

Master's Reflection and Abstract

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to determine the effect of having a district-appointed ArtsCore Arts Integration Coordinator (AIC) on educators' and the District partners' practice efficacy; competence, confidence, and resilience. ArtsCore seeks to support pre-service and early-career teachers in and through the arts by developing and implementing programming designed to enhance their competence, confidence, and resiliency (ArtsCore, 2016). In response to a growing and constant need to maintain professional, qualified educators in the Oshkosh Area School District (OASD), a new position was created in the fall of 2018 to offer support and professional development opportunities in Arts Integration (AI) for District educators. The focus of this position, as well as ArtsCore, is on *teachers*. However, the data most commonly used to evaluate teachers is student achievement centered. To make the most impact on teachers and to enhance the ArtsCore program, I believed that the position's efficacy needed to be evaluated and researched. Literature review, reflection, observations, participation, and interviews led me to a greater understanding of the effects this position can have on teachers and how I could support them as the AIC. The data suggested that the main role of the AIC this school year was to coordinate communication, education, support, and collaboration for the teachers in AI.

INTRODUCTION

Background

In response to a growing and constant need to maintain professional, qualified educators in the Oshkosh Area School District (OASD), a new position was created in the fall of 2018 to offer support and professional development opportunities in Arts Integration (AI) for District educators (Appendix A). This began as awareness within the OASD schools, including the education faculty at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh (UWO). After being invited to apply for an Arts Integration (AI) grant for teachers, the program ArtsCore was created and housed within the city of Oshkosh. This AI professional development for teachers, now in its fourth year, has trained over 100 teachers. Beginning the 2018-2019 school year, ArtsCore was looking for sustainability options and stronger ties to area school districts. This led to a partnership with the OASD and the creation of the ArtsCore District Coordinator (AIC) position.

The intended roles for the Arts Integration Coordinator for OASD were to develop and coordinate programs, staff training, and support for early-career OASD teachers in Arts Integration. In addition, the AIC would expand the understanding and practice of AI among school teachers and administrators in OASD. The goal for the AIC was tied to a grant that funded the ArtsCore program in Oshkosh, WI. In addition to supporting early-career educators, the grant also focuses on high school and pre-service educators. The AIC position was meant to continue to develop activities within OASD, serving pre-service teachers at UWO, and creating opportunities for high school students who would consider teaching careers in hopes to grow student and staff engagement, educate the students more holistically, improve the educational practices for the District, and increase the number of young people prepared to teach in the region.

In a district with 20 schools, reaching nearly 10,000 students a year, with the inclusion of approximately 650 undergraduate education students at UWO, the impact and effectiveness of the AIC needs to be evaluated (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). As this is my personal new position, I want to

make sure that district's needs are being met while adequately supporting its educators, and honoring the goals and outcomes listed by UW Oshkosh ArtsCore which is currently funding the position. The roles, duties, and responsibilities of this position are quite varied and engage multiple levels and entry points into the field of education. It is a new position for the OASD that is being designed and implemented on a daily basis without a clear path, only guiding outcomes.

My background prior to this position was linked to UWO, the OASD, and ArtsCore. I graduated from UWO in 2012 with a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts and K-12 Art Education Licensure. Dr. Wendy Strauch-Nelson was my capstone art education professor. Dr. Strauch-Nelson was the founder and original grant writer for ArtsCore. I was hired in the OASD as an art teacher in the fall of 2012. I taught full-time as an art teacher, working at elementary, middle school, and high school levels, depending on my assignment for the school year. In my third year of teaching, Dr. Strauch-Nelson reached out to me through email about my interest in ArtsCore. She explained that it was a nine-day professional development platform that was focused on Arts Integration. It would go throughout the school year, meeting about once a month. I signed up for the first ArtsCore Colony for the 2015-2016 school year.

Upon finishing ArtsCore Colony, I used AI in my curriculum. As part of the ArtsCore mission to grow leadership skills for their Alumni, I was also invited to present at several ArtsCore events including; Bridge Day in the fall and Symposium in the spring. I believed strongly in the benefit of the effects ArtsCore has on teachers and the academic benefit of teaching more holistically with AI in the classroom. When the position opened up, I saw an opportunity for OASD and ArtsCore to reach more teachers and students more effectively, so I applied and was offered the position in October 2018.

Research Question

The primary focus of this action research is to address the aforementioned OASD needs and concerns in relationship ArtsCore.

Focus Question: What effect does having a district-appointed Arts Integration Coordinator have on educators' and the District partners' practice efficacy; competence, confidence, and resilience? ArtsCore seeks to support pre-service and early-career teachers in and through the arts by developing and implementing programming designed to enhance their competence, confidence, and resiliency (ArtsCore, 2016).

Sub Questions:

1. How will these three components be evaluated?
2. What will determine and define competence, confidence, and resilience?
3. What are the outcomes that contribute to being competent, confident, and resilient in one's own curriculum?
4. What duties and supports are needed and practical for both the AIC and the educator receiving support?
5. What does the support look like for educators and district partners?

METHODS

Research Question

What effect does having a district-appointed Arts Integration Coordinator (AIC) on educators' and the District partners' practice efficacy; competence, confidence, and resilience?

Design

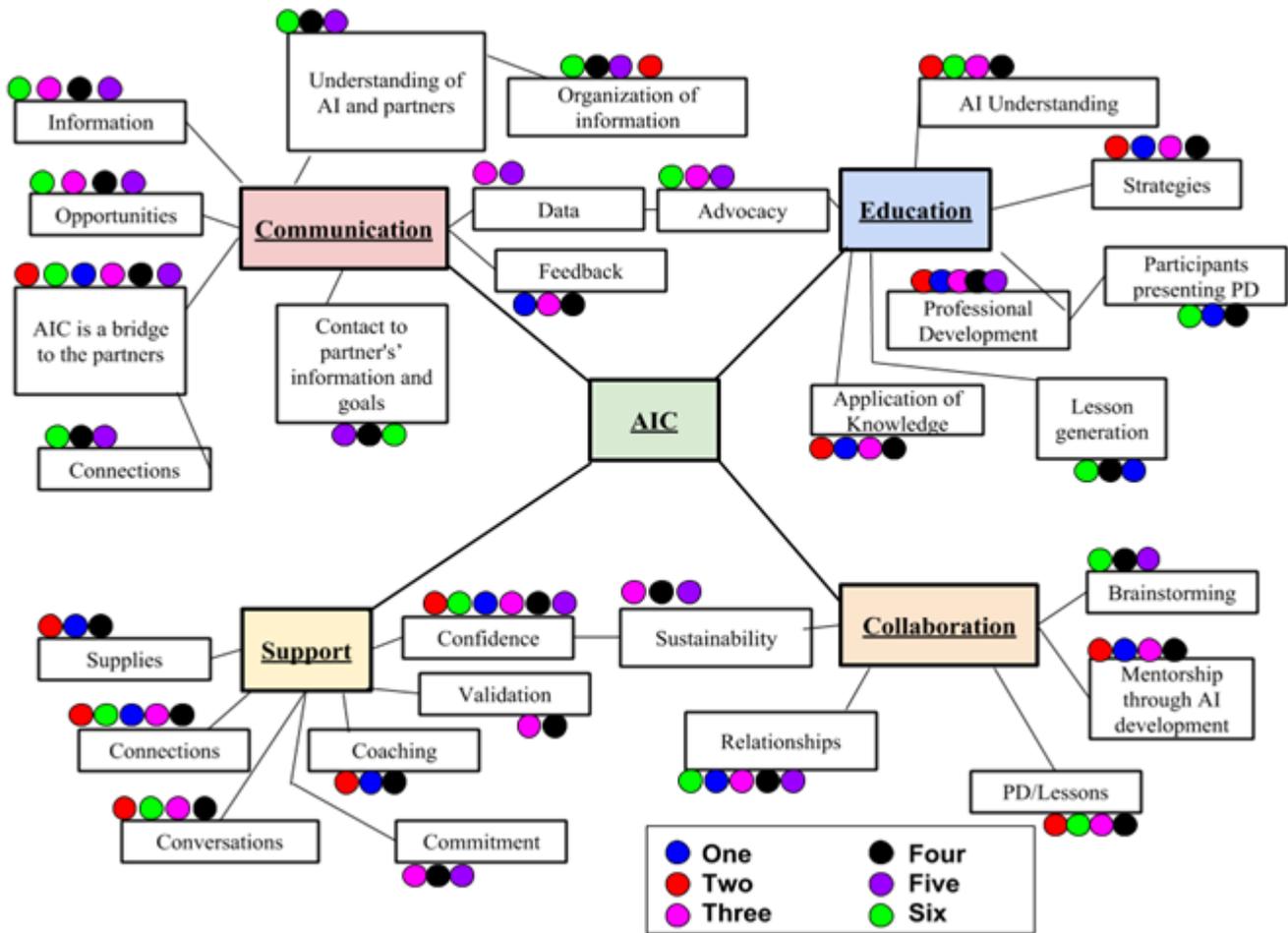
A qualitative phenomenographic case study was used in this action research to study the effects of having a district-appointed Arts Integration Coordinator on educators' and the OASD partners' practice efficacy; competence, confidence, and resilience.

Description of Design

Phenomenography is designed to study the different ways in which people experience, interpret, and understand a phenomenon (Marton & Booth, 2013). Phenomenography is similar to phenomenology, in that both study experiences related to a phenomenon. Phenomenology works to understand a person's or a group of people's understandings and perspectives relating to a situation. It is the "what is it like to experience *phenomena*?" questions that lead a phenomenological study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 255). This focuses on the phenomena and its effect on people. In contrast, Phenomenography investigates the variations in the ways people understand the phenomenon. That is what Marton (1981) described as "second-order perspective" (Larsson & Holmström, 2007). The interview process in phenomenography asks open-ended, 'why' and 'how' questions. Examples may be, "How did you experience this?" and "Why did you do this that way?" (Åkerlind, Bowden, & Green, 2005, p. 79).

The phenomenographic data contain descriptions, analysis, and understandings of experiences (Marton, 1981). Marton offered an example that illustrated the two in relation to psychology. The following is a similar example to help illustrate: If a researcher were to investigate arts integration in education, a phenomenologist would investigate in learning about Arts Integration. A psychologist would investigate in learning about how people experience things. Using phenomenography then, a phenomenographic researcher would investigate how people experience Arts Integration. These experiences in phenomenography are then categorized into a limited number of qualitatively different ways (Marton, 1981). The results are not interpreted and applied to the phenomena, as in phenomenology, but detailed and described directly from the data of the participants perceived experiences; not the *what*, but the *how* and *why*.

... Participants were selected from a group of educators...who were interested in receiving Arts Integration coaching and support for their classrooms, teachers who are currently participating in ArtsCore Colony, individuals who had previously participated ArtsCore Colony, and a member from each of the District partners. The sample includes data from six participants total...The determining factor is if they have received support, collaboration, and/or coaching in AI with the AIC in at least two sessions, conversations, or meetings that have led to the implementation of at least one AI initiative or lesson.



Summary

...Communication was the most responded to main category with approximately 31% of the data directly referring to it. Participants stressed the importance of communication in the AIC's role mainly as a 'bridge' to the other ArtsCore partners; the Oshkosh Area School District, the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, and the Paine Arts Center and Gardens. Participant Five described the whole of ArtsCore as having "so many moving parts that need to work together". Gathering and disseminating the information to and from the partners was much less frequent and effective prior to the creation of the AIC position...All four main categories and the subsequent subcategories related to the basic needs the AIC provided for them which was not previously in place from one source; AI training and continued education, communication of ideas, goals and knowledge, support for their classrooms via supplies, professional development, coaching, connections, and the ability to collaborate with someone who had the time to work with them and help coordinate collaboration between them and others. Many of these things were taking place before the AIC, however, the addition of the position made some of these activities able to happen faster, more efficiently, and perhaps to more fidelity...The collaboration, education, supports, and communication aided me as the AIC and helped me with my own professional development in filling the role and helping it evolve to meet the needs of the partners, grant, and participants.