

Preparing Educators for Arts Integration

Placing Creativity at the Center of Learning

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Foreword by Jane R. Best



Contents

Foreword	Jane R. Best	v
Acknowledgments		vii
Introduction		1
	<i>Gene Diaz and Martha Barry McKenna</i>	
PART I: THEORY AND PRACTICE IN ARTS INTEGRATION		17
1.	Using the Creative Process as Pedagogy	19
	<i>Gene Diaz and Martha Barry McKenna</i>	
2.	Arts Integration and Standards Alignment	29
	<i>Amy Charleroy and Pamela Paulson</i>	
3.	Using Curriculum Design Frameworks for Arts Integration	41
	<i>Don Glass and Lisa Donovan</i>	
PART II: STATEWIDE MODELS OF ARTS INTEGRATION		53
4.	Whole-School Models of Arts Integration: Oklahoma A+ Schools	55
	<i>Jean Hendrickson</i>	
5.	The Evolution of Arts Integration in Maryland: Working in Consortium	65
	<i>Mary Ann Mears, Kathy O'Dell, Susan J. Rotkowitz, and Lori Snyder</i>	
PART III: EDUCATION OF LEADERS IN ARTS INTEGRATION		77
6.	Preservice Teachers Advocating for the Arts	79
	<i>Eric Engdahl and Peg Winkelman</i>	

7. Principals Art Leadership Program	91
<i>Una McAlinden</i>	
8. Learning from an Arts-Savvy Charter School Principal	103
<i>Elizabeth F. Hallmark</i>	
PART IV: ARTS SPECIALISTS IN ARTS INTEGRATION	113
9. Championing the Way to Effective Arts Integration	115
<i>Joyce Huser and R. Scot Hockman</i>	
10. Professional Learning in and Through the Arts	125
<i>Sibyl Barnum</i>	
PART V: ARTS INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE	137
11. SLANT: Professional Development in Science and Arts Integration	139
<i>Julia Marshall</i>	
12. Dance Literacy: A Pathway to Arts Integration	149
<i>Karen Bradley and Susan McGreevy-Nichols</i>	
13. The Resonant Heartbeat: Folk Dance, Physical Literacy, and Arts Integration	159
<i>Colleen Hearn Dean and Terry Sweeting</i>	
14. Kansas: Pioneering Arts Integration	169
<i>Elaine Bernstorf</i>	
Conclusions and Recommendations: Different Strokes for Different Folks	181
<i>Gene Diaz and Martha Barry McKenna</i>	
About the Contributors	198
Index	203

Introduction

Gene Diaz and Martha Barry McKenna

Arts Education Partnership organizations affirm the central role of imagination, creativity, and the arts in culture and society; the power of the arts to enliven and transform education and schools; and collective action through partnerships as the means to place the arts at the center of learning. (Arts Education Partnership, 2002, p. 1)

“Art Makes You Smart,” states the headline of the *New York Times* review section (Kisida, Greene, & Bowen, 2013). And the headline on the blog of the Royal Conservatory of Canada reads, “Learning Through the Arts Students Achieve Better Academic Results” (Embleton, 2014). If art makes you smart and learning through the arts leads to better academic achievement, then why don’t we have the arts in every school, for every student, every day? The research behind the headlines identifies the gap between what’s demonstrated to be effective for learning and what students experience in their schools every day. The authors of this book see the arts as fundamental to every child’s learning because they have engaged in research in schools and observed the benefits for children when teachers are able to integrate the arts into and across the curriculum. The arts allow children to express and communicate their ideas, feelings, and thoughts through multiple modalities. Thus the arts allow equity of access to learning for all children.

WHY ARTS EDUCATION?

According to *Art for Art’s Sake? The Impact of Arts Education*, a research-based publication of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the main benefit of education in the arts is the acquisition of artistic habits of mind. These habits of mind include the development of craft and technique in arts fields, as well as “skills such as close observation, envisioning, exploration, persistence, expression, collaboration, and reflection—the skills in thinking and creativity and the social

Using the Creative Process as Pedagogy

Gene Diaz and Martha Barry McKenna

We are all born creative. This belief resides at the core of this chapter and at the core of our work in higher education, primarily in graduate teacher education. In this chapter we explore ideas about what it means to be creative and what we mean by the creative process as pedagogy. We illustrate these ideas with stories of teaching in an arts-integrated graduate education program for classroom teachers. In addition to exploring how these ideas shape our teaching in formal and informal settings, primarily as providers of inservice teacher education but also as educators of learners across the lifespan in various fields, we will also reflect on the different ways that we have expanded these ideas about creative process as pedagogy from a basic teaching concept into projects that involve multiple contexts, cultures, and communities. We use the phrase “creative process as pedagogy” to define our integration of artistic processes into both what and how we teach. Engaging in creative process as pedagogy has led us to understand teaching, learning, and leading in new ways, ways that are dynamic and continuing to evolve. Robinson writes that “creativity is the process of having original ideas that have value . . . creativity is a process more often than it is an event” (2011, pp. 151–152).

Since many students in K–12 schools across the United States do not have access to high-quality learning in and through the arts, they have few opportunities to enhance their creativity or exercise their imagination (President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, 2011). Recognizing this lack of access, faculty at Lesley University in Cambridge, MA, designed in 1984 the first master’s degree program in arts integration education that offer professional development for educators around the country, to engage them, and their students, with sustained experiences in the creative processes of the arts. In these programs educators learn to integrate the arts across the curriculum, or within their work in the community, and to expand opportunities for their students to engage in the arts. In a nation in which arts education is perceived to hold little value by many school districts (when available,

conducive to creativity, expression and making art” (National Art Education Association, 2009, p. 1). Similarly, the creative process as pedagogy opens up space for educators to explore. As faculty we come to each course in this program as an artist comes to the medium of creative expression. Our students, educators all, bring their knowledge of the world of learning, the students they teach, and the relationships they foster, and with us they engage in exploring a learning landscape and discover the territory of the creative.

WHY USE THE CREATIVE PROCESS AS PEDAGOGY IN ARTS INTEGRATION?

Creative thinking finds grounding in the many possibilities that surround ideas and concepts. The artistic process pushes artists to explore perspectives and to find or create new ones, and to actively evaluate their worth as they create. As part of our teaching in the arts we lead students into this exploration, thereby encouraging critique and critical thinking as integral to the process (Diaz & McKenna, 2004). Teachers who integrate the arts in their teaching have many opportunities to model creativity and imagination (Burnaford, with Brown, Doherty, & McLaughlin, 2007; Donahue & Stuart, 2010). As they explore an art form and engage their students in constructing ideas in and through the arts, they engage with the novel and the new, creating authentic learning experiences as they construct new knowledge. Educators who integrate the arts learn to appreciate multiple perspectives and model this appreciation for their students (Deasy & Stevenson, 2005; Eisner, 2002).

Educators who integrate the arts using creative process as pedagogy become more comfortable with ambiguity and are able to confront and accept what Greene (1978) notes as that which is not yet, that which is still in the process of becoming. Although schools traditionally value facts and data, information and typologies, the arts push teachers into the realm of the unknown. As they themselves uncover new directions for learning and design new methods for teaching, they become explorers as well. What better teacher than one who is actively exploring ideas and seeking new knowledge? Creating something original always requires taking a risk and moving into the unknown, just as attempting to construct authentic learning experiences in the arts demands creative thinking and a creative process.

Teachers using creative process as pedagogy offer their students options to communicate and express their knowledge and learning in multiple ways (i.e., musical, kinesthetic, poetic, dramatic, visual, and storytelling). This respect for students’ varying capacities opens up learning to those who have often been left out because of one-dimensional or single-intelligence-based teaching practices. Schools in the United States have long emphasized learning in mathematical and analytical skills, and they have prioritized language through text and thinking in linear pathways. Students who express their

subcategories: Reading (which is further divided into reading informational texts and reading literature), Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language. Each of these categories has a set of between six and ten College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards—overarching standards that apply across all grade levels. Each Anchor Standard connects to corresponding grade-level standards that offer more specific guidance on what it means to meet that standard in age- and grade-appropriate ways.

The first phase of research involved an examination of all four groups of Common Core ELA Anchor Standards *and* all of their corresponding grade-level standards, noting all specific references to the arts—recommendations that students read works of drama, for example, or interpret and analyze images. The information collected here highlights not only where the arts are or are not present in the Common Core State Standards, but it also identifies patterns and trends in these connections—noting, for example, which types of arts learning appear to be most heavily emphasized, and which arts disciplines and processes are emphasized at particular grade levels.

Standards for Reading

There are 220 grade-level Common Core State Standards for Reading, including standards both for reading literature and informational texts. A total of 50 of these standards contain at least one direct reference to arts-based learning, including the following:

- Reading a work of drama
- Analyzing and interpreting images and illustrations
- Comparing the same work in different media
- Using songs in the classroom

As the Reading standards naturally center on the practices of analyzing and interpreting texts, every anchor standard and corresponding grade-level standard in this category contains references to the term *text*. When considering arts-based connections to this body of standards, educators may interpret this term to include non-print texts, such as works of dance, visual or media arts, music, or theater. **If this definition of *text* is accepted, then all of the standards in this category, at every grade level, have direct references to arts-based content or investigation.**

This approach has informed teacher professional development opportunities nationwide. Arts education curriculum consultants have worked with arts educators, arts administrators, and faculty from institutions of higher education to similarly explore the arts as text. These consultants help facilitate the focus on evidence-based responses to works of art, related to the story, theme, symbols, ideas, feelings, etc., that the artwork may convey, as well as to how these specific artistic elements and processes are used to communicate through the respective arts discipline. These responses occur

Figure 2.1. National Core Arts Standards: Anchor Standards

Creating <i>Conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work</i>	Performing/Presenting/Producing <i>Realizing artistic ideas and work through interpretation and presentation; interpreting and sharing artistic work; realizing and presenting artistic ideas and work</i>	Responding <i>Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning</i>	Connecting <i>Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context</i>
1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work	4. Analyze, interpret, and select artistic work for presentation	7. Perceive and analyze artistic work	10. Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art
2. Organize and develop artistic ideas and work	5. Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation	8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work	11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding
3. Refine and complete artistic ideas and work	6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work	9. Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work	

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Performing/Presenting/Producing

Positive alignment was found between the NCAS Anchor Standards for Performing/Presenting/Producing and all segments of the Common Core Anchor Standards for English Language Arts. The connections varied in the areas of focus and types of skills they described. Following are some of these connections:

- The first Performing/Presenting/Producing Anchor Standard—*Analyze, interpret, and select artistic work for presentation*—aligns with all ten of the Common Core Anchor Standards for Reading.

school who may not otherwise be interested,” they help young people “find their niche,” and they enable students to make cross-curricular connections, as “no subject is truly on its own, skills must be integrated.” They stated that the arts can be used to reinforce subject-area knowledge and support the kids “who may not connect with ‘core’ subjects.” “We learn more about our students, their talents, and how they learn.” They see that through the arts, students “discover ‘hidden’ talents” and are provided with opportunities for success and recognition. They believe the arts can foster positive socialization and build a supportive community environment as performances and showings are powerful experiences for students to be seen (by themselves and others) in “a different light.”

The administrative candidates were also convinced that arts integration increases and enhances learning and is “something to look forward to!” Their responses about the benefits of arts integration included the development of cognitive skills, the support of literacy development, the stimulation of different areas of the brain, and the activation and creation of schema. They discussed the concept of multiple intelligences and elaborated on how the arts provide ways to differentiate and diversify instruction by allowing students to learn information through different modalities.

The administrative candidates noted that they appreciated how teaching in and through the arts promotes creativity and demonstrates its value. As one candidate stated, “[Arts integration] shows that education is also about creativity!” Others referred to arts education as providing a more holistic approach to learning, and some observed that arts integration allows students to develop a more complete formation and construction of knowledge. A few offered examples, such as the exploration of culture and diversity that can be fostered through arts education, as well as the visual representation of ideas through art.

Burdens

While administrative candidates appreciated the benefits of the arts in learning, they acknowledged the burden of implementation in their schools. They described how the arts are not viewed as part of the “core” curriculum and bemoaned the lack of community understanding about the arts connection across subject areas. “Many times it [arts integration] seems frivolous and not overtly necessary to be a productive member of society.” They assumed that many school boards and district leaders were not aware of the need for, and the importance of, the arts. They further stated that many teachers and leaders are neither knowledgeable about nor comfortable with the teaching of the arts. In fact, they felt that many educators were completely unaware of the arts standards.

LESSONS LEARNED

The session . . . engaged me, saddened me and motivated me. It further committed me to my beliefs that the arts are a critical component of equitable education.

A sense of advocacy was clearly demonstrated by these administrative candidates as they realized their potential roles in promoting, maintaining, and sustaining arts education. They felt compelled to find ways to incorporate the arts at the school level. As one of them declared, “Even I (or almost every student) can be successful in the arts.”

In writing about their personal experiences following the art activities, they commented on the high level of teaching skills required in the arts, such as the importance of providing clear expectations and outcomes while providing “room for individualism.” They stressed the role of the teacher to encourage, not “crush,” students’ artistic attempts and how the right amount of coaching allows the student to “flourish.” They discussed how the group connections were deepened because they had all taken risks to express themselves. In the sessions with preservice teacher candidates, they had all experienced the growth and learning that are inherent in the arts.

Questions

The questions that some administrators posed reflected the lack of knowledge regarding the arts in many schools and districts. For instance, “I know multiple subject candidates have to take a physical education methods class, do they also take art, music, etc.?” Several were unaware that there are frameworks and standards in the visual and performing arts. Others did not know that high school arts classes are required for entrance to the University of California and the California State University systems.

Every department has their arguments as to why they are the most important. How can we bring back arts into the curriculum as leaders? How do we have time, support, influence?

This statement is indicative of the questions raised as administrative candidates wrestled with issues of advocacy and implementation of arts integration. The statement reflects the burdens they feel; however, it is interesting to note that this question began with “how can we,” not “should we.” The administrators talked about presenting data on the power of arts integration and posed questions on how decisions are made around policies, budgets, courses, and programs.