

The Comfort Level of Teachers in Integrating Arts into
the Academic Curriculum and its Prevalence in Schools

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Education

July 2009

Graduate Programs in Education

Goucher College

Table of Contents

List of Tables	i
Abstract	ii
I. Introduction	3
Statement of the Problem	4
Hypothesis	4
Operational Definitions	4
II. Review of the Literature	5
Defining Arts Integration	5
Integrating Arts into the Academic Curriculum	6
Including Arts as Stand-Alone Subjects	10
Summary	12
III. Methods	13
Design	13
Participants	13
Instruments	13
Procedure	14
IV. Results	15
V. Discussion	19
References	23

List of Tables

1. Table 1: When you first started teaching, did you feel prepared by your teacher training program to integrate arts into the academic curriculum? 16
2. Table 2: When you first started teaching, how important did you feel it was to integrate arts into the academic curriculum? 17
3. Table 3: When you first started teaching, how often did you seek the help, advice, or a desire to collaborate with an arts specialist on an academic unit? 17
4. Table 4: How often do you allow students to chose an arts project as a means of assessment? 18

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine whether arts programs are more integrated into the academic curriculum today versus 5 or more years ago. This study also examined whether newer teachers felt more comfortable in implementing arts into their academic plans as opposed to more experienced teachers. This was determined by conducting a survey of teachers who had been teaching 5 years or fewer and 6 years or more. It was found that arts are more integrated into classroom curriculum now as opposed to the past; however, newer teachers are not necessarily more comfortable in integrating the arts as compared with their more experienced colleagues. It was concluded that more research needs to be done in the area of arts integration, and more specifically, giving teachers the means and materials to do so.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For many years, arts and education have existed as stand-alone subjects in the public schools. In recent years there has been a push to integrate arts into public-school academic curriculum (Brown, 2007). Some schools choose to fully integrate the arts into the academic subjects and vice versa. Other school systems choose to include arts as stand-alone subjects, with little or no academic connection.

Because there is a large variance in the way arts are being implemented into public schools, there is a varying level of training available to teachers who do integrate arts into the curriculum. This lack of consistent training can lead to disjointed connections being made between the arts and the academic subjects (Brown, 2007). If arts integration were more uniform and teachers felt confident about including arts into the academic curriculum, many benefits likely would be observed. Among these benefits would be making community resources available, improving student behavior, increasing learning and motivation through making meaningful connections with the material, improving behavior, and increasing motivation and self-esteem (Downing, 2003). If arts are going to be integrated successfully within the classroom curriculum, classroom and arts teachers need to be trained, prepared, and willing to implement these concepts on a consistent basis. The benefits of including arts in education have been examined frequently and the results of such studies have been reported in literature. However, it is not clear how well these findings have been implemented within public education settings.

The researcher's interest in this topic was inspired by her background and training in arts education, specifically dance. It has been challenging for this researcher to integrate concepts of the academic curriculum into her classroom activities, and to work collaboratively with classroom teachers to integrate arts into their classrooms. This researcher began to notice that novice teachers seemed no more prepared to integrate the arts into their classrooms than teachers who had been teaching for a much longer period of time, in spite of research stating the benefits of an education rich with the arts. This situation led the researcher to question if teachers and school systems are more likely to integrate arts into the curriculum now versus their willingness to do so in past years.

Statement of the Problem

The problem this study seeks to answer is whether arts programs are better integrated into public school curriculums now, versus ten years ago. Additional questions to be addressed relate to how the arts are integrated, if teachers feel prepared to integrate the arts within their classrooms, how often such integration occurs, why the integration is done, and how supported the teachers feel their efforts are.

Hypothesis

Arts programs are more integrated into the public school curriculum now as opposed to the past. Furthermore, arts are being included within the classroom more now than before, although teachers may not feel that they have adequate training to implement the arts into their curriculum.

Operational Definitions

In this study the independent variable, the amount of time a teacher had been teaching, was defined with two categories. One category included teachers who had been teaching zero to five years and the second category included teachers who had been teaching six years or more. The dependent variable was the degree and manner in which arts were integrated into the classroom curriculum. This was operationalized through the various questions in a survey.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review explores issues related to integrating arts instruction within the classroom curriculum. Section one presents definitions of arts integration. Section two describes ways in which arts instruction can be integrated within the classroom curriculum. The third section explores effects of offering arts as stand- alone subjects.

Integrating arts (music, dance, theater and visual arts) into the classroom curriculum is an issue that is prevalent in public school systems today. As school budgets continue to dwindle and educators and schools find themselves without specialists and content area teachers to teach the arts, the job often falls to the classroom teacher. Likewise, as arts education research becomes more acceptable and prevalent, arts specialists are asked to integrate classroom concepts into their teaching and curriculum. Furthermore, some schools and schools systems are struggling simply to find ways to keep arts instruction in their schools in any manner. The research related to arts instruction, such as that reported by Brown (2007), advises that each of these approaches has benefits, but that schools will benefit most from total integration of the arts into the classroom curriculum and integration of classroom curriculum into arts instruction. Therefore it is important to investigate how comfortable classroom teachers and arts specialists feel about integrating one another's concepts into their own classrooms.

Defining Arts Integration

Schools systems, professionals, and educators define arts integration in several ways. Many schools include classroom arts activities but fail to expand instruction to include the historical, cultural, critiquing, and philosophical aspects of the arts. "In a subservient approach, the arts are used to support superficial learning activities that address neither the goals of arts learning nor those of another subject area" (Brown, 2007, p. 172). In this approach, while the arts are being utilized, arts instruction actually may not benefit students and educators in a meaningful way. Schools also can choose to utilize an interdisciplinary learning approach. This approach "connects arts forms with other subject areas, with a criterion that the focus is on the arts" (p. 172). This may be the most beneficial integration model as it

links curriculums and makes learning meaningful for the students. According to Brown, students identify connections between subjects and begin to think more creatively, fluently, elaborately, and perceptually. As Brown notes, this approach depends upon collaboration among specialists and classroom teachers. The approach works best when standards from the arts curriculums and the content area curriculums are aligned. The third type of integration that appears to be most commonly utilized in school systems is including arts in a school setting, yet providing little or no connection between the various arts and the classroom subjects. Brown utilizes an all encompassing definition: "... 'arts integration' refers to a unit of study that focuses on the arts as a way of learning in other disciplines, involving creative, imaginative, experimental, and purposive and collaborative interaction, and focusing on the integrity of the arts forms and life-centered issues" (p.172).

Integrating Arts into Classroom Curriculum

Integrating arts into the classroom curriculum includes elementary school classroom teachers using the arts to supplement and enhance their curricular goals in science, social studies, mathematics, and language arts. The current research focuses on how prepared teachers feel in integrating arts concepts into their curriculum based on their training and on students' reactions and outcomes.

Teacher Training

Andrews (2006) studied the preparation of Canadian teaching candidates to introduce the arts in their classrooms. It was noted that "In faculties of education across Canada, teacher-candidates enrolled in elementary certification programs receive very limited instruction in the arts" (p.446). Andrews suggests utilizing partnerships with local universities to increase teacher strength in the arts. In Andrews' study, elementary school teachers partnered with arts professionals and specialists from a local university to gain experience and instruction in teaching the arts to their students. These professionals assisted the teachers with lesson plans, content, and teaching techniques specific to the arts. "Specialist art teachers can impact highly on elementary teacher candidates teaching effectiveness as they bring current classroom teaching strategies, concrete activities, resources and classroom management techniques appropriate to the arts on-campus" (p.453). A participant in this study stated, "I was more prepared;

therefore, much more effective. Outlines given were used. I was able to modify the information and resource materials to match the grade level...I knew if I modeled the lesson, that it would work” (p. 451). Partnerships between professional organizations and school systems can help to address the issues of teacher preparedness when dealing with integrating arts into the educational system.

Many teachers in the study reported by Andrews (2006) noted that their lack of experience in teaching the arts was a barrier that prevented them from including arts instruction in their classroom curriculum. In a study reported by Durkin (2004), when teachers were asked to take a “Creative Dance for Children Course,” they were plagued by concerns such as “How can someone teach something they do not really know?” or “How can one teach the ‘art’ of dance without a passion for it?” (p. 27).

Throughout the study, teachers were asked to present sample lessons to one another and to elementary level school students in which dance concepts were integrated into classroom lessons. After completion of the course, “...the vast majority of them expressed both the motivation and the perceived capability to include ‘dance in school’ experience for their students.” Furthermore, “...nonarts specialist teachers reported feeling prepared and actually teaching learned activities in their classrooms one year after completing a one-semester course” (p.27). Gaining valuable teaching experiences-with some guidance aided teachers in feeling better prepared and equipped to present arts related concepts in their classrooms.

In the study reported by Dunkin (2004), classroom teachers reported that collaboration and co-teaching with a school’s arts specialist was beneficial and created a more well-rounded learning experience for the students. Brown (2007) suggests that teachers and specialists should plan collaboratively on units in which arts and academics overlap. When planning for these units, teachers should ask themselves questions such as “What is the content, what is appropriate instruction, who provides instruction, what strategies will be implemented, how will assessment occur?” (p. 172). In a case study described by Strand (2006), a theater company provided a semester-long residence at an elementary school. The theater professionals spent a week collaborating with two third grade classroom teachers, a science specialist, a computer specialist, a reading specialist, a music teacher, and the principal. The team chose to develop a unit related to a specific story. Students would explore the art and

the land and culture of the people in the story while also incorporating concepts of theater with language arts. When the students were asked what they thought about the collaboration of so many teachers for one unit of study, the students responded by informing the interviewer of everything they were learning to do that year through the integration of the arts into their curriculums. “We’re learning about Gods and Goddesses, about prewriting, fast writing...we’re learning about the 13 winds...we’re learning how to work with shapes, how to make new shapes with what you have” (p. 33). The study continues to comment on the benefits of collaborations with arts specialists by stating “The collaborative process and instructional outcomes...go on to show how the interrelationships between themes support the dynamic nature of curriculum development and implementation” (p. 38). By collaborating with specialist teachers, classroom teachers can improve and enhance the structure of their classroom curriculum while increasing student engagement.

Student Outcomes

While teacher preparation is key in integrating arts concepts into the classrooms, student outcomes are just as important in determining the success of arts integrated programs. One of the most beneficial outcomes many arts integrated programs have noted is an increase in intrinsic motivation in students.

A study related to arts integration described by Likesas and Zachopoulou (2006) sought to discover whether intrinsic motivation in physical education would be increased through the use of a music and movement integrated program in which a group of elementary students learned traditional Greek dances. Results from the study revealed that “...use of music and movement education had a positive effect on intrinsic motivation for dancing and active participation of students, especially of the trained boys group” (552). Horowitz, as cited by Brown (2007), discusses what the current research on arts education is discovering about student motivation. “...Students participating in arts integration make notable gains in social competencies, such as cooperative learning and adult and peer relationship development. Salient effects on personal learning included gains in positive risk taking, as well as increased self-confidence, perseverance and motivation” (p.173). Intrinsic motivation appears to create learners who are willing to try and readily learn new material in any subject.

Including arts in an academic curriculum can create students who are culturally aware and appreciative of the differences among their peers. It also can create collaboration among and between students. In a case study reported by Densel (2005), students were able to work on the creation of a mural that depicted the culture and history of the area in which they lived. The director of the study states that the goal of the project “was to develop a project that would highlight the strength of the arts in my district and encourage collaboration between all the art teachers, students of multiple ages, and the community” (p.35). By participating in this project students were able to learn about the history of their town through the creation of a mosaic mural. It also allowed for collaboration among students from different schools. Junior high and high school teachers implemented the creation of the mural into their curriculum. Meanwhile, elementary school teachers selected fourth and fifth grade students to volunteer after school to assist in the building of the mural. These students were familiar with the mural’s content, having learned the history of the area as a part of the classroom curriculum. Students were able to use art, discover expression, learn about their culture, take pride in their work, and work with others to create a mural for their town. Implementing the arts into a curriculum can add a valuable cultural component that might otherwise be missing from academic lessons.

Integrating the arts into academic subjects is likely to create learners who are well-rounded and equipped to deal with many styles of teaching and learning. A study reported by Lynch (2007) examined how arts were integrated into the classroom at a public arts magnet elementary school. The teacher and author noted that integrating concepts of music, art, theater, and movement/dance created experiences in which the students were wholly involved in the learning process. Lynch states that “when the arts become a vehicle for learning classroom content, the whole child is involved. Children are immersed intellectually, emotionally, physically, and therefore rigorously, in the learning experience” (p. 37). Furthermore, based on what the students were creating, they had to make purposeful choices about what information was essential to their projects to demonstrate what they had learned. Finally, the teacher and author found that “...arts integrations are inclusive experiences that invite all students to participate in the learning process. Students who struggle academically experience success when given the opportunity to

demonstrate their learning using multiple sign systems” (pp.37-38).

Another positive student outcome involved in integrating arts into the curriculum is that the results of many studies demonstrated an increase in student learning and engagement. As one physical education teacher discovered when trying to teach a dance unit, the students were unresponsive, embarrassed, and off task (Zavatto & Gabbei, 2008). However, once the teacher adapted the dance unit to make it culturally relevant and interesting to the students as an art form, even introducing a choreography component to the unit, the teacher was able to engage and “...hold students’ interests throughout the unit” (p. 28). In the same study, the authors cite Chen, who validates the choreography component of the unit stating that it “...involves a complex interweaving of psychomotor, cognitive, and affective elements. This complex interweaving of learning elements represents a meaningful event in which students are interested and ultimately motivated, to perform well” (p. 28). The arts help students to experience success in their academics and other areas of learning and life.

Including Arts as Stand-Alone Subjects

Because it takes much time and effort on the part of the specialist and the classroom teacher to provide arts-integrated units to their students, schools simply may decide to include arts in the curriculum as isolated, or separate subjects. As noted by a dance specialist, “The average elementary school teacher is already so overwhelmed by the content that is required by state standards and curriculums that asking them to take on the role of teaching creative dance on top of this load is just not practical” (Dunkin, 2004, p.23). Several studies, such as that conducted by Hallam, Lee and Gupta, (2007), demonstrate that schools are moving towards a more holistic approach to teaching the arts. Instead of teaching visual art, dance, music, and theater as hobby oriented subjects, these specialists now are attempting to teach the total art form. This includes philosophy, criticism, history, and aesthetics in addition to skill.

Need for Trained Specialists

To teach the arts more holistically, schools are attempting to find professionals who have backgrounds in education in addition to their art form. These specialists need to be able to facilitate learning and artistic experiences for their students, pass on their expertise, and emphasize philosophies of

the art form. Specialists need to be able to create a wholly artistic experience for their students. “The goal of learning design should be an aesthetic appreciation of form and its application to art making regardless of a specific method” (Kim, 2006, p.24). Schools need specialists who are trained to impart this knowledge to their students.

Curricular Emphasis

Most recently, arts specialists have deemphasized the arts as a mere skills based subject and have begun teaching the creative and philosophical implication of the arts as well. Currently, as seen in the British Primary School System, students learn art as expression, art as a skill, and art as a philosophy.

In teaching art as form of expression, specialists are essentially teaching students to learn about themselves. “...Initially art is as a subject which provides children with an opportunity to express themselves—a place for creativity and imagination” (Hallam, Lee & Gupta, 2007, p.211). The difficulty in teaching art as a form of expression is that specialists need to be careful not to influence the children’s designs and creations. Students need to be free to create their own compositions based upon their personalities.

In teaching arts as skills based subjects, the specialists’ focus is on teaching specific skills and techniques. Using the visual arts as an example, “...the goal of art education is for children to develop the specific skills necessary to move from ‘scribbling’ towards confidently using art materials and techniques such as shading and perspective as a means of creating visually realistic and accurate pieces of art work” (Hallem et. al., 2007, p. 212). In this way, the specialist is to act as an expert and can emphasize a correct technique and an incorrect technique, which cannot be done when teaching expression.

Finally, specialists also are expected to relay historical and philosophical information about the arts to their students. When teaching artistic philosophies specialists are “...developing the child’s awareness of different historical periods and artists associated with each historical style and introducing children to the cultural significance of art such as religious pieces or tribal art” (Hallem et. al, 2007, p.212). In this approach, the teacher acts as an expert trying to get students to determine the message behind certain pieces of art.

Although many schools still have the arts taught as isolated subjects, an integrated approach has several benefits for students as the arts have expanded to include elements of expression and history/philosophy, as opposed to mere skill and craft. While these specialists may not be directly collaborating with classroom teachers, they are still working to integrate multiple subjects and learning styles into their content.

Summary

As arts education research becomes more common, the concept of integrating the arts into classroom academic subjects is increasingly more viable and educationally sound. However, today's teacher can feel ill equipped to teach the arts. In this case, collaboration with specialists and universities through joint planning time and professional development is key to the integration of arts into an academic unit. When teachers feel prepared and willing to integrate arts within the academic curriculum, positive outcomes include increased student confidence, and greater intrinsic motivation among students. Additionally, teachers can provide students with an all encompassing learning experience and connect students to their cultural heritage. Even when little integration and collaboration exist among the arts and academics, teachers of art subjects are seeking ways in which to help students engage and connect through expression and history.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Design

The purpose of this study was to determine if arts programs are more integrated within the public school curriculum now as opposed to such implementation in past years. Additionally, the study sought to determine if arts are being included within the classroom more frequently now than before although teachers may not feel that they have adequate training to implement the arts into their curriculum.

This study is a descriptive study in which the researcher gathered primarily quantitative data through the use of a survey. The data gauged the participants' current attitudes and perceptions on arts integration.

The independent variable in this study was the amount of time a teacher had been teaching. It was defined with two categories. One category included teachers who had been teaching zero to five years and the second category included teachers who had been teaching six years or more. The dependent variable was the degree to which teachers were able to integrate arts into their academic curriculum based on when they started teaching.

Participants

Participants in this study were from Thomson Estates Elementary School in Elkton, Maryland and professionals and students from Goucher College's Masters of Education program in Towson, MD. This study included a total of 23 participants. Of those participants 14 had been teaching 5 years or fewer, and 9 had been teaching 6 years or more. Nineteen taught at the elementary school level, 1 at the high school level, 1 at the post-secondary level, and 2 were middle school teachers.

Instruments

The instrument used in this study was a survey gauging the attitudes and prevalence of arts integration based on when teachers began teaching. The survey consisted of 19 multiple-choice items, and one open-ended question. Questions on the survey gathered information on the demographics and job descriptions of the participants, teacher preparedness in integrating arts, availability of resources, benefits

and draw-backs in integrating the arts, subjects most often integrated, and the means through which they are integrated. The survey was developed by the researcher and has not been reviewed. Therefore it has not been tested for validity and reliability.

Although this survey was developed by the researcher, its subcategories and questions were based upon the content of two surveys which had been conducted previously. One instrument was the *Teacher Viewpoint Survey*, developed by Chapman and Golding (2005), which was used to assess the status of American arts education. The second survey was developed by The Scottish Council for Research in Education. This instrument surveyed teachers regarding their attitudes and perceptions on arts education programs (Downing, 2003).

Procedure

Participants in this study were allowed to complete the survey electronically or through a paper and pencil version of the instrument. Instructions to the participants were as follows:

This is a survey to determine how teachers are implementing concepts of art (music, dance, drama, visual arts) into the academic curriculum (language arts, science, social studies, mathematics), and the prevalence and means with which they do so, now versus in the past.

Directions: Please answer each question based on when you first entered the teaching profession

The survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete, and participants had 2 weeks to respond to the survey.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine if arts programs are more integrated within the public school curriculum now as opposed to such implementation in past years. Additionally, the study sought to determine if arts are being included within the classroom more frequently now than before although teachers may not feel that they have adequate training to implement the arts into their curriculum.

General Results

Of the 23 participants in this study, only 9% indicated feeling very prepared by their teacher education program to integrate arts into their academic curriculum. The majority, 61%, indicated feeling somewhat prepared, while 17% indicated feeling somewhat unprepared, and 13% felt very unprepared. Sixty-five percent (65%) of respondents noted that their teacher education program required them to take some sort of arts education course while 35% were not required to take any sort of arts education program. When asked how supported and encouraged by their administrators and supervisors each participant felt about integrating arts into their curriculum, 81% noted they felt somewhat encouraged, or very encouraged, while 19% felt somewhat discouraged, or very discouraged. Furthermore, when asked how important teachers felt it was to integrate arts into the curriculum, 48% indicated that it was important, 35% indicated it was somewhat important, while 17% indicated that it was somewhat unimportant. Eighty-seven percent noted that when integrating arts into the curriculum, they saw an improvement in academic performance, while 13% indicated no improvement in academic performance. When asked in what academic subject they integrated arts to the greatest extent, 48% said language arts, 26% said social studies, and 17% said science, while only 4% said math. When asked in what subject teachers least integrated arts, 85% said science and math, and 15% indicated social studies, or language arts. Likewise, 39% said the art form they used the most when integrating arts into the academics was visual arts. On the other hand, when asked what art form teachers integrate least into the curriculum, 41% said dance. Finally when asked how often teachers allow students to chose an arts assignment as a means of assessment, 30% indicated very often or often, while 13% responded never.

Specific Results

Of teachers who have been teaching two years or less, 83% said they felt somewhat prepared to integrate arts into the academic curriculum. Of teachers teaching 3-5 years, 38% stated they felt somewhat prepared by their teacher training program to integrate arts into the curriculum. When teachers who had been teaching 6 years or more were asked the same question, 100% of those teaching 6-10 years noted that they felt somewhat prepared. Of teachers who had been teaching 11 years or more, 50% felt somewhat prepared to integrate arts into the curriculum when they first started teaching. (See Table 1).

Table 1. When you first started teaching, did you feel prepared by your teacher training program to integrate arts into the academic curriculum?

Experience of Teacher	Very Prepared	Somewhat Prepared	Somewhat Unprepared	Very Unprepared
2 years or fewer	17%	83%	0%	0%
3-5 years	13%	38%	25%	25%
6-10 years	0%	100%	0%	0%
11 years or more	0%	50%	33%	17%

When asked if their teacher training program required them to take any sort of arts in education classes, 67% of teachers who have been teaching 2 years or fewer responded yes, while 33% responded no. Of teachers who have been teaching 3-5 years 63% responded yes, while 38% responded no. Of teachers teaching 6-10 years, 100% stated that they were required to take an art in education class. Of teachers teaching 11 years or more, 50% were required to take an art in education course, while 50% were not. It should be noted, however, that there were only three teachers in this category.

When asked how important it is to integrate arts into the academic curriculum, 100% of teachers teaching 2 years or fewer indicated that it was very important, while 50% of those teaching 3-5 years or 11 years or more felt that it was important. (See Table 2.)

Table 2. When you first started teaching, how important did you feel it was to integrate arts into the academic curriculum?

Experience of Teacher	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Unimportant	Very Unimportant
2 years or fewer	100%	0%	0%	0%
3-5 years	25%	50%	25%	0%
6-10 years	0%	33%	67%	0%
11 years or more	50%	50%	0%	0%

Of teachers who have been teaching 2 years or fewer, 67% reported that they sometimes collaborate with an arts specialist on an academic unit. However, 100% of teachers teaching 6-10 years indicated sometimes collaborating with a specialist. (See Table 3.)

Table 3. When you first started teaching, how often did you seek the help, advice, or a desire to collaborate with an arts specialist on an academic unit?

Experience of Teacher	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Never
2 years or fewer	0%	33%	67%	0%
3-5 years	0%	12%	38%	50%
6-10 years	0%	0%	100%	0%
11 years or more	0%	0%	83%	17%

When asked if integrating arts into the academic curriculum improved students' academic performance, overwhelmingly teachers of all experience levels responded in the affirmative. Finally when asked how often teachers allow students to chose an arts project as a means of assessment, the majority of teachers, 50% of those teaching 5 years or fewer, and 67% of those teaching 6 years or more responded sometimes. However, more teachers who have been teaching 5 years or fewer responded that they very often chose an arts project as a means of assessment as compared with teachers who have been teaching 6 years or more. Fifty percent of those teaching 0-2 years and 13% of teachers teaching 3-5 years responded that they very often chose an arts project as a means of assessment as opposed to 0% of teachers teaching 6 years or more. (See Table 4.)

Table 4. How often do you allow students to chose an arts project as a means of assessment?

Experience of Teacher	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Never
2 years or less	50%	0%	50%	0%
3-5 years	13%	0%	50%	38%
6-10 years	0%	33%	67%	0%
11 years or more	0%	33%	67%	0%

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine if arts programs are more integrated within the public school curriculum now as opposed to such implementation in past years. Additionally, the study sought to determine if arts are being included within the classroom more frequently now than before although teachers may not feel that they have adequate training to implement the arts into their curriculum.

Based upon the results from the study, it can be argued that arts programs were integrated more frequently into academic curriculum today as opposed to the past. When asked how often teachers sought assistance or collaboration from an arts specialist during an academic unit, no teacher who had been teaching six years or more indicated this had been done often. This was not the case for teachers teaching zero to five years. Furthermore when asked how important teachers felt it was to integrate arts into the academic curriculum, 100% of teachers who had been teaching 2 years or fewer answered very important, versus 0% of teachers who had been teaching 6-10 years and 50% of teachers who had been teaching 11 years or more. Based on these findings, it is evident that teachers who had been teaching the least number of years are more willing to integrate the arts into their curriculum and have positive attitudes and perceptions about doing so, thus proving support for the first part of this study's hypothesis that states that arts are integrated into the curriculum more frequently now, as opposed to the past. This may be due to the emphasis these teachers place on seeking out ways to reach students with multiple learning styles and abilities. Arts can be an ideal way to meet the diverse needs of diverse learners. Teachers who have more recently graduated from teacher training programs and colleges may have a greater awareness of methods and theories to diversify instruction.

The second part of the hypothesis states that while arts may be more integrated, teachers today are no more comfortable integrating the arts than they were six or more years ago. The evidence for this part of the hypothesis yielded mixed results. In one aspect, more teachers who have been teaching 5 years or fewer indicated they felt very prepared to integrate the arts into their academic program, as opposed to 0% of teachers who have been teaching 6 years or longer. This response suggests that newer teachers are

more prepared and trained to integrate the arts into their academic curriculum. However, in some aspects the opposite proved to be true. More teachers who had been teaching 3-5 years answered that they were not required to take an arts education course versus 0% of teachers who have been teaching 6-10 years. This response suggests that teachers who have been teaching 6-10 years may be slightly more prepared and competent in teaching arts as opposed to their less experienced colleagues. In some aspects of the study, the newer teachers indicated feeling more prepared to integrate arts into the academic curriculum, and in some instances the opposite proved true. Teachers who had been teaching 0-5 years were equally prepared to integrate arts as their more experienced counterparts; however, they each indicated feeling prepared in different ways. The reasons for this mixed result could relate to the fact that although arts have been a part of many public school programs for several years, the extent and manner of arts teaching that occurs in public schools changes from system to system and over time. Teachers may have had a variety of experiences in integrating or including arts at a variety of institutions, regardless of their experience levels. Depending on where they began their career, the manner in which they were expected to incorporate arts, and the preparedness they felt as a result, could have varied greatly.

Implications/Theoretical Consequences

The theoretical implications of this research indicate that teachers, for the most part felt supported, prepared and willing to introduce arts and integrate the arts within the academic curriculum. Results from this study suggest that, while teachers may not feel comfortable with all the arts, or how to integrate the arts within their instruction, they are more than willing to try. Based upon results from this study, it is recommended that administrators and college programs try to incorporate more arts training into professional development programs. Likewise, arts specialists also should receive training on how to integrate academics into their instruction as well. With this type of preparation, specialists and teachers could work together to collaborate and make learning a well-rounded, all-inclusive experience. While some teachers indicated contacting an in school arts specialist for collaboration, others seemed hesitant. As one teacher noted on the survey, “I asked many times when I first started teaching elementary school if I could incorporate arts into my curriculum, and it was discouraged by my administration. They said that

arts were for the specialists.”

Furthermore, most teachers in the study recognized the importance of an arts-rich education and the benefits and improvements they see in their students because of it. Teachers across experience levels seemed very willing to work with the arts; however, they also indicated that more experience and training in doing so are needed.

Threats To Validity

One element that threatens the validity of this study is that some of the questions included in the survey were poorly worded and therefore had to be discarded. Participants should have been directed to choose the best possible response. However, because this direction was omitted, some survey participants chose more than one answer, and consequently these responses, and in some cases the entire question, had to be discarded. Furthermore, the number of teachers teaching zero to five years and the number of teachers teaching six years or more were disproportionate. More respondents indicated that they had been teaching three to five years, versus six years or more. Likewise, more participants taught at the elementary school level than at the middle school, high school, or post-secondary level. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized across student age groups, and may be relevant only at the elementary school level.

Comparisons with Other Studies

Ultimately, this study found that while teachers were certainly willing to integrate the arts into their curriculum, they were not always able to do so. As one teacher noted on the survey, “I would like to integrate more of the arts into my lessons, but I’m not sure how.” This feeling is similar to the findings of Andrew (2006), who found that teachers appeared to be ill-equipped to integrate the arts. Andrews’s study also found that collaborating with arts specialists in the school system helped teachers to feel more at ease with integrating the arts within their own curriculum. This study found that the majority of teachers sometimes sought to collaborate with their specialist counterparts as opposed to very often or often doing so. According to Andrews, collaboration among the two groups would increase the validity and comfort level of the classroom teacher. Brown (2007), and Dunkin (2004), agreed with this perspective and found

that student learning increased when teachers collaborated with the specialists.

This study also examined the means utilized and the comfort level felt by the classroom teachers when integrating arts within their curriculum. Results from the study suggest that teachers were willing, yet not always comfortable integrating arts into their curriculum. It also found that using arts as a means of assessment was utilized only sometimes by the majority of teachers as opposed to very often, or often. As noted by Brown (2007), the varying degrees in comfort level and ways in which to inject arts into the curriculum can result in education and learning becoming disjointed and less meaningful for students. This finding by Brown relates to the current study in that if teaching of the arts continues to vary from system to system, students will miss the benefits presented by an education which includes the arts.

Implications For Future Research

Future studies should continue to evaluate the place and benefits of including arts in education. Studies should also focus on how teachers and specialists can work together to implement arts and academic strategies within their teaching practices. With more knowledge of which collaborative methods work best, teachers can continue to improve their teaching strategies and practices to best benefit their students. In addition, future studies should focus on how to effectively train teachers to feel comfortable in integrating arts practices into their teaching. Research reported in this study indicates that teachers with more training and higher comfort levels will be more likely to include arts within their instruction. Finally, future studies should investigate how a collaborative effort between arts and academics benefits students' approach to learning.

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