

## Article 3: Why Arts Integration

### Arts Integration in the Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century

In the last newsletter, this series took an extremely short look at the incredibly long history of arts integration in the classroom. This installment will focus on developments of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century which was a particularly active time for research related to arts integration.

Several changes in the way educators thought about the arts occurred during this time. In 1983, Howard Gardner published his theory of multiple intelligences which honored the unique ways humans process information from their world. Cognitive sciences and neuroscience were beginning to explain the interconnectedness of the intellectual, emotional, social, and physical functioning of the learner; the “whole child.” It became recognized that, “Physical sensation and emotion are essential components of the mind, as integral to thought and learning as logic is” (Gullat, 2008, p. 14). Integrating the whole child is something the arts had inherently been doing and educational and cognitive researchers were now looking more closely.

The arts began to be seen as a way to make learning meaningful for students. For example, Catterall (1998) noted that by creating representations (as is often done in the arts) students were constructing meaning for themselves. Thus the arts were being seen as more than expressive tools; they were recognized as tools for discovery and understanding.

At this same time, arts educators debated the role of the arts in schools. While some supported integrating the arts with other disciplines for the reasons cited above, others believed the arts should be included in the curriculum on their own merit alone, not to enhance non-arts learning. For instance, Hatfield (1998) argued that through their study and application, the arts teach skills that are essential to all learners, skills that are not acquired in other subject areas. These, he and others posited, should be the focus of arts education.

While the arts certainly can teach students to explore the unknown, to engage in creative problem solving, to appreciate multiple perspectives, and to recognize and value aesthetics qualities, we also know that children enter *all* of our classrooms with the innate compulsion to sing, dance, move, draw, build, and/or play act (Gullat, 2008). To ignore these human tendencies in the classroom is to make learning distant and fractured. The arts are big enough for both ... unique arts learning and arts integration.

For more information on the state of arts integration in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, consider starting with these resources (just a few among many):

Berghoff, B. (1998). Inquiry about learning and learners: Multiple sign systems and reading. *The Reading Teacher*, 51 (6) 520-523.

Bresler, L. (1995). The subservient, co-equal, affective, and social integration styles and their implications for the arts. *Art Education and Policy Review*, 96 (5) 31-37.

Catterall, J. (1998). Does experience in the arts boost academic achievement? A response to Eisner. *Art Education*, 51 (4) 6-11.

Eisner E. (1998). Does experience in the arts boost academic achievement? *Art Education* 51 (1) 7-15.

Gullatt, D. (2008). Enhancing student learning through arts integration: Implications of the profession. *The High School Journal*, April/May 2008, 12-25.

Hatfield, T. (1998). The future of art education: Student learning in the visual arts. *NASSP Bulletin*, 82 (597) 9-17

Oddleifson, E. (1994). What do we want our schools to do? *Phi Delta Kappan* 75 (6) 452-453.

Parsons, M. (1998). Integrated curriculum and our paradigm of cognition in the arts. *Studies in Art Education*, 39 (2) 103-116.