

Advantages of integrating arts into the curriculum



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The purpose of this paper is to investigate the advantages of integrating arts into the curriculum. Looking closely at students with communication disorders, the immeasurable possibilities to aid them with verbal communication aids are never-ending. It is important for educators to acknowledge the success that has been demonstrated when students involve themselves in their learning as well as in their ability to communicate. Arts integration is an educational approach that creates a level of personal connection, as well as an appreciation for different learning styles. An emphasis on the process of discovery with the arts allows for unexpected outcomes. Teachers help students to develop more complex thinking skills, and add depth in the classroom through a creative analysis of the work created. The work is looked at for its meaning rather than its visual appeal. Using the arts can assist students in verbal understanding, focusing and concentration. Ranging from speech disorders to developmental disorders, the idea of art as therapy is never looked at as an alternative within the school system. I will be using the utilization of art integration in the school system as a way to analyze the success of students with speech therapy issues. With the increase in the number of students that need help with speech issues, the variety of methods that teachers are able to use should also expand. By using various strategies teachers demonstrate how the arts ignite creativity and enhance learning. Arts integration as a form of speech therapy in the Elementary Schools has a positive impact on the oral language and overall comprehension in elementary age children.

The art as a method for assisting verbal communication in learning-disabled students combines “ articulation and language skills”. Incorporating

professional speech pathology strategies, the use of the arts looks at things that might assist the children in not only speaking but also progressing in creating their own communication. The events created are built on a “ foundation of methods, enhanced by current research, and techniques that have been successful in many experiences.” (Estrella, 2005)

“ Can we think beyond the developmental stages in art that we have taken for granted for so long and that have implicitly limited the possibilities of experiences and materials that we have offered children?” (Mason 2006)

It is important that all educators acknowledge the success that has been demonstrated when students involve themselves in their learning. Arts integration is an educational approach that creates a level of personal connection, as well as an appreciation for different learning styles, for both professor and student. Before finding the answer to questions regarding art in relation to communication it is necessary to understand the background, history, and importance of what Art Therapy is. Although similarly different, Art Integration and Art Therapy are similar notions but different practices. With a general concentration on combining art into the curriculum, Art Integration is a general education tool. While art therapy focuses solely on the use of art in relation to verbal exercises. Art Therapy by definition is a form of psychotherapy; in psychotherapy there is an exploration of feelings and concerns in nonverbal and verbal exercises that use simple visual art materials. Art therapy focuses on the creative processes possible for a person instead of what they are able to produce. Perplexing and difficult feelings are able to be expressed through using Art Therapy because it is presented in a non-threatening manner. It is used to encourage insight, self-

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awareness, and independence of the patient. Teachers help students to develop more complex thinking skills, and add depth in the classroom through a creative analysis. Those who utilize Art Therapy often feel they are able to communicate and gain understanding within various communicational aspects through it. Art Therapy is said to help in a creative process that a person goes through in which they can find “ inner guidance” and find “ self-healing” at a conscious level.(Ulman, 1975) Art Therapy can be expressed through “ storytelling, poetry, music, dance, visual arts, painting, sculpture, and any other type of creativity activity”.(Ulman, 1975) Many Art Therapists believe that there is growing a stronger connection between art and healing and believe that Art Therapy is significant to a person’s health.

In an article entitled “ Expressive Therapy: An Integrated Arts Approach” expressive therapist Estrella, discusses expressive arts therapy, integrative arts therapy, and therapy as an all-purpose treatment for children with communicative as well as learning disabilities. Her idea of “ interrelatedness of the arts” takes an integrated approach to the use of the “ arts as a tool for psychotherapy.” “ Also referred to as expressive arts therapy, integrative arts therapy, multimodal expressive therapy, or intermodal expressive therapy”, according to the author this represents a “ discipline rooted in philosophical, cultural/historical, and clinical models that each support the unique contributions that an interdisciplinary approach to the arts affords.” (Estrella 2005)

Using the arts can assist students in understanding, focusing and concentrating. Arts integration in the Elementary Schools has a positive

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impact on the language, oral as well as overall comprehension in elementary age children. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the advantages of integrating and effectively using the arts in the curriculum as a therapy tool, for students with language as well as communication disorders. Furthermore, this paper will evaluate the arts as an integration tool to encourage mainstreaming of LD (Learning Disabled) students into the classroom. By using these various strategies teachers demonstrate how the arts ignite creativity and enhance learning. “ There is a growing recognition of the arts as intrinsically interdisciplinary.”(Estrella, 2005)

“ Recent research tends to stress the negative impact of knowledge on drawing, the extent to which what children know about an object prevents them from drawing what they see.” (Giles 2004)

The arts too many educators are viewed as leisure activity, non-academic, and irrelevant to the employment world. An integrative approach to teaching, for example, “ connects visualization with reading comprehension, contextualizes math, or brings an experiential context to the science or social studies classroom.”(Estrella 2005) Funding for art education in many schools both public and private has significantly reduced or completely been cut. Government officials at state or city levels feel the need for art education is not as significant as the need for more academic based programs like mathematics, history, science and social studies. Studies proposed to make a cut of 35. 6 million dollars in art education (FY 2006 Ed Budget Summary, 2005). Officials see art education as something that is impeding on their student’s academic careers, rather than helping them. Using the arts can assist students in understanding and applying skills to

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standardized exams. Focus and concentration can be developed through an appreciation and appliance of different learning styles, such as “ linguistic, visual or kinesthetic thinking.”(Estrella 2005)

Through the integration of insight into cognition (thinking) and expression (acting) students perform at a higher level. Although art therapy has been used in some fashion beginning in the “ first half of the twentieth century”, its range of helpful effects is still only partially explored today. (Appel 2006) Therapists constantly invent new ways to use the arts to assist people with a variety of disabilities and psychological problems. However, it was not until about “ one hundred years ago that doctors began to record descriptions of spontaneous artwork done by their patients”. (Appel 2006) “ The emotional development of children, fostered through encouragement of spontaneous creative expression and self-motivated learning, should take precedence over the traditional intellectual approach to the teaching of standardized curriculum”(Appel 2006). Not only does it encompass “ less threatening, non-verbal techniques with patients that have profound difficulty verbalizing” their feelings and thoughts; it can be used to “ open and expand verbal communication’, as well.(Geist 2008) Art therapy, is meant to function as a way of supporting “ ego functioning by enhancing a sense of identity and self-esteem and in the process, fostering maturation” in the patient. (Ulman 2005) In other words, Art therapy complements or supports psychotherapy but does not replace it. An entity of its own, psychotherapy, although an effective therapy method, would be used with art therapy rather than by itself. From the earliest days of psychoanalysis, the making of art was viewed according to the analyst’s theoretical stance. By examining the

patient's conscious mind art therapy is still engaged in this fashion as an attachment to logical treatment. This concept has also had a "considerable impact on the broader field". (Strand 2006)

There are many fields of study that focus on children and their needs whether it may be mental, social or physical, one of these fields of study is child psychology. Child psychology is a form of study that allows understanding the developmental stages of children and what should be expected of them during their different stages. But art therapy permits us to understand children at a different level, a more intimate level, allowing us to view more in-depth the mind of a child. By understanding the developmental and behavioral stages of children, therapists can better identify what is hindering the child from proper and age appropriate communication. The theory that encompasses ideas to increase aid for students with developmental disorders touched upon by theorist Lev Vygotsky, who states that culture gives the child the cognitive tools needed for development. Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" is one of his best-known concepts. The overall role of the speech-language pathologist is the integration of "fluency-shaping and stuttering modification approaches." The author goes in detail about how well children represent events seeming in "their world" in relation to speech. The authors concept in relation to Vygotsky and his theory of Scaffolding which argues that students can, with help from adults or children who are more advanced, master concepts and ideas that they cannot understand on their own, connects directly through a process of using what the students already know, to develop the things they need help with.

Those who argue against funding arts education need to take a closer look at what art education does for a child. With the constant need for extracurricular activities resources in the schools are limited, with too much emphasis on instruction time; students lose the opportunity to express themselves as individuals. As displayed in the graph above, a 2003 study of a Minneapolis Elementary school system showed the overall amount of students that had integration in schooling had an impactful increase in the amount on their reading score. The “ pink line” representing the English Language Learners showed a valuable increase in the total reading scores increased in relation to the amount of integration incorporated. Likewise, the amount of students qualifying for free lunch had a measurable increase due to an increase of arts integration. Researchers have found that enriched arts education bridges gaps created by socioeconomic and language barriers because art is a shared language and skill that all children understand. Likewise, research has shown through the graph that Low-SES students involved in music programs outscored low-SES no-music students on the referenced mathematics assessment. Low-SES students who were more involved in drama activities had greater reading proficiency and a more positive self-concept, and the gaps widened over time, as compared to low-SES students with little or no involvement.

With the 2001 “ No Child Left Behind Act”, some states and districts have dramatically cut back their arts programs as well as decreased funding for arts education; the number of art, music, and drama teachers; and the time chosen in schools for art related activities. But in many instances there is a lack of knowledge about art and its therapeutic forms, among caregivers as

well as among those who could benefit from it. As Ulman points out, the term “ Art Therapy” is used to refer to a variety of practices with many different aims, noting that there are numerous different kinds of qualifications. What all art therapy has in common, however, is that engaging in an art practice is “ used in some attempt to assist integration or reintegration of personalities.”(Ulman 2005) Similarly, an interview from the mother of a now, 11 year old son states that when he was 5- 8 years old he participated in art/play therapy and states that, “ It (art therapy) has helped him to accept himself the way he is. He had difficulty feeling like he was “ different” from other children and the play/art therapy has helped him understand to accept the differences as positive aspects of his life.” (N. Gidney, personal communication, February 14, 2010)

In a 2010 article about funding in schools, Holly Lambert, a teacher at Morgan School in uptown Charlotte, is reaching out to the ASC (Arts & Science Council) for “ up to \$60, 000 through a web site that raises money and matches donations to go towards the arts education across the United States (DonorsChoose. org).” Lambert and many of her colleagues are submitting requests for “ musical instruments, art supplies and other materials on a special page: donorschoose. org/asc. The ASC will match up to \$30, 000.” The need for resources is ever growing and will continue to increase as funding decreases. (Brown, 2010)

Teachers often find themselves in a field without formal “ recognized certification”; working within schools art teachers or classroom teachers, often have to teach in their own art field, because a standard art inclusion curriculum isn’t provided. Meanwhile, boards of education, principals, and <https://assignbuster.com/advantages-of-integrating-arts-into-the-curriculum/>

state legislatures are pressing for reading, mathematics, science, and social studies achievement, placing the arts in schools at risk.

In this graph it displays a fifth grade classroom, focusing on males. This shows, likewise to the other graph, a significant increase in the reading scores in relation to the amount of integration. The more integration allowed, the better the students' scores ended up, especially in males. Students performing "below the standard" or "nearly meeting the standard," require educational opportunities that partner their learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal) with their areas of weakness (verbal linguistic, logical/mathematical). (Wadeson 1980)

Q: Do the arts transform the environment for learning?

Language for the students should strive at all times to develop an atmosphere that encourages verbal communication. In this, interviewer N. Gidney states that her sons "communication skills have increased through play therapy. Through the play therapy we have learned new ways to communicate with each other. I have learned a lot about the way he communicates and it has helped my son to feel more comfortable talking to me about subjects he may not have if it was not for the therapy." (N. Gidney, personal communication, February 14, 2010)

Likewise, there must be times of quiet during the school day for individualized instruction, but in integrating art into the curriculum it encourages and helps develop independent working skills. In providing enriching language activities more can be made of group activities. The idea of social exchange is evident when looking at the things that encourage

students to speak to each other rather than think independently. The development of language skills is important for successful interpersonal communication. Geist argues in an article entitled "Integrating Music Therapy Services and Speech-Language Therapy Services for Children with Severe Communication Impairments: A Co-Treatment Model," how preschool children with speech-language disorders demonstrated social communication skills in basic group music activities with their non-disabled peers. This text connects directly to BF Skinner's behaviorism theory stating that "learning is a function of change in overt behavior. Changes in behavior are the result of an individual's response to events (stimuli) that occur in the environment." The effectiveness of arts activities relating to the overall goals of a special needs student as well as the overall goals of the academic curriculum. Perceptual training through the arts is emphasized, and teacher's guides to problems related to slow learners as well.

"...Although researchers involved with child art have long insisted that art is far more tightly interwoven in the fabric of human learning than contemporary Western culture tends to admit, the complex socio cultural and historical reasons for the peripheral position of art in North American schools and preschools remain to be fully explicated, widely understood, and revised in action." (Geist 2008)

By using and integrating art into lessons, techniques to broaden language experiences using activities that are divergent from the traditional instructional processes, bombard the child with experiences and specific uses of language, exposing them to a variety of modes of expression, encouraging listening skills, thinking skills, and opportunities for talking.

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Often times the language distorted child feels self-conscious in speaking before others. The child is often misunderstood, resulting in a reluctance to attempt further verbal communication, resulting in looking for ways of dealing with this hesitancy to talk. With the integration of various art forms, these students with communication disorders or an inability to verbalize become responsible for expressing themselves to other children through a range of media.

“ Drawings are believed to reflect the subject’s mental representations and conceptual knowledge about the objects they draw. Drawings become more accurate and detailed as children’s mental models of the world become more extensive and differentiated.” (Gardner 2006)

Certain forms of arts instruction enhance and complement basic reading instruction aimed at helping children “ break the phonetic code” that unlocks written language by associating letters, words and phrases with sounds, sentences and meanings. Since we do not “ read reading” but rather texts of various kinds in search of meaning, it is important that forms of arts instruction promote both basic reading skills and the achievement motivation that engages young learners in the reading experience. Children develop the ability to write, read, speak, listen, and think by having “ real” experiences with motor activities, reading, speaking, writing, listening, and thinking, and by getting support from experienced learners. Integrating the arts means that the elements of creativity are developed and taught with a set of common experiences. (Gardner 2006)

There are many advantages to integrating the arts in relation to speech therapy. Children learn all aspects of language by using language in purposeful situations as well as in situations they enjoy. By integrating the arts into therapy methods, we put children in situations that match the way in which they naturally learn and use language. By integrating the arts for children with communication delays, children develop better critical thinking abilities. A treatment for many kids with speech and or language disorders refers to a problem with the actual production of sounds, where a language disorder refers to a difficulty understanding or putting words together to communicate ideas.

As defined, a speech or communication disorder is characterized by the following:

“ Articulation disorders include difficulties producing sounds in syllables or saying words incorrectly to the point that other people can’t understand what’s being said.

Fluency disorders include problems such as stuttering, the condition in which the flow of speech is interrupted by abnormal stoppages, repetitions (st-st-stuttering), or prolonging sounds and syllables (sssstuttering).

Resonance or voice disorders include problems with the pitch, volume, or quality of the voice that distract listeners from what’s being said. These types of disorders may also cause pain or discomfort for the child when speaking.

Dysphasia/oral feeding disorders, including difficulties with eating and swallowing.” (Sutton 24)

Because language disorders can be either passionate or significant, therapy should focus on children who have difficulties understanding language as well as those who difficulty putting words together, limited vocabulary, or inability to use language in a socially appropriate way. Including art, books, objects as well as constant events, these aid in the stimulation of language development. Repetition as well as exercises to build speech and language skills help with articulation or sound production. With the variety of reasons why children need speech therapy, the arts in collaboration relates to cognitive (intellectual thinking) or other developmental delays and motor problems.

Certain music instruction, including inclusive instruction that includes spatial training, “ develops spatial reasoning and spatial-temporal reasoning skills”, which are fundamental to understanding and using mathematical ideas and concepts. Learning in individual art forms as well as in multi-arts experiences engages and strengthens fundamental capacities as “ spatial reasoning”, including organizing and sequences, conditional reasoning, theory and consequences, problem solving, and creative thinking.

Those officials that are not fighting the budget cuts made towards music education are becoming a part of the reason that current youth will suffer a loss in education. The attitude that math and science are the most valuable subjects to learn is carried over in the budget debate. It has made the whole idea of publicly funded fine arts projects seem wasteful and frivolous.

Students who were achieving at academic expectation scored high on all rhythmic tasks, while many of those who scored lower on the rhythmic test achieved below academic expectation. If music education keeps being disregarded, America will suffer by losing a unique opportunity to educate children and keep them in school. Creative thinking skills are improved, by using “ the side of their brains that don’t get used in math and science”. Geist argues that music therapy can be integrated with speech therapy and service as an effective method for children with communication delays. This argument is that with the integration of communication arts through music effective speech-language services are set. Through mutual models with “ procedures, experiences, and communication outcomes” demonstrate how preschool children with speech-language disorders “ demonstrated social communication skills in basic group music activities with their non-disabled peers”. However, many professionals are working carefully to improve procedures to “ address the varied and sometimes complex communication and educational needs of children with disabilities” (Geist 2008).

Sublimation is a topic that is notorious in art therapy, where some art therapists support the concept and others dismiss it. According to Ulman, author of Art Therapy, “ only on the basis of sublimation can the function of art and full potential of art therapy be adequately understood” (8). While some art therapists believe that the therapeutic value of art therapy can only be achieved through sublimation, many others have witnessed the positive effects art therapy can have in individuals who do not achieve sublimation. This text relates directly to my topic in that through the theorist Freud and his Artistic Sublimation theory. Which states Sublimation is the

transformation of unwanted impulses into something less harmful. This can simply be a distracting release or may be a constructive and valuable piece of work, in relation to art. Sublimation channels this energy away from destructive acts and into something that is socially acceptable and/or creatively effective.

Typically, an Art Therapy assessment involves the therapist's giving the client a series of five or six art tasks, using a variety of media. These tasks relate to the student's perception of self, his or her family, and school, or other aspects of their environment. These drawings and the student's behavior while approaching this task are then evaluated along with developmental, family, and academic history. It is important to note that children's progress in drawing differs significantly across the cultural spectrum. A person who uses art as an assessment tool needs to be familiar with the art children are exposed to and the culture they are from, before making an evaluation.

Ulman describes sublimation as "instinctual behavior is replaced by a social act in such a manner that this change is experienced as a victory over the ego" (balance between reality, primitive drives, morals) (p. 8). According to Ulman, "Artistic sublimation consists in the creation of visual images for the purpose of communicating to a group very complex material which would not be available for communication in any other form...Every work of art contains a core of conflicting drives which give it life and determine form and content to a large degree"

Fine arts educations were not seen as important or even minimally essential, “ music should be used to help students overcome racial and cultural stereotyping, bias, and insensitivity”. Studies have shown the number of years of instrumental music instruction and academic achievement in math, science and language arts are significantly connected. This practice emphasizes the adaptive components that can be put into music integration. Focusing but not limiting to autistic students, Geist claims that when paired with music, speech contributes to feelings that need to be expressed. What students are able to learn, as well as retain through the arts is demonstrated in a variety of mediums. Young children who engage in dramatic enactments of stories and text improve their reading comprehension, story understanding and ability to read new materials they have not seen before. The effects are even more significant for children from economically disadvantaged circumstances and those with reading difficulties in the early and middle grades.

In looking at dance integration researchers suggest it encourages pro-social behaviors as well as self-control. The ability to express oneself through dance shows a significant decrease in the frequency of negative behaviors. These techniques were introduced using movement, childrens’ stories and discussion. Using dance in the classroom, results have shown that teachers noticed a significant decrease in violent behavior in their students. Including fights, failing to pacify, being frustrated as well as not being able to control their emotions. The children reported significant decreases of these behaviors both seen and experienced: “ someone is doing something wrong,” and “ someone throwing something.” Significant changes in the

students' perceptions and feelings about experiencing or seeing aggression were noted in their "not feeling happy". The use of dance in the classroom allows students to handle themselves and responding to certain situations. Research in dance showed an increase of "feeling happy," and a decrease in "feeling scared." (Wadeson 1980)

"Cognitive psychologists continue to undertake studies related to children's art experiences, operating within an established consensus regarding the nature of age related changes in children's drawings observes persistent interest among his colleagues in children's passage from "intellectual" to "visual realism". (Purnell 2004)

Art therapy is a therapy technique that did not "position its existence until the 1940s" (Sutton 12). Originally techniques used in art therapy were used in other form of therapy such psychoanalysis or the method of understanding mental life. In which a person would illustrate spontaneously and use free-association.

"Art therapy gives children both verbal and nonverbal outlets. In art therapy the whole creative of art is recognized: form, content, and individual meaning. Art therapy helps in reconciling emotional conflicts as well as promoting self-awareness and personal growth." (Mishook 2006)

The process of creating art is rather simple, while the field of art therapy is complex. Creating art in a therapeutic setting the child goes through a process. Focusing on a feeling or an event; creating an image that represents the feeling or even; and discussing the significance of the created image (Kramer 1971). In the creation of an image the client is given a

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choice of various mediums whether it is drawing, painting, modeling, or construction.

A more structured technique in art therapy is that of the “ Human Figure Drawing Test” by Elizabeth Koppitz. This technique is used to measure a child’s emotional and mental development. Various depictions of figures have meanings. According to Koppitz, if child were to draw “ small figures these would be interpreted as meaning being timid, while large figures would represent aggression”. Likewise some of these drawings reveal the relationships between the members of the child’s family.

According to (Gullant 2008) the Best Practice for Arts Integrated 21st century Learning include the idea that the products created “ reflect students’ responsibility for identifying problems and issues, conducting research, examining values, and making reflective decisions within an arts infused curriculum.” This also includes “ active involvement in developmentally appropriate activities results in high-quality works that are a fusion of arts and non-arts disciplines.”

Gardner refers to the ages between 5 and 7 as “ the golden age of drawing,” and the research teams have devoted considerable attention to the apparent demise of artistry in the middle to late childhood and its unreliable resurgence in adolescence.” (Geist 2004)

Developmental aspects of children’s drawings

In 1947 Victor Lowenfeld published the book Creative and Mental Growth that was used to connect intellectual growth, psychosocial stages of development, and six stages of development in children’s drawings. Kellogg
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Foundation (1970) also supported the conclusion that children progress in drawing through different stages, fall into predictable age groups. The Scribble Stage, which appears at about eighteen months to two years of age is said to not just be aimless motion created at random by the child, but demonstrates an awareness of pattern and growing hand-eye coordination. (Silk & Thomas, 1990; Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987)

“ Soon after children start scribbling, they will start to name what it was they drew after they have finished drawing it. Around two years of age, children will sometimes label their drawing before they have started working on it, but if the drawing looks like something else to them, they may just change the label. Their scribbles progressively become more recognizable and separate shapes appear on the same page. At around three and a half years, children begin incorporating details like fingers on hands.” (Silk & Thomas, 1990; Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987)

The following stages from ages four to nine consist of two drawing stages, The “ Pre-Schematic” Stage and the “ Schematic” Stage. Both identified by Lowenfeld, the “ Pre- Schematic stage is when children can draw a human figure with a circle and two dangling lines for legs, sometimes as Lowenfeld states include a