

Article 2: Historical Context for Arts Integration

As readers of this newsletter know, ArtsCore works to strengthen and empower educators who teach in and through the arts. To accomplish this, we have adopted a philosophy of arts integration. Despite the newness of ArtsCore, it is important to understand that arts integration is not a cutting edge, revolutionary, or particularly innovative approach to teaching! It has been around for centuries. In this second installment of a series of articles about why we have centered on arts integration, we'll look at the historical context for arts integration.

Some scholars trace the history of arts integration back to the later part of the 20th century citing Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences and that of proponents including James Catterall, Liora Bresler, Elliot Eisner, and others. Many scholars journey back further to progressive education as defined and practiced by John Dewey, "The Integrated School Art Program," by Leon Winslow (1939), the work of William Heard Kilpatrick, and others in the early 20th century. While these (and countless others) were all important contributors, I contend that it is appropriate to look even further back.

Many of you who know me know that Friedrich Froebel, creator of the kindergarten, is one of my education heroes. Froebel recognized children as expressive and creative beings. He taught that children are always actively engaged in mediating between themselves and their world in *unique, active, and joyful ways* (Froebel 1887). Froebel implored parents and educators to embrace the natural inclinations of children as essential learning tools. Adults, he believed, should be led by children to those things that arouse curiosity and wonder rather than the opposite (Froebel, 1887; Von Marenholtz-Bulow, 1877). A century later Dewey and Kilpatrick would sound quite Froebelian when they both argued that units of study should be based on the inherent interests of children.

"The word and the drawing, therefore, belong together inseparably, as light and shadow, light and day, soul and body do" (Froebel, 1887, p. 79).

Another scholar from roughly the same time and place as Froebel, Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe, advocated for and modeled a holistic and integrated method for scientific study. Goethe is best known for his literary works however, he also developed and advocated for a form of nature study based on the unity of all life. Goethe's approach calls for intimate encounters with a phenomenon, as a living, organic whole and within its own natural environment. In this process, the roles of observer and observed are dissolved and both become participants. The investigator is called on to attend to what the living organism has to offer. Through direct experience, the interconnectedness of self and world are understood (Wahl, 2005). What does this way of approaching nature look like in practice? The Goethean method asks us to slowly come to know a natural phenomenon from all sides, to take in the whole and gently move inward, and then to tell its story. Yes, *story-telling*, the ongoing theme of ArtsCore Colony.

Naturally, Goethe rejected methods that would limit thinking to reason alone. Henri Bortoft explains, "This is the direction in which Goethe takes us: towards a science of the lived experience of phenomena, instead of mathematical abstractions, and microscopic explanations" (2009). His method honors multiple ways of thinking about the natural world including empathy, intuition and imagination (Wahl, 2005). He did not deny emotional awareness or involvement in the study of nature, he embraced it. He understood that nature is multi-dimensional and requires multi-dimensional modes of study and understanding.

As this series continues, the themes of holistic engagement and the interests of students will resurface repeatedly as important justifications for arts integration. If you have any additions you would like to share or if you need more detailed reference information for your own study, please contact me (wendy@thepaine.org).