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Art Integration in the Classroom

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ART INTEGRATION IN THE CLASSROOM

by

Cindra L. Ross

A Research Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

REGIS UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Art Integration in the Classroom

Over 70 years of research has shown clear evidence that exposure to the arts benefits students. When the arts are part of the curriculum, student achievement improves, engagement levels are higher, behavior problems are fewer, and student’s attitudes about school, and about themselves, improve. When the arts are integrated into core subject classrooms, teachers can present complex lessons that bridge multiple subject areas and encourage critical thinking skills. Integrated lessons provide students with a variety of learning styles the opportunity to utilize their strengths and demonstrate knowledge in many different ways. The incorporation of drawing, music, technology, and drama can add relevance and context to lessons in any subject area. For teachers, arts integration can breathe new life into lessons and assessments by allowing students an opportunity to creatively explore ideas and concepts and to use their strengths to express their learning and knowledge in a variety of ways. There are many fun and easy ways to expose students to the arts, and to create interdisciplinary lessons. The integration of the arts into the core subject classroom helps students to become critical thinkers and well-rounded human beings.
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

For the last decade, the educational focus in the United States has been on the use of standardization and high stakes testing to determine whether teachers in the public school systems have provided a thorough education for students. The role of the arts in education has decreased as teachers have experienced pressure from administrators and communities to teach to the core subject standards and improve test scores. For over 70 years, educational theorists, like Dewey (1934, as cited in Purnell, 2004), have maintained that the arts play an integral part in students’ ability to learn and help to develop deeper levels of understanding in all curricular areas. Despite a tremendous amount of research in the last decade that demonstrated clearly that exposure to the arts in education improves: (a) academic achievement, (b) cognitive capacities, and (c) social behavior, there continues to be a lack of art integration in U.S. classrooms today (Purnell). Arts integration is a method of teaching and learning that is dedicated to providing students with rigorous, real, and creative lessons that include various art forms and help to make connections and transfer knowledge between multiple concepts and subject areas (Burnaford, Aprill, & Weiss, 2001).

Statement of the Problem

The focus in the U.S. public schools on standards and testing has caused teachers and administrators to question the role of the arts in the classroom as they try to
prioritize: (a) time, (b) funding, and (c) curricula. Many teachers feel that they do not have enough time to meet all of the required standards and checkpoints, and there is no room in their day for subjects that are not specified in the core standards. The use of art integration can help students to make connections between subjects and achieve a greater depth of understanding in all curricular areas. Art can be used to reach students with a variety of different learning styles and provide engaging elements to lessons to provide students with freedom of choice and opportunities for creativity. A lack of utilization of the arts deprives students of cultural development and deep connections about the real world. Eisner (1983, as cited in McDonald & Fisher, 2002) stated, “When one shapes the culture, and schooling is precisely that – an intentionally shaped culture – one provides direction to the invention of the mind” (p. 29). Teachers need training to recognize how the use of art integration can improve: (a) efficiency, (b) engagement, (c) connections between curricular areas, and (d) student learning and achievement.

Purpose of the Project

Many teachers hesitate to integrate any form of art into their classrooms due to a perception that it distracts from the time and effort that is needed to meet the required standards in core subjects. The purpose of this project is to develop a presentation for teachers to emphasize the importance art integration in the classroom, as well as the benefits that art integration provides to both teachers and students. This presentation is in the form of a training module that can be used at a staff in-service or collaboration meeting.
Chapter Summary

In summary, it is this author’s position that the use of arts integration in the classroom is beneficial to both students and teachers. The use of integrated lessons allows students to make connections and see relationships across the curriculum, and its use can improve levels of engagement and achievement. Teachers can develop lessons that are highly efficient and represent real world problems that include multiple subject areas and require students to use complex thought processes to find creative solutions and internalize their knowledge. In Chapter 2, the Review of Literature, the background material is presented to support the use of art integration in the classroom. The use of the arts can help to reach students with multiple learning styles and can improve students’ attitudes about themselves and the learning process through the development of deeper levels of knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. In Chapter 3, Methods, the procedures for the development of this project are detailed.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this project is to develop a training module for use at a teacher inservice or collaboration meeting to encourage the use of art integration in the classroom. Many teachers view art as a form of recreation or recess, instead of a resource or an integral part of instruction to build skills and concepts in all disciplines. Burnaford, Aprill, and Weiss (2001), wrote:

The arts produce a genuine synergy between content areas by engaging multiple models of inquiry. Integration is about engaging a rich array of skills and learning strategies so that the understandings of each content area is enriched and illumined by the presence of other content areas. (p. 10)

Both teachers and students benefit when the arts are integrated into the curriculum.

The Role of Art in Education

Art is part of the human experience. “Art exists in all societies and has been created by human beings since prehistoric times” (Koster, 2005, p. 3). Art surrounds people everywhere and includes: (a) patterns on clothing; (b) images in signage and advertisements throughout the urban environment; (c) the many forms of media to which humans are exposed; (d) illustrations in books; (e) the shape and design of buildings and modes of transportation; and (f) art and decorations in the home, at school, and in museums or galleries. Art is a system of symbolization that is used in every culture around the globe. Despite the indisputable presence of art in every culture, and the distinct role that the arts have played in the documentation of human history, there is an
ongoing discussion about the place and value of art education in the public school systems in the United States.

Historical Background

Purnell (2004) reviewed how the role of the arts in education has been debated in the U.S. for over two centuries. Early Americans emphasized the education of students in practical or useful arts, like furniture or quilt making, and separated the study of fine arts as an elitist endeavor. From the mid 1800s through the early 1900s, an interest in fine arts education grew in the U.S. due to the fact that the industrialists struggled to compete against superior goods imported from Europe where the craftsmen were formally trained in art and design. Interest and integration of the arts into the U.S. educational system fluctuated over the remainder of the 20th Century. Interest in the arts and the Aesthetic Education movement were high in the 1930s and 1940s. In the late 1950s, after the Soviets launched the Sputnik satellite, the arts were pushed aside in schools in favor of: (a) technology, (b) mathematics, and (c) science. In the 1960s, Presidents Kennedy and Johnson re-emphasized the importance of the arts through the establishment of the National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities and the addition of a research program for the arts in the U.S. Office of Education. In the 1970s, Eisner (1974, as cited in Purnell) published the correlations between exposure to the arts and higher academic achievement. The inclusion of the arts in education took a downturn in 1983, when “a government document titled A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform ignited an education reform movement which had no place for the arts in either its standards or its core curricula” (p. 154). In 1994, the Clinton
administration supported the arts when it named the arts as a core subject area and an essential element in the education of U.S. children (Riley, 1994, as cited in Purnell). The last decade has produced a tremendous amount of research in favor of arts education and support for the benefits of art integration on student learning (Champions, 1999; Hutchens, & Pankratz, 2000; Critical Links, 2002; all cited in Purnell).

Purnell (2004) wrote that, after this long history of debate and research, a study was released by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2002, as cited in Purnell) which showed that only 15% of teachers routinely incorporated music into their classrooms, and only 27% incorporated visual arts to any great extent. Jensen (2001) reported that there is no federally mandated policy for art education. This lack of policy has resulted in a wide variety of funding and prioritization for art programs across the country. “Despite mounting research supporting the arts in education, many obstacles remain, effectively keeping the arts out of the classroom” (Purnell, p. 156). Budgetary cutbacks and an almost exclusive focus on literacy, mathematics, and science achievement have had detrimental effects on art programs (Appel, 2006).

Why Art Integration Is Important

“The arts - in all forms – stimulate the brain. They ignite creativity and provide students with opportunities to critically interpret the world around them” (Appel, 2006, p. 15). There are many benefits to both students and teachers when an integrated arts curriculum is implemented. The combination of multiple subjects within a single lesson or project can help teachers to provide more depth, relevance, and interest in a lesson and,
also, it can help the teacher to manage his or her time and cover multiple concepts at once. Lake (1994) cited Caine and Caine (1991) who focused on the ways that the human brain seeks out meanings, contexts, and patterns in order to successfully process information. This type of connected, interdisciplinary approach to learning is the basis for the thematic and experiential education promoted and practiced in an integrated curriculum. Over the last 20 years, many aspects of the world (e.g., communications, information, economy, etc.) have become more interconnected and globally interdependent. There is a growing need to provide students with the skills and tools to understand concepts and underlying structures. Arts integration connects learning with the real world. Arts learning experiences are consistent with the evolving workplace. In an idea driven world and economy, the ability to generate ideas that are imaginative and flexible, bring those ideas to life, and to communicate them to others are key factors to career success. In line with a constructivist view of teaching, arts integration emphasizes in depth knowledge, meaningful and relevant concepts, and connections that are linked between numerous subjects and with elements of life outside of school. In the Champions of Change report, Fiske (1999) concluded that school staff need to seek “systemic ways to make the arts a meaningful part of every American child’s life. Together, we can make the everyday learning experiences of young Americans less ordinary and more extraordinary” (p. xii).
Engagement

“Art can be the spark that engages students and draws them into learning” (Burnaford et al., 2001, p. 65). In the Champions of Change (Fiske, 1999), the effect of the arts on student engagement was described as follows:

When well taught, the arts provide young people with authentic learning experiences that engage their minds, hearts, and bodies. The learning experiences are real and meaningful for them. . . . The arts reach students who are not otherwise being reached. . . . The researchers found that the arts provided a reason, and sometimes the only reason, for being engaged with school or other organizations. . . . The arts reach students in ways that they are not otherwise being reached. Other recent educational research has produced insights into different styles of learning. This research also addresses examples of young people who were considered classroom failures, perhaps “acting out” because conventional classroom practices were not engaging them. These “problem” students often became the high-achievers in arts learning settings. Success in the arts became a bridge to learning and eventual success in other areas of learning. (p. ix)

Arts integration helps students to connect and engage with concepts by giving form and sensory representation to learning and cognition. Through the incorporation of a wide array of compelling visual, aural, tactile, and kinesthetic activities into lessons, as well as the generation of new knowledge, students will be provided with experiences and vivid sense memories that lead to the internalization of the learning and knowledge. The use of sensory images helps the human brain to organize and recall new concepts and knowledge. “The arts require learners to bring together sensory processes with thinking processes to generate concrete representations of thought and feeling in the material world” (p. 18).

Students, who are actively engaged in learning, demonstrate excitement and interest in what they are doing (Jensen, 2001). This level of interest opens the door for
creative thinking and new ideas. The use of an integrated curriculum can help teachers and students to focus on content and skills through the use of organizational processes and concepts that invite active inquiry and engagement. Often, teachers look for organizational principles that can bridge separate subject areas and lead students to find the “big ideas” (Burnaford et. al., 2001, p. 34) in intriguing new ways. When a student is motivated and fully engaged in a learning experience, that student feels invested in ways that are much deeper than just knowing the right answer (Fiske, 1999).

Engagement is as important for teachers as it is for students (Groth & Albert, 1997). The use of arts integration can transform the learning environment into a place of exploration and discovery. This process can energize and renew teachers; however, teachers may need professional development to learn how to successfully integrate the arts into their classrooms. Training, collaboration, and inquiry can help teachers to learn new strategies and creative solutions to teaching and learning problems. The use of an integrated curriculum can breathe new life into old lessons and take teaching and learning to deeper levels. Use of the arts can open the door to many interesting options for teachers to design intriguing and engaging lessons. When creativity is unleashed, and students are free to experiment and explore, unexpected outcomes can make the learning process enjoyable and memorable for both students and teachers.

Differentiation and Learning Styles

“The arts serve to broaden access to meaning by offering ways of thinking and ways of representation consistent with the spectrum of intelligences scattered unevenly across our population” (Fiske, 1999, p. 4). Not all students are alike. Students absorb
and process information in different ways, have different strengths and weaknesses, and come from different cultural, economic, and social backgrounds which may result in very diverse forms of: (a) thinking, (b) learning, and (c) behaving. Teachers need to consider the differences in how students learn as they prepare lessons. Information should be delivered in ways that give students with diverse styles more than one method or opportunity to grasp the concepts being taught. Teaching that relies primarily on the spoken and written word does not reach all types of students (Dickinson, McKean, & Oddleifson, 1997). Gardner (1999), co-director of Project Zero at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education, developed the theory of multiple intelligences. Gardner suggested that, in U.S. school systems, only two kinds of intelligence are rewarded and reinforced, verbal and logical-mathematical. Gardner identified five other types of intelligence that should be equally considered: (a) visual/spatial, (b) bodily/kinesthetic, (c) musical, (d) interpersonal, and (e) intrapersonal. When teachers are able to build on students’ strengths through their more dominant intelligences, it equips them to learn more fully (Burnaford et. al., 2001). Eisner (1998, as cited in Burnaford et. al.) reported that the arts contribute to cognitive development, and people use different forms to represent their thinking, such as: (a) literal language, (b) visual images, (c) numbers, or (d) poetry. Just as teachers must differentiate lessons for learners at different ability levels, also, they must consider differentiation for various learning styles.

No one has a pure learning style, so learning is strengthened when the process is repeated in a variety of forms (Groth & Albert, 1997). Also, the use of different forms of representation is more interesting and interactive for students (Groth & Albert).
When students read a story, act out a scene from that story, make puppets of the characters in the story, and make up a song about something in the story, they are far more likely to remember the story than if they had simply read it. The use of a variety of activities provides students, with diverse strengths, equal opportunities to increase their comprehension and understanding. In addition, multiple activities for one lesson or concept can be used to provide students with choices. When students are allowed to make their own choices, it increases their levels of ownership and engagement. Integrated lessons and learning in the arts impact how students think, and how they feel and behave (Fiske, 1999).

**Self-Esteem**

“With the arts, all students have a chance to succeed – and better yet, to showcase their success” (Appel, 2006, p. 15). The use of integrated lessons that involve the arts can profoundly impact the self-esteem of students. For students, who struggle in traditional learning environments, the arts provide outlets for creative thinking and opportunities for expression without the fear of being wrong. Brown (2007) stated that, recent research (Horowitz, 2005) finds that students participating in arts integration make notable gains in social competencies, such as cooperative learning and adult and peer relationship development. Salient effects on personal learning included gains in positive risk taking, as well as increased self-confidence, perseverance, and motivation. (p. 173)

The arts help in the development of the: (a) mind, (b) body, (c) emotions, and (d) spirit. Experiences in the arts facilitate growth in: (a) judgment, (b) purpose, (c) persistence, (d) tolerance, and (e) patience (Dickinson et al., 1997). One school principal noted that, after the implementation of a rich arts program: (a) students who had not been previously
successful flourished, (b) discipline problems had nearly disappeared, and (c) academic achievement increased (Dickinson et al.). When students’ needs are addressed, and they are given opportunities to show their strengths and skills, they are more motivated to succeed. Success and confidence in any area tends to lead to overall improvement (Burnaford et al., 2001).

The creation of art is satisfying to students because they are given the freedom to create and have control over the materials used. According to Fiske (1999), the arts have been linked to higher levels of motivation and engagement, as well as positive attitudes that contribute to improved academic achievement. In the Champions of Change, Fiske reported that researchers from Teachers College Columbia University studied over 2,000 students and found that students with high exposure to the arts were far more likely than those, who were not exposed to the arts, to think of themselves as competent in all academic areas. Often, in arts integration, there are lessons in which a product is created. The processes of the conception, design, and completion of a plan are critical for students’ success. Burnaford et al. (2001) wrote:

Art production makes learners aware of themselves as capable learners and productive citizens. The arts give learners a sense of agency – of being able to make things that matter happen in the world. For students with damaged perceptions of their own abilities, arts experiences can be life saving. (p. 20)

Achievement

“Involvement with the arts provides unparalleled opportunities for learning, enabling young people to reach for and attain higher levels of achievement” (Fiske, 1999, p. xii). Use of the arts offers the means to help students consolidate and understand what they learn. According to Dickinson et al. (1997), there have been reports of up to 20%
increases in reading, writing, and mathematics test scores as a result of integrated arts experiences. The results were consistent in multiple studies including: (a) the Chicago Arts Partnership in Education (CAPE; 1998) project, (b) the Learning in and Through the Arts (LITA; 1998) project, (c) analysis of the Department of Education NELS:88 (1998) database, and (d) several studies conducted by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL; 1998-1999; all cited in Fiske). In 1993, the College Entrance Examination Board members (as cited in Dickinson et al., 1997) announced that students who studied arts and music scored an average of 31-50 points higher on the mathematics and verbal sections of the Scholastic Aptitude Test. Fiske reported that Catterall’s analysis of the National Educational Longitudinal Survey (NELS:88) found that students involved in the arts had favorable outcomes including: (a) attained higher achievement, (b) stayed in school, and (c) demonstrated better attitudes about school and community. These patterns held true for students with both high and low socioeconomic status (SES). This is notable because many educators who are critical of, or uninterested in, arts integration dispute study results and note that children from high SES families have more opportunities to be involved in the arts, and also, many other resources that can lead to improved academic performance. Therefore, it was important for these studies to restrict segments of the research to low SES students to show that the patterns of improvement through arts integration for low SES students were very similar to the improvements shown by all students (Fiske).

Consistently, the teachers in the CAPE program (Burnaford et al., 2001; Fiske, 1999) wrote about the many areas of growth experienced by students in arts integration
programs. The students learned and grew in their capacities to think and communicate with: (a) creativity, (b) fluency, (c) originality, (d) elaboration, (e) persistence, and (f) risk (Burnaford et al.; Fiske). These are skills that improve students’ performance in all academic areas, and in their abilities to function successfully as human beings.

Burnaford et al., wrote about the scrutiny of arts programs in an era of academic standards and the factors of accountability for scores, time, and other policy driven measures in schools. The presence of the arts has been questioned as a valid part of the educational process. However, the research (Fiske, 1999; Jensen, 2001) clearly showed the positive impact that arts integration had on students’ abilities to: (a) think, (b) learn, (c) feel, (d) behave, and (e) achieve. In the Champions of Change (Fiske), it was stated that:

No subject has prior rights over any other subject, for to diminish one is to diminish the possibility and promise of them all. If the arts are to help define our path to the future, they need to become curriculum partners with other subject disciplines in ways that will allow them to contribute their own distinctive richness and complexity to the learning process as a whole. (p. 45)

The arts play an integral role in the lives of all human beings and should be an integral part of how students are educated.

When educational achievement is discussed, an important part of that discussion addresses the form or forms of assessment used to measure achievement (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). The use of arts integration and the creative process can lead teachers to discover the power of authentic assessments. For an authentic assessment, information is collected and looked at in regard to the whole student. Teachers and students need to build a relationship so that the teacher can understand the student’s culture and
experiences and develop a context through which to view his or her work. Authentic assessments consist of a combination of: (a) projects, (b) products, (c) notes, (d) portfolios of work, (e) test scores, (f) essays, (g) student reflections, and (h) other evidence of the content and skills that the student has learned. The inclusion of students in the authentic assessment process encourages those students to evaluate themselves. When students are taught to critique and evaluate their own work, they become more invested in the quality of the work that they do (Burnaford et al., 2001). Vacca and Vacca (2005) found that many educators, who argue against the emphasis placed on high stakes testing, value the thorough and in-depth process involved in authentic assessments. Just as the use of arts integration can deepen the learning experiences in core subject areas, authentic assessments can improve the true measurement of achievement in all curricular areas.

Theories and Research

Arts integration includes many of the components of the constructivist theory of teaching. Brooks and Brooks (1999) described constructivist classrooms as places where: (a) activities challenge students and their suppositions, (b) teachers pose problems of relevance, (c) lessons are integrated and built around big ideas, (d) teachers value students’ perspectives, and (e) assessment is part of the learning activities and process. The use of constructivism encourages “assignments and materials that are interdisciplinary,” and allows teachers to give students the “freedom to chase their own ideas” and “to take risks and approach assignments with a willingness to accept challenges to their current understandings” (p. 10). In the constructivist approach, one
looks for active lessons that prompt students to: (a) generate, (b) demonstrate, and (c) exhibit work. Arts integrated lessons incorporate all of these themes and activities.

Arts integration classrooms encourage and demonstrate the values of a democratic community. “The arts bring people together to work toward common goals and express key concepts and beliefs” (Burnaford et al., 2001, p. 7). Meaningful learning takes place when lessons are based on the development of students’ abilities to negotiate between their personal needs and their connection to the needs of the class or the community. Integration combines the interests of students and teachers to establish an environment for co-teaching, and co-learning that is engaging for everyone. Burnaford et al., summarized the importance of the arts in the world today as:

The arts teach learners to know themselves as capable citizens in a democratic society, observing, creating, reflecting, making choices, and taking responsibility for actions in the world. Our children face a future that is much more mobile and shifting that the world we know. They need to be adept at crossing many more borders – real and virtual, social and geographic, intrapersonal and interpersonal – than we were prepared for in our education. The life-long employer, one-occupation career is over. Young people need flexibility, creativity, and a tolerance for ambiguity to successfully manage their emerging adulthoods and to become effective citizens. The skills they will need to grow up well in the 21st century include the ability to: (a) plan with, negotiate with, and work well with diverse collaborators; (b) imagine alternative solutions to a problem and choose between options; (c) manage multiple, diverse, simultaneous projects; (d) self-monitor and adjust their work; (e) organize space and time; (f) convey information in diverse forms; and (g) synthesize information from diverse sources (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). The arts offer opportunities to utilize many of these skills. The adults of tomorrow will need to think outside the box because the box will not be there tomorrow. A curriculum with segregated subject areas may have made sense in a manufacturing economy based on the assembly line, but the emerging information economy calls for a more integrative approach to the curriculum. (p. 21)
Chapter Summary

Arts integration in the curriculum provides many benefits to students and teachers. Because art plays a profound role in the human experience, it should be an integral part of all education. Of the material reviewed in this chapter, the authors of every study, article, and book supported the use of arts integration, and no detrimental effects to students were found in any of the literature reviewed for this project. The recent literature on the topic of arts integration is primarily based on several key studies and programs, many of which are included in the *Champions of Change* report (Fiske, 1999). Also, there are a number of books on the topic (Burnaford et al., 2001; Eisner 1972; Gardner, 1999; Jensen, 2001) that consistently cross-referenced and cited one another, and therefore, tended to provide redundant information.

With use of the arts, students can be helped to connect concepts and bridge the divide between content areas. The arts contribute to the development of the whole student, for example: (a) motivation and interest in learning, (b) strengths and learning styles, (c) self-esteem, (d) behavior, (e) communication, and (f) achievement. The arts can be used to help teachers to enrich and expand their lessons to include real world problems that cross subject area boundaries. When subjects are combined, teachers can make lessons more interesting and more efficient. Complex projects require authentic forms of assessment that include collaboration between students and teachers. Dickinson et al. (1997) wrote:
If students are to fully embrace the rich and diverse cultures of the world; if they are to live up to their full cognitive potential; if they are to be prepared for living and working in a technologically driven world; and if they are to live a life alive and wide-awake to the possibilities yet to come, this promise of the arts as basic education must be realized. (p. 20)

It is this author’s opinion that all students deserve to be exposed to the arts, and that integration of the arts into the core curriculum improves the educational experience for both students and teachers. Teachers should be aware of the academic, social, and behavioral improvements that can come from arts integration. Professional development opportunities can help teachers to include arts integration in the classroom. In Chapter 3, the method, audience, procedures, and goals for this project are detailed.
Chapter 3

METHOD

The purpose of this project was to develop a training module that highlights the benefits and encourages the use of art integration in the classroom. The project is in the form of a PowerPoint presentation that can be presented at a teacher in-service or collaboration meeting. Many teachers view art as a recreational or extra activity, or even as a distraction from core subjects. This presentation explains how the use of art integration can help teachers and students to: (a) make connections between subjects; (b) achieve a greater depth of understanding in all curricular areas; (c) utilize their personal strengths and learning styles; (d) explore their creativity through active and engaging lessons; and (e) improve efficiency, growth, and achievement.

Target Audience

This project applies to teachers at any grade level. All teachers can benefit from the concept of curricular integration. Any teacher who is interested in adding: (a) depth, (b) engaging activities, (c) bridges between concepts and ideas, or (d) real world scenarios to their lessons should consider the utilization of arts integration in his or her classroom.

Goals and Procedures

The goal of this project was to provide teachers and administrators with a training module that explains the benefits of arts integration and offers suggestions on how to integrate the arts into the classroom. The PowerPoint presentation provides a brief
review of literature that examines the many ways that art integration has a positive impact on learning, self-esteem, and achievement. Also, the module contains ideas and suggestions for teachers to help them recognize opportunities for integration and take action toward the implementation of arts integration in their lessons.

Peer Assessment

Assessment of the presentation was obtained from four colleagues. Each colleague was asked to provide informal feedback on the content, relevancy, and value of the module. The peer assessors were asked to comment on recommendations and suggestions for improvement and/or further research.

Chapter Summary

The use of arts integration leads to rich lessons that help students to connect ideas through meaningful activities and utilization of their strengths and creativity. Through this project, this author has provided other educators with an overview of the existing literature and research on arts integration, and valuable suggestions on how it can benefit both the teaching and learning processes in their classrooms. In Chapter 4, this information is provided in the form of a PowerPoint slide presentation, including a written narrative for each slide, and the appropriate references. A reflection and discussion of the project is presented in Chapter 5.
Chapter 4

PROJECT

Our current academic environment has teachers feeling pressured to meet set standards and checkpoints, and to increase student achievement on high stakes test scores. This environment has lead teachers and administrators to question the role of the arts in the school curricula. This project is a PowerPoint training module for teachers and administrators highlighting the benefits and encouraging the use of arts integrations in the core subject classroom. This presentation explains how the use of art integration can help teachers and students to: (a) make connections between subjects; (b) achieve a greater depth of understanding in all curricular areas; (c) utilize their personal strengths and learning styles; (d) explore their creativity through active and engaging lessons; and (e) improve efficiency, growth, and achievement. All teachers and students benefit from curricular integration. Any teacher who is interested in providing real world scenarios and creative explorations to their lessons should consider the utilization of arts integration in his or her classroom. The goal of this presentation is to provide teachers and administrators with a training module that explains the benefits of arts integration and offers suggestions on how to integrate the arts into the classroom.
This presentation is designed to introduce teachers to the concept of integrating the arts into their classrooms. Research on multiple intelligences has taught us that not all students learn the same way, and our current education system primarily supports verbal and logical learners. Arts integration can give visual, aural, tactile, and kinesthetic learners a level playing field on which to demonstrate their knowledge. For all students, integrated lessons provide experiences that create sense memories, and help to internalize learning and knowledge.
What is arts integration?

- Allowing students creative choices to demonstrate knowledge
- Creating projects and assessments that integrate a variety of skills and concepts
- Employing Constructivist concepts of active exploration and "hands-on" learning
- Exposing students to various art forms

http://www.funderstanding.com/constructivism.cfm

Arts integration is a method of teaching and learning that provides students with rigorous, meaningful, and creative projects and assessments that include various art forms. Arts integration includes giving students creative options and a variety of ways to express their knowledge. Integrated lessons help students to make connections and transfer knowledge between multiple concepts and subject areas. These lessons follow the constructivist principles of allowing students to create things and actively explore the concepts they are learning. Integrated lessons can also lead to critical thinking, problem solving, flexibility, and improved communication; all of which are skills that are needed in our rapidly changing 21st century learning environment. Arts integration exposes students to various art forms and technologies, and can help to add context and relevance to many lessons. For additional information on Constructivism, click on the interactive link shown here.
In our current academic world, the reality is that tremendous emphasis is placed on the coverage of set standards and checkpoints and high stakes test scores. Many teachers feel pressured to simply “get through” all of the required material and do not want, or do not feel they can, take the time to make lessons more integrated and creative. Some teachers view the arts as “extra” activities, or a distraction from core subjects. Most administrators are aware of the statistics and research highlighting the advantages for students when integration takes place, but do not feel that there is enough time or funding to push for more academic and arts integration in their schools and classrooms.
“The arts produce a genuine synergy between content areas by engaging multiple models of inquiry. Integration is about engaging a rich array of skills and learning strategies so that the understandings of each content area is enriched and illumined by the presence of other content areas.”

- Burnaford, Aprill, & Weiss, 2001

Give it a try!
It makes a difference!

http://www.capeweb.org/fpubs.html

The truth is that many successful integrations can be easily added to existing lesson plans and the benefits to students are immediate. This quote from “Renaissance in the Classroom” emphasizes the value that arts integration brings to the classroom.

I highly encourage you to give arts integration a try. It can add new life and new meaning to old lessons and assessments, and it will make a difference in the achievement of your students! If you are interested in the book “Renaissance in the Classroom” or the Chicago Arts Partnership in Education that performed the research for the book, you can go directly to their website here.
Exposure to the arts Improves:

- Academic achievement
- Cognitive capacities
- Social behavior
- Attitudes and self-esteem

(Dewey 1934, as cited in Purnell, 2004, and Dickenson, McKean, & Oddleifson, 1997)

A multitude of research clearly shows that exposure to the arts, integrated lessons, and alternative assessments lead to measurable improvements in all of the categories listed here. For over 70 years, educational theorists and researchers, such as Dewey, have been documenting the positive and integral role that the arts play in broadening student’s abilities to learn and develop deeper levels of understanding. When the arts are an active part of the curriculum, it has been reported that student grades and test scores have improved up to 20%. When student engagement goes up, their behavior problems go down, and many students feel better about themselves and about school.
It is important to recognize that allowing creative projects and assessments in the core subject classroom can give students multiple avenues to success. Multiple intelligence studies have shown that students of all learning styles benefit from connected, interdisciplinary lessons. The arts create connections that bridge subject areas and help to lead students to discover the underlying context or “big picture” of many lessons. Active explorations and projects engage students in many different and positive ways. An overview of Gardener’s Multiple Intelligence theories can be seen at this link.
What does arts integration look like?

Any incorporation of:
- Music
- Drawing
- Poetry
- Digital media
- Dance
- Dramatic performance

For many core subject teachers, the hardest part is knowing where to start. Little changes to existing lessons can make a significant difference in how students process and grasp new ideas. Adding creative options empowers students by giving them choices and allowing them to use their own interests and strengths to explore concepts. When students are given the freedom to be creative, their level of engagement often increases. Giving students choices is also a wonderful way to diversify lessons. Incorporating music, art, poetry, technology or performance into your lessons can really spark your student’s interests!
Arts integration can be incorporated into any classroom, and any subject area. For some students, art, music, technology, or drama are the only subjects that they feel good about or the only classrooms where they feel comfortable. It is these creative outlets that get them to school each day. Think how much these students would benefit from being able to replace an essay with a music video, or a poem. For a student who is terrified to speak in front of the class, why not give them the choice of creating a slide show with a recorded narration? For students who struggle with test taking, couldn’t we let them demonstrate their knowledge by creating an I Movie, drawing a storyboard, or performing a skit? These creative projects and assessments can update old lessons, and can be energizing for teachers as well as students.
Many students need to understand why the subjects they are learning are important.

Integrated lessons and projects create real life scenarios where problems have many different aspects and possible solutions. The opportunity to actively create solutions helps students to solidify and internalize their learning. Here are some examples.

Geometry teachers can talk about the use of shapes and angles in architecture and interior design. Their students can create a design for their dream bedroom or apartment using shapes, sizes and angles to see how furniture fits within a space. Social studies students can reenact a session of the Continental Congress in a skit or create a slide show about a famous war battle. Literature students can draw storyboards to illustrate the major themes in a novel, or make a scrapbook that highlights the life events of a major character. A famous poem or speech can be turned into a rap piece in a music video.
The opportunities are endless. It’s all about exposing students to the arts and encouraging creative new solutions to your existing lessons and assessments.
If adding or changing projects and assessments seems like too much for you, then try integrating art into your classroom in more subtle ways just to get started. Playing a variety of music in the classroom is beneficial for students. You can display artwork in your classroom, or find music or movies that are relevant to your current topic of study or that correspond with the literary or historical time period that you are working in.

Integrating the arts gives context and a human experience to many lessons. The arts provide a different perspective that can help students to relate to what they are learning in any subject area.
Students respond well when they feel empowered. They like to feel like they have a say in what they are doing, and how they are doing it. When students are given creative choices for projects and assessments, they get excited, and their level of ownership and investment increase. We have all heard about the changes facing 21st century learners. They must be able to generate imaginative and flexible ideas. They must be able to communicate in many different ways. Integrated lessons build these skills. Through integrated lessons and assessments, students can learn to combine various subjects and skills to make sense of complex ideas. They are given the opportunity to explore concepts and create experiences that help them to connect ideas and internalize knowledge. The link provided here can take you to the “Champions of Change” report, which documents many of the benefits of arts integrations.
You do not have to be artistic yourself!

- Be willing
- Watch them go!

Many teachers think that since they are not artists, musicians, media experts, or actors, that they are not capable of introducing these types of projects. This is not the case! All you have to do is be willing to offer creative choices to your students. The students will take the opportunity and run with it! Just be there to guide them and watch them go!

You can always get advice and input from colleagues when you run into questions that you can’t answer or if you are looking for integration ideas. That is the beauty of integration - the teachers learn and grow right along with the students.
There are many studies, articles, and books that support and emphasize the importance of arts integration in the classroom. Over the last 70 years, the research has consistently shown that students benefit from exposure to the arts, integrated lessons, and alternative assessments. If you are interested in researching this topic on your own, or you would like to see the specific statistics and study results, I have included several of the best resources I have found here - and I would be happy to provide you with a complete bibliography after the presentation.
Try an arts integration in your classroom! Look at your plans for the next few weeks and see if there is a place that you can add a creative project or assessment in place of a written assignment or exam. Is there an active project that you can insert that can combine multiple concepts in a real-world scenario? Arts integrations will improve your student’s achievement, attitude, and understanding. You have nothing to lose. Give it a try and evaluate the results! You will be glad you did. Watch your students grow and thrive!
A closing thought

“Art production makes learners aware of themselves as capable learners and productive citizens. The arts give learners a sense of agency—of being able to make things that matter happen in the world. For students with damaged perceptions of their own abilities, arts experiences can be life saving.”

-Burnaford, April I., & Weiss (2001)

I would like to conclude with this powerful quote from the book “Renaissance in the classroom”.

(quote)

Thank you for your time, and I hope that you will try an arts integration in your classroom in the near future!
Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the author presented a PowerPoint presentation designed to highlight the many benefits to students and teachers when the arts are integrated into the core curriculum. The presentation included an overview of the research and literature on art integration, the positive impact of integration on teaching and learning, and suggestions to help teachers begin to integrate the arts into their own lessons and assessments. In Chapter 5, the author will reflect on the achievements of the project, the limitations of the project, recommendations for the future, and a project summary.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

In an educational environment of standards and high stakes testing, the focus on the whole child is sometimes lost. It is critical that educators step back and look at the individuals in their classrooms. Children have different learning styles, interests, and strengths, and all children deserve the opportunity to be taught and assessed in ways that allow them to use and develop their interests and strengths. Years of research and study have consistently shown that exposure to the arts, along with integrated lessons and assessments, improve: student achievement, cognitive capacities, self-esteem, attitudes, and behavior. The arts give context and relevancy to learning in many different subject areas. Creative exploration of ideas and concepts help students to process and retain the information they are learning. This project was designed to encourage teachers and administrators to implement art integrations in their classrooms. Barriers always exist, such as lack of time, training, and funding, which prevent good practices from being implemented in schools. The beauty of art integration is that it can be done easily in any classroom by making small changes to current lessons and assessments, and simply offering students creative choices.

Objectives Achieved

The goal of this project was to share the value of art integration with teachers and administrators, and to encourage the use of art integration in the classroom. This author was successful in sharing this presentation with several teachers and administrators at the
middle school where she is employed, and with teachers at two other schools. The administrators were very excited and enthusiastic about the content, and plan to share the presentation with their entire staff. This middle school, and the entire school district, has chosen critical thinking as a focus area for teachers and students this year. One administrator was so excited about the relevance of this presentation, as part of the critical thinking discussion, that she suggested showing it to the District School Board. A Resource Teacher felt that the most successful message of the presentation was that any teacher can integrate the arts into any subject area classroom, and the changes can be simple to implement. This Resource Teacher also noted the value of integrated lessons for learners who struggle with traditional lessons and assessments. The teachers who viewed the presentation felt that the suggestions were very helpful and gave them ideas for integrations in their own classrooms.

Peer Assessments

This presentation was given to four peers for review. The peers consisted of one Building Resource Teacher, one Administrator, one Art Teacher, and one general classroom Teacher. Their assessments, in rubric form, are attached. (see Appendix) The consensus of these assessments was consistent with the objectives of the project. All of the peers agreed that they learned something about the value that art integrations bring to the classroom. Each reviewer felt that the presentation was easy to follow and understand. These peer assessors each felt that they left the presentation motivated to try art integrations, and inspired to think about new ways to integrate the arts into lessons and assessments in their school or classroom. The Building Resource Teacher and the
Administrator both noted the value of interdisciplinary lessons, and were interested in discussing integrated lessons with their staff. The peer assessors felt that there were no gaps or errors in the information presented, and none of the peers offered criticisms or suggested changes to the presentation.

Limitations of the Project

In education, three issues are often cited as the primary limitations to the implementation of any new or improved teaching method or technique. These three issues are the lack of time, training, and funding. The administrators who viewed this presentation all agreed that their staffs should be trained and encouraged to create more complex, interdisciplinary lessons. The biggest problem seems to be a lack of time. Teachers have very little time in the school day to meet with other teachers, and to talk about building bridges between subject areas for students. For many teachers, the thought of recreating or rethinking their lessons and assessments seems overwhelming. Once these teachers understand the benefits of integrated lessons, and see examples of how easily they can incorporate creativity into their existing lessons, they are more likely to try an art integration. Administrators would love to spend their time training teachers to develop engaging, complex, and integrated lessons that benefit students of all learning styles. Unfortunately, the reality is that their time is often spent dealing with daily crisis management, discipline issues, budgeting, and staffing; all of which leave little time for research, discussion, or training on improvements to lesson delivery or assessment. One of the goals of this project was to help overcome some of these limitations; by suggesting
simple and creative ways to integrate lessons that would not require additional time, specialized training, or increased funding.

Another significant limitation for art integration is the current educational climate, which clearly stresses the achievement of standards and checkpoints, and performance on high stakes tests. The pressure on administrators and teachers to meet performance goals on standardized tests in the core subjects has altered priorities, budgets, and staffing, and has pulled resources away from the arts. This project was designed to help educators to acknowledge and readdress the importance of the various learning styles, interests, and strengths of all students. When complex, integrated lessons, and creative projects and assessments are presented to students, these students will develop critical thinking skills and internalize the knowledge needed to perform well on standardized tests. It is so important to foster the growth and development of the whole child through exposure to the arts, quality teaching methods, and attention to life skills. It is the opinion of this author that promoting the development of happy, cultured, and well-rounded human beings should be a higher priority than hitting every checkpoint in a curriculum guide, or improving a test score.

Recommendations for the Future

Despite the myriad of research which clearly documents the benefits to students, learning, and achievement when the arts are part of the curriculum, many schools continue to focus more on traditional, direct teaching methods which emphasize only the material included on state and federally mandated high stakes tests. It would benefit all students and educators if more studies could be done to document and publicize how
deep, exploratory lessons that focus on current, real world problems and scenarios, and include interdisciplinary concepts, technology, and arts integrations, are vital to the true cognitive and social development of children. Our world is changing, and our educational systems need to adapt and change as well.

It is popular in current American culture to publish the performance averages on state and federal test scores by students in public schools in the newspaper and on television. This publicity has caused tremendous political and public interest to be placed on testing. More research could provide further evidence and proof that exposure to the arts, better teaching practices, and complex, integrated lessons and assessments not only increase engagement levels and retention of knowledge for students, but can also improve performance on standardized test scores. Publication of this type of research could help educators to shift the media focus away from test results. The goal should be to place the media and public attention on the importance of arts and technology integrations, and interdisciplinary learning, for the improvement of student achievement and the development of successful 21st Century learners and workers. If the public is going to continue to monitor test scores, then school districts and educators are going to have to become more media savvy, and learn new ways to inform the public of the best methods for teaching children in our ever-changing, information and technology based society. School districts, administrators, and teachers need to implement and inform the public on the practices that are best for children in our current learning environment, and should not cater to outdated political and media driven perceptions.
Project Summary

The purpose of this project was to explore and evaluate the role of the arts in the classroom. Through research, and a review of the current literature on this topic, this author found overwhelming evidence that art integration, along with interdisciplinary lessons and assessments provide students with a deeply enriched learning experience. The arts help to reach students with a variety of learning styles, and open the door for the creative exploration of ideas and concepts in any subject area. It has been documented that when the arts are present in the curriculum there is an improvement in student: achievement, engagement, depth of understanding and retention, self-esteem, and attitudes.

The goal of this project was to share information about the benefits of integrating the arts into the curriculum, and to encourage educators to implement art integrations in their classrooms. The PowerPoint presentation provided teachers and administrators with an overview of the research and literature on the topic of art integration, and the many benefits for students that come from exposure to the arts, and integrated lessons and assessments. The presentation also offered suggestions and examples of easy methods to start integrating the arts into current lessons and assessments in any classroom. This project was designed to inform teachers that it is not difficult, time consuming, or costly to offer creative options to students. Integrated lessons are often more relevant and engaging for both students and teachers. Integrating the arts gives students the opportunity to explore ideas, make connections, and communicate in a variety of ways. Arts integrations, interdisciplinary lessons, and creative assessments allow teachers and
students to utilize their strengths and interests to make the teaching and learning process more meaningful and successful.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Rabkin, N., & Redmond, R. (2006). The arts make a difference: It's time to stop thinking about the arts as fluff. They make schools better places to learn, and they raise student achievement. *Educational Leadership, 63*(3), 60-64.


Images:


APPENDIX

The assessment rubrics completed by four peer educators are included here.
Peer Assessment Rubric
Arts Integration in the Classroom
PowerPoint Presentation

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What did you learn about the value of integrated lessons?
So much! Particularly the benefits for our “struggling” traditional learners and how this helps us create “critical thinkers.”

Was the presentation easy to follow and understand?
Absolutely! I particularly liked the fact that each Powerpoint slide was a point of reference, not read word for word!

Did you like the look of the presentation?
Yes! It was easy to understand without too much “stuff,” to jumble things up. The art work was perfect — such a nice touch!

Did you leave with a new idea that you could try in your classroom? As a staff developer I’m excited to share this with my teachers — of all content areas!

Were you motivated to consider an integrated lesson in your classroom?
YES! Let’s start “pushing” our teachers to think “outside the box”!

Comments/Suggestions? FABULOUS! Seriously.

Tina H. Boogner, 2/6/08.
Peer Assessment Rubric
Arts Integration in the Classroom
PowerPoint Presentation

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What did you learn about the value of integrated lessons?
Clarifies for students, excites students, brings out their passions.

Was the presentation easy to follow and understand?
Yes

Did you like the look of the presentation?
Yes

Did you leave with a new idea that you could try in the classroom?
Yes

Were you motivated to consider an integrated lesson in your classroom?
Always, I firmly believe in it.

Comments/Suggestions?
Enjoyed it, think your efforts are well focused. I think back to when I was in elementary and were I did best was when we were allowed to integrate many subjects. (There were manyt many opportunities as I look back). Math in those days was NEVER integrated and that is perhaps why I had no interest, was not great at it. I learned to adapt it to my life and interests by integrating it MY WAY. What a sad statement for math of the past. I hope they are doing it NOW.

Pat H.

http://mail.dcsdk12.org/Login/FOV1-000133F4/98E307F7-3B9ACA00-0951DDFE?Templ... 2/6/2008
Peer Assessment Rubric
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PowerPoint Presentation

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What did you learn about the value of integrated lessons?
Integration helps students deepen their understanding of the subject being taught - a way to touch each child.

Was the presentation easy to follow and understand?
Most definitely! I would love to see the Board of Education review this.

Did you like the look of the presentation?
Wonderful! This made me begin to think creatively.

Did you leave with a new idea that you could try in your classroom?
I definitely will have new ideas thinking of how to incorporate this into my classroom.

Were you motivated to consider an integrated lesson in your classroom?
Yes, I would love to see more integration in middle school curriculums.

Comments/Suggestions?

Signed: [Signature]
Date: 2/10
Peer Assessment Rubric
Arts Integration in the Classroom
PowerPoint Presentation

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What did you learn about the value of integrated lessons?
I learned that integrated lessons can allow students to demonstrate knowledge of a topic in a variety of ways that allow kids to highlight their individual strengths and learning styles.

Was the presentation easy to follow and understand?
Yes, it was organized and very easy to understand.

Did you like the look of the presentation?
It was clean, and not too busy. The font was easy to read. The recording was very clear.

Did you leave with a new idea that you could try in your classroom?
I left with several new ideas that I could easily incorporate into my classroom with minimal preparation.

Were you motivated to consider an integrated lesson in your classroom?
Absolutely! I could clearly envision this benefitting several of my students with behavior and focus issues.

Comments/Suggestions?
Very impressive! I really enjoyed the presentation — WAY TO GO!