Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963) provides a visual and written tale about a child's journey of possibilities. In Sendak's somewhat autobiographical illustrated children's story, he weaves a tale of Max, a young boy, whose imagination allows him to find alternate possibilities for his real life situation through the creation of an island of *wild things*. *Where the Wild Things Are* provides a metaphor for a rewoven story regarding the everyday instructional journey of art teachers who seek to nurture wild things in their classroom. Creativity or "wild things" are encouraged through a proposed instructional model: Choice, Voice, and Challenge (CVC) Instruction (Perkins, 2004). CVC Instruction defines ways in which classroom teachers may provide vehicles for their students' mental journeys that can lead to creative and imaginative actions and outcomes. There is much in the literature describing multiple and identical art projects that appear on elementary and middle school classroom walls across the United States. CVC Instruction, as defined by Perkins, began as a way to change these identical works to more imaginative outcomes and explain creative instruction to non-art teachers. Perkins' journey continued as she developed an instructional tool for preservice teachers that evolved into a formalized and integral part of a K-12 model focused upon creativity in art. The CVC model provides a working definition of creative instruction that can assist art teachers in their explanation of the creative process to colleagues. CVC provides a way for creativity to be explained, defined, and situated in art education practice.

Creativity or the cultivation of thinking about the world through imagined ideas, symbols, and metaphors is the essence of a visual art experience. Classroom strategies can provide opportunities for creative visual thinking—the wild things of the imagination—that transform creative processes of students. In order to envision instruction that encourages the wild thing as a part of a contemporary art classroom, the journey begins with ways to define characteristics of creativity.

**Defining Wild Things: Characteristics of Creativity**

Identification of wild things, or ideas that denote creativity, generally fall into two categories: the creativity of everyday life and world-changing creativity. The wild things or creative thinking present in classrooms is defined as *everyday creativity*, while *world-changing creativity* occurs when an expert in a field develops or discovers new concepts that change thinking in different domains or in the world (Amabile, 1989; Cropley, 1999; Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi & Gardner, 1994; Torrence, 1962). World-changing creativity in art, as exemplified by artists such as Cassatt, Koons, Picasso, or Sherman, requires extensive knowledge and mastery within a field acquired through traditional learning (Cropley, 1992; Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi & Gardner, 1994). Alternately, everyday creativity as viewed by Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, and Gardner is a capability present, in varying degrees, in all individuals and age groups, potentially providing the wild things of creative outcomes in the classroom and beyond. Everyday or classroom creativity evolves from a learner's cultural context, whether or not others have discovered the same idea on many other occasions (Amabile, 1989; Beattie, 2000; Boden, 1994). For example, an art lesson introduced to ten different art classes may generate the same novel variation on the project for 15 of 200 total students. Although similar, these novel solutions are defined as everyday creativity for these students within their classroom context. CVC instruction recognizes and encourages the possibilities in everyday creativity for students. Everyday creativity emerges as ingenious interpretations in the process of knowledge acquisition, providing moments that create interest in learning and life (Amabile, 1989; Cropley, 1999; Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi & Gardner, 1994; Torrence, 1993). Creativity may be situated in the student process and/or outcome. In Sendak's story, Max—motivated by rambunctious disobedience—transforms his bedroom, the furniture, and his dreams into a unique world. The creativity of everyday life may include the story of a child such as Max retelling his or her imagined journey, novel variations.

**In Search of the Wild Things: The Choice, Voice, and Challenge (CVC) Model for Creative Instruction**

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for an evening meal recipe, or a student using humorous or surprising metaphors to develop content or design an art composition. In art classrooms, everyday creativity or the exploration of wild things includes a student art process or a teacher-assigned classroom project that takes a different or surprising approach, utilizes media in an innovative manner for the class, provides a novel descriptive critique or explanation for processes/product, and/or applies visual ideas in a transformative adaptation. An example is an upper elementary art unit that incorporated development of archihats. These hats, based upon an architecture unit, encouraged each student to design a home or habitat they imagined or thought about (in the future, in space, underground) to wear as a symbolic visual thinking/thought cap. The archihat assignment was an everyday innovative teacher's assignment that allowed for possible everyday student creative outcomes (Figure 1).

Locating Wild Things in the Classroom

In Where the Wild Things Are, Max displays this everyday creativity through a childhood proclivity for exploration of imagined places and things. Imagining of wild things, while delightful, is not an exceptional process. Weisberg (2006, 1986) and Boden (1994) argue that all varieties of creative work are brought about by ordinary cognitive processes. There is a relatively close relationship between creative thinking and other forms of cognition, such as problem solving, reasoning, and the use of memory (Swartz & Perkins, 1990; Weisberg, 2006). A creative product or idea in an art classroom might include a student application of individual knowledge in science or social studies, and art integrated into a new approach beyond the class context to create an art project that is interdisciplinary and innovative in application. An example includes a secondary contemporary social issues unit that assigned research with a personal narrative connection. The project themes included war and society (a brother in the army), violence and bias (area hate crime), as well as media and feminist issues (eating disorders). An innovative student developed her story about a relative's struggle with an eating disorder. She selected a cooking pan as her "canvas" to represent challenging Appalachian eating styles (grits, fried chicken, and Derby pie), body image issues, and the change to healthier eating habits. Religious symbols reflect her relative's strength to overcome the disorder through the support of Appalachian family and spiritual values. (See Figure 2.)

Previous notions of creativity include a view of art as an activity that is mystical or special; however, these views limit opportunities for broad pedagogy that encourages each student's everyday creative thinking. While others within the field of creativity identify multiple factors such as personality traits that are present in creative individuals (Amabile, 1989; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996), CVC Instruction (Perkins, 2004) addresses the need for educating all students by providing opportunities to actively explore imagined potential and reflectively engage with the context of their environments and cultures.

Choice, Voice, and Challenge Instruction

Much like the journey of Max, our much longer pedagogical journey of years and a day led us to ways to encourage wild things in the art classroom and introduce creative instruction through Choice, Voice, and Challenge or CVC Instruction (Perkins, 2004). This approach to instruction includes creative and critical strategies broadly categorized in three components: student choice, student voice, and challenge.

CVC instruction requires time for presentation, idea development, meaningful discussion, problem posing, and solutions to problems. Sandell (1991) observes that the "structure, setting and time allotted in most art programs often tend to repress creative studio activity and critical response" (p. 183). However, CVC instructional strategies may be incorporated in everyday lessons that aim to create a classroom environment that affirms everyday creativity and the thinking processes that foster it. Suggested Choice, Voice, and Challenge instructional strategies include:

- Incorporating open-ended and diverse thinking activities with student exploration within learning contexts taught across social, cultural, and interdisciplinary areas.
- Multiple choices of materials, solutions, and projects incorporating critical reflection and questioning.
- Allowance for student-expanded interdisciplinary and global questions accompanied by time to reflect, generate ideas, and pose problems/questions through a dialogic interaction of questioning and classroom discussions.
- Creation of a supportive, risk-free environment for problem-posing and solution possibilities.

![Figure 1. Two archihat thought caps.](image1)

![Figure 2. Eating disorders social issues project.](image2)
CVC: Choice

The choice component of CVC incorporates thinking strategies that promote diverse opportunities through media and materials. Developing classroom choice encourages a greater degree of personal engagement with instructional content. This provides opportunities for students to have a greater sense of ownership in an art project, whether choices are given in the content, media, style, or subject matter. Student choice in an art classroom may include providing diverse media and multiple outcome options for the completion of artworks as well as an instructional tolerance for ambiguity. Outcomes of CVC Instruction will be diverse and reflect student development of processes and production. An example is a Wild Thinks and Things afterschool project with 6th grade at-risk students. Sendak’s Where the Wild Things Are children’s picture books as well as contemporary media provided literacy connections to student learning regarding performing objects, kinetic art, form, sculpture, and individualized character development. Instruction encouraged diverse outcomes based upon idea generation, student abilities, and media exploration with culminating puppet performances (Figure 3). In this project, student choice was embedded within the development and production process by providing: opportunities for brainstorming, time for critical questioning and evaluation, and diverse puppet construction opportunities, as well as incorporation of multiple and sometimes unique found materials.

CVC Choice includes the ordinary thinking activities of student judging and deciding as a facet of creative thinking. These choices foster independence and self-assurance by cultivating risk-taking in a supportive environment. As the work is completed, the students will be faced not only with application of the content, but also with critique of the concrete results and consequences of their choices. These activities develop creative problem-solving skills and become the backdrop for further experiences in the classroom and elsewhere.

CVC: Voice

Voice in art is the expression of our thoughts and beliefs made concrete through art outcomes. According to Bakhtin (1993), individuals frame self-contexts as a creative act. This self-construction is the place where students can commit their values and themselves—their voices—acting as their signature in a concrete visual form. The act of creating in visual art is another way of communicating to ourselves and others what matters—in life, our world, our experiences, our history, etc. (Ratcliffe, 2008, 2009). By developing voice, a particular aspect of life is given importance and expression. Voice affects and influences others and becomes part of the dialogue of our culture (Bakhtin, 1990, 1993). However, another aspect of self-construction occurs when an individual encounters a different version of a shared experience in the created image or art product of another. These differing versions provide opportunities for expanding understanding through critical re-evaluation. This requires care and planning to “set the stage” for a degree of risk-taking students might feel in expressing their voices. Presenting these choices in a surprising or playful manner develops what Szekely (1988) describes as a creative and motivating art classroom environment that encourages risk taking. Classroom strategies that encourage CVC Voice occur in everyday thinking processes identified by Weisberg (2006) that include: encouraging students to remember something, to imagine a life event or experience that occurred, or to plan how to give that image visual form.

Therefore, Voice in the CVC model, can provide opportunities for individualized creative expression within the production of art processes or outcomes such as: journals, sketchbooks, artworks, and verbal/written products. Voice project criteria allow for inclusion of individual content and meaning. CVC Voice encourages students to intentionally seek to express something of their selves. A high school project demonstrating voice included student research regarding narrative as a purpose of art and as expressed symbol making. Students evaluated a variety of artworks such as Ringgold, Eakins, and Kahlo, with a focus upon artists’ narrative content. The students then selected key elements of their past and ways these elements connected to present perceptions. Classroom activities encouraging voice included reflection and discussion regarding social contexts, role models, urban/rural perceptions, as well as family structures. A student project example depicted a three-dimensional tie-dye style, earth-friendly lamb representing her parents’ farm (Figure 4). She viewed her parents as contemporary hippies and their holistic lifestyle as different, creating her unique cultural context. Classroom products encouraging voice move away
from the replication of cultural or artistic content and foster individualized student understandings of their own uniqueness and the diversity of others. In addition to CVC voice, this project encouraged choice through diverse options in materials and art product formats (found object sculptures, relief narratives, and papier-mâché).

CVC: Challenge

The third aspect of CVC, challenge, occurs in art assignments designed to incorporate content learning or inter-disciplinary knowledge. A creative outcome does not emerge from a knowledge vacuum, but rather from knowledge transformed into imagined visions. CVC challenge assignments include a degree of difficulty, but are sufficient to encourage deeper engagement and thought (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Walker, 2001). An assigned project that is too easy and requires little thought, or is too difficult and beyond student capabilities, will not engage students. Content objectives and learning about application of that content must be present for a creative challenge to occur. Walker comments that “thinking innovatively is easier in the presence of resistance and divergence” (p. 53), and that a problem-bound framework for art instruction motivates students. Challenge assignments are developmentally appropriate for the individual student and require effective complex solutions derived through expanded student thinking. A challenge assignment should include an application of content learning and require open-ended, individual, and diverse solutions. The goal is to establish foundational skills so that when a CVC challenge aspect is introduced, the difficulty factor for students is exhilarating rather than bewildering.

A challenge classroom example includes development of performing objects or puppets. This performing object concept, described earlier in the article for at-risk middle school students, adapts to high school and preservice teaching students. During the unit, students identify visual qualities, mechanics, and characteristics of performing objects; explore art history regarding performing objects of Klee, Picasso, and Taymor; and rewrite a not-superhero-as-hero or other story into their own puppet and narrative. Students identified themes and then wrote a personal script or narrative. An innovative student developed a complex performing object that reflects a rewritten story about a gay hero (Figure 5). The challenge content included: key issues of plot and character development; performing object aesthetics with art history references; dramatic movement and performance; and complex performing object construction.

In addition to CVC challenge, this other-hero project exemplified choice and voice. Students were given the choice of form and materials for the performing object such as a marionette, hand puppet, Taymor-style human performing object. Students were challenged to choose their own combination of visual qualities from the three reference artists (Klee, Picasso, and Taymor). The voice aspect was provided by student-driven selection of other-hero characteristics they wished to rewrite as an atypical hero character. This instruction generated self-reflection and social awareness about people not seen as readily or easily accepted, whether socially, culturally, physically, or racially (challenge). The culminating product reflected student voice through a performing object performance.

A similar example of CVC instruction can be identified in a clay unit for secondary and college-level non-art students—Journey of the Hero Plaques (Figure 6). Content included Jung's archetypal hero and quest symbols found in myths and fables in many cultures and contemporary media. The overarching idea was, “Where are you in your hero's journey?” Through low-relief clay images, the students incorporated
symbol-making appropriated from other cultures, their own family history, and self-designed images. Architectural elements provided a sense of a "special place" or retablo-style personal altar. This project incorporated student symbol-making (voice), personal self-reflection connected to Jungian archetypes (challenge and voice), and the development of ceramic imagery within a student-developed clay relief format (choice).

**Mapping the Wild Things**

The three aspects of CVC—choice, voice, and challenge—are part of a wild things journey that combine, inform, reinforce, and enhance each other to allow for individualized and thoughtful student solutions. Just as Max's journey involved multiple scenes, these separate instructional approaches provide a map, with many routes, to identify, define, and explain creative instruction in a classroom setting. CVC instruction may be introduced in varying degrees throughout the K-12 setting and can provide components that can be assessed in a high stakes testing environment. While the assessment of creativity is problematic and context-based, ordinary thinking outcomes and content application can be assessed with traditional testing methods such as critiques, performance rubrics, and paper testing. Further, the outcomes of CVC instruction can be identified when assessing whole class outcomes. For example, when observing classroom walls displaying CVC student creative outcomes, projects can demonstrate a variety of materials and diverse student solutions. CVC is a pedagogy of creativity, providing instructional options for creative or novel expression. Regardless of teaching strategies, some students will be risk-adverse and select traditional or safe solutions rather than novel options. As art teachers we can provide the opportunities and develop strategies that lead to classroom "wild things."

Teachers who model creativity or divergent thinking are more successful in the development of creative thinking behaviors in their classrooms (Beattie, 2000; Cropley, 1992; Gardner, 1994; Rejskind, 2000). The classroom art teacher is well trained to model creativity, encourage creative behaviors, and provide creative definitions to increase public understanding. Further, as a professional educator, art teachers understand the everyday pedagogy required to develop ordinary thinking skills. The field of art education provides rich opportunities for social and individual voice and cultural development in an art classroom. These moments arise during student idea generation, open discussions, critiques and presentations of individual student ideas. In the everyday creative classroom, our goal is to allow wild things to emerge during synergistic instruction.

**REFERENCES**


**Conclusion**

Creativity is located in and arises out of the everyday experiences of our life, context, and world. Creative thinking, the exhilarating and often frustrating but rewarding engagement in the creative process, is the reason most of us became art educators. Our hope is that one day classroom creativity may be defined in a way that allows creative thinking practices to become part of accepted content standards. Creative thinking and creative production are notions embedded within the art education discipline. In addition, identifying creative strategies is a part of an everyday teaching challenge. Art teachers are uniquely educated to enact a CVC creative model within structured classroom environments and to guide other travelers on an imagined journey to visit wild things.

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