

Introduction to Arts Integration

Arts Integration Basics

BYU ARTS Partnership Framework

The BYU ARTS Partnership believes that arts integration in schools is essential to the human experience. The degree to which teachers implement the arts will vary depending on teacher background, student needs, and curricular needs. There are multiple entry points along a continuum towards arts integration. We support and educate teachers as they provide arts experiences (infusion, enhancement, enrichment, etc.) in their instruction and apply arts integration towards exceptional learning outcomes. We encourage, advocate, and facilitate improved practice in arts-integrated instruction leading to student growth.

What is Arts Integration?

BYU ARTS Partnership Definition

Arts integration is an approach to teaching in which students are engaged in creative processes by exploring, reflecting, interpreting, connecting, applying, and demonstrating knowledge of specific objectives in multiple content areas. Integration occurs when learned and applied skills in multiple content areas synergistically and authentically connect to each other. Authentic integration reflects students' life experiences and prepares them to contribute positively to society.

MORE DEFINITIONS OF ARTS INTEGRATION

In an effort to establish the essential characteristics of effective arts integration, it is helpful to examine how various professional entities define integration. In reviewing the various definitions, look for the elements of arts integration: maintains the integrity of the subject, connects to established standards, follows a clear instructional purpose that directs focus and priority, and is meaningful, authentic, and seamless.

ARTS EVERY DAY

Arts integration is instruction that integrates content and skills from the arts— dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts —with other core subjects. Arts integration occurs when there is a seamless blending of content and skills between an art form and a co-curricular subject.

KENNEDY CENTER

Arts integration is an approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form. Students engage in a creative process that connects an art form with another subject area and meets evolving objectives in both. [Read more here.](#)

MARSHALL

Integration resists simply depicting subject matter outside art, addressing social issues through art, or placing art in its sociocultural context. Integration is a pedagogy that goes deeper and broader than these applications: it involves making conceptual connections that underlie art and other disciplines. Connecting art to other areas of inquiry in a substantive, integrative way not only reveals the foundations of each discipline but also makes for sound pedagogy because this process is congruent with the way the mind works: how we think and learn; promotes learning, especially learning for understanding and transfer; and catalyzes creativity.

Marshall, J. (2005). Connecting Art, Learning, and Creativity: A Case for Curriculum Integration. Art Education, 46(3), Academic Research Library.

RUSSELL-BOWIE

In a non-integrated environment, children move from one subject to another, making no links or connections among them and only learning the skills, knowledge, and understandings of each subject within the closed doors of that particular subject. A nonexample of integration includes programs that lose all integrity within the individual subjects. These programs end up being superficial activities loosely based on a theme, but with little depth or meaningful outcomes in any subject. Successful integration creates connected and meaningful learning experiences. Children are achieving discrete indicators and outcomes in each of the subjects and/or art forms but are also engaging in authentic learning within a meaningful, holistic context and being given the opportunity to develop generic skills as well. This type of integration provides students with multi-faceted, in-depth learning experiences that challenge them both emotionally and intellectually. *Russell-Bowie, D. (2009). Syntegration or disintegration? Models of integrating the arts across the primary curriculum.*

International Journal of Education & the Arts, 10(28). Retrieved [date] from <http://www.ijea.org/v10n28/>.

CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Arts integration is instruction that blends content and skills from one arts discipline—music, visual arts, dance, and theater—with another arts discipline or academic subject. The most successful arts integration is more than academics with arts activities added on. Successful arts integration stands on a foundation of carefully planned learning goals.

[Read more here.](#)

EDUTOPIA

Integration is not simply combining two or more contents together. It is an approach to teaching which includes intentional identification of naturally aligned standards, taught authentically alongside meaningful assessments which take both content areas to a whole new level. [Read more here.](#)

A+ SCHOOLS PROGRAM

Arts integration is bringing together arts and non-arts objectives to create hands-on, experiential, connected, and meaningful learning experiences. [Read more here.](#)

CORNETT

Integration involves combining diverse elements into harmonious wholes with a synergistic result. Synergisms are valued because while individual elements maintain their integrity, the "sum is more than all the parts."

Cornett, C. (2014). Creating Meaning through Literature and the Arts: Arts Integration for Classroom Teachers (5th Edition). Pearson.

RABKIN & REDMOND

An instructional strategy that brings the arts into the core of the school day and connects the arts across the curriculum.

Rabkin, N. & Redmond, R. (2006). *Helping Struggling Students. Educational Leadership*, 63(5), pp. 60-64

CATTERALL

[Arts integration is] learning that takes place when arts are integrated into other subject areas to enhance instruction. Students are afforded the opportunity to learn subject matter with arts as an entry point. Teachers may use music, visual arts, or drama to introduce or strengthen an academic subject.

Catterall, J. (1998). *Does Experience in the Arts Boost Academic Achievement? A Response to Eisner. Art Education*, 51(4).



WHAT WE INTEGRATE

1. Content (Dance, Drama, Music, Visual Arts, Media Arts, Literary Arts, Social Studies, Science, Math, Language Arts, Health/P.E.)
2. 21st Century Thinking Skills (Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaborating, Communicating, Character, and Citizenship)
3. Developmental Skills and Standards (Physical, Social, Emotional, Language, Cognitive)

Depending on the priorities and desired learning outcomes of the lesson or unit, a teacher may arrive at an integrated lesson from multiple routes. In some cases, teachers begin by looking for shared topics, skills, and big ideas within their curricular areas. Other times, teachers intuitively create an integrated learning opportunity out of a desire to teach the big idea in context or through application.

- Big ideas: What we want our students to know. Big ideas are overarching, cross-curricular themes that can be lessons, units, or year-long themes. Big ideas help educators avoid teaching "like a parade of facts" (Alleman, Knighton, & Brophy, p. 25).
- Skills: What we want our students to do. Skills are the verbs.

ELEMENTS OF ARTS INTEGRATION

Regardless of how educators approach integration, the following are essential elements to effective integration:

1. Integrity of the Subject

In examples of effective integration, the integrity of each subject area or skill is maintained. Content and skills are not minimized, diminished, or "watered down" in order to create an artificial connection or fit. Rather, each big idea maintains its integrity, and regardless of whether it is taught separately or in an integrated way, the content maintains its essential characteristics, elements, and descriptors. A good way to test the integrity of an integrated plan is to ask, "Could a content specialist observe this lesson and still identify it by its content (e.g., science) or is the content so altered that it is unrecognizable?"

2. Connects to Established Standards

Regardless of whether teachers start with standards or return to them after creating an integrated learning opportunity, it is important that the lesson content connect back to established standards. In an integrated lesson or unit, content and skills taught directly relate back to the established curriculum standards, objectives, and indicators for the applicable grade level and teaching area.

3. Instructional Purpose Directs Focus and Priority

Many teachers believe that an integrated approach requires each big idea or skill within a lesson or unit to receive equal time and priority. However, multiple approaches and labels to integration are acceptable and effective. The important thing to remember about effective integration is that content areas or skills do not require an equal number of standards or equal time: most lessons promote a central content area that takes the lead or pinpoints the lesson's focus. The lesson purpose, the disposition and training of the teacher, and the needs of the student all contribute to the lesson priority.

4. Meaningful, Authentic, and Seamless

When effective teachers integrate multiple big ideas and skills, they do so in authentic and seamless ways. The integrated learning experience needs to connect multiple learning priorities in a natural way as the lesson or unit unfolds. Developmental authenticity connects big ideas and skills with appropriate developmental expectations for the students' age group. Experiential authenticity connects multiple ideas and skills in a meaningful context. Content authenticity suggests that authentic cultural, historical, or societal connections are being made.



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