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## Going Against the Norm: The Use of Student-Designed Assignments

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# Going Against the Norm: The Use of Student-Designed Assignments

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## Research Question

How can I use authentic, student-designed assignments to learn about my students' individual learning needs and interests, and encourage student autonomy?

## Literature Review

- Patall, Cooper, and Wynn (2010) found a positive correlation between students being given a choice of assignments and their level of enjoyment and interest in their assignment.
- In order for assignments to be authentic and beneficial, Rudman (2014) argued that assignments should reflect students' individual needs and interests.
- Reeve (2006) and Katz (2007) characterized an autonomy-supportive classroom as one where the teacher acts as a facilitator and the students are in control of their own work.

## Methodology

- My study involved 23 fifth grade students from a low-income, suburban school (15 girls, 8 boys).
- Students designed their own assignments on a European Explorer.
- I content analyzed my field notes and students' responses, work samples, and project rubrics.

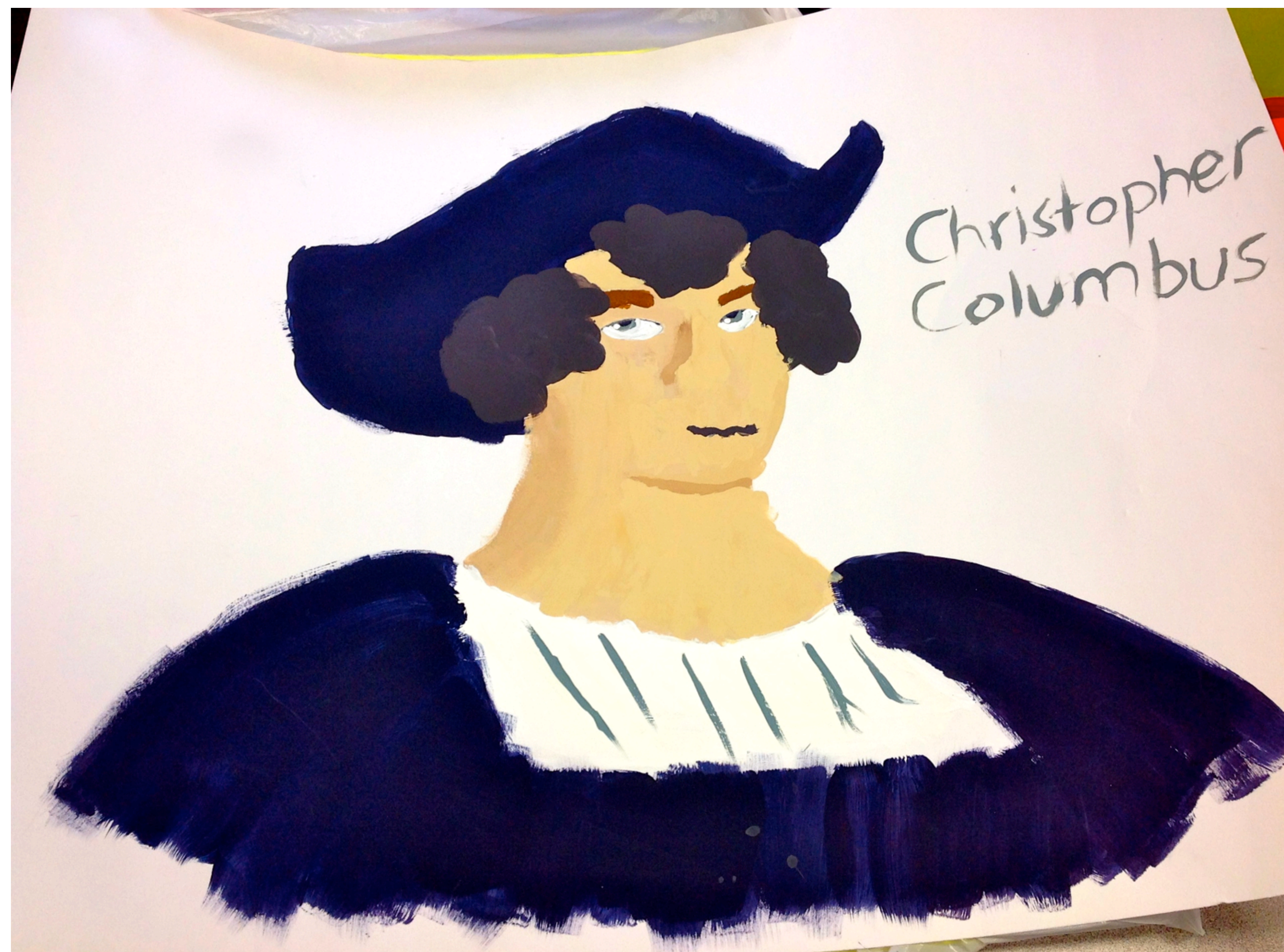


Figure 1. Painting of Christopher Columbus done by a student who was interested in art.

## Results and Data Analysis

- Students valued newfound autonomy.
- Students' assignments reflected individual needs and interests (see Figure 1).
- Students demonstrated enthusiasm toward assigned tasks.
- Assignment resulted in positive academic performance.

## Conclusion

- Including students in the design of their own assignment encourages ownership, engagement, enjoyment, achievement, and integration of interests and diverse learning needs.
- Teachers should create more opportunities for student choice and autonomy in regards to academic work.
- Additional studies should be conducted on the use of student-designed assignments in other content areas, and as an accepted form of assessment.