

Promotion of Arts Integration to Build Social and Academic Development

Lorie Scott
Sallie Harper
Matthew Boggan

Abstract: Integrating the arts into the curriculums incorporates lessons to address social-emotional and academic issues. Art integration helps students to engage in meaningful learning as well as understanding at a much more defined and deeper level. It is our belief that if all elementary level teachers were trained in arts-based techniques for supporting the social-emotional and academic development that students will graduate with a broader and more diverse understanding of the world. This paper will review the literature on arts integration studies, learn more about a local school initiating arts integration, and review teachers opinions who have just started using arts integration techniques in their classrooms at School O in Mississippi.

***About Authors:** Lorie Scott is an elementary school teacher in Mississippi and an Educational Specialist student at Mississippi State University; Dr. Sallie Harper is the Interim Associate Dean of Education and Associate Professor of Elementary Education at Mississippi State University's Meridian Campus; Dr. Matthew Boggan is an Associate Professor of Educational Leadership, Program Director of Educational Leadership and Project Director of Learning and Educating through Alternative Programs (LEAP), a transition to teaching program at Mississippi State University's Meridian Campus.*

Key Words: Arts Integration, Social Development, K-12, Elementary Education, Academic Success, Curriculum Development.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Brouillette (2010) studied arts activities that attributed to social-emotional development. Brouillette investigated responses of twelve veteran classroom teachers who participated in the inner-city arts programs. Children who show evidence of healthy, social, emotional, and behavioral skills are most likely to achieve high academic standards in elementary schools. Implementation of an arts curriculum may very well strengthen academic achievement as well as promote healthy social-emotional development. Alter, Hays, and Ohara (2009) conducted a study on nineteen Australian teachers on their art experiences. The teachers were from twelve different elementary schools with representatives from each grade in K-6. The teachers were given interviews where key issues of concerns were addressed such as time and quantity of the curriculum, the accountability of the teachers, the integration of subject content in the creative arts, the level of the teacher's own confidence of the arts, and the value of the status given to the creative arts. There were five recommendations that

were reported from this study that included more pre-service teacher training, teacher support, more creative arts specialist teachers, more allocated time for creative arts, and further research that examines the practices of Creative Arts. Brouillette's findings revealed a need for teacher preparedness in the creative arts and the fact that the creative arts suffer in comparison to academic or financial support of core subject areas. Some teachers reported a more dim view of the arts because of the challenge to understand the latest trends in arts education while meeting the goals of regular academic programming.

Amorino (2008) supports Brouillette's (2010) efforts in that that the arts are crucial to a complete educational system. Arts integration activities can help our students to better understand academics through unique examples when there wasn't a clear understanding using traditional education measures.

Glen Rock Public School District (GRPSD, 2011) in New Jersey seems to view the arts as unique vehicles that can open new ways of learning for everyone. GRPSD revamped instructional methods by instructing teachers to incorporate various forms of the arts into their classroom. This included music, art, and drama. Through GRPSD's program called, "Arts Create Excellent Schools" (N.J. Department of Education, 2011), GRPSD funded a three-year professional development program to train teachers in how to integrate the creative arts into the regular curriculum. Twelve teachers participated in a six day long workshop where they focused on integrating the arts into their instruction. Twenty-six teachers were involved in the project for five years and produced a video on DVD about arts integration. After the training, teachers were questioned and indicated that they saw "highly observable growth" as a result of creative arts training. GRPSD teachers seem to have the belief that general education programs could be improved through arts integration. The arts are critical areas of study that should be utilized and not ignored.

Coutts, Soden, and Seagraves (2009) studied a three-year arts-infused education model for elementary and high schools called Arts across the Curriculum (AAC). The Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE), which was founded in 1992, brings teachers and artist together to work collaboratively to infuse the arts into the school curriculum. The AAC program was the very different from other arts in education initiatives. This program promoted the task of developing the skills of the teachers to collaborate together and to explore educational methods for teaching the arts. Through Integrated Curricular Lesson (ICL) the artist and teacher worked together in their specialized subject areas to design lessons. The literature suggests that there are benefits for all involved in an art in education program. The AAC program believes that planning time is very important, the teacher and artist relationship must be a good one, teachers and artists must be flexible with each other and teachers and artists must understand each other's roles and positions.

Binder and Kotsopoulou (2010) believe that the arts can help children understand their own inner landscapes and validate their social and cultural ways of knowing. Kotsopoulou created a project around the concepts of images, process, and identities with twelve students, their teacher, and a junior and kindergarten class. The children were involved in a wide variety of artistic activities. This study lasted for nine weeks and once a week the children participated in open-ended visual art experiences that connected to their understanding of self and others. In this study four books were used *Willy the*

Dreamer by Anthony Browne (2000), *Frederick* by Leo Liouni (1973), *Vincent's Colors* by Vincent Van Gough (2005), and *Ish* by Peter Reynolds (2004). These books gave examples of the student work in the creative arts. The students expressed their creativity and thoughts on quilt squares. At the beginning of the process the students had difficulty figuring out how to transfer their thoughts onto the quilts but after further explanation, the students understood. According to the author, the quilt project empowered the children to explore who they were and what was important in their lives.

Holzer (2009) studied fostering learning across the curriculum including integrating the arts. Holzer believes that there is a place for arts in elementary schools, but for others it is a struggle. Holzer (2009) believes that some people think of art and education as they may think of paintings, performances, instruments, bands, choirs, and trips to museums. At Lincoln Center Institute (LCI) arts education experiences are designed to motivate student's imagination. This way of addressing the arts it not only beneficial to the students across the school curriculum, but it affects the students in the way that they may process activities of daily life or even thoughts about the future. Beginning the arts in the elementary grades will set a foundation for later imaginative growth. LCI sees imagination as a primary resource for creativity. According to Holzer (2009), elementary and high school programs that integrate the arts serve as a powerful asset in academic achievement.

Spohn (2008) studied teachers' perspectives of the arts in regards to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) standards. Since NCLB of 2001 was implemented, Spohn says that the arts are not utilized because of the heavy demand for schools to focus on math and reading. Schools with no dance or music instruction are definitely at a disadvantaged position. Spohn's research addressed the lack of information on funding for arts education and ignoring teachers' perspectives. Participants included one high school visual arts teacher, and one elementary school language arts teacher. Spohn's interest in the arts was due to the fact that he had fourteen years of professional performing experience in dance and nine years of teaching dance in higher education. Spohn found that both arts teachers and non-art teachers believe instructional time and classroom instructional time has been revamped and shortened in order to accommodate the requirements for NCLB. The study revealed that curriculum and instructional time for arts education in music and visual arts for kindergarten to fifth grade had not changed since 2001. The music curriculum suffered a cut in the middle school. Math and language class times were increased; social studies and science instructional

times were reduced, and music was drastically modified. There were other changes that took place in the high school schedule. Spohn (2009) points out that the arts are not tied to NCLB's accountability system; it is unlikely they will receive an equal distribution of funding efforts in the near future. Spohn (2009) also found that in conclusion, the emphasis on math, reading, and soon to be science is forcing schools with limited resources to take away programs such as the arts need to be integrated into the K-12 curriculum.

Penning (2008) studied a school district in San Francisco whose primary goal was to provide arts learning to all of its public schools. Penning felt that San Francisco would be a model school district with arts learning. The San Francisco School of the Arts (SOTA) is a public magnet school that began from a campaign in the early 1980s by Ruth Asawa. Ruth Asawa is a nationally known arts activist who was instrumental in founding SOTA. In 2010, the school's name was changed to the Ruth Asawa-San Francisco School of Arts (RASOTA) to honor Asawa's efforts in art education. RASOTA's purpose reinforced the importance of creativity in education and to affirm the district's dedication to the arts. San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD, 2011) adopted the Arts Education Master Plan (AEMP) which is a blueprint for how to integrate the arts in the regular curriculum. Asawa supported the SFUSD's plan to use AEMP and said, "Just as athletes need to exercise every day, children need to make art every day." (SFUSD, 2011). Through a span of three years and with the support of the SFUSD community, parents, and district personnel, a document was written to express the need for an arts center. Carlos Garcia, the superintendent of RASOTA, feels that schools change for the better if they make arts a part of the curriculum of all students (SFUSD, 2011). Through the Visual and Performing Arts Office, Garcia implemented changes such as hiring new full-time art teachers, expanding placements for professional teaching artists, integrating the arts into other curriculums, and more. Garcia suggests that when effectively teaching the arts correctly, it allows the students to think about how they relate to each other.

Vigilione (2009) studied how No Child Left Behind has placed so much demand on math, reading, writing, and science that extracurricular and electives have been driven out of the schools. Due to this mandatory requirement, urban schools have a significant reduction in the arts. Vigilione (2009) believes to promote the arts that you must have a climate of respect, and supporting learning styles. Vigilione suggests that academic benchmarks could be best met when regular education programs collaborate with arts integration and when addressing NCLB rules for success. A modeled Charter

School of Excellence (CSE) believes that while test scores remain important, healthy relationships are vital (Vigilione, 2009). The CSE utilizes art and action into the curriculum. The results found that the aspects of creativity that are dominated through the arts are also valuable in all areas of life. Combining education with the arts and challenging students to think abstractly helps them in pursuing and gaining a deeper knowledge of the world. Knight (2010) studied the need to persist for active learning in the arts classroom instead of just a visual literacy. Knight believes that visual art lessons are implemented to provide students with critique because they help students to develop a 'critical eye,' the same as what artist use. There needs to be a turnaround in the level of curriculum planning to change the assumptions about how the visual arts are defined. Knight believes that art education programs have a responsibility to educate students about culture. Knight (2010) notes that in the school context, art education instructs students with ways for making connections between their ideas and the ideas of others, but the process of discussing the art provides another avenue of meaning. Knight (2010) thinks that if art educators do not actively promote what the visual arts brings to the curriculum, they will be giving up the control of what art education brings to the students.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate the understandings of the purpose of integrating the arts in the regular curriculum at a local elementary school (School O) in Mississippi. School O recently received a grant called, "Arts in the Classroom," to promote arts integration; therefore, there was a need to understand the history and purpose of arts integration. There are several forms of the arts, but the two most popular forms seem to be the Visual Arts and Performance Arts. Implementing arts in the classroom is a wonderful and rewarding experience for students. As educators, we provide the students with opportunities to participate in creative activities that would inspire them to express themselves and to also open up other avenues of learning. Students deserve the opportunity to break away from pen or pencil every now and then in order to travel down other streets of creative options, which leads to learning. Children can soar into the arts integrated into the classroom.

As educators in a school, we have the opportunity to observe and to participate in many activities that involve the arts. The teachers at School O implemented the arts into the school at full throttle. Some of the activities have been individual classrooms and others have been school

wide. The school wide project involved a museum of Pablo Picasso's life line and artwork. Each grade level completed some form of art display from Picasso. The second grade students portrayed Picasso's Blue Period. The students used geometric shapes and lines for Picasso's face. The only colors that they used were blue and black. After the completion of the face, the students used water colors and painted over the paper. This particular arts lesson was implemented into a math lesson and a history lesson because the students needed to research Picasso's Blue Period to help them to understand why they were studying him and using blue and black. Each project from the grade level students had an explanation of what was done along with the objectives. The museum display was awesome. Parents had the opportunity to become a part of what the students had done by walking through the Picasso's Museum and observing that hard work that each child had created.

MATH LESSON EXAMPLE

An example of a math exercise used at School O was to ask students to draw a gallon jug on a large piece of brown construction paper. Second, the students would draw four cartons inside the jug that represent quarts. Third, the students drew smaller containers for pints. Finally, the students drew two cups and inside a cup was eight ounces. Color coding for each size is important so that no capacity picture looks like another one. Students gained a better understanding of this math activity through the integration of the visual arts. Similar activities such as this one are integrated into the music and drama classes in an effort to promote arts integration at School O.

TEACHER FEEDBACK

The information in this section highlights five teachers' points of view at School O in regards to arts integration.

Elise:

"Art integration is vital! We integrated art in first grade by introducing famous artists when studying countries. We included the places where the artists lived, showed them prints, reproduced the prints, created self-portraits, painted, collaged, colored, and drew daily in journals. We then drew bubble maps about the art and talked about the genre or style of art the artists used such as surrealism or abstract."

Bonnie:

"Arts Integration is a great opportunity to expand the horizons of children everywhere. Students can see visual art and drama, hear music, and perhaps read literature that is not every day fare. Being exposed to great works and classics has the potential to also open the door for a child who may have a talent in an area that would otherwise go undiscovered. As a teaching strategy, integrating the arts into content areas is a great way to teach to multiple intelligences and learning styles, and can also provide for enrichment opportunities. I think the best aspect of arts integration in the classroom is that it is just plain fun because learning with the arts involves participation and hands-on activities. I wholly recommend integrating fine arts into the curriculum for everyone."

Mable:

"Art integration provides more exciting instruction for students. It also helps students to be able to relate to the content areas being taught. The students can experience a real-world connection."

Linda:

"Arts integration plays a vital role in a child's education. The arts teach the whole child. The arts can improve student learning across the curriculum, provides an expanded area for critical thinking, accommodate a variety of different learning styles, and builds self-esteem. As a music teacher, I believe that the instruction I give plays a major role in academic success. Students are motivated to do better, and they are actively engaged in the learning process through participation, questioning, and responding by using the arts. In closing, the arts are used as an extremely effective tool to reach, engage, and unlock a student's full learning potential."

Dixie:

"Art integration, in my opinion, is the strongest tool a teacher has that allows instruction, evaluation and assessment of a variety of skills and abilities simultaneously. Art Integration allows teachers to take a holistic approach which reaches children on various levels of intellect, emotion, and interpersonal

interaction. Art integration requires the use of problem solving skills, creative thinking skills, evaluation skills, adaptation, assimilation, and association skills which are vital in a child's ability to apply the information that is taught in the classroom. These skills are what develop the brain into an efficient machine instead of a programmed duplicate. Research shows that learning is tied to emotion. Therefore the only conclusion to be drawn is that students will only internalize skills and information if they associate them with an emotion. Art integration is not only a positive emotional experience for children, it allows them to experience other's emotions and communicate them through original works. Art integration also allows for interpersonal interaction between children, artists, and community members. All of these things strengthen the skills a child needs to be successful in their educational experience, as well as in life."

CONCLUSION

It is very important and necessary to implement the arts in elementary schools. Without arts in the classroom the students cannot shine at the level that is needed for them to shine. With the arts, students can receive the opportunity to be creative. When walking the walkways and hallways throughout School O, art is displayed in all locations. This is especially the case in the Pre-K and first grade classrooms. When walking by the music room, you can hear the students singing, playing instruments, and even moving their bodies to the beat of the music. When stepping inside many teachers' classroom we get a feeling the arts promotes learning and fun. Fun is important to keep in mind when working with young minds. With careful researching for valid, peer-reviewed, and professional articles, we discovered that research proves that there is an importance of arts to be integrated into the elementary schools. All schools should implement arts into the curriculum whenever it is possible. Because of the NCLB Act of 2001, more focus has been placed on reading and math, but arts implemented into reading and math could give students that burst of excitement that they need in order to advance and to have fun in the process. The investigators of the study now have a better understanding of the importance of the arts which will encourage us to have louder voices when it comes to support for arts integration.

REFERENCES

- Amorino, J. S. (2008). Classroom educators learn more about teaching and learning from the arts. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90(3), 190-195. Retrieved November 5, 2011 from EBSCOhost.
- Alter, F., Hays, T., & O'Hara, R. (2009). The challenges of implementing primary arts education: What our teachers say. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 34(4), 22-30. Retrieved November 5, 2011 from EBSCOhost.
- Binder, M. J., & Kotsopoulos, S. (2010). Living Ishly: The arts as mindful spaces in the identity journeys of young children. *Encounter*, 23(2), 21-27. Retrieved November 5, 2011 from EBSCOhost.
- Brouillette, L. (2010). How the arts help children to create healthy social scripts: Exploring the perceptions of elementary teachers. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 111(1), 16-24. doi:10.1080/10632910903228116
- Coutts, G., Soden, R., & Seagraves, L. (2009). The way they see it: An evaluation of the arts across the curriculum project. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 28(2), 194-206. doi:10.1111/j.1476-8070.2009.01606.x
- Glen Rock Public School District (2011). Retrieved in December, 2011 from: www.glenrocknj.org
- Holzer, M. (2009). The arts and elementary education: shifting the paradigm. *Teachers & Teaching*, 15(3), 377-389. doi:10.1080/13540600903056718
- Knight, L. (2010). Why a child needs a critical eye, and why the art classroom is central in developing it. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 29(3), 236-243. doi:10.1111/j.1476-8070.2010.01655.x
- New Jersey Department of Education (2011). Retrieved in December, 2011 from: http://www.nj.gov/state/njsca/dos_njsca_grants-arts-education.html
- Penning, D. (2008). Reimagine learning: Building a district on arts education. *Teaching Artist Journal*, 6(4), 279-289. doi:10.1080
- San Francisco Unified School District (2011). Retrieved in December, 2011 from: <http://www.sfusd.edu/en/curriculum-standards/visual-performing-arts/arts-education-master-plan.html> and www.sfusd.edu
- Spohn, C. (2008). Teacher perspectives on no child left behind and arts education: A case study. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 109(4), 3-12. Retrieved November 5, 2011 from EBSCOhost.
- Viglione, N. M. (2009). Applying art and action. *Reclaiming Children & Youth*, 18(1), 16-19. Retrieved November 5, 2011 from EBSCOhost.

Copyright of National Teacher Education Journal is the property of National Teacher Education Journal and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.