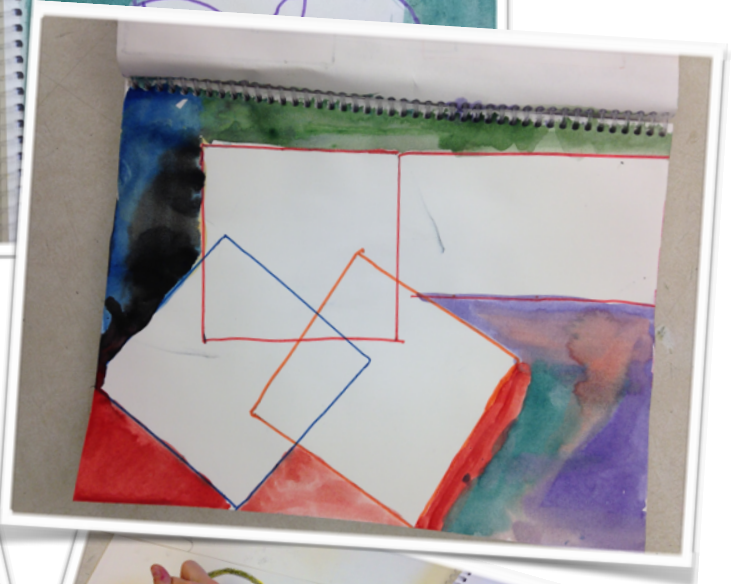


# Visual Journals

“Will a decorated page promote meaningful writing in the art studio?”



**Project Goal:** To encourage reflective, personal writing during art class with 5th grade students.

- Will the use of a visual journal in art class increase the fifth grade student's ease of writing?
- Does a decorated page help in the flow of writing?

A visual journal combines drawn images with the written word. The journal is a layered piece of art that contains the student's ideas, sketches, reflections, and documented journey. Through this method of writing and drawing, students are able to transcend the written word. A simple image is blended with words into a visual vocabulary that is powerful. Adding meaningful words to the visual imagery enhances the decorated pages and allows students to apply their writing skills in a way that is less confrontational than simply writing sentences on blank pages. The visual journal in the art room is used at the start of most classes to hold initial ideas and thoughts about the project. At the culmination of a project, students use the visual journal to reflect on their work.

## **Findings:**

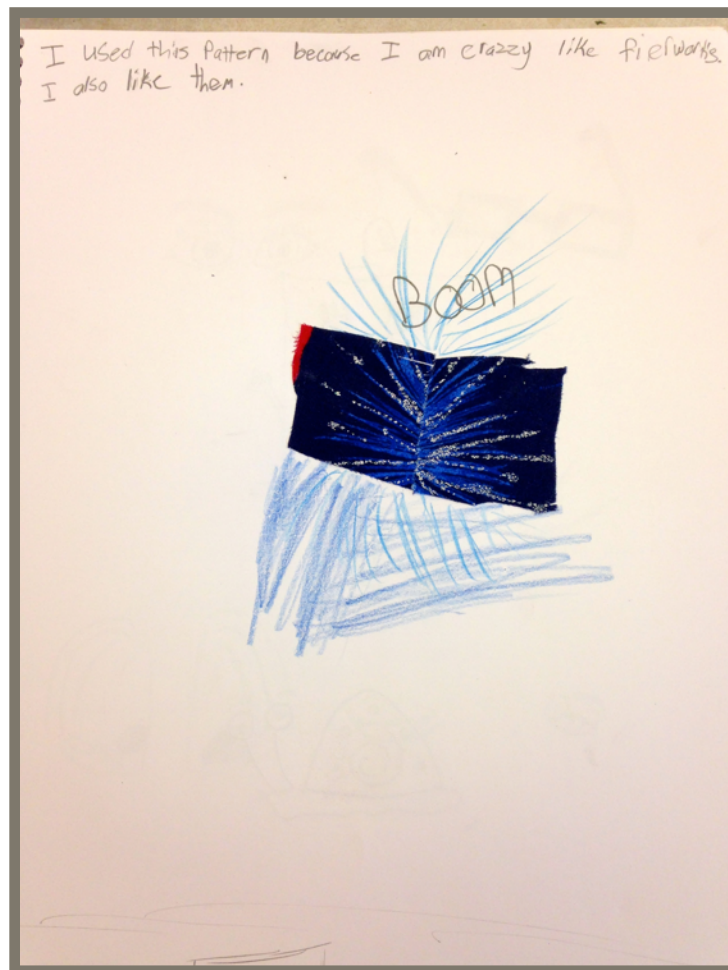
### **Pre Questions**

I introduced the visual journals to students at the beginning of the school year. Initially, the visual journals were regarded by students as notebooks. Students were reluctant to write in their journal and simply wanted to sketch picture responses to questions and prompts, using an average of nine words with their entries. Students were looking for ways to get out of writing and would complain when asked to include a sentence with their picture response. Many times I would get a fragmented sentence of three words.

The two questions that I analyzed from the first semester were:  
**“Where should the setting of your family portrait be?”** (This was an initial idea generating question for students to reflect on, which ultimately guided their family portrait collage project)

**“How does this fabric represent you through color, texture, and pattern?”** (This question was a culminating reflection prompt based on the piece of fabric chosen by the student to be woven into the diversity tapestry)

I counted the number of words that students used to answer these two questions. Based on findings from Mr. McNulty’s fifth grade class, the combined number of words written for these two questions was 384.



## Post Questions

At the start of the second semester in January, I introduced the decorated page. Students decorated as many pages as they could with materials of their choice. The goal was to fill up the pages with color, leaving little windows of white paper throughout the book. Students immediately embraced this process and loved creating their own unique writing spaces regarded as windows. Students began using these decorated pages to answer questions, reflect, and generate ideas. Almost instantly, students were eager to add words to their pages. There was an overall increase in the flow of fifth grade writing and an increase in the amount of meaningful words on a page.

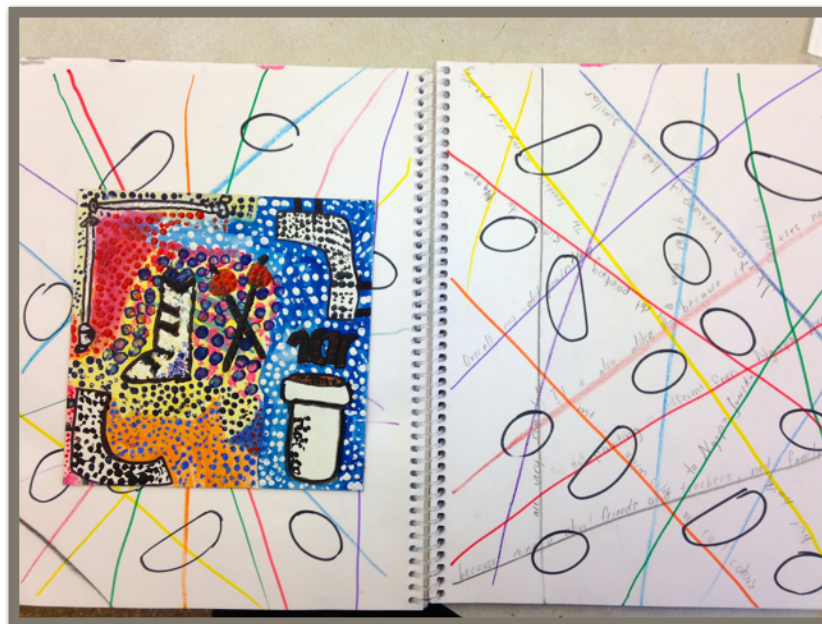
The two questions that I analyzed from the second semester were:

**“When was a time that someone important to you taught you how to do something?”** (This was an initial idea generating question for students to reflect on, which ultimately guided their Aboriginal dot paintings)

**“Compare and contrast your dot painting with the dot painting of *Ngapa Jukurrpa*. How does your story compare to the story of the artist? How are your symbols similar to the symbols seen in the *Water Dreaming*?”** (This question was a culminating reflection prompt based on the student’s Aboriginal dot painting)

I counted the number of words that students used to answer these two questions.

Based on findings from Mr. McNulty’s fifth grade class, the combined number of words written for these two questions was 915.





■ Pre Questions

■ Post Questions

