity and learning flow

The Learning Flow Experience for Students

Csikszentmihalyi (2014)



- **Student Skills Match Project Learning Activity**
- **Project Goals are Clear**
- **Feedback from Instructor is Immediate**
- **Student is Fully Absorbed in Learning Activity**
- **Student Feels that Control is Possible**
- **Increase in Student Engagement, Motivation and Learning**
- **Decrease in Student Self-consciousness, Anxiety, Worry and Stress**
- Student's Personal Problems are Set Aside
- **Together these produce the feeling of eudaimonia or happiness**

The Importance of Creativity

Warr et al., (2019)

- **Pursuit of making meaning of one's life**
- **Connects to well-being and is an outcome of the flow experience**
- **Four C model of creativity:** Big-C (genius level creativity), little-c (everyday instances of creativity), Pro-C (professional creativity bridging the gap between Big-C and little-c) and **mini-c (creativity which occurs inherently in learning).**
- **Critical for problem-solving**
- **Crucial to student engagement and success.**
- **Addresses the whole person with special emphasis on the social and emotional aspects of learning.**
- **Achieves fairness and equity among individuals**
- **Integral to a student's sense of purpose, well-being, and ability to thrive**



The Happiness Workshop

Archdiocese of Denver
2020 Language Arts
Curriculum Standards

Writing Standards
Grades 6, 7, 8
Narrative Writing

(<https://archden.org/schools/office-catholic-schools/curricula/>)

- **8.W.3.a.b.c.d.e.**
- **7.W.3.a.b.c.d.e.**
- **6.W.3.a.b.c.d.e.**
- Write narratives in which they:
 - a. engages and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and organize a sequence of events or experiences.
 - b. develops narrative elements (e.g., setting, plot, event sequence, complex characters) with specific sensory details.
 - c. uses a variety of techniques to convey sequence, shift from one timeframe or setting to another, and/or show the relationships among the events or experiences
 - d. chooses words and phrases to effectively develop the events, experiences, and ideas and to create mood.
 - e. provides a strong conclusion that follows from events, experiences, or ideas.
- **8.W.8.c.**
- **7.W.8.c.**
- **6.W.8.c.**
- Adapt style of writing to purpose:
- c. narrative

The Happiness Workshop

Archdiocese of Denver
2021 Catechesis and Theology
Curriculum Standards

Grade 8
Strand III
Life in Christ

(<https://archden.org/schools/office-catholic-schools/curricula/>)

Grade 8: Strand III Life in Christ

A. Christian Anthropology

3. Give examples of how a person is pure in heart, that is, when he/she perceives and respects others as a gift and seeks to make a gift of him/herself to others. (TOB 50, 54, 57-3; CCC 2518, 2519)

Discipleship and Community

1. Discuss the need to make a choice to follow Jesus and how to live out this choice every day.
2. Describe the importance of a Christian culture, or way of life, to live the faith in the world.
3. Describe how their membership in the Body of Christ gives them a responsibility to each other member of the human community.

Morality

1. Identify that God puts us in the world to know, to love, and to serve him, and so to come to paradise and this is the goal of the moral life (CCC 1721).
2. Explain that the Beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness (CCC 1718).
7. Identify examples and/or demonstrate ways to use virtues to respond to situations involving personal and/or social sin (CC1869).

Service and Social Justice

1. Assess how Catholic values help us make social, economic, and political choices
2. Discuss that every right has a corresponding responsibility.
3. Identify some responsibilities related to the rights of human persons.

The Happiness Workshop

Archdiocese of Denver
2021 Catechesis and Theology
Curriculum Standards

Grade 7
Strand III
Life in Christ

<https://archden.org/schools/office-catholic-schools/curricula/>

Grade 7: Strand III Life in Christ

A. Christian Anthropology

8. Explain how Christ does not accuse but instead appeals to the human heart to be pure. (TOB 45:5, 46:5-6, 49:7; CCC 2517-2519)

9. Describe what 'life according to the Spirit' is and how following the law of God leads to true freedom and happiness. (TOB 15:1, 45:1, 51:5-6, 53:4-5, 54:2-4; CCC 30, 736, 1731, 1824, 1828-1832, 2514, 2516, 2548)

10. Evaluate how love, as a power, is a participation in the love of God himself: How it is total. How it is faithful. How it is fruitful. How it is generous.

B. Discipleship and Community

2. Explain the role of mentorship and growth in discipleship.

6. Identify their talents and gifts and describe ways to share these with the community

D. Service and Social Justice

5. Identify some responsibilities related to the rights of human persons

6. Create suggestions for peaceful alternatives and solutions for violations of life and dignity of the human person; call to family, community, and participation; rights and responsibilities; option for the poor and vulnerable; dignity of work and the rights of workers; solidarity; care for God's creation.

The Happiness Workshop

Archdiocese of Denver
2021 Catechesis and
Theology Curriculum
Standards

Grade 6
Strand III
Life in Christ

<https://archden.org/schools/office-catholic-schools/curricula/>

Grade 6: Strand III Life in Christ

A. Christian Anthropology

1. Exhibit wonder and awe at the generosity of God in the gifts of His abundant and beautiful creation. (TOB 2-3, 13:2; CCC 293-295, 341)

B. Discipleship and Community

2. Explain how to continue growing in relationship with Jesus as a disciple.

3. Identify ways that God called individuals in the Old Testament to serve in the community and formulate examples of ways that God continues to call us to serve in the community today.

4. Demonstrate the skill of listening: to hear others respectfully, and to be open to the voice of God.

D. Service and Social Justice

1. Define God's call to leadership as a call to service for the community.

Using Photography and Photographs as Educational Tools

Used as a pedagogical tool (Puttilli et al., 2016)

Enduring documents of time and space (Hannam & Ryan, 2019)

Common language requiring only the exchange of silence (Puttilli et al., 2016)

Details emerge which may be invisible or go unnoticed in real time (Puttilli et al., 2016)

Adds authenticity (Hannam & Ryan, 2019)

Stimulates playfulness and creativity in children (Puttilli et al., 2016)

Children can use their imaginations to place themselves within the context of a photograph (Ruini et al., 2020)

A tool to help school children manage negative emotions (Ruini et al., 2020)

Can be used to analyze obstacles to happiness and to restore positive feelings (Ruini et al., 2020)

Photographic Storytelling



A vehicle for helping students **reflect on the context and the landscape of their lives** (Puttilli et al., 2016).

Allows **students** to **learn about and interpret the world in which they live** (Haines, 2015).

Makes **connections to self-acceptance, purpose in life and personal growth** (Gao and McLellan, 2018).

Adds authenticity by capturing symbolism, descriptions, and people associated with an important moment, place, or space (Haines, 2015; Hannam & Ryan, 2019).

Countries with Existing Educational Models



China (Wu et al., 2021)

Italy (Ruini et al., 2020)

Morocco (Puttilli et al., 2016)

USA (Haines, 2015)

Demographics from Data

- All data was collected through self-report measures. Results should be validated by another research method. (Salters-Pedneault, n.d.)
- Median age range of participants spanned 10 years of age to 17 years of age.
- Socio-economic status of participants was equal and defined as middle to upper middle class. Lower income and underserved populations were not represented.
- Religious affiliation was not identified in all research studies.
- Male and Female participants were equally represented.
- Most studies were conducted using a participant group size of 150 - 200 participants.

Analysis of Data: Learning Flow

- **Flow is experienced during a learning activity** (Annalakshmi et al., 2020).
- Easily achieved by students with the personality characteristic of extraversion (socially bold, enthusiastic, high positive regard for themselves), (Annalakshmi et al., 2020).
- Difficulty being achieved by students with the personality characteristic of agreeableness (forgiving, trusting, compromising), (Annalakshmi et al., 2020).
- **Achievable when teacher support, classroom order, and emotional safety are high** (Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

Analysis of Data: Positive Effects of Learning Flow

- Overall positive self-image, (Wu et al., 2021)
- Development of autonomy, (Ruini et al., 2020).
- Leads to Environmental Mastery, (Ruini et al., 2020).
- Promotes Personal Growth, (Ruini et al., 2020).
- Promotes Positive Relations, (Ruini et al., 2020).
- Leads to a Strong Sense of Purpose in Life, (Ruini et al., 2020)
- Leads to Self-Acceptance, (Ruini et al., 2020)

Analysis of Data: Flow Experience Predictors

- Directly affected by positivity (Wu et al., 2021).
- Mediated by Positive Affect in School (Wu et al., 2021).
- Teacher-centered love of learning, perseverance, zest, and hope (Wagner et al., 2020).
- Individual student tasks where love of learning, perseverance, and self-regulation are present (Wagner et al., 2020).
- Group work where judgment, love of learning, perspective, perseverance, zest, love, social intelligence, teamwork, fairness, and leadership are present (Wagner et al., 2020).

Conclusion for Students

Male and female adolescent students, ranging in age from ten to fourteen can experience learning flow when they are in classroom environments which display order, expect order, and promote emotional safety, where teacher-centered support and love of learning, perseverance, zest, and hope are modeled and present for student-centered individual tasks and group work.

Conclusion for Teachers

Teachers foster students' learning flow experiences by promoting positivity and positive affect in school for their students when they model and display a love of learning, perseverance, zest, and hope in a classroom environment that is orderly, free of chaos, emotionally safe, and student-centered.

The Happiness Workshop in Detail

- 2-Day immersive experience using photographic storytelling.
- 10 - 12 middle school students in the same grade level.
- Teacher's role is as a guide rather than instructor.
- Student engagement in peer collaboration is encouraged.
- Teacher feedback is provided at each step.
- Students write and translate personal story as narrative to photographic images using school provided digital cameras.
- Students install collective exhibition of photographic storytelling for the whole school community.
- Reflection and feedback gathered from students and teachers at the end of each day regarding the experience of participating in *The Happiness Workshop*.

The Happiness Workshop Outline

Day One

- Ice breaker - Teacher Led
- Introduction
- Whole Group Brain-Storming Session
- Individual Idea Selection and Collaboration to Solve the Problem
- Short Break
- Mini-Lesson - Written Narrative and Student Collaborative Worktime
- Short Break
- Mini-Lesson - Translating Written Narrative to Imagery and Student Collaborative Worktime
- WALKING FIELD TRIP TO AN OUTDOOR SETTING OR PARK With Time for Lunch and Recess Included
- Mini-Lesson - Taking Photographs and Student Collaborative Worktime
- Return to School and Reflection on Day One

Day Two

- Ice breaker - Student Led
- Recall of Day One
- Mini-Lesson - Steps with Computers and Student Collaborative Work Time
- Short Break
- Mini-Lesson - Preparing Photographs for Exhibition and Student Collaborative Work Time
- Recess and Lunch Break
- Mini-Lesson - Installing Exhibition and Student Collaborative Work Time
- View Exhibition with Community
- Mini-Lesson - The Process of Critique and Student Collaborative Work Time
- Reflection on Workshop Experience

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Thank you,
The Happiness Workshop

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The Workshop Model

The workshop is intended for 10 – 12 participants who are students in either sixth, seventh or eighth grade, where all participants in a single workshop are in the same grade levels. Below, is a brief agenda of the two-day workshop which begins at 8:15am and ends at 2:45pm. The timing of each day includes short breaks as well as added time for lunch and recess. Following the brief agenda is the full workshop script, written for use by an individual teacher or a small group of teachers to facilitate the workshop.

Brief Agenda.

Day One

- Introduction
- Icebreaker
- Whole Group Discussion
- **Break**
- Review and Overarching Theme
- Collaborative Brainstorming
- Example Outcome
- Individual Idea Selection
- **Break**
- Mini Lesson Written Narrative
- Student Application – Written Narrative
- Mini Lesson – Translating Written Narrative to Photographs
- Student Application – Translating Written Narrative to Photographs
- **Walking Field Trip to an Outdoor Setting or Park, (including time for lunch and recess)**
- Mini Lesson – Taking Photographs
- Student Application – Taking Photographs
- Return to School and Reflection on Day One of Workshop Experience

Day Two

- Ice Breaker
- Recall of Day One – Student Led Collaboration and Discussion
- Mini Lesson – Steps with Computers
- Student Application – Steps with Computers
- **Break**
- Mini Lesson - Preparing Photographs for Exhibition
- Student Application – Preparing Photographs for Exhibition
- **Recess and Lunch Break**
- Mini Lesson – Installing Exhibition
- Student Application – Installing Exhibition
- View Exhibition
- Mini Lesson – The Process of Critique
- Student Application – The Process of Critique
- Reflection on Day Two and Workshop Experience

The Happiness Workshop Script: Day One

8:15a – 8:20a

Ice breaker (Teacher)

Teacher says: “We are going to play a game like *Wheel of Fortune* where your job is to guess individual letters to reveal a saying or question.” Note: Teacher makes marks on the white board ahead of time which represent the following words and spaces: What do flow, creativity, and photographic storytelling have in common? “Let us look together on the white board. You should see a series of dashes and spaces which stand for a question that will inform our work today in *The Happiness Workshop*. Ready?” Teacher asks students to raise their hands to guess letters to fill-in the blank spaces to reveal the question. There is no penalty for a wrong answer, but it is important to keep track of which letters have been asked but are not found among the letters in today’s question.

8:20a – 8:30a

Introduction (Teacher)

Teacher introduction: “Good morning. My name is Mrs. Michele Meyer, and I am going to be guiding each of you, as we experience *The Happiness Workshop* together. I want to take a minute or two to share a little bit about the backstory on how THW came about. THW is the culmination of my master’s degree in Applied Psychology through Regis University which I completed at the end of August 2021. Flow, according to Csikszentmihalyi (2014), is the feeling or experience one gets when one is doing something so enjoyable one wants to continue it for its own sake repeatedly. I have experienced flow many times throughout my life. I had no idea how to name this feeling or what caused it to happen until I began to study flow theory and learning flow in depth

as I produced my capstone project. Often, I experience flow while writing projects for my middle school art students. One moment, I am not sure what the next project will entail and the next I am typing so fast that the words are flying from my fingertips to the word document on my laptop. I can tell you that for me, time stands still. I can produce work at such a fast speed that it takes mere minutes to formulate my thoughts and ideas into something concrete like a project worksheet for students. It feels as if I have climbed to the top of the highest mountain peak and can see clearly for miles. It is an exhilarating feeling, one that I cannot get enough of – it is addicting! Csikszentmihalyi (2014) defines this type of intrinsic feeling as eudaimonia or happiness. I can recall those feelings as if they occurred earlier today. However, they are not as intense as my original experience, but they are there, nonetheless.”

“I want to hold on to this feeling, but I cannot because there are other things vying for my attention. Now that I have learned a lot about flow theory and learning flow (flow which occurs during a learning activity), I want to share it with others, especially students and colleagues. God talks to us in these special moments, in the experience of flow and learning flow, helping us to understand our strengths and our areas of growth.

Experiencing flow and learning flow makes a difference in what we choose to do with our time. I especially like creating project worksheets for my middle school art students – God uses me and my creative capabilities to help my students reflect, think, and create something good! Hopefully, by participating in *The Happiness Workshop*, you will experience flow and learn how God wants to use you! I want to make sure that you understand that you can experience flow through almost any activity. Team sports,

individual sports, dance, music, writing, art, working on cars, designing fashion or architecture, and many other activities including ones centered around learning.”

“The topic of education has always been an important one for me. Through my work on my master’s degree, I have learned a lot about how the brain works, being human, stress and most importantly flow theory and learning flow. All of which I have viewed with students in mind. I created THW because as an Art teacher, I saw a need for students to learn about flow theory and learning flow, to understand and recognize when and how flow occurs, which we will talk about in greater depth a little later.”

“First, with the end in mind, we need to talk about the outcome of *The Happiness Workshop* which will be an exhibition of personal stories created from photographs each of you will take and print which tell your own individual story. How we will get to the result or outcome will be through a series of mini lessons which break down the entire process into small steps that build on one another. An important part of our work throughout the workshop will be the collaboration that occurs with your peers and me. One step will include taking photographs using a digital camera. I want to assure you that the focus of the workshop is not the quality of the photographs you produce but the story that you choose to tell with your photographs. Also, we will cover the process of critique and complete an informal critique process as part of viewing the full exhibition. This is done to help students look deeply at the photographic stories, provide feedback to peers and celebrate together all the connections made during the workshop.

“Next, I am going to explain flow theory developed by Mr. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (pronounced muh·hay·lee chik·sent·mee·hai·ee). There are two important concepts about flow theory. First, that flow is the experience of being

completely absorbed in an enjoyable activity where time either expands or contracts creating the intrinsic feeling of happiness. Is it possible that you have had an experience like this but not know what it was or that it had a name? Second, flow occurs when one's skills are well matched to the task at hand. When one's skills are higher than the task usually the individual procrastinates or may even experience boredom. The opposite is true in that when one's skills are lower than what is needed for the task, then anxiety, worry and stress become the dominant emotions and feelings. This may explain why you feel as you do when presented with a project or task that you have difficulty beginning. One solution for these feelings is to ask yourself, "What is the relationship between this project and my skill level?" The answer to this question should prompt you to talk with your teacher to discuss workable solutions. What questions do you have on flow? I will answer two or three questions so that we stay on time. Does this sound, ok?"

8:30a – 8:50a

Whole Group Discussion

Teacher says, "We are going to have a short whole group discussion on the following question: What do you think flow theory has to do with students and education?" Teacher helps discussion, writing answers in the form of bullet points on the white board. Teacher should allow about five minutes for students to discuss question and supply answers such as: Flow theory means students are having fun; flow theory can help students and teachers work together to match skill levels to projects for a deeper learning experience; learning flow is about me and my educational experience.

8:50a – 9:00a**Break**

Teacher says, “Thank you for your participation in our whole group discussion.

As you can see on the white board it was fruitful. Now let us take a short break. Please be back in your seats in ten minutes or at 9:00a.”

9:00a – 9:15a**Review and Principal Theme**

Teacher says, “Before we move on, let us review the information from our whole group discussion. I will start the review with “*Flow theory is important because*” and then each of you can finish the sentence. (One example of a student answer is: ...it helps students and teachers work together to match individual student skills to projects.)

Teacher continues, “Now that we have discussed flow theory together, let us talk about the focus of your work today which begins with identifying the principal theme, because it will inform and guide your work throughout *The Happiness Workshop*. Our overarching theme will be: *This is my story; will you tell me yours?* What questions do you have about the overarching theme?” Teacher uses a few minutes to answer students' questions.

9:15a – 9:30a**Collaborative Brainstorming (See Appendix Archdiocese of Denver Curriculum Standards for alignment to theology standards.)**

Teacher says, “Now that the principal theme has been identified we can dive into the project of creating a photographic story. The first step for each of you is to identify the problem which should answer the question: “*What have I done for Christ? Or what am I doing for Christ?*” The story that you choose to tell should come from your own

individual experiences. For example, you could tell a story about the time you had to sit on the bench while someone else played your position during a game; or you missed a sleepover because your great Aunt Sally, whom you have never met, decided to come for a visit and your parents wanted you to stay and meet her; or your friend wanted to play kickball with you at recess but everyone else wanted you to play basketball; or you were asked to help the new student by being their friend. How do these examples answer the questions, what have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? Student answers could be as follows: In the first example, God asked me to sit on the bench so that the other player who rarely gets a chance to play, can. In the second example, God asked me to make sure I met my great Aunt Sally because she is not in great health, she is old, and it is important to my mom. In the next example, God asked me to play with just one of my friends instead of a whole group of friends because my friend was feeling lonely. We are going to take 15 minutes for you to brainstorm and write down practical solutions. You may move about the room as you collaborate with your peers and/or ask me for help. At the end of the 15 minutes, you should have about five or six practical solutions which you feel you could develop into a photographic story.”

9:30a – 9:40a**Example Outcome**

Teacher asks students to volunteer to share one solution with the whole group from their list of five or six ideas. Teacher should write individual solutions on the white board for all students to see and read. Teacher will then go over the process for narrowing a list of ideas to just one single idea. This process entails asking questions (which should be written on the white board) such as: Which story or stories can be told using only photographs? Which story fully answers the question or questions, what have I done for

Christ or What am I doing for Christ? Which story is most workable for taking photographs considering that we will be using either the school grounds or a nearby park for our setting? As students ponder the answer to these questions, they can or will cross off some of their ideas, leaving only one or at most two options. Then teacher can ask the question, which of these two stories do you want to tell the most? Teacher asks the whole group, “What questions do you have about what I have discussed and shown you?” Instructor should allow a few minutes to field student questions.

9:40a – 9:50a**Individual Idea Selection**

Teacher says, “With the result in mind, please use the next 10 minutes to narrow your list of five or six workable solutions to one story which reflects a personal experience that answers the question or questions, what have I done for Christ? Or what am I doing for Christ that you will use for your photographic story. You may collaborate with your peers and/or with me.” Teacher says to the whole group, “What questions do you have about this task?” Instructor should allow a minute or two to field student questions.

9:50a – 10:00a**Break**

Teacher says, “Thank you for your challenging work narrowing down your list from six or seven solutions to one. Now, let us take a short break. Please be back in your seats in 10 minutes or at 10:00a.”

10:00a – 10:10a

Mini Lesson - Written Narrative (See Appendix Archdiocese of Denver Curriculum Standards for alignment of standards.)

Teacher says, “Welcome back! The next step of our project is to write a narrative.

This is a story that has a beginning, middle and end. I wrote a narrative based on my personal experience of when I rode my bike downhill for the first time, pondering how this experience answered one of the questions, what have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ?

My narrative (Note: My narrative takes place, many years ago, when I was about seven years old.)

I have been learning to ride a bike for the past couple of weeks. Today, I want to try riding my bike downhill. The neighborhood where I live was built where a lake used to be, and my house was built at the bottom of the lake. Utah Street, where I live, is the main street of our neighborhood and extends from one side of what used to be the lake to the other. Utah Street is steep, but it is also long. I am a little bit nervous about riding my bike downhill, but I think after a few times I will get used to it and it will be a lot of fun!

I am going to walk my bike up the hill to the top of Utah Street which usually takes a few minutes to get there. Here I go! Oh my gosh, this is scary fun. I am going fast! It is hard to stay in a straight line. Oh no, my bike is getting wobbly. I am starting to get scared that I will fall off. I need to brake but my legs do not want to listen. Oh no! I am falling!

I am close to home, but I am alone. I told my Dad I could ride by myself, now I wish I had not said that. I am crying because I am scared, my head hurts, my knees and elbows are bleeding, and I must walk my bike the rest of the way home.

I was not ready to ride downhill. I can see my dad in the distance running towards me. He must have seen me fall. I am happy to see him! I know he will take my bike, dry my tears, and wash my cuts and scrapes. I love my dad a lot!

How does this story answer the question, what have I done for Christ? Or what am I doing for Christ? Because the story is from my childhood it can only answer the question what have I done for Christ? In this story, I experienced confidence, trust, fear, pain, sorrow, and love all within a matter of minutes. Reflecting on the experience I can see God's hands at work when He gave me confidence to try, and the desire to trust in my own abilities, the fear of failing, the pain of being injured, the sorrow of disappointing my dad, and lastly, the unconditional love freely given to me, from my dad as he helped me clean up my injuries and get my bike home. Was my experience excellent? No, but I learned a lot about myself and life that day which I have never forgotten.

10:10a – 10:50a

Student Application - Written Narrative

Teacher says, "Students, we will use the next 40 minutes for each of you to write a narrative of your personal story. Please feel free to collaborate with your peers or seek me out for help. What questions do you have about the goal for this time?" Teacher should allow a few minutes to answer student questions.

10:50a – 11:00a

Mini Lesson - Translating Written Narrative to Photographs

Teacher says, "I am going to show you how to translate your narrative from text to photographs. You will be working line by line from the beginning to the end of your narrative. For me, my first line was "I have been learning to ride a bike for the past

couple of weeks.” What types of images could I use to stand for this line? Remember our answers should be feasible considering that we will be at the park or on school grounds. (One answer is a bicycle which may be found on campus in the bike rack.) Now, let us move on to the next line which is, “Today, I want to try riding my bike downhill.” What types of images could I use to stand for this line? (One answer is a hill of some kind. Can you think about the school grounds and recall if there is a hill?) Using this same process, I am going to move through my narrative identifying images or photographs that I want to take to tell my story.” Teacher then says, “What questions do you have about the process of translating a narrative from text to imagery?” Instructor should allow a few minutes to answer student questions.

11:00a – 11:30a

Student Application - Translating Written Narrative to Photographs

Teacher says, “Students we will use the next 30 minutes to translate our written narratives from text to imagery or photographs. Please feel free to collaborate with your peers and to seek out my feedback and help as you go through the process of translating your narrative from text to photographic images.”

11:30a – 2:00p

Walking Field Trip to an Outdoor Setting or Park (Timeframe includes a 30-minute break for lunch)

Teacher says, “It is now time for us to take a short walking field trip outside. We will be gone about two and a half hours during which we will have lunch and recess. You will need to make sure that you bring with you a full water bottle and your lunch or snacks. It will be about 2:30p when we are back on campus. If you need to use the restroom, please do before we go. There are also two more adult chaperones (which are

not parents to any participating student or students), other than me, which will be with our group as we walk to and from the park together. I have assigned each of you to a group with an adult.” Note: teacher then shares the list of students and the chaperone with the group. Together, students will walk with adult chaperones to an outdoor location which has been previously selected and have a picnic lunch first before beginning work. Note: the reason parents of participating students are not invited is because a parent can influence the outcome of the workshop for their child.

12:00p – 12:15p**Mini Lesson - Taking Photographs**

Teacher will guide the students through the mechanics of working a simple digital camera to take photographs making sure to cover turning the camera on and off, pointing out the location of the viewfinder and the button for taking a picture, as well as how to view and remove, a single or series of photographs. Lastly, the importance of lighting on the photograph image. It is important to note that the digital cameras selected for use are basic point and shoot cameras without bells and whistles. Teacher should remind students that the quality of the photographs they will be taking and then putting in the exhibition will not be graded in terms of photographic skills. However, there will be a critique process following the exhibition which will be explained at that time.

12:15p – 2:00p**Student Application - Taking Photographs**

Students will take photographs to depict pre-selected portions of their personal narrative with peer collaboration and teacher feedback.

Return to School and Reflection on Day One and Workshop Experience (2:00p – 2:45p)

Students will reflect on Day One, and the workshop experience using the following questions which have been made into a written reflection sheet for each student, to answer the following questions:

1. What did you think you were going to do as a participant in *The Happiness Workshop*?
2. Describe two different experiences collaborating with your peers.
3. Describe and explain your experience selecting a personal story to write as a narrative.
4. Describe when you might have experienced flow during today's workshop.
5. Identify one thing that helped improve your work today.

The Happiness Workshop Script: Day Two

8:15a – 8:25a

Ice breaker - (Student)

Student says, “Good morning! I have been asked to lead us in a different icebreaker. I thought it would be fun to play Pictionary. Here is how the game works. First, we are going to break into teams by counting 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3 and so on. I would like all the 1’s to sit together, 2’s and 3’s. Allow about 30 seconds for students to change seats. Student begins again. A single word has been written on each of these papers. Each team will select one person to draw, this same person will select the paper, keeping the word hidden from their team. I will set a two-minute timer. When you are ready to begin drawing, give me a nod and I will start the timer. Ready? Ok, go!” Note: words to draw should relate to *The Happiness Workshop* in some way. Some examples are, happiness, camera, photograph, story. Allow each group to have at least one turn and if time allows two.

8:25a – 8:40a

Recall of Day One – Student led Collaboration and Discussion

Teacher asks for a student volunteer to lead the whole group discussion. Teacher says, “I would like a volunteer to lead our whole group discussion, anyone willing?” Volunteer student is given a note card with the following two questions to ask the group: “What was the problem that informed our work yesterday?” Then, the volunteer student asks the second question: “What were some of the solutions?” Note: A student secretary can be appointed to record answers in bullet form on the whiteboard. Teacher takes a place in the background, to be present, if needed for support.

8:40a – 8:55a**Mini Lesson – Steps with Computers**

Teacher will guide the students through the steps of uploading digital photographs to server, showing right naming conventions, moving images around to place them in the order of the narrative. Teacher will check in with each student reviewing their work and supplying feedback on the choice of photographs and order. Teacher will guide students through the printing process, showing specific printers for use, so that printing can be spread out to several printers. Teacher will say, “What questions do you have regarding uploading your images, moving them to the correct order and printing?” Teacher should allow four to five minutes to field questions.

8:55a – 9:50a**Student Application - Steps with Computers**

Teacher says, we will use the next 55 minutes for uploading your photographs, naming each photograph, placing them in the correct order and preparing the photographs for printing. Please feel free to collaborate with peers and seek out my help as you complete this work.” Teacher says, “what questions do you have about what we need to accomplish during the next 45 minutes?” Teacher should allow a few minutes to answer student questions.

9:50a – 10:00a**Break**

Teacher says, “Thank you for your focus and completing the work with your photographs. Let us take a short break. Please be back in your seats in ten minutes or at 10:00a.

10:00a – 10:15a**Mini Lesson – Preparing Photographs for Exhibition**

Teacher will guide students through the process of preparing images including photographs for presentation in an exhibition. Teacher will show examples of photographs mounted on black construction paper along with the materials needed to complete the mounting process which includes a ruler, a sharp pencil, an X-Acto knife, and Uhu glue stick. Teacher will demonstrate the process of measuring, placing tick marks and gluing a single photograph to black construction paper. Note: Teacher will supply all materials needed for each student to complete this step. Teacher says, “What questions do you have about this process?”

10:15a – 11:15a**Student Application - Preparing Photographs for Exhibition**

Teacher says, “Students, we will use the next hour to glue each photograph to black construction paper using the process that I demonstrated. Please feel free to collaborate with your peers or to seek me out for help.”

11:15a – 12:00p**Recess and Lunch Break**

Teacher says, “We have reached the point in today’s workshop to take a much-needed break which includes time for both lunch and recess. Enjoy the time away from the workshop to eat, talk and play. The workshop will begin again at noon at which time we will gather to learn and talk about installing your work as a formal exhibition. Have fun! I will see each of you back in this room at noon!”

12:00 – 12:15p

Mini Lesson - Installing Exhibition

Teacher says, “Welcome back! I hope you had both a nice break and an opportunity to relax. We are now going to discuss the important aspects of installing an art exhibition. Each of you will handle hanging your individual stories. There are a couple of methods which can be used to display artworks for public viewing. One of them is to use the flats from a stage performance because the flats have two sides of stretched canvas which can be used for display. The second one is to use a freestanding metal grid made up of three individual grids, zip tied together for stability and placed in the shape of the letter u. It is possible to string more than three grids together if needed. We will be using the metal grids for our exhibition. Please keep in mind that each story should be “read” horizontally from left to right as you would read text in a book. You have already mounted your images on black construction paper, so the hardest part of the job is complete. The next step is to place two transparent plastic adhesive hangers with a hole for an “s” hook on the back of each image found at the top left and right corners of the image. The bottom part of the “s” hook can then be threaded into the opening on the artwork and the top part of the “s” hook is then hung from one of the horizontal bars of the grid. Make sure that each image is placed on the same bar so that the story can be read easily. Now, I am going to demonstrate the method.” Teacher then says, “What questions do you have about this process?” Teacher should allow about four or five minutes to answer questions.

12:15p – 1:00p**Student Application - Installing Exhibition**

Teacher says, “Students, we will use the next 45 minutes to install your individual stories. Please feel free to collaborate with your peers or to seek out my feedback and help as you install your artworks.”

1:00p – 1:45p**View Exhibition with Community**

Teacher will guide students in how to view each individual story as well as the complete exhibition of all students’ stories. Teacher will remind students that they are not the only ones viewing the exhibition. Guests from the school community will be in attendance as well and manners are important. Noting the importance of conducting oneself in right ways because each student stands for the school individually.

1:45p – 2:00p**Mini Lesson – The Process of Critique**

Teacher will guide students through both a formal and an informal process of critique explaining both forms and pointing out that the only form which will be used is the informal process of critique. The teacher will say, “The formal process of critique uses Describe, Analyze, Interpret and Judge as the method for viewing artworks. For example, someone can describe concrete things within each photograph, analyze them in terms of the elements of Art, interpret the image using their own life experiences and then judge the images in terms of the story they tell, supporting their answers with concrete examples. However, it is important to remember this is not the critique process we will use today. Instead, we will use an informal critique process which uses only Interpret and Describe for viewing artworks. When someone interprets what they see in a photograph

they would use their own life experiences to attach meaning. For example, a bicycle may be interpreted as something that is wanted, a means of transportation, or represents either a negative or positive experience. The teacher would then ask the question: “What do you see in the photograph that makes you think this way, waiting for student responses.

Remember regarding photographic storytelling, it is the story that is being told through the photographs that is most important.” Note: Using the tools of Describe and Interpret allows for students to see recognizable, concrete objects and then interpret those objects in relation to one another against their own life experiences. It should be a very moving experience.

2:00p – 2:30p

Student Application - The Process of Critique

Students will work individually or with one other peer to view and critique two stories with the goal of seeking to understand the answer to the original question which informed the work on display which was, what have I done for Christ? Or what am I doing for Christ? Students will write down their critique to share with the original artist.

2:30p – 2:45p

Reflection on Day Two and Workshop Experience

Teacher will hand out a written reflection sheet to each student with the following questions:

- ★ Identify three new things that you learned while participating in *The Happiness Workshop*.
- ★ Identify three ways in which your relationships with your peers have changed.
- ★ Identify when you think you experienced flow and how did it make you feel.
- ★ Identify one area in which you grew through your work in *The Happiness Workshop*.

- ★ Going forward, how do you see yourself in the eyes of God?
- ★ What changes would you recommend that *The Happiness Workshop* consider, which will improve the experience for future students?

Chapter 5

Discussion

The Happiness Workshop (THW) was developed to fill a gap in understanding in education, specifically for Administrators and Teachers. The workshop itself was developed for middle school students to experience learning flow through the process of photographic storytelling. In education, students need to engage fully in learning activities to promote the transfer of knowledge for all content areas. However, for many students, deep engagement does not occur. This inability to engage deeply with subject specific content can be due to a student's perception of their own skills in comparison to the requirements of the given project or activity. According to Csikszentmihalyi (2014) when student skills are well-matched in a learning activity the student becomes deeply engaged in the activity, losing themselves completely in the moment. This deep engagement is learning flow where time stands still, all other concerns are set aside, goals of the activity are clear, there is immediate feedback from teachers and students feel they are in control. However, when a student perceives their own skills are either higher or lower than what is needed to complete a project, they will choose to display boredom or procrastination. This lack of engagement occurs simply because a student has assessed the activity or project at hand against their own abilities and has either deemed it unworthy of their time, hence boredom or becomes anxious out of fear of failure making the choice to procrastinate.

For teachers, evidence of learning is paramount. However, this evidence can be tailored to each individual student based on individual students' skill levels. This method of assessment results in less stress and anxiety for those students who have determined their skills are not strong enough to be successful. Conversely students who determine an activity is unworthy of their time also need a way to use their skills successfully thus allowing them autonomy to decide

how best to accomplish the goals of the project. Considering that there are three types of learners which are visual, auditory, and kinesthetic, teachers need to craft projects and activities with open ended solutions which allow students to meet the project challenges using their unique skill levels to achieve success. In my 15-year career as an elementary art teacher, I have witnessed firsthand the inability of some of my students to engage in art projects. My work on flow theory and learning flow produced an “ah-ha” moment for me. I now know why some of my students chose to procrastinate or appeared bored, choosing not to work on the current project while others dove right in without looking back! I took the opportunity to create an open-ended art project for my middle school students as their last project of the school year this past April/May. I cannot begin to describe the happiness I not only saw but could also feel in the art room emanating from my students. There was not one student who appeared bored, became anxious or stressed, or failed to complete the project. The solutions produced by all students were highly creative, extremely unique, and displayed high quality artisanship. The strong show of solutions occurred simply because they were given freedom to match their own skill levels to the challenge in front of them to determine the outcome which met the requirements of the project. As their teacher, it was a joy to have the middle school students in class because they were not only happy to be there, but they knew they could be successful, they knew they were in control. This does not mean there will not be problems to overcome but at least when problems arise, students will view them as minor setbacks rather than major ones.

The Educational Gap and How it is Addressed

THW began as an idea intended to address a gap in student engagement and learning at the elementary school level. The gap was identified as a lack of understanding among teachers and administrators regarding learning flow and its benefits for students as well as teachers. THW

identified a need but lacked both a curriculum and a process to bring it to fruition. Through research, photographic storytelling was determined to be an optimal way in which to engage students in a creative learning activity. The process of photographic storytelling contained within THW uses the lens of “What have I done for Christ?” and/or “What am I doing for Christ?” to tell a visual story where the groundwork is laid using narrative writing techniques, collaboration, reflection, and photography all with the goal of sharing a story with a community. In elementary school, learning occurs in every conversation, task, and activity. Students can learn about each other as they find shared experiences hidden in the silent photographic stories.

For the curriculum to be valid, THW needed to use current curriculum standards for the Archdiocese of Denver. Following the Literature Review a determination was made to include a narrative writing component within the curriculum which would need to connect to the 2021 Language Arts Standards for grades six, seven and eight. In addition, the desire and need to connect to Jesuit philosophy became a vital element of the curriculum. Using colloquy, an intimate conversation with God, a determination was made to use, “What have I done for Christ?” or “What am I doing for Christ” as the lens the students would use to view the event they selected for their story. This method allows students to view an event from a distinct perspective, one in which they were acting on behalf of God. In doing so, it can change their own thoughts and ideas on their role and the outcome of an event. All of which is great learning. Introducing this lens made it necessary for the curriculum to use current Catechesis and Theology curriculum standards also for the Archdiocese of Denver.

Finally, the curriculum was written as a script, for any teacher anywhere to facilitate THW in their school. However, it is important to note, not all schools fall within the Catholic school system and as such there may be a need for modifications to THW curriculum to

incorporate and reflect curriculum standards for other school districts. Modifications can be made once alternate curriculum standards are identified.

Learning Flow and Implications for Education

The current educational model has been in place a long time where students gather in a classroom and instruction is provided by a teacher. However, Csikszentmihalyi (2014) suggests that student engagement has been at an all-time low. Csikszentmihalyi reasons this is so because of a lack of understanding by teachers as to the benefits of flow theory and learning flow experiences for students. A one size fits all approach to projects and activities cannot and does not meet the skill levels of all students in an individual classroom. With the development of technology, education has grown to include online coursework, as well as complete online curricula intended to compete with, and in some cases replace traditional classroom models. THW provides opportunities for students to gather much like in a traditional classroom setting but with added opportunities to collaborate as they move through the steps of the workshop towards completion creating a unique learning experience. Each conversation presents an opportunity to learn, to grow, to mend fences and to build friendships all because the students are together, sharing the same space and time.

Limitations

THW is an applied research project. However, because it was created and developed during the summer semester of the Capstone course MAPC 693 it has not been applied in an elementary school setting. To understand the viability of THW it will be important to obtain approval to implement THW as soon as feasible.

In addition to decision-maker approval, several material limitations have been identified for THW which include obtaining enough digital cameras as well as photographic printing services for each individual student participating in a single 2-day session of THW. (Note: cameras can be shared by participants from one workshop to the next but not during the same workshop.) Implementing THW in a school setting will also require approval by the appropriate middle school teachers because of the time needed to conduct the workshop in lieu of other subject specific content areas. For many schools procuring cameras and printing services may be a limitation of implementing THW without the help from outside resources. Some schools may have access to the necessary funds either through donations or within existing budgets to buy enough digital cameras. It is important to note that it is not presumed that all schools will be able to fund THW internally. One way to address this limitation is for THW to establish itself as a non-profit organization which could solicit donations to procure digital cameras for schools in need. Another way to address this limitation is to seek outside sources which can partner with THW or a school directly to provide use of digital cameras to borrow like checking out a book from the library.

The Future and THW

On August 6, 2012, the Results Chapter of THW was presented to Ms. Lisa Taylor, principal of Our Lady of Fatima School (OLF) in Lakewood, Colorado with positive comments. Ms. Taylor indicated that she was open to having THW implemented for incoming sixth grade students. However, she recommended the following course of action to obtain final approval: Identification of specific outdoor location for walking fieldtrip; assessment of how many working digital cameras OLF currently owns; assessment of how many new cameras are needed; addressing potential concerns about having two separate workshops for 19 students rather than

one workshop with all sixth-grade students at the same time; presenting THW to middle school teachers along with gaining their approval; identification of possible dates for THW at the end of the first quarter or beginning of the second quarter. Once these requirements have been fulfilled implementation of THW will remain dependent on the impacts, if any, of Covid-19 and/or other variants OLF as a school may experience within the first four to six weeks of the new school year. Although THW did not receive a green light to proceed, it does look hopeful for implementation sometime this school year, possibly as early as mid-October, for sixth grade students.

Future Research

Future research regarding learning flow and its applications in education can take several directions. One possible study could be to determine a way to target learning flow activities for middle school students in content specific area of math. A second possible study could be to develop a targeted survey specifically designed to pinpoint when learning flow occurs for a student. A study is needed that would help content specific teachers pinpoint methods to promote a learning flow experience for their students individually. Also, future research should include studies of flow and learning flow among middle school students in socioeconomic backgrounds which are below middle to upper middle class and/or underserved populations because there is a lack of data on these populations.

This project found that any adolescent student, male or female can experience learning flow. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that all adolescent students regardless of socioeconomic conditions can achieve and benefit from learning flow experiences but there needs to be data to confirm this conclusion. This area of study is important because of the effect of creativity on fairness and equity among all students. THW uses creativity through the process

of translating a written narrative into photographs, creating a photographic story. It is my hope that THW will be like a rock thrown in a pond, creating a ripple effect for all students everywhere.

Conclusion

There are several conclusions that can be drawn from the work in THW. One of particular importance is the positive effect learning flow can have on academic success placing it at the forefront of new pedagogical practices in terms of student engagement and well-being to mitigate stress, anxiety, and depression. A second conclusion is the understanding of photographic storytelling as a powerful tool for engaging students as they reflect on their own lives, seeking God's hands in each event while learning about their peers through the shared experiences found in each other's photographs. Lastly, is the value that photographic storytelling can bring to all students everywhere. THW provides a unique opportunity for hidden shared experiences brought to light that would go unnoticed otherwise. THW gives middle school students an opportunity to be fully engaged, collaborate with peers, narrate a personal experience, and then to share that experience with a community. As each member takes in the stories, silently viewing and reflecting on the photographs, a connection is made from one human being to another creating a bond formed out of love.

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APPENDIX A

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed from the research studies listed below using the following criteria: participant age should be within the ages of 10 - 17, socioeconomic status, participant group size to be at least 150 individuals, research method was self-report, topic related to flow, flow theory, learning flow, positivity, positive affect in educational settings.

Annalakshmi, N., Kappan, E., & Vidya, B. (2020). Personality predictors of flow among adolescents. *Indian Journal of Positive Psychology*, 11(3), 218–226.

<https://doi.org/https://iahrw.org/our-services/journals/indian-journal-of-positive-psychology/>

Annalakshmi et al., (2020) examined gender differences in flow experiences and the influence of personality factors on flow experience, flow state and dispositional flow using self-report measures.

Rathunde, K., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2014). Chapter 9 The Social Context of Middle School: Teachers, Friends, and Activities in Montessori and Traditional School Environments. In *Applications of flow in human development and education* (pp. 189–212). essay, Springer.

Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi (2014) examined how middle school students in both Montessori and traditional schools viewed distinct aspects of their school experience using the Experience Sampling Method (ESM). The questionnaire included questions related to the school as a whole, teachers and classmates; identifying with whom students chose to spend time with during academic activities and the identification of specific activities completed during the school day.

Ruini, C., Albieri, E., Ottolini, F., & Vescovelli, F. (2020). Once upon a time: A school positive narrative intervention for promoting well-being and creativity in elementary school children. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, 1–13.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/aca0000362>

Ruini et al., (2020) examined the efficacy for promoting well-being and creativity in elementary school students using self-report measures, for the purpose of comparing an intervention program based on storytelling as well as narrative techniques to a control condition.

Wagner, L., Holenstein, M., Wepf, H., & Ruch, W. (2020). Character strengths are related to students' achievement, flow experiences, and enjoyment in teacher-centered learning, individual, and group work beyond cognitive ability. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 1–13.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01324>

Wagner et al., (2020) examined different learning situations through self-report measures to identify the relationships of students' character strengths with achievement, flow experiences and enjoyment.

Wu, R., Huebner, E. S., Zhou, J., & Tian, L. (2021). Relations among positivity, positive affect in school, and learning flow in elementary school students: A longitudinal mediation model. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12418>

Wu et al., (2021) examined the longitudinal relations among positivity, positive affect in school and learning flow as well as the mediational role of positive affect in school between positivity and learning flow through self-report measures.

Research Methodology

All data was collected through self-report measures. This methodology according to Salters-Pedneault (n.d.) has both pros and cons. Salters-Pedneault, (n.d.) suggest results from self-report measures should be validated by another research method due to participants' social desirability affecting answers.

- Pros: inexpensive, reaches larger field of participants, obtain data in a short amount of time, results can be anonymized (Salters-Pedneault, n.d.).
- Cons: Personal biases may affect answers due to social desirability (Salters-Pedneault, n.d.).

Participant Demographics

- Median age range of participants spanned 10 years of age to 17 years of age.
- Socio-economic status of participants was equal and defined as middle to upper middle class. Lower income and underserved populations are not represented.
- Religious affiliation was not identified in all research studies.
- Male and Female participants were equally represented except in one study females outnumbered males by 10%.
- Study group size ranged from 150 participants to 4681 participants. Most studies were conducted using a group size of 150 – 200 participants.

Data Results

- Data supports personality types are predictors of experiencing flow (Annalakshmi et al., 2020).
- Data supports females are more likely to experience flow than males (Annalakshmi et al., 2020).

- Data supports positivity as a predictor of future learning flow (Wu et al., 2021).
- Data supports learning flow is achievable when teacher support, classroom order and emotional safety are high (Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

Learning Flow Outcomes

- Flow is experienced during a learning activity (Annalakshmi et al., 2020).
- Easily achieved by students with the personality characteristic of extraversion (socially bold, enthusiastic, high positive regard for themselves), (Annalakshmi et al., 2020).
- Difficulty being achieved by students with the personality characteristic of agreeableness (forgiving, trusting, compromising), (Annalakshmi et al., 2020).
- Achievable when teacher support is high (Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).
- Achievable when classroom order is high (Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).
- Achievable when emotional safety is high (Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

Positive Effects of Learning Flow Outcomes

- Overall positive self-image (Wu et al., 2021).
- Development of autonomy (Ruini et al., 2020).
- Leads to Environmental Mastery (Ruini et al., 2020).
- Promotes Personal Growth (Ruini et al., 2020).
- Promotes Positive Relations (Ruini et al., 2020).
- Leads to a Strong Sense of Purpose in Life (Ruini et al., 2020).
- Leads to Self-Acceptance (Ruini et al., 2020).

Positive Affect in School Outcomes

- Experiencing positive emotions during the school day has a positive effect on learning (Wu et al., 2021).

Flow Experience Predictors

- Directly affected by positivity, (Wu et al., 2021).
- Mediated by Positive Affect in School, (Wu et al., 2021).
- Teacher-centered love of learning, perseverance, zest, and hope, (Wagner et al., 2020).
- Individual student tasks: love of learning, perseverance, and self-regulation, (Wagner et al., 2020).
- Group Work: Judgment, love of learning, perspective, perseverance, zest, love, social intelligence, teamwork, fairness, and leadership, (Wagner et al., 2020).

Conclusion

Male and female adolescents, ranging in age from ten to fourteen can experience learning flow when they are in classroom environments which display order, expect order, and promote emotional safety where teacher-centered support and love of learning, perseverance, zest, and hope are modeled for student-centered individual tasks and group work are present.

Teachers promote students' learning flow experiences by promoting positivity and positive affect in school for their students when they model and display a love of learning, perseverance, zest, and hope in a classroom environment that is orderly, emotionally safe, and student-centered.

Students with a positive sense of self are more likely to experience learning flow because they easily engage in tasks due to their positive outlook regarding their own abilities and capabilities. Students who build on their positive experiences over the course of a given school year are also more likely to experience learning flow, because one positive experience added to another build's confidence, increasing the desire for autonomy. Teachers can construct projects

that allow for students to select their method of displaying proficiency in a subject or content area. This methodology of including students in the decision-making process allows each student to tailor the demonstration of knowledge to their strengths.

Data reported by Annalakshmi et al., (2020) can be used to draw several conclusions. Regarding the use of personality characteristics and gender to predict the ability of a student to experience flow it is possible to conclude that students who exhibit the personality characteristic of extraversion would positively experience flow. This is because an individual who is high on extraversion is socially bold, enthusiastic, full of energy, has high positive regard for themselves, enjoy social gatherings and making conversation with others. This type of individual is unlikely to hesitate when given a task that is either above or below their skill level because they exhibit a positive-self state. Conversely, according to the same data, students who are high on agreeableness are unlikely to experience flow. These individuals are forgiving, trusting, compromising, flexible and remain calm in stressful situations. However, as human beings we are made up of more than one personality characteristic. A student who is a combination of characteristics can achieve flow in the right conditions. This is where a strong educator is needed to work with the student to match projects and tasks to their skill-levels which are outside of their personality characteristics. Experiencing flow represents complete absorption in a task or project which is achievable by all.

APPENDIX B**Archdiocese of Denver Curricula Standards****2020 Language Arts Curriculum Standards Archdiocese of Denver*****Guiding Principles of 3-8th Grade Writing Curriculum***

- 1: Students should write well, using language as a bridge for communication with one's fellow man for the betterment of all involved (Archdiocese of Denver, n.d.).
- 2: Students should choose or be assigned lengths of writing intentionally for the purpose of the writing (Archdiocese of Denver, n.d.).
- 4: Students should write in various ways to naturally order thoughts, align them with truth, communicate experience, and accurately express intent, knowledge, and feelings (Archdiocese of Denver, n.d.).

Guiding Principles for K-12 Speaking and Listening Standards, specifically items I, II, IV, V and VI.

- I. Language is a bridge for communication with one's fellow man for the betterment of all involved (Archdiocese of Denver, n.d.).
- II. People should grow in their ability to speak in various ways to naturally order thoughts, align them with truth, and accurately express intent, knowledge, and feelings (Archdiocese of Denver, n.d.).
- III. Great rhetoric and oration can be best learned by imitating master orators including those in scripture and history (Archdiocese of Denver, n.d.).
- IV. Students need to know a concept deeply in order to speak about it well (Archdiocese of Denver, n.d.).
- V. Oration is a means of signifying concepts and the relationship to reason (Archdiocese of Denver, n.d.).
- VI. Listening to others to develop empathy, understanding, and love of others. We serve a God who listens to us, and we imitate God when we seek to understand the heart and mind of others (Archdiocese of Denver, n.d.).

Language Arts Narrative Writing Standards by Grade Level

Note: Writing standards are coded using the following convention: Grade.W.Standard.

8.W.3.a.b.c.d.e, 7.W.3.a.b.c.d.e and 6.W.3.a.b.c.d.e:

Write narratives in which they:

- a. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and a point of view and organize a sequence of events or experiences.
- b. Develop narrative elements (e.g., setting, plot, event sequence, complex characters) with specific sensory details.
- c. Use a variety of techniques to convey sequence, shift from one time frame or setting to another and/or show the relationships among the events or experiences.
- d. Choose words or phrases to effectively develop the events, experiences, and ideas and to create mood.
- e. Provide a strong conclusion which follows from events, experiences, or ideas.

2021 Catechesis and Theology Standards Archdiocese of Denver***8th Grade Strand III: Life in Christ*****A. Christian Anthropology**

3. Give examples of how a person is pure in heart, that is when he/she perceives and respects others as a gift and seeks to make a gift of him/herself to others. (TOB 50, 54, 57.3; CCC 2518, 2519).

B. Discipleship and Community

1. Discuss the need to make a choice to follow Jesus and to live out this choice every day.
2. Describe the importance of a Christian culture, or way of life, in order to live the faith in the world.
3. Describe how their membership in the Body of Christ gives them a responsibility to each other member of the human community.

C. Morality

1. Identify that God puts us in the world to know, to love, and to serve him, and so to

come to paradise and this is the goal of the moral life (CCC* 1721).

2. Explain that the Beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness (CCC 1718).

7. Identify examples and/or demonstrate ways to use virtues to respond to situations involving personal and/or social sin (CCC 1869).

D. Service and Social Justice

1. Assess how Catholic values help us make social, economic, and political choices.
2. Discuss that every right has a corresponding responsibility.
3. Identify some responsibilities related to the rights of human persons.

7th Grade Strand III: Life in Christ

A. Christian Anthropology

8. Explain how Christ does not accuse but instead appeals to the human heart to be pure (TOB* 45.5, 46.5-6, 49.7; CCC 2517-2519).

9. Describe what ‘life according to the Spirit’ is and how following the law of God leads to true freedom and happiness (TOB 15.1, 45.1, 51.5-6, 53.4-5, 54.2-4; CCC 30, 736, 1731, 1824, 1828-1832, 2514-2516, 2548).

10. Evaluate how love, as a power, is a participation in the love of God himself. How it is total. How it is faithful. How it is fruitful. How it is generous.

B. Discipleship and Community

2. Explain the role of mentorship and growth in discipleship.

6. Identify their talents and gifts and describe ways to share these with the community.

D. Service and Social Justice

5. Identify some responsibilities related to the rights of human persons.

6. Create suggestions for peaceful alternatives and solutions for violations of life and dignity of the human person; call to family, community, and participation; rights and responsibilities; option for the poor and vulnerable; dignity of work and the rights of workers; solidarity; care for God’s creation.

6th Grade Strand III: Life in Christ**A. Christian Anthropology**

1. Exhibit wonder and awe at the generosity of God in the gifts of His abundant and beautiful creation (TOB 2-3, 13.2; CCC 293-295, 341).

B. Discipleship and Community

2. Explain how to continue growing in relationship with Jesus as a disciple.
3. Identify ways that God called individuals in the Old Testament to serve in the community and formulate examples of ways that God continues to call us to serve in the community today.
4. Demonstrate the skill of listening: to hear others respectfully, and to be open to the voice of God.

D. Service and Social Justice

1. Define God's call to leadership as a call to service for the community.

Abbreviations

*CCC: Catechism of the Catholic Church

*TOB: Theology of the Body