

Additional Videos:

Here are the links to two videos on what arts integration looks like in practice:

Hard Fun <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRQ4ay0Ot9U>
Teaching Through the Arts <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UBQdKyF1Ak4>

What the Research Says

Arts integration has many implications that can effect student achievement, teacher success and retention, and community and cultural awareness. By utilizing this technique in elementary schools where it is crucial to get an equitable start in education, students have the opportunity to maximize their own achievement. For the purpose of this study, student achievement will mean what students produce on standardized test scores. High student achievement will be interpreted as student test scores that are at the proficient or advanced levels on state standardized tests. In addition, arts integration will refer to any program of study that includes teaching state established fine arts objectives while teaching the state established academic objectives simultaneously. Finally, elementary school students will be any students who are in kindergarten through fifth grade.

As arts integration has received more awareness throughout the past decade, research has concluded several findings on its use and results. First, arts integration does improve standardized test scores in elementary school students, particularly those who live in urban areas, are socio-economically disadvantages, or who are minorities. Arts integration also has an impact on creating equity in student learning, while at the same time increasing community involvement within the schools.

However, arts integration also presents several challenges. In order for it to be successful, there needs to be time allotted for planning and collaboration between teachers. In addition, arts integration has taken on different meanings to different schools, which provides an unclear picture of what it actually entails. Finally, due to the need for additional resources, funding for arts integration programs can be difficult to find. Through these findings, it is the purpose of this literature review to disseminate whether it is worth integrating the arts into the academic classroom.

Arts integration improves test scores

The evidence regarding arts integration and its effect on standardized test scores clearly shows that test scores improve when students learn in an arts integrated classroom (Gullatt, 2008, Rabkin and Redmond, 2006 and Ruppert, 2006, Jensen, 2002, Goldberg & Bossenmeyer, 1998). Not only does arts integration improve test scores, but it has a dramatic effect on student attendance which leads to higher scores because the students are more willing to come to school and learn (Jensen, 2002).

Indeed, while arts integration improves test scores, it is the access to the arts and using them in the academic curriculum that effects the cognitive abilities that are being assessed with the standardized tests. Thus, as more areas of the brain are engaged and utilized, test scores rise. For example, studies show that by participating in the arts, students' thinking skills, reasoning abilities, and organization levels improve (Appel, 2006, Ruppert, 2006 and Jensen, 2002).

In addition to raising logic and reasoning abilities through the arts, arts integration also helps to decrease the achievement gap. Currently, the No Child Left Behind law of 2002 separates

subgroups of students by race, special education, socio-economic status, and English Language Learners. The purpose of doing this is to highlight the areas that typically struggle and fall behind in reading and mathematics and to try to close the gap that remains between these subgroups attaining proficient and advanced on standardized tests. This is particularly a struggle in urban districts, which have a higher percentage of diverse populations. However, by using the arts within the classroom to teach academic subjects, studies have shown that these student subgroups increase their standardized test scores significantly within the first three years of implementation (Rabkin et. al, 2006, Delisio, 2005, Jensen, 2002, and Goldberg et. al, 1998). Significant rises can take on various meanings. However, students in urban schools typically raise their test scores by 30% or more in the first year (Jensen, 2002), if not doubling their scores on standardized tests within the same amount of time (Rabkin, et. al, 2006). This kind of increase may explain the rise in schools who are implementing arts integration programs (Burnaford, Aprill & Weiss, 2001).

Creating equity

Not only does arts integration impact test scores significantly within the various subgroups, it affords students the opportunity to learn a concept that is personalized to the way they individually learn without creating the need for a teacher to devise individual plans for individual students. By learning an academic concept “through art or within art” (Goldburg, et. all, 1998, pg. 56), students can make individual meaning of the concept, which in turn solidifies the concept within their own minds. For students with special needs, English language learners, or minorities, this is particularly important. These three groups have variables, such as disabilities or a lack of prior knowledge, that cause them to have a disadvantaged starting place for traditional learning methods. However, by using the arts to teach an academic concept, these students start where everyone else starts: on their own individualized starting lines. This

creates equity, which is the principle that everyone gets what they need in education. By creating equity, all students do have a chance to succeed regardless of their variables (Appel, 2006). Because the “arts reach students who are not normally reached, with methods that are not normally used, which keeps tardy, truancy, and dropout rates down” (Jensen, 2002 pg. 48) this also provides an equal starting point for all students. The more students are in school and motivated to learn due to an engaging way of learning core subject areas (Ruppert, 2006 and Strand, 2006) the more likely they are to succeed at learning the material.

Cultural and community awareness

The arts as a whole represent various cultural aspects and links, so they are a natural fit when teachers are trying to explain historical events. Music, art, literature, and dance all influenced history and were influenced by history. The arts can even be used as a comparative study of a time period by looking at the various cultures’ influence on the arts themselves. This can make supplanting the arts during a history lesson very easy. However, the goal of arts integration is to enhance and to supplement the academic lessons themselves. Therefore, not only can the arts be used as a reference for the effects of historical culture, they can be used to enhance and embrace the study of a student’s own culture (Delisio, 2005). And, as teachers make a point to connect to student cultures within their classrooms, they can connect with the students themselves who then begin to respect and listen to their information much more carefully (Gullatt, 2008).

By weaving the culture and heritage of students into core academic lessons, arts integration allows students to take ownership and pride of how their learning effects not only themselves, but also their ancestors (Delisio, 2005). In addition, “by making culture a true part of school culture” (Burnaford, et. al, 2001, pg.12), students gain

perspective and introspection to what their learning and how it has direct implications to what will happen next. This type of learning creates ambition within students to learn further and deeper about a subject (Strand, 2006) which makes the information meaningful to them.

In addition to becoming more culturally sensitive and aware, arts integration encourages interaction between the community and the students by bringing in local professional artists to share their craft. This is done by artisans working with teachers to create lessons that teach both the curricular goals and the artistic goals through professionals within the community. This brings a piece of community cultural heritage into the school, while at the same time treating the artistic aspect of curricular learning with high respect. The result is that students are learning both the academic objectives and the high level of artistry that is included in a project (Appel, 2006 and Rabkin et. al, 2006). This type of learning leads to increased social skills, more empathy, and better cognitive abilities (Gullatt, 2008, Ruppert, 2006, and Burnaford et. al, 2001).

Finally, it has been noted that arts integration is a good method for bringing in parent support for the educational needs of their child. Parents are much more likely to participate in discussions with teachers, working with their children on academic materials at home, and being an active participant within the school building through volunteering and PTA meetings (Delisio, 2006). This type of involvement and support from parents is crucial to a child's education because it provides a model for learning and an overall respect of the educational system (Rabkin et. al, 2006). By utilizing parent partnerships and support, schools can better attend to the needs of their students and unique populations.

Providing time

While there are many positive benefits to incorporating an arts integration program into an elementary school curriculum, there are several items that are challenges to doing the integration program well. First and foremost is the most precious commodity in schools: time. In order for an arts integration program to be successful, there must be enough time allotted so that teachers and artists can collaborate and plan meaningful lessons that incorporate both sets of objectives (Gullatt, 2008 and Appel, 2006). Without an adequate length of time and common planning times, arts integration runs the risk of being misinterpreted and not done with integrity (Mishook and Kornhaber, 2006). In addition to time needed for planning, time must also be given for teachers to obtain professional development that enhances their knowledge of arts integration and how to implement it successfully in their classrooms. Without professional development in the forms of in-house training sessions, studies of other successful arts integration programs, and collaborations with local arts centers, an arts integration program will never reach its full potential (Appel, 2006 and Burnaford et. al, 2001).

Not only is providing time for collaboration and professional development integral to arts integration success, but so too is providing time for arts classes to meet in and of themselves. Often, arts teachers are not willing participants in an arts integration program due to fears of their own individual programs being cut to save money (Gullatt, 2008 and Mishook et. al, 2006). In fact, this fear is so prevalent that the National Arts Educators Association discourages their members from participating in arts integration programs because the programs may replace art classes for budgetary reasons (Mishook et, al, 2006). This seriously limits the ability of an arts integration program to be successful because the greatest internal resources of the school - art, music and physical education teachers – will not participate and provide valuable

information. This then compounds the difficulty in finding and keeping artistic resources that can be utilized in arts integrated lessons (Rabkin et. al, 2006). Time must, therefore, be incorporated into the master schedule of the school for music, art and physical education as core subjects that teach art for arts sake.

The meaning of “Arts Integration”

Occasionally, the term “Arts Integration” has a variety of meanings and if the program is to survive and thrive, an operational definition must be determined. Because this program is not used in a majority of schools, the terminology can be easily confused to take on a slew of different, and often incorrect, interpretations. Mishook and Kornaber, 2006, described arts integration as fitting into the categories of either “co-equal” or “subservient”.

The goal of true arts integration is to be co-equal. This is when the arts are looked at and treated with the same respect and validity as the core academic subjects. This is visible when the arts have a class time of their own to teach their subject matter, have equal classrooms as academic teachers, are incorporated into the staff culture, and have equal planning time as their academic peers. In terms of inserting the arts into an arts integration program, the arts teachers are looked at as professionals and collaborate with teachers to create lessons that match both sets of objectives.

Subservient arts integration is when the arts are looked at as a subject matter to enhance what is going on in the classroom, or when the arts are used for planning time and no collaboration exists between the classroom teachers and the arts teacher. This type of arts integration is undesirable because it does not induce creative lessons that broaden and deepen the curricular ideals for a student.

Another danger of misinterpreting the terminology is that education is so often changing and renewing that administrators want the next

quick fix for their student achievement scores. If administrators are not careful to study what a true arts integration program looks like and support it with time and effective resources, the program will not be successful (Strand, 2006). Administrators must also acknowledge that each arts integration program looks different in each school (Rabkin et. al, 2006 and Burnaford et. al, 2001) because the resources, population, needs, and culture in each school is different. To try and make an arts integration program a cookie cutter replica of another will be a disservice to the integrity of the work.

Increased resources

Finally, because arts integration is a curricular program which requires collaboration, time, a culture of success and innovation, and encourages making lessons into units that focus on twice the amount of objectives and goals, additional resources will be needed. This can be a challenge for many schools due to lack of funding and a slowing economy. In the past, schools have reached out to private funding and grants to provide the additional revenue needed to sustain an arts integration program (Gullatt, 2008), however, this is quickly dwindling due to increased competition for funds. Additionally, there is a lack of federal and state funds to support such programs because the government is required by law to support up to 50% of the entire school budget and politicians are reluctant to raise taxes or cut other integral programs to provide additional funds for arts integration programs (Rabkin et. al, 2006). Thus, finding funding to support the initiatives of bringing in professional artists, providing professional development, and purchasing extra materials becomes a challenge.

In addition to finding money for arts integration programs, there is also the challenge of finding enough space to incorporate the large scale projects that often happen with such a program (Delisio, 2005). Schools need to plan for having space for the arts teachers and academic teachers to work and produce the projects, additional space

to house the projects, and having enough room to accommodate the people that are brought in from outside the school to further deepen the artistic experience. In addition, space must also be procured for the extra consumable supplies and equipment that will be necessary to engage in an arts integration program (Gullatt, 2008).

Lastly, schools must be prepared to seek out and hire highly qualified and certified personnel that can support an arts integration program and help it to grow (Gullatt, 2008, Mishook et. al, 2006, Rabkin et. al, 2006, Strand, 2006 and Burnaford et. al, 2001). Because many academic teachers are uncomfortable with their own artistic abilities (Rabkin et. al, 2006 and Goldberg et. al, 1998), it is essential to hire arts teachers that are highly qualified and certified by the state to ensure that the artistic element is of integrity. Conversely, it is as essential to hire the most highly qualified academic teachers as well who are willing to collaborate and use the curriculum as a guideline to create successful and engaging arts integrated lessons.

Conclusions

Arts integration could provide a unique and exceptional approach to tapping the true knowledge of elementary school students and help them to express that knowledge through higher standardized test scores. The research clearly shows that standardized test scores improve significantly in those students who have had access to arts integration programs. In addition, there are positive relationships between arts integration and enhanced social and emotional skills, while at the same time encouraging self-exploration through cultural and community awareness. While the hurdles of financing, time and resources will continue to exist for arts integration, the end result of higher test scores, increased deeper learning, and enhanced personal skills could prove great enough to afford the risk.