**Grantee Name:** Pamela G. Taylor, Ph.D.

**Title of Project:** Research and Development of Visual Descriptors/Indicators for eLASTIC: Electronic Learning and Assessment Tool for Interdisciplinary Connections

**City, State:** Richmond, Virginia

**Grant Period:** August 2010-June 2011

**NAEF Grant Amount:** $8,500

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**Related Webpage:** N/A

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**Project Description:**
NAEF funded a portion of the larger research and development of eLASTIC: Electronic Learning and Assessment Tool for Interdisciplinary Connections. (The larger project was initially funded by the Qatar National Research Foundation.) Several visual descriptors or indicators for 11th grade learning in the visual arts and their subsequent virtual representation were developed and placed in the test version of the eLASTIC software. This project was a part of the development of a learning and assessment software directed toward 11th grade English and art classes in Qatar.

*eLASTIC* is designed to combine the portfolio process, teacher feedback, and evidence/data availability while at the same time contribute to the development and improvement of literacy skills. It is designed to offer the virtual, connective, adaptable and flexible environment that today's digital students are both accustomed to and require. Its virtual elastic spaces will provoke students to stretch their preconceived notions of learning and knowing. Teachers and other students may comment and add to each other's *eLASTIC* files as a means for offering suggestions, responding to and refining written work, providing peer-editing suggestions, pointing the way for further research and/or complimenting student's work and thinking. Most importantly, *eLASTIC* spaces afford students opportunities to visually represent the cognitive connections they make between course readings and their own written compositions, images, audio files and primary documents available in web-based settings. One of the basic premises for *eLASTIC* is that students' knowledge evolves and grows as they make connections. Therefore, assessment of said learning charts progress as well as contributes to it.

**Project Goals and Objectives:**
The goals of this component of the project were to create, develop and test 3 specific working objects within the eLASTIC software program. The goals and objectives of the larger eLASTIC project are to research and develop a way to assess what students know and are able to do while at the same time contribute to their learning.

**Description of Activities Supported by this Grant.** For Research Grantees, include a summary of research methodology.
During the fall of 2010, the *eLASTIC* project manager Ms. Jan Johnston along with collaborators Dr. Charles Bleick and Dr. Elnour Hamad conducted a workshop for the eTC (*eLASTIC* Teacher Consultants) in Doha, Qatar featuring Principal Investigator, Dr. Pamela G. Taylor’s instructional videos related to connective thinking. During this workshop, the teachers shared the following ideas for visual descriptor/indicators and standards they felt should be used in this first test version of the software: (1) Frames in the Gallery space in which students may upload images of their art work and/or Writing; (2) Text panels and links in which students may answer specific questions posed by their teachers related to history and culture; (3) Couch with notes attached in which questions may be posed related to art, ideas, writing etc. within the eLASTIC space. As a result of this effort, the NAEF grant funded Dr. Taylor’s four trips to Fairfax, Virginia to work directly with software developers (Dynamic Animations Systems). NAEF funding also assisted in the development of these descriptors and paid for release time for Dr. Taylor to work on this research. A limited test version of the software was completed with the aforementioned visual descriptors and activity suggestions and taken to Qatar for initial testing in April 2011.
The larger research project is continuing with more testing of the software and ultimate development and testing of data mining processes that will take the information student put into the software and analyze/connect to national, state and curricular standards to provide data for what students know and are able to do.

Results: Lessons Learned or Findings of Research
Once test versions of eLASTIC were created and facilitated, usability tests were implemented in the classrooms in Qatari schools. The usability tests primarily gave us notice of problems experienced by the teachers and their students. The research team and the software developers addressed these problems and another version of the software was beta tested in October 2011. At this date (Nov. 30, 2011) students and teachers are using the software and the research focus is directed toward mining, analyzing, and presenting data related to assessment of what students know and are able to do.

Impact of Receiving this Grant:
The NAEF grant funded travel in the US, added course release time, and provided additional funds for software development at a particularly crucial period of this research project—immediately before a scheduled trip to Doha, Qatar for the first Beta testing. Indeed, the NAEF grant resolved some very important funding issues for the project by providing financial assistance in the US.

Grantee Biography:
Dr. Pamela G. Taylor is Associate Professor of Art Education at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. She earned her Ph.D. from Penn State University and was awarded the J. Paul Getty Dissertation Research Award for her “Hypertext-based Art Education: Implications for Liberatory Learning in High School” in 1999. Taylor is published in such journals as Art Education, Studies in Art Education, Journal of Cultural Research, International Journal of Education & the Arts, Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia, and FATE in Review. She authored Amazing Grace: The Lithographs of Joseph Norman and coauthored Interdisciplinary Approaches to Teaching Art in High School. She was Editor of Art Education from 2007-08. She is a NAEA Distinguished Fellow; 2010 Higher Ed Art Educator, 2009 VA Art Educator; and chairs the Council for Policy Studies.

About the National Art Education Foundation
NAEF supports visual art educators and promotes the teaching of art through professional development, research, and program sponsorship. As an independent, philanthropic organization, NAEF assists with efforts to represent the teachers of art in America, improve the conditions of teaching art; promote the teaching of art; encourage research and experimentation in art education; sponsor institutes, conferences, and programs on art education; and to publish articles, reports, and surveys about art. The Foundation has supported 246 projects since its inception in 1985. NAEF funding supports a wide variety of professional activities, including research in art education, scholarships for professional development, promotion of art education as an integral part of the curriculum; establishment and/or improvement of art instruction in public and private K-16 schools; promotion of the teaching of art through activities related to the instructional process, curriculum, student learning, student assessment, classroom behavior, management, or discipline; purchase of art equipment and/or instructional resources. Donations in support of NAEF, a 501(c)3 tax exempt organization, are tax deductible and greatly appreciated.