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## Attainable Arts Integration in the elementary school classroom

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ATTAINABLE ARTS INTEGRATION  
IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM

A Thesis Submitted  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Designation  
University Honors with Distinction

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Arts Integration is an education philosophy that advocates for educating the whole child in a way that will prepare him or her for life outside the classroom. Arts Integration can effectively do this because it makes art, which is seen everywhere in the world around people, an essential part of the classroom. In an Arts Integration classroom, the arts are integrated with mathematics, science, social studies, and reading. Arts Integration teachers strive to authentically incorporate music, drama, the visual arts, dance, and literature into their classrooms on a daily basis. When teachers authentically incorporate the arts into the classroom, the arts become a teaching and learning device rather than an unrelated activity taking up time. When teachers use Arts Integration as a part of their regular classroom instruction, they are helping students to learn in a more authentic manner, in which all of their learning is connected rather than separate.

Arts Integration provides teachers with a wide variety of teaching instructions, allowing them to select what will help their students or school the most. While a variety of options may overwhelm teachers, they have a variety of easy, attainable choices for how to integrate the arts and help their students in the greatest way possible. This leads to many different approaches to Arts Integration, depending on the school and teacher. This paper will examine Arts Integration and explore options teachers have to effectively integrate the arts into their classroom without requiring excessive specialty supplies.

## Research Questions

1. How can teachers with limited art knowledge effectively integrate the arts in their classrooms?
2. How can teachers integrate the arts without requiring additional or excessive financial resources?
3. Can a single teacher integrate the arts without it being a whole school or district effort?
4. What are some strategies for integrating the arts that will benefit the students the most?

## Literature Review

### What is Arts Integration?

ARTSEdge, an outreach of the Kennedy Center, defined Arts Integration as “an approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form. Students engage in a creative process which connects an art form and another subject and meets evolving objectives” (Silverstein & Layne, 2013, para. 1). Arts Integration reaches beyond a single activity and transforms the way classrooms function, creating student-centered learning where the students are encouraged to draw on prior knowledge or experiences, demonstrate learning, and reflect on learning. Students are provided with the opportunity to be actively engaged in the learning process when a teacher is incorporating the arts areas. This also provides the students with many different ways to demonstrate what they have learned.

In Burnaford’s literature review *Arts Integration Framework, Research & Practice* (2007), definitions of Arts Integration were broken down into three groups, based on their similarities. One group of definitions described Arts Integration as “learning ‘through’ and ‘with’ the arts”

(Burnaford, Brown, Doherty & McLaughlin, 2007, p. 12). These definitions focused in on how there are connections between the different things that students learn, especially between the curricular subjects and the arts. This group of definitions matched up with the portion of the ARTSEdge definition that addressed students engaging in learning that “connects an art form and another subject” (Silverstein & Layne, 2013, para. 1).

The second group of definitions found in Burnaford’s review described Arts Integration as “a curricular connections process” (Burnaford et al., 2007, p. 13). The definitions that fall into this category were largely concerned with the real-world applications that can come out of Arts Integration and how authentic they are. When the arts are used to apply to the world outside the classroom, students learn in a way that will carry meaning when they leave the classroom and when they apply their knowledge to different situations.

The third group of definitions outlined that Arts Integration is a “collaborative engagement” (Burnaford et al, 2007, p. 14). The definitions examined differ in who is collaborating with whom, but the overarching theme is that students and teachers are not working alone. The authors highlighted the community’s role in Arts Integration as well as the role colleagues and classmates may play. These collaborative measures help to make the learning more meaningful for the students.

A crucial part of Arts Integration discussed by the Kennedy Center, founded in 1971 in memory of President John F. Kennedy, is the connection between an art form and another subject because the true benefit of Arts Integration comes in when the connections are “mutually reinforcing... By engaging in learning in one subject, learning in the other is reinforced and extended, and vice versa” (Kennedy Center, 2012, para. 14). Throughout a

school year, the focus of the classroom's Arts Integration may change as the students learn and grow, demonstrating the "evolving objectives" (Kennedy Center, 2012, para. 1) that grow and change with the students. As a student learns and grows both socially and academically, his or her needs in the classroom will change and the use of Arts Integration can help a teacher meet those changing needs.

Another important part of Arts Integration is the concept of purposeful planning, in which teachers review "what young students already know and need to know within grade-level, standards-based, content area instruction. Purposeful planning requires the teacher to define and focus on the 'big ideas' that need to be taught learned, and remember by students" (McDonald, 2010, p. 4). Purposeful planning allows teachers to develop the evolving objectives, selecting the big ideas that students need to learn and are found in the grade-level standards. When teachers intentionally look at what their students need to learn according to the standards, they can focus in instruction on the big ideas covered by these standards. This allows them to better ensure that students are learning the appropriate material each year.

In the article *A School Revitalized through the Arts*, Morris stressed the importance of commitment while discussing personal experiences as the principal of a school that decided to become an Arts Integration school. To become a successful and authentic Arts Integration school requires the commitment of not only the teachers, but the whole school and the school community. The teachers and staff must put in time in order to make this a positive experience for students, persevering and working together to create authentic lessons. When teachers commit to using Arts Integration in their classroom or school, they will have a more successful



program than they would without the commitment, which the students can benefit from even more.

### **Why integrate the arts?**

Lynch (2007) highlighted qualities of Arts Integration that cause the students to be more engaged in the classroom activities. One of these qualities was how students were encouraged to “use their hands, bodies and voices in meaningful ways” (Lynch, 2007, p. 36). Through Arts Integration, students have more freedom in their classroom as well as a greater responsibility for the tasks they work on. Students gain freedom in the classroom by being able to select their own tasks that fit their interests, giving them a greater responsibility in the classroom.

In addition to giving students more responsibility in the classroom, Arts Integration can help students to make their own decisions about how to interact with the classroom content (Lynch, 2007, p. 36). When students are given the chance to select their own task that fits a set of characteristics, they can make a decision about what may help them the most with the content.

Arts Integration can also be very helpful in encouraging students to “expand their repertoire of communication through the challenge of transforming their knowledge from words into pictures, gestures, or sounds” (Lynch 2007, p. 38). It challenges advanced students to draw the words they already know and understand, adding another dimension to their vocabulary and understanding. In the case of Laws’ second grade classroom (Lynch, 2007), Arts Integration helps bridge the gap between understanding and verbal language. In a classroom of all English Language Learners, Laws used a lesson on orchids and still life drawings to help students develop written narratives about a personal experience, meeting one of the Grade 2 Language Arts standards. Pairing the writing experience with the art helped the students to

develop narratives that exceeded the teacher's expectations in length and vocabulary because the topic was something they were able to relate to.

In addition to helping how students relate to classroom material, incorporating the arts into the classroom benefits students by providing them with the opportunity to express their knowledge creatively, with no right or wrong answer (Davis, 2009, p. 51). Through this creative expression of their knowledge, students are challenged to look beyond the obvious and consider "what if?" (Davis, 2009, p. 55). Arts Integration turns students from boring questions and explicit answers, helping them to exercise critical thinking skills that challenge them to combine their knowledge from multiple subject areas.

As students are thinking critically, Arts Integration also offers them the opportunity to express their own ideas. As a part of the classroom environment, the teacher can show the students how each person's perspective matters, helping them to be more open to the thoughts and ideas of others. (Davis, 2009, p. 67) With so many different perspectives, Arts Integration also helps students to consider what they want to know and how they want to assess their work. (Davis, 2009, p. 71) The students have to consider each piece of information they are taking in and decide how that information is going to impact their current thoughts and ideas.

Another significant benefit of Arts Integration is how it can excite the students and help them become interested in what they are learning. Arts Integration helps students by providing a classroom connection to the world outside school. Learning is no longer an event that occurs in the classroom, textbook in hand, but it is expanded to include many aspects of the community surrounding the school. As students develop this interest in learning and the

community around them, they also develop a greater sense of social responsibility and a desire to care for that community.

In the book *Creating Meaning through Literature and the Arts*, Cornett (2011) broke these benefits down even further, placing them in three categories. The first set of benefits addressed includes “Intellectual Contributions” which include creative problem solving, critical thinking, comprehension, and composition or expressing meaning. Through each of these, Cornett highlighted how it takes “high level thinking to understand and create through the arts” (Cornett, 2011, p. 11). When teachers integrate the arts, they help challenge their students to achieve a higher level of understanding, which can benefit them greatly in the academic world.

Cornett’s second group of benefits are social contributions, where the “meaning is altered by social circumstances” (Cornett, 2011, p. 11). These contributions include culture, cooperation or collaboration, community, and compassion. Through these social contributions, students are provided with opportunities to learn about other cultures, whether it is from their classmates, members of the community, or a piece of art they are observing. Learning from their classmates or other community members helps to establish a stronger classroom community by recognizing each person’s own unique contributions.

Finally, there are the personal contributions that Cornett discussed as things that “engage the emotions and reflect personal values” (Cornett, 2011, p. 11). Arts Integration can contribute a stronger sense of commitment or interest for the students by helping to develop more intrinsic motivation through curiosity and choice. The arts can also help students develop greater concentration as they work in the classroom, as well as the confidence to take risks. As a part of these personal contributions, Arts Integration enhances students’ competence and

control over their “mind, voice and body” (Cornett, 2011, p. 11). Through the use of different materials and tools, they are challenged to develop ways to “plan, think, work and produce” (Cornett, 2011, p. 11) using these new materials.

In addition to the many benefits students can gain from the arts, teachers can learn from the arts, allowing the arts to influence how they teach in their classroom. Additionally, teachers can learn from the arts by considering how they present material in their classroom. Colley (2012) examined the six areas identified by E. W. Eisner in which education can learn from the arts. The six areas follow:

- 1) The ability to compose qualitative relationships and make judgments; 2) the formulation of aims, along with a willingness to explore and accept uncertainties; 3) the ability to recognize that form and content are connected; 4) the ability to understand that there are other forms of expression besides words; 5) an understanding of various media and the opportunities and limitations associated with each; and 6) a sense of purposefulness and direction. (Colley, 2012, p. 5)

These six areas focus on the knowledge that teachers have about the arts and a given content area. This knowledge can be used to improve Arts Integration and education in general as teachers use the arts to benefit students and enhance their learning.

In a related article, Eisner (2009) went into detail about concepts prevalent in artistic practice that can help with the improvement of education. The first two aspects highlighted for improving education through the arts looked at how form and content are connected, helping to define each other. For teachers, this means that how students are taught impacts how the students learn (Eisner, 2009) and that interactions can impact the students’ learning. Another

aspect of the arts that can help improve education is the subtle variations in instruction. Eisner explained how these subtle variations can make a huge difference in student learning by comparing it to melodies in pieces of music. Even one small note change in a melody can have a huge impact in how the melody sounds to a listener. Instruction is just like that; when a teacher changes one small thing, it can have a significant impact in how the students understand and learn.

Eisner highlighted how education can learn from the surprises found in the arts, seeing them as a part of a reward rather than an interruption or intruder. These surprises can be seen as a discovery which is necessary for progress. Surprises also help in aiding intrinsic motivation because students will be actively looking for what is going to happen as a result of their learning. Eisner also talked about how the open-ended tasks found in the arts can also help students exercise their imagination which can lead to invention. These open ended tasks provide students with choices that allow them to determine the end result of their work. It may be an idea proposed by the teacher or the student may be able to produce their own product. Like the surprises, these open-ended tasks can increase a student's intrinsic motivation because they are given more choice in their learning.

As teachers learn from Arts Integration, students will reap the benefits. They will get an education that can continue to meet their growing, changing needs, as Arts Integration is able to do so well. Following with the ARTSEdge definition of Arts Integration, students will “engage in a creative process which connects an art form and another subject” to demonstrate their understanding. (Silverstein & Layne, 2013, para. 1) If these components are present, students

will develop greater intrinsic motivation through their opportunities to complete open-ended activities and engage in their own discovering.

## **Research Methods**

The primary source of research for this thesis is the examination of literature written about Arts Integration and its use in public schools. Articles, books, lectures, and studies were examined in search of information about how to integrate the arts in an authentic manner, in which the arts are used as a learning device. ERIC, a part of Ebscohost, was the main database used to access journals and articles for this thesis. Arts Integration was the primary search term, and after that, search terms were related to information found in articles. Many articles not directly referenced in this paper were examined after they were referenced in other sources. Each of the five arts areas was used as a search term, but that did not yield substantial results. Similar search methods were used for the UNI Rod Library website, leading to the inclusion of many of the books. Summaries and indexes were utilized extensively in determining whether or not the books were useful.

Many resources were considered and then not used for one of two main reasons. The first reason was because they contained out of date information. That is true for many of the books from the UNI Rod Library because they were published in the 1980's or earlier, before teachers had regular access to the internet, so much of the information had a very different view of the classroom. Another reason that sources were not used is because they contained irrelevant information, focusing on aspects of teaching and Arts Integration that are not addressed in this thesis.

Through the examination of this information, a practical approach to Arts Integration has been developed, keeping in mind teachers who may be new to Arts Integration. However, the information is applicable to all educators, regardless of their experiences with Arts Integration.

### **Definitions**

The following are key terms used throughout this paper.

Arts Integration is a method of teaching where students learn about and demonstrate their learning through the five art forms. Students are given the opportunity to learn and explore material, developing a greater understanding through their exploration. As students learn and explore, they are presented with opportunities to work individually or in groups, helping them to learn social and life skills as well.

Literature is one of the five art forms. It includes the use of written materials such as books and poetry as well as the student production of written materials. Students study the structure of stories, the different genres, and literary elements such as theme, plot, character, setting, and point of view (Cornett, 2011).

The Visual Arts represents the study of art concepts and themes as well as the historical, social, and cultural roles of art. Students learn about communication through art by looking at how to read or interpret different pieces of art and how to convey information through art. They learn about valuing art and appreciating it as well as some of the different techniques used to create art (Cornett, 2011).

Music includes the study of musical concepts such as tempo, rhythm, beat, accent, meter, notes, syncopation, pitch, dynamics, texture, melody, and harmony. Students learn about how sound is organized in time and space. They learn about reading music as well as major genres, styles, and people. Students may learn how to write music as well as how to create and play musical instruments (Cornett, 2011).

Drama includes the learning of acting skills related to the body, mind, and voice as well as skills related to script writing, designing, directing, and researching. Students can learn valuable social skills as they study characters, the different types of conflict, plot, setting, and mood. Students can also learn about the different styles or forms of dramatic works – improvisation, pantomime, reader’s theatre, and storytelling (Cornett, 2011).

Dance and Movement encourage students to consider how they move in the BEST (Body, energy, space and time) way. “Body” looks at the parts of the body they use and the shapes they make with those parts. “Energy” considers the attack the students’ use, which is how they move, whether it is fast or slow, high or low. “Energy” also considers the weight of the movement, the strength or tension, and the flow. “Space” is the level, direction, size, place/destination, and pathway of the movement. The rhythm, speed, accent, duration, and phrases of the movement are the “time”. Students also learn about famous people of the dance world as well as dance genres, forms, and styles (Cornett, 2011).

Authentic Arts Integration is art that is done in the classroom to help students learn by connecting to the curricular subjects, rather than art that is used to fill up time in the classroom. Authentic Arts Integration involves the use of the arts as a learning tool rather than as a space filler.



## **Findings**

Arts Integration provides teachers with ways to get students more engaged in their learning and in classroom activities (Lynch, 2007, p. 37). Students are given the opportunity to select the tasks they complete and make decisions about what will help them to learn the content. Along with these different choices, students can improve their communication skills by completing activities that challenge them to add another dimension to their vocabulary through drawing or another art area. This also provides students with low vocabularies the opportunity to communicate through the arts in ways that they cannot communicate in spoken language. In order to maximize these benefits and the others, there are ways of integrating the arts to consider.

### **Three Levels of Arts Integration**

Cornett (2011) broke down Arts Integration into three different levels, depending on how prevalent the arts are in a classroom. The first level describes teaching “with” the arts, where teachers just teach one or two arts areas that are in their comfort zone (Cornett, 2011, p. 21). The lessons are casual with only a loose connection between the arts area and a given subject area. To successfully use Arts Integration in their classroom, teachers do not need to do more than this. While the benefits may not be at their peak, the students still benefit from this approach because they are provided with some opportunities to learn and grown, exploring the art area(s) and the content the teacher connects it to.

The second level of arts integration is when teachers teach “about” or “In” the arts (Cornett, 2011, p. 21). At this level, teachers may begin doing some co-planning with an arts specialist at the school, the art, music or PE teacher, or another teacher in the school. These

lessons begin to develop more substance than the lessons taught “with” the arts, becoming mini-lessons that include explicit instruction about the related art area. As teachers become more comfortable with Arts Integration, this second level allows them to add as much art instruction as they are comfortable with. They are also able to include as much art instruction as their school has the ability to add. They can work with like-minded teachers without requiring the school to hire the arts specialists. They can also co-plan with a member of the community who would like to share their art talent with the school.

The third and final level of Arts Integration is when teachers teach “through” the arts (Cornett, 2011, p. 21). When teachers move to this level of Arts Integration, they begin teaching substantial units that include explicit art instruction. The art instruction is no longer just a mini-lesson, but more substantial and directly connected to the arts standards followed by the district. As a part of this level of Arts Integration, all ten building blocks of Arts Integration are present. Cornett refers to ten building blocks that represent “‘general operating principles’ necessary for full implementation” (Cornett, 2011, p. 17) of Arts integration. Their order does not necessarily represent a ranking order for the ten blocks.

### **Ten Building Blocks**

Cornett’s first building block of meaningful Arts Integration is “Philosophy of Education” (Cornett, 2011, p. 17). To have meaningful Arts Integration, teachers should be focused on creating an environment that allows for diversity, creative inquiry, engaged learning, and student independence. At the core of Cornett’s Arts Integration Educational Philosophy is the belief “in the capacity of all individuals to construct personal meaning using a variety of communication tools... and materials.” (Cornett, 2011, p. 17) Regardless of a teacher’s level of

Arts Integration, this is a belief that all teachers can hold, striving to help their students construct personal meaning through the means that they are comfortable and familiar with.

The second building block for meaningful Arts Integration is the incorporation of Arts Literacy through the explicit teaching of arts concepts and skills (Cornett, 2011). As was shown in the different levels of Arts Integration, this is characteristic of the third level of Arts Integration and maybe a little of the second level. As teachers develop greater confidence in using the arts and the different arts areas, their incorporation of arts in the classroom becomes more meaningful. Teachers are able to explicitly teach the arts concepts and skills needed to make the instruction as meaningful as possible. Working towards this building block has become much more manageable for teachers because of the wide variety of resources that they have access to, both through schools and the internet.

The third building block for meaningful Arts integration is collaborative planning, when classroom teachers work with each other, art or music teachers, or community artists. This coincides with the second level of Arts Integration, when teachers teach “about” or “in” the arts, using co-planning with an arts specialist from the school or community. As a part of the collaborative planning process, everyone involved strives to “find genuine, not forced connections” (Cornett, 2011, p. 65). These authentic connections represent the third level of Arts Integration, where teachers teach “through” the arts. In order for classrooms to represent the highest level of Arts Integration, there must be collaborative planning.

An aesthetic learning environment is Cornett’s fourth building block of Arts Integration. In this building block, Cornett focused on the classroom environment and creating a space that is supportive and positive (Cornett, 2011). The space should promote risk taking, respect, and

understanding as well as celebrate diversity. When this type of learning environment is created, the students will feel safer as they explore the arts. This building block applies to all three levels of Arts Integration; and like the Philosophy of Education (Building Block One), all teachers can create this type of environment to help their students in some way. Students will gain the most benefits if the Arts Integration plan allows for a learning environment that is consistent across the entire school, but all students can benefit from a caring, supportive and positive classroom environment.

The fifth building block for meaningful Arts Integration is that literature is one of the core art forms. As the most readily available art form, literature can be a core aspect of Arts Integration (Cornett, 2011, p 19). In today's world of standardized tests and No Child Left behind, reading instruction is required at all levels. Real books are being used more and more to give the reading instruction rather than leveled readers, providing educators is an easy way to get started with the arts in their classroom. This ease of integration also makes the literary arts the easiest ones to integrate at level three. With so many literature options that teachers can access with the click of a button, they have many different options for using literature for all subjects.

The sixth building block for meaningful Arts Integration is Best Practices, when teachers utilize explicit teaching about the arts concepts and processes. These best practices include quality creative problem solving, using high quality materials, and art examples. Even though teachers are using explicit instruction, they can focus in on the big ideas and leave students to use some of their problems solving skills, pushing them to grow. When teachers follow the Best Practice of co-teaching, this building block becomes representational of levels two and three of

Arts Integration. As teachers work together, they have greater opportunities to utilize their strengths as well as to provide students with the explicit instruction of the arts areas. Not everyone can be extremely knowledgeable in every art area, so when teachers work together, their students can be exposed to many different areas and approaches.

The seventh building block that Cornett discusses is Instructional Design, which looks at the structure and routines of a classroom. Cornett recommends the use of pronged lesson plans, which are structured around a clear introduction, development, and conclusion that clearly show the academic and art objectives. Beyond the lesson plans, meaningful arts integration occurs when the students are given time to pursue their own personal interests and work on long-term projects. Many of these instructional design components lead to substantial Arts Integration, making this building block a part of the third level of Arts Integration. If a teacher does not include all aspects of this instructional design, it may no longer be a level three building block because the teacher may no longer be teaching “through” the arts with explicit art instruction in all of the arts areas. The teaching may be better represented by level two, where the teaching is “about” or “in” the arts, using mini-lessons to teach some basic art concepts (Cornett, 2011, p. 21). Whichever way the teacher decides to structure the lesson determines their instructional design, which is a key component of Arts Integration.

The eight building block of meaningful Arts Integration is differentiation, when instruction is different “in response to learner strengths and to meet diverse needs” (Cornett, 2011, p. 19). One way that Arts Integration allows for differentiation is through the use of multiple means for communication. When students are provided with those options, their

learning can become more personal to them and help them to develop a greater understanding of the content. While differentiation is a must for Arts Integration, just because a teacher differentiates instruction does not mean that meaningful Arts Integration is occurring in that classroom. Because of this, differentiation is only representative of the first level of Arts Integration.

The ninth building block of meaningful Arts Integration is Assessment for Learning. To allow for meaningful Arts Integration, assessments should be used as a motivational tool to increase learning (Cornett, 2011). If students are given more engaging assessments, such as creating a diorama, the art work they complete means more than simply when they are asked to create something unrelated to any content areas. The content is also more meaningful because they have access to a physical representation of it that they created or helped to create. These assessments can also become more engaging when teachers use multiple forms, allowing students to demonstrate their learning in multiple ways. The use of multiple assessments is closely related to the differentiation that happens in the classroom as well.

The tenth building block of meaningful Arts Integration is Arts Partnerships, when teachers are co-planning and co-teaching with specialists from within and outside the school. If this is done well, it can be an important part of moving the Arts Integration to a higher level. The most basic thing teachers can do to start these Arts Partnerships is to look at who is close by. It may be an art teacher at the school, a teacher who has a hidden passion for dance, or a next-door neighbor who has a photography shop. These are all people that teachers could pull in as specialists in a given field and use to educate the students. There is not a textbook that

can share the same information as these real people and the students can connect what they are learning to real-life situations where it applies.

### **Making the Most of Limited Resources**

This last building block of Arts partnerships is perfect for teachers with limited knowledge. There are people who are knowledgeable about the different arts areas and eager to share their knowledge and skills. Teachers should be taking advantage of these people by working with them and inviting them into the classroom. Professional artists can provide a whole new perspective on learning when they are involved in the classroom. Inviting them into the classroom also provides teachers with an excellent free resource. These people have so much to offer the classroom and teachers should take advantage of it. The art professionals also come in handy when teachers or schools have limited resources.

When a teacher or school is facing limited resources that may hinder their use of Arts Integration, they need to remain committed. Morris (2009) highlighted the importance of commitment in the use of Arts Integration. Once teachers are committed to Arts Integration in their classroom, regardless of the level of Arts Integration, they can begin to implement the other building blocks of Arts Integration. To take full advantage of whatever limited resources are available, teachers can pick a focus of one or two art areas. This will prevent resources from being stretched too thin and allow them to use all materials to their fullest.

Another way for teachers to maximize their limited resource is to find training or professional development options that will help them to increase their own knowledge about Arts Integration. One great option is the Kennedy Center website (Kennedy Center, 2012), which has countless articles and resources for teachers, completely free of charge. Through

websites like these, teachers can truly challenge themselves to learn and grow without having to pay for fancy conference or university course.

### **Ambler & Strong's Examples**

In a series of reports from The Arts, Education, and Americans, Inc., Ambler and Strong (1981) looked at what a group of classroom teachers did to integrate the Arts in their own classrooms. They compiled that information and came up with a list of eight things that teachers can do to integrate the arts in their own classrooms. The first thing they highlighted was the teacher's use of the arts for basic skill development. The researchers found teachers from across the country that were using Arts Integration to help their students learn things like number concepts, sentence structure, reading comprehension and phonetics. (Ambler & Strong, 1981, p. 6) The use of Arts Integration in situations like this provided the teachers with simple ways to make their lessons more enjoyable and engaging for the students. The teachers did things like creating simple books for and with the students using the school copier and giving students alternative assessments to papers. These are all options that are within a teacher's typical resources.

Ambler and Strong also advocated for teachers to teach students to value the arts for their own sake. To begin this, teachers must first recognize the potential that each student has to create and critically examine art (Ambler & Strong, 1981, p. 9). Once teachers recognize that each student has the potential to critically create and examine art, they can become a greater advocate for each of the different arts areas. In order to become an advocate for the arts, teachers need to introduce their students to the arts, and show them the benefits to the incorporating those arts. Teachers can encourage students to find what areas they are



passionate about or what areas they want to explore more, helping students to develop respect for the arts. The teachers can give students tools or resources to help them pursue their interests.

A third thing that one teacher can do to integrate the arts is to use the arts to “nurture creative self-expression and individual achievement” (Ambler & Strong, 1981, p. 10). Teachers can give students choices in what activities to do and how to approach them, allowing each individual student the opportunity to express their own ideas and show the teacher and the class what they can do individually. When teachers use the arts in their classroom, students are given the opportunity to achieve things they may not have been able to without Arts Integration. The students who struggle may be able to produce a painting or a musical interpretation that demonstrates their knowledge better than they could on any written exam or paper. As the students are able to blossom through the arts, they may feel as if they can contribute more to the classroom because they are no longer an under achiever. Projects that allow some students to blossom can also help their peers develop a greater respect for them because they are seen as “individuals with talent, imagination, and intelligence” (Ambler & Strong, 1981, p. 11).

In the rest of the publication, Ambler and Strong look at five other things that a teacher can do to use Arts Integration, including things such as the use of the arts to overcome community isolation and using the arts to demonstrate professional leadership (Ambler & Strong, 1981). The remaining five things that teachers can do tend to focus more on why teachers should integrate the Arts rather than how to, which is why these remaining components are not included here at this time.

## **Conclusion**

To make Arts Integration more attainable in their classrooms, teachers should follow whichever level of Arts Integration meets the needs of their students and fits with their school and classroom. This option can help teachers begin using Arts Integration by allowing a gradual introduction of the arts. Teachers should also strive to incorporate each of the ten building blocks. As they include more and more building blocks, their Arts Integration will reach a higher level and will challenge students. This gradual incorporation of the arts provides teachers with greater opportunities to use Arts Integration in any school setting. The different levels of Arts Integration also make it more attainable for all teachers, regardless of their classroom.

## **Proposal/Recommendations**

Teachers can begin using Arts Integration by incorporating the arts in whatever ways they are comfortable with and familiar with, making it more attainable for all teachers. One good place to start is with short warm-up activities to get the students going at the beginning of the day or to help get their attention at the beginning of a lesson. A teacher may want to start with warm-up activities related to literature or poetry. One option would be to have the class create a web, brainstorming ideas for an upcoming topic. Similar ideas can be grouped together with circles or colors once there are lots of ideas. This would work well for a writing topic, as well as any literary element, genre, or person.

Another warm-up activity related to the literary arts is a "Mystery Bag" (Cornett, 2011, p. 126) where teachers have a bag full of items that can be used to introduce a book. For example, if a class is getting ready to read *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White, a teacher could place a pig, a spider and a picture of a farm in a bag. The items are pulled out of the bag to introduce

the book to the students. This could also be done after a book is read in literature circles and the students can put together the bag as a way of introducing the book to their classmates who read a different book. If items are too bulky or hard to come by, students could print off or draw pictures to represent their items.

These two warm-ups connected to literature represent simple activities teachers can do to begin using Arts Integration. They do not require excessive supplies other than what teachers may already have in the classroom or have access to through the school. If a warm-up needs to focus more on the visual arts, teachers could once again create a mystery bag, but this time include objects that connect to a piece of art work. This is a good way to introduce a piece of art work that is going to be used to discuss different art concepts or elements such as color, texture, or shape. Teachers can get information about some of these concepts from the school's art teacher or by visiting an artist's website.

Teachers can also have the students do warm-up activities that help prepare them for the day in a more general sense. Many warm-up activities related to drama also help students develop skills such as team building, fluency or focus. If teachers wanted to help students focus, they could have the students brainstorm ways to pantomime sounds without making any noise. Once they have come up with ways to portray the sounds, provide the students with the opportunity to practice the sounds and then present them to the class. Have students pay close attention to what they are doing and see if they can figure out the sound. Students can also break down the sound into multiple parts and pantomime all of the parts of the sound.

A dance and movement warm-up that also connects to focus is called Slow-Mo Concentration (Cornett, 2011, p. 288). Students pick a movement they do on a regular basis

and do it in slow motion, paying attention to each aspect of the movement. The class can name their movement and give feedback on their focus and concentration. This can also be done in pairs or small groups to help with team building as well. Warm-up activities that help students develop these types of skills not only help their learning, but also help the students to become more prepared for what they will encounter outside of the classroom. Concentration and focus are important skills for when students leave the classroom so developing them while they are in school gives them a head start for when they leave the classroom.

Once teachers feel comfortable incorporating one art area, they can move past the single activities like warm-ups and begin doing more activities with one specific art area that they are comfortable with. To incorporate music, a teacher may want to start the day by playing calming music to help the students focus in on the day ahead of them. For science, teachers could look up different songs related to the science content being taught. There are songs that go over the different bones in the body, the life cycle of a butterfly, and the names of the oceans, to name a few. By using songs like these, the teachers can help their students learn and retain the information presented in class. There are also songs related to social studies content, but for a different way to incorporate music, teachers could have students research the history of different instruments or styles. They could focus in on a location or time period that is being studied in social studies at that time. A project like this can help broaden a student's understanding of history and a given time period as well as provide them with the opportunity to be an expert in a given area. If there are enough areas, each student could be given an instrument or genre to look up to give them an even greater opportunity to present to the class.

Music also provides teachers with some wonderful math connections. The different notes used to write music can be paired up perfectly with fractions. Teachers can have the students look at what fraction of a bar is spent on a given note or they can have students identify what note represents a certain fraction of the bar. Students could also be given the opportunity to write their own song about a given content area, whether it is a math song or their own version on a science or social studies song.

If a teacher is not comfortable with music being their main focus, a more attainable alternative may be the literary arts, which draws from readily available children's literature or student produced writings and activities done in the classroom using different aspects of literature. Through the incorporation of the literary arts, teachers may wish to use a high quality piece of children's literature to introduce an activity. Websites such as the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) provide lists of quality science books that teachers may be interested in using to introduce and teach different lessons. Resources like this that are online for free are a great way to make Arts Integration more attainable for all classroom teachers.

For a social studies unit, teachers can use biographies to teach about key people in a unit. Students may also enjoy historical fiction books, but teachers should be cautious when using these books because they are not completely historically accurate, though students can still learn a lot from them. The historical fiction books are especially good at getting students interested in a topic, which may be helpful in getting uninterested students engaged in reading. Nonfiction books are also a great way to incorporate the literary arts into the classroom because they are more reliable than the historical fiction books. When selecting nonfiction

books, teachers should look for real or realistic images rather than cartoon drawings so students can get an accurate image of what they are learning about.

These nonfiction books are also a great way to integrate the literary arts into science units. Nonfiction science books serve as great attention getters for lessons or units, helping to engage students and set the stage for their learning. An additional way to incorporate the literary arts into science would be to have the students create their own nonfiction books about what they have learned. If there are not readily available books on a topic, students can create a book for the classroom that next year's students can look at or they can make it to take home and share with family and friends. This can be a great final assessment for teachers because they can see a summary of the students learning and students can display that learning in a form that allows them the freedom of expression.

Making books represent a very attainable form of arts integration for teachers. While some people may want the books to be professionally bound or look like something purchased at a books store, teachers can make great books with plain copy paper and a few staples. It also provides students with the opportunity to put together their own type of books, choosing between different formats or styles and adding whatever decoration they think fits best.

In addition to the strong literature connections, many science and social studies units fit well with the visual arts and the creation of different models. When students create a model of the solar system, for example, they are able to see more about how the planets relate to each other in size and distance. This incorporation of the visual arts creates a greater level of understanding than when the students simply read facts out of a textbook. Teachers could have students create this model by having them draw the planets on a sheet of paper. Another

option would be to have the class take a wall of the classroom and put up drawings of the planets, incorporating the math concepts of scales or representatives by making the art to scale. The students could also create mobiles of the planets to hang around the classroom. Of all these options, the first two require the simplest materials because they can be done with plain copy paper and markers or crayons. Other materials may enhance the project, but the students will still benefit from the incorporation of the arts when the teachers use the more readily available resources.

Throughout science and social studies, students have many opportunities to experience visual arts integration by creating their own images that demonstrate their learning. When students are provided with these alternatives to writing a paper, they are given the opportunity to demonstrate their learning in a new unique way. Many museums may also provide teachers with great resources and opportunities to integrate the arts into their curriculum through resources connected to a visit or virtual tours found online. On the Smithsonian website, one such exhibit is titled *Inventing a Better Mousetrap: Patent Models from the Rothschild Collection*. This exhibit contains images of different patented designs along with a brief description and a history of the exhibit. At the conclusion, there are five mystery models that give viewers the opportunity to guess what they are and what were used for. Online exhibits like this one are a great resource for teachers to use in the classroom, especially when they can be accessed completely free of charge and from reliable websites like the Smithsonian.

Online exhibits and artists' websites are also great resources for observing art. If teachers cannot take the students to a museum because of the cost or location of the museum, they can use different online resources to give their students a similar experience. With the

internet, students can still observe different artistic technique and possibly learn how to use them as well. Taking advantage of a free and abundant resource like this is a great way to make Arts Integration more attainable for classroom teachers, regardless of their prior knowledge or past experiences.

Once teachers begin to feel comfortable with this basic use of Arts Integration, they can begin to move up to the next level of Arts Integration Cornett (2011) discussed when the Arts have a stronger connection to the material that is being taught. Many of the same strategies apply at this level, but what changes is what the teacher does to connect the lessons or activities to the content being taught. From books like McDonald's *Handbook for K-8 Arts Integration: Purposeful Planning Across the Curriculum* (2010), teachers can receive guidance about developing authentic Arts Integration Lessons.

At the end of each chapter, McDonald walks readers through another step in planning lessons using self-study worksheets. The first step is looking at "What students need to know" (McDonald, 2010, p. 54), having teachers consider the different standards the lesson must be aligned with and what the goals and objectives are. Once teachers have established what the students need to know, McDonald takes them through what the students already know so that the teachers will be aware of what needs to be reviewed and where instruction should begin. McDonald also provides tools for helping teachers select resources, plan the instructional sequence, and assess how the lesson went. Each of these tools can help teachers to look at how they would like to use the arts in their classroom and how well they manage to do so. A self-study like the one McDonald presents can help teachers increase the level of Arts Integration in their classrooms.



Another tool teachers can use to increase the level of Arts Integration in their classroom is their colleagues and friends. Especially when working on a restricted budget, teachers should take advantage of the people around them who have greater expertise in one of the art areas. Even other grade-level teachers can be very instrumental in a classroom's Arts Integration when they come in and share a love of painting, music, or one of the other arts areas. Both the teacher and the students can learn from what the teachers share. People with a passion for art can be great models for students, especially when working to increase their engagement and motivation in the classroom. Guest artists can help students to see their learning in a new perspective by providing a new approach to the material. These people also have a lot to offer teachers, whether it is ideas about the incorporation of one of the arts or actually techniques or strategies related to a particular arts area. As teachers are working to grow as an Arts Integration teacher, they can seek out more intentional connections with these artists and learn about how they can more authentically connect a given art area to their curriculum.

To continue to grow in the area of Arts Integration, teachers can also use websites such as the Kennedy Center and ARTSEEDGE, which not only offer articles about what Arts Integration is and why it should be used, but they also have lesson plans and resources for teachers. Through these two websites and others like them, teachers can learn more tools and techniques for integrating the arts into their classroom across the subjects as a way of making learning more meaningful for the students.

## Discussion of Significance

What this study has done is show how Arts Integration can be attainable for all teachers, regardless of the resources they have available or their knowledge of the arts areas. This study highlighted three different levels of Arts Integration (Cornett, 2011) that teachers can implement in the classroom. With these different levels, teachers can determine what they are the most comfortable with and use as much Arts Integration as they are comfortable with. Even if they cannot use Arts Integration to the highest level, students still benefit from the hands-on learning that comes with Arts Integration.

This study also highlighted how Arts Integration is attainable for teachers because of the different self-planning tools available such as McDonald's *Handbook for K-8 Arts Integration* (McDonald, 2010). Teachers can use self-study worksheets like the ones found in McDonald's book to develop authentic Arts Integration lessons that use the arts to help students further their learning rather than just to fill up more time in the day. Even if teachers are not as familiar with an arts area or they are completely new to Arts Integration, McDonald's book (2010) walks them through how to plan an effective Arts Integration lesson. Once teachers develop an understanding of a lesson format, they can adapt it to fit their personal teaching style as well as the students' individual needs.

A third thing that this study found that makes Arts Integration attainable to classroom teachers is the internet and the plethora of sources available at no cost to teachers. Using these online resources, teachers can learn more about the arts areas they want to teach their students about as well as find additional lesson planning sources, virtual museum tours, and images to enhance instruction. With access to all of these in the classroom and at home,

teachers can be learning about the arts and Arts Integration whenever they are able to and they can learn how to best be instruction their students to have authentic Arts Integration and meaningful classroom instruction.

Students benefit from the arts in three main ways: intellectually, socially, and personally or emotionally. Intellectually, the arts help students develop skills such as problem solving and critical thinking through more open ended projects and assignments. When students are given an art project, they are provided with tasks that give them the opportunity to exercise problem solving to complete the task. Each student can complete the task in their own way, demonstrating critical thinking through how they choose to execute the task and display their knowledge.

Socially, students can benefit from Arts Integration because they can learn skills such as collaboration, community and compassion, as well as learning about different cultures. The arts provide a very strong way for learning about cultures because each culture has different art forms that mean different things. When teachers bring in guests from different cultures to teach students about the art from that culture, the students are also empowered to learn more about the people in their community and to develop greater compassion for those people. Students can also develop collaboration as they work with their classmates on projects or do some warm-up activities that require them to work together, even just for short periods of time.

Students also benefit from Arts Integration personally or emotionally through their development of confidence, concentration and competence. The arts can help students develop greater confidence in themselves and their knowledge because they are provided with

new ways to display their knowledge and a choice in how to display it. Through this choice, students who do not always succeed are provided with new opportunities to be successful in the classroom. This also aids their competence because they are able to display what they have learned in a way that truly reflects their knowledge.

Arts Integration can also be used by teachers in their classroom because there are so many different resources that can help teachers learn more about Arts Integration and the arts with them needing excessive financial resources to attend conferences. When teachers take advantage of the many free resources and the people who are right around them, they can present students with more authentic and meaningful learning. Arts Integration becomes much more attainable when teachers utilize the resources that are freely and readily available and they strive to integrate the arts at whatever level they are comfortable with.

### **Conclusion**

Arts Integration, where students learn about the five arts areas and demonstrate their learning through those areas, provides students with many different benefits throughout their learning experiences. These benefits will help students in and outside the classroom because what they are learning has such a strong connection to life outside the classroom. It is possible for a single teacher to help students gain these benefits by using Arts Integration in the classroom, even if it is not school wide because the teacher can decide what level of Arts Integration they are comfortable with. As the teacher selects a comfortable level of Arts Integration, they can ensure that whatever they decide to do will provide the students with

authentic art experiences that connect to their learning, rather than art activities with no relation to students' learning.

## **Limitations**

One limitation of this approach to Arts Integration is the lack of support that teachers may have in their classroom. If teachers are working on Arts Integration alone, they will not have the support system found in an Arts Integration school. This may limit the amount of time they can spend on the arts and the amount of they can spend on professional development. This may also limit administrators' willingness to assist with any types of programs or activities or to allow time to be spent on them. Without other teachers using Arts Integration the teachers may struggle because there are not as many people around to draw ideas from. If there are not any other teachers who are interested in Arts Integration, the teachers may not have as many resources immediately available to them.

One way for teachers to overcome this limitation is to encourage others to join them in using Arts Integration. They can pave the way for the school to begin an Arts Integration program and help guide the colleagues along. Teachers can also pair up with the schools art, music, and PE teachers to find ways that the specials can be incorporated into the classroom. Even if those teachers cannot change their instruction to match the classroom, classroom teachers can find ways to make those classes a part of their regular academic instruction.

## **Further Research**

One window for further research is the difference between the teachers who use Arts Integration on their own, without extensive professional development or support from administrators and the teachers who use Arts Integration in an Arts Integration school. It would

be interesting to see how the environment around them impacted their ease and comfort of use Arts Integration. It would also be interesting to see how that impacted students' learning, though that is more difficult to measure because there are other factors that influence that besides just the support system the teacher has.

This study would also be enhanced by research that focused in teachers' resources and professional development and how that impacted student learning. Unlike the first suggestion, this could allow researchers to look at more specific reasons for learner differences in achievement and understanding because they could consider students from similar classes at the same school in hopes of finding two more balanced classrooms. Researchers could then get a better idea of how Arts Integration instruction is influenced by the teachers' professional development.

## **Summary**

Throughout this study, different journal articles and books were examined to seek out an attainable method of Arts Integration that teachers can use regardless of their background knowledge and school support system. What was found is that there are three different levels of Arts Integration that teachers can use in their classroom, selecting what they are the most comfortable with to benefit the students as much as possible. This can make Arts Integration more attainable for teachers who do not have an extensive support system at the school with plenty of professional development. However, this may pose some limitations for teachers because if they do not have that support from the administration, it may be difficult for them to implement even the simplest of Arts Integration lessons due to administrative restrictions. Further research would be beneficial in determining the extent of this limitation.

This study also showed that there are a wide variety of resources available to teachers that can help them make Arts Integration more attainable in their classrooms. They can take advantage of free online resources, different teachers at the school, and community members, drawing on all of them for their expertise and knowledge and inviting them into the classroom to help with arts instruction and introducing the students to arts concepts.

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