

Arts Integration: The Impact on Teachers

One of the characteristics of ArtsCore that sets it apart from most other educational initiatives is that our focus is on *teachers* rather than students. It is such a unique feature that it often takes both our participants and presenters a chunk of time to truly understand what that means. Our mission is to help pre-service and early career *teachers build competence and resiliency*. We have chosen to do this through the thoughtful use of arts integration. Therefore, in this series dedicated to why we focus on arts integration, it is essential to look at how *teachers benefit* from AI. After all, ArtsCore is predicated on the assumption that they do indeed benefit.

So, where is the research that proves this? It is scattered quite sparingly in the literature. While the issue of teacher resilience has risen to the fore in recent years, the relationship between resilience and AI has not been adequately researched or reported. Where it has been reported, it is often as an aside to issues of student achievement.

Burton et al (2000) conducted a robust study in 28 schools to find out if there is an interactive relationship between arts learning and learning in other subjects. The report is worth reading for anyone interested in arts integration because the research team ultimately moved beyond the question of transfer to broader issues related to “different constellations of cognitive competencies” (252), or in other words, ways of thinking.

As for teachers, the report also found this:

Classroom teachers who integrate the arts and collaborate with other arts providers are more likely to be innovative, enjoy their jobs, and have good relationships with their students. This finding is consistent with results from our field study, with many teachers attributing changes in teacher practice and positive relationships with children to arts programming (245).

In their study of 10 schools, Stevenson and Deasy (2005), also reported increased teacher satisfaction and a reduction in teacher turnover in schools where classroom and arts teachers collaborated in implementing arts integrated lessons.

The high turnover of teachers and the current teacher shortage has necessitated a closer look at teacher resiliency. The web is full of ‘listicles’ (brief, list-based articles that promise to change your life) that suggest things that teachers can do to increase their own resiliency. Some of the items that come up repeatedly include:

1. Own your teaching
2. Network with others and build a sense of community
3. Find a professional passion and become an expert
4. Learn more about your students

Clearly these are all things that AI fosters and encourages. We own our teaching when we research and innovate better ways. We contribute to a sense of community when we collaborate and celebrate collective accomplishments within our schools and networks. Arts integration is a passion for many of us and an approach to teaching in which there is room for many more experts. And we learn more about our students when we give them multiple ways to express themselves to us. Those of us who have adopted arts integration as our approach to teaching know these things viscerally. We experience them

every day. Perhaps then, it will be ArtsCore participants/alumni who will help fill the gap of *research* on the impact that arts integrated teaching has on teachers themselves. ArtsCore will help in any way we can.

References:

Burton, J., Horowitz, R., & Abeles, H. (2000). Learning in and Through the Arts: The Question of Transfer. *Studies in Art Education*, 41(3), 228-257. doi:10.2307/1320379.

Stevenson, L., & Deasy, R. J. (2005). *Third space: When learning matters*. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership.