

Some Thoughts on the Arts and Arts Integration

Mike Smith- The University of Northern Colorado

“It is quite possible that the elegant structures Bobby learns in geometry may give him ideas for his latest sculpture in art class. Similarly, the consideration of multiple points of view in interpreting a work of art may introduce new ways for Bobby to think about an algebraic equation. But if he is not studying both math and art with equal attention, his understanding across disciplines will be limited and lopsided. And while we have considered what it is math teaches and how, we have not spent enough time asking what it is the arts teach and how. We have been too busy justifying them...

The arts must be featured in our schools so that we can have more artists among us producing works for museums, theaters, concerts halls, and the media writ large. But they must also be featured so that we can have more artists among us guiding national policy, running businesses, breaking boundaries in science, medicine, education, and technology. As parents, students, teachers, administrators, community leaders, and policymakers, we need to advocate for the realization of such human potential.”

— Jessica Hoffmann Davis, *Why Our Schools Need the Arts* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2008), p.2-3.

“Integrated arts education is not arts education as we generally think of it. It is designed to promote transfer of learning between the arts and other subjects, between the arts and the capacities students need to become successful adults. It is designed to use the emotional, social, and sensory dimensions of the arts to engage students, and leverage development and learning across the curriculum. It is designed to amplify learning in the arts by escaping the confines of formal aesthetics and technical instruction. It connects the content of art to students’ personal experiences and their need to make meaning from the world. Arts integration does not conform to any of the stereotypes of arts education. It requires serious engagement and learning in the art form and broadens the ‘arts for art’s sake’ focus of conservatory education. It makes creative production a core practice and value, and rejects the standards-free, non-cognitive approach of creative expression or recreation. We might call it the arts for learning’s sake.”

— Nick Rabkin and Robin Redmond, *Putting the Arts in the Picture: Reframing Education in the 21st Century* (Chicago: Columbia College Press, 2004), p. 9.

“Successive waves of educational reform in the United States during the past century have met with mixed success, in part because they have addressed symptoms and rather than underlying causes of systemic societal and educational problems and because the reforms have not been critically thought through or pursued over the long haul. Something more than tinkering on the margins of education seems to be called for, but what? ... I follow Langer, Howard, Nelson Goodman, and others who have employed a similar philosophical strategy with regard to the arts and education. My interest is primarily in social and concrete enterprise.”

— Estelle Jorgensen *Transforming Music Education* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), p. 48.

“Teachers and students tend to see learning in integrated ‘wholes.’ Unfortunately, however, textbooks devoted to single subjects and traditional assumptions about the divisions of learning into smaller parts called subjects make it difficult for teaching and learning to take place in such a way that large-scale problems are solved. Too often we assume that all children need precisely the same skills and knowledge, and that we know the best way to teach them. This is simply not true...

We believe that interdisciplinary learning motivates students and teachers to want to learn. The best themes are the themes that you and your students think are important.”

— Thomas R. Post, Arthur K. Ellis, Alan H. Humphreys, and L. JoAnne Buggy, *Interdisciplinary Approaches to Curriculum: Themes for Teaching* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1997), p.2.

“Arts integration begins with the strengths of the art forms. In arts integration, teachers and students practice that reflection deeply. The artist or arts teacher’s presence and knowledge regarding each art form introduces teachers to other ways of knowing and reflecting on knowledge. Teachers are not designing lessons that have an arts option. Rather, the model is more of a multiple Venn diagram, with depth and breadth not just in the content field knowledge the teacher is bringing, but also in the art form that the artist or arts teacher is bringing.”

— Gail Burnaford, Arnold Aprill, and Cynthia Weiss, editors, *Renaissance in the Classroom: Arts Integration and Meaningful Learning* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001), p. 9.