Defining Arts Integration

Across the nation there has been a growing interest in arts integration as an approach to teaching in which the arts leverage learning in other subject areas such as science, language arts, mathematics, and social studies.

Since 1999, the Kennedy Center has been working in an intensive and ongoing way with a network of partnership schools in the Washington DC metropolitan area to provide professional learning experiences for teachers to learn about and implement arts integration. The program, known as Changing Education Through the Arts (CETA) uses a comprehensive definition of arts integration as its foundation. This definition helps over 400 teachers in the program know exactly what arts integration is and how it differs from teaching the arts or just using the arts in the classroom.

The Definition

Arts Integration is an **APPROACH** to **TEACHING** usNDI(H)]N4(a)G10(r)c 0 Tw 1.94 0 TdTd 57 Ie6]Rely##wc6000stb88/TT3 1 Tf 0 Tc 0 Tw 6.35 0 Td (8)Tj 0.0. /P -21

Inside the Definition

The definition includes terms that have deep connections to the arts and education. The following sections examine each key term.

Arts Integration is an **APPROACH** to **TEACHING**...

approach (n) - a path, road, or other means of reaching a person or place

This definition begins with the assertion that arts integration is larger than an activity. Rather, arts integration is an approach to teaching that is embedded in one's daily practice.

An "approach to teaching" refers to *how* something is taught rather than *what* is taught. Every teacher has an approach to teaching, whether or not they are aware of it. Approaches fall along a continuum from traditional, teacher-centered instruction to more progressive, student-centered instruction. Ultimately, our approach is based on our beliefs about how students learn. As an approach to teaching, arts integration relies heavily on the progressive, student-centered end of the continuum.

This approach to teaching is grounded in the belief that learning is actively built, experiential, evolving, collaborative, problem-solving, and reflective. These beliefs are aligned with current research about the nature of learning and with the Constructivist learning theory. Constructivist practices that align with arts integration practices include:

- v Drawing on students prior knowledge
- Providing active hands-on learning with authentic problems for students to solve in divergent ways
- v Arranging opportunities for students to learn from each other to enrich their understandings

- v Engaging students in reflection about what they learned, how they learned it, and what it means to them
- v Using student assessment of their own and peers' work as part of the learning experience
- v Providing opportunities for students to revise and improve their work and share it with others.
- Building a positive classroom environment where students are encouraged and supported to take risks, explore possibilities, and where a social, cooperative learning community is created and nurtured.

Students construct and demonstrate UNDERSTANDING ...

understand (vt.) -(1) to get or perceive the meaning of; to know or grasp what is meant by; comprehend (2) to gather or assume from what is heard; to infer 3) to know thoroughly; grasp or perceive clearly and fully the nature, character, functioning, etc. of 4) to have a sympathetic rapport with

Constructing understanding of one's world is an active, mind-engaging process. Information must be mentally acted upon in order to have meaning for the learner.¹

Arts integration provides multiple ways for students to make sense of what they learn (construct understanding) and make their learning visible (demonstrate understanding). It goes beyond the initial step of helping students learn and recall information to challenging students to take the information and facts they have learned and do something with them to build deeper understanding.

"In the arts students have central and active roles as meaning makers. This role demands that they not only acquire knowledge but they develop the capacity to

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be "messy." It is difficult to predict what will happen, be discovered, or emerge during the process. Learners engage in inquiry and experimentation as opposed to following rigid, step-by-step rules. Some ideas, once explo22(nqui)-(o)-4(c ex)-nruldnd exovered

connections as two intersecting lines, mutually-reinforcing connections function as a cycle.

For example, students are challenged to create a tableau (motionless stage picture) that depicts a defining moment of the Trail of Tears. They must examine the social studies content, find out what led to the United States government forcibly relocating the Native Americans west of the Mississippi River, and determine the impact the dislocation had on the Native Americans. They must then distill their understandings into a tableau, which requires them to consider stage composition, characters, actions, relationships, and expression. Because a tableau is so concise, students must return to the social studies curriculum to determine the most significant information. Once the tableau is created, students are challenged to compose short statements that they will speak within the tableau. Again, they must return to the social studies content, synthesize it, and make inferences. With each rotation through the cycle, student learning in both theatre and social studies is reinforced and deepened. The more they learn about the Trail of Tears, the more their **tableaue**)- /TT3 1 Tf -8(a)6(min(-(ir)(t)4)-3(rc)-, t)-2(ta)6(b)2(l9(d)]TJMAr)3(e gTw [((t)) 10tn 1(min)2Th(hr)3e]TJ -0.003 Tc 030.52their u re1..72 Td [(0)2(r)-5(ma)6(-30.52t4(to orma-24.28a Te(c)4acon(c)01 0.0004rArte c-8(a)6(min)20bj6 V must also evolve if students are to remain challenged. A student does not learn to express ideas through dance in one session. Objectives evolve and unfold over time as students'

ARTS INTEGRATION CHECKLIST

APPROACH TO TEACHING

1.

ENDNOTES

¹ Jacqueline Grennon Brooks and Martin G. Brooks, *In Search of Understanding: The Case for Constructivist Classrooms* (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 1999), 4. ² Lauren M. Stevenson and Richard Deasy, *Third Space: When Learning Matters* (Washington DC: Arts

Education Partnership, 2005), 37.

³ Dennie Palmer Wolf, "Building and Evaluating 'Freedom Machines': When is Arts Education a Setting for Equitable Learning?" in Contours of Inclusion: Frameworks and Tools for Evaluating Arts in Education, ed. Don Glass (Washington, DC: VSAarts, 2008), 5-6.

⁴ Definition by National Advisory Committee on Cultural and Creative Education in Pat Cochrane and Mike Cockett, Building a Creative School: A dynamic approach to school development

(Stoke on Trent, UK: Trentham Books, 2007), 59.

⁵ Sir Ken Robinson, Out of Our Minds: Learning to Be Creative (West Sussex, England: Capstone Publishing, 2001), 128.

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