

## DEFINITIONS FOR ARTS INTEGRATION

The term “arts integration” has also evolved over the past 15 years as school districts, state arts councils, and arts organizations have experimented with various models of implementation. Some programs and schools have chosen not to use the term at all, although descriptions of the curriculum appear to belong in this domain. Much work in the arts professional journals that could be termed integrative is labeled **interdisciplinary**, perhaps because, as noted in this review, the term evokes less controversy and challenge from within the arts professions. Some of that work is included in this literature review.

The term “integration” comes from the Latin word **integrare**, which means to make something whole, a root also used, for example, in the word **integer**, meaning “whole number” (Grumet, 2004). Terms such as **arts-infused** curriculum (Ingram & Reidell, 2003), learning **in** and **through** the arts (Bamford, 2006; Bloomfield & Childs, 2000), learning **with** the arts (Goldberg, 2006) and arts as a **vehicle for learning** all represent slightly different iterations familiar to readers of arts integration project and program reports.

Current interest in arts integration has not appeared to produce a consensus on the theory or practice of

integration, much less a universally held definition of the term (Parsons, 2004). Practitioners sometimes speak of interdisciplinary studies, a multidisciplinary curriculum, and integrated learning in relatively interchangeable terms. An Arts Education Partnership 2002 National Forum on the topic produced the document *Creating Quality Integrated and Interdisciplinary Arts Programs* (Deasy, 2003), in which Richard Deasy referred to arts integration as “the effort to build a set of relationships between learning in the arts and learning in the other skills and subjects of the curriculum” (p. 2). He noted that the term means different things to different

people in different situations and context. The report synthesized the views on arts integration from 13 invited partnerships and revealed that various programs and initiatives across the United States had different points of emphases for arts integration. Some affirmed the importance of assessing how and what students learn as elements of arts integration practice; others defined arts integration specifically as differentiated instruction; for others, professional development was a key element that defined arts integration as an integration of people rather than of specific content.

Despite the lack of consensus on any one definition, there appear to be categories of definitions that are syntheses of definitions-in-action. For this review, we have created three categories: **arts integration as learning “through” and “with” the arts**; **arts integration as a curricular connections process**; and **arts integration as collaborative engagement**.



## ARTS INTEGRATION AS LEARNING “THROUGH” AND “WITH” THE ARTS

Phrases such as **learning in** and **learning through the arts** also represent a locus of controversy in this field. Those who have attempted to define arts integration often have pointed to the potential for the transfer of learning between the arts and other subjects (Rabkin & Redmond, 2004, 2006). There is continuing debate about the appropriate methodologies for measuring such transfer and how/which arts concepts and skills should be examined with respect to transfer to and from other content skills and concepts (Bamford, 2006; Bradley, 2002; Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 1999, 2000;

Catterall, 2002a, 2002b, 2005; Deasy, 2002; Eisner, 1998; Hetland & Winner, 2000; Horowitz, 2005; Ingram, 2003; Keinanen, Hetland, & Winner, 2000; McKean, 2000; Moga, Burger, Hetland, & Winner, 2000; Myers & Scripp, 2007; Perkins & Salomon, 1988; Rabkin & Redmond, 2004; Scripp, 2002; Vaughn, 2000).

A body of literature has been created among researchers who are interested in how learning occurs in and through the arts (Butzlaff, 2000; Catterall, 1998, 2002a, 2002b, 2005; Deasy, 2002; Hetland & Winner, 2004; Keinanen, Hetland, & Winner, 2000; Moga, Burger, Hetland, & Winner, 2000; Perkins & Salomon, 1988; Rabkin & Redmond, 2004; Scripp & Subotnik, 2003; Winner & Cooper, 2000; Winner & Hetland, 2000). While it can certainly be argued that **any** experience one has will cause some neural transformation, it is also reasonable to assume that extended learning or training in the arts creates an environment where there is more of this active relationship between what Catterall (2005) identifies as **conversation and silence**. Conversation refers to the external conversation that occurs as students and teachers discuss a work of art, its symbols, its historical significance, and its importance to the current classroom discourse. Silence refers to the internal conversation that occurs as student-artists wrestle with form, with ideas and meaning, and with how to execute ideas that are forming in their minds. It is in this silence that most neurological processing and, therefore, neurological change likely occurs. Catterall proposes the following: “The Rosetta stone for understanding transfer from learning in the arts to other domains may emerge as **comprehension of the impact of arts-related neurological development on individual abilities to accomplish non-arts tasks**” (p. 6, emphasis in original).

Since transfer has been at the heart of much recent research into arts learning, as well as recent criticism of arts integration, Catterall suggests a “central theory” that may suggest research programs with respect to arts learning and transfer:

- 1 Arts learning and experiences, to varying degrees, reorganize neural pathways, or the way the brain functions. Extended and or deep learning in the arts reinforces these developments.
- 2 The development and re-organization of brain function due to learning in the arts may impact how and how well the brain processes other tasks. (p. 7)

## ARTS INTEGRATION AS A CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS PROCESS

Much has been written about arts integration as a means to connect certain elements of curriculum across content fields. A curricular focus on a “big idea” or “shared concept” larger than specific concepts in any one content domain may represent a more unified and complex approach to curriculum design (Brown & Nolan, 1989; Burnaford, Aprill, & Weiss, 2001; Ingram & Seashore, 2003; Kelner & Flynn, 2006; Krug & Cohen-Evron, 2000; Weiss & Lichtenstein, in press). Integrated curriculum, some argue, is most inherently concerned with ideas (Parsons, 2004). Beane (1997) adds a caution, noting that the reduction of the term “integration” to mean the simplistic connection of content in different school subjects reduces the importance of the connections for larger issues in the curriculum, such as inquiry, democratic processes, and problem solving. Beginning with a shared concept or big idea supports the notion that arts integration can address these larger issues in the curriculum.

Those who describe arts integration in this way emphasize the need for genuine authenticity in identifying a common concept or unifying idea and guarding against false or superficial integration claims that are not consistent with the disciplines involved (Kelner & Flynn, 2006; Nixon & Akerson, 2002). Nixon and Akerson refer to the goal of mutual integrity of the disciplines as **equal development** that contributes to cognitive growth in academic areas addressed. Burnaford, Aprill, and Weiss (2001) describe the process of such common concepts or ideas as the **elegant fit**.

The literature includes discussions of the importance of **real-world content and application** as a characteristic in arts integration that links curricular areas (Burnaford, Aprill, & Weiss, 2001; Goldberg, 2006). The use of inquiry by teachers, artists, and students as the basis for arts integration extends that framework for integration when real questions guide both the design and the implementation (Amdur, 1993; Balick, in Wolf & Balick, 1999; Blasingame, Erickson, & Woodson, 2005; Brown & Nolan, 1989; Burnaford, 2007; CAPE UK 2005; Chancer & Rester-Zodrow, 1997; Efland, 2002; Eisenkraft, Heltzel, Johnson, & Radcliffe, 2006; Eisner, 2002; Mason & Steedly, 2006; Weiss & Lichtenstein, in press; Wilhelm, 2005; Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998).

Often, those who implement arts integration stress the importance of using the vocabulary and language of the art form when making curricular connections (Weiss & Lichtenstein, in press). Common language is a partial litmus test for ensuring cognitive development and conceptual understanding of the art form. State standards that articulate arts integration as an approach toward the teaching of both arts and non-arts curriculum usually underscore the need for clear objectives and outcomes in both the arts content and the identified non-arts topic or subject.

Others have identified the notion of **parallel processes**, rather than parallel content, as the framework for arts integration (Burnaford, Aprill, & Weiss, 2001; Weiss & Lichtenstein, in press). A parallel process approach to arts integration suggests that the school classroom

could and should use the processes often embodied in the art forms as tools for learning and engaging students. Yenawine (2005) noted that learning to look is a process of stages, just as learning to read is a process of employing a series of gradually more complex steps. He compared the concepts of reading readiness, reading levels, and reading for comprehension as they might be applied to visual literacy in the world of art. Seeing those parallels across disciplines enables viewers and readers not only to become more skilled but also more to be more capable of making meaning (p. 846). Schergen (Weiss & Lichtenstein, in press) described the need to create a “studio environment” for arts integration, borrowing from the visual arts, in order for such processes to be experienced.

Popovich (2006) stressed the importance of students’ interests in curriculum that is integrative. She compared the curriculum theories focused on phenomenology, postmodernism, autobiographical text, and interdisciplinary integration that view the individual’s experiences as a central source of curriculum. Popovich also noted that having students conduct original research is a central framework for arts integrative curriculum. Process portfolios which document students’ research on a big idea through a variety of means, including sketches, online resources, observations, and reflective journaling, are part of integrative arts learning.

## ARTS INTEGRATION AS COLLABORATIVE ENGAGEMENT

Claire Detels (1999) represents another theory regarding the purpose and general results of arts integration in school settings:

Single-disciplinary specialization in the arts has led to extraordinary levels of complexity and virtuosity in the areas of research and practice, but it also has had the effect of isolating the specialists who teach about the arts from each other and from contacts and influences from other academic disciplines. (p. 119)

Arts integration is often defined as a process of collaboration. Just who is involved in the collaboration differs according to the program or research project. Eric Booth (2003) suggests the need for a teaching artist from the community as the heart of arts integration. In this model, the teaching artist participates in integration, not only of content but also of the community he/she represents. Because arts partnerships are often involved in integration processes, the role of community becomes central to the conversation about the focus and structure for the content in arts integration.

Others describe arts integration as a process involving in-school arts specialists (music or art teachers, for example) and classroom teachers. Still others have proposed that arts integration is possible and productive for classroom teachers alone to embrace, without the



mutual support of arts specialists or teaching artists. Regardless of who is involved, many have affirmed the need for collaborative planning and inclusion of parents and community in order to engage students (Bresler, 1995; Grumet, 2004; Heath, 2001; Hefferen, 2005; Mason & Steedly, 2006; Myers & Scripp, 2007; Stokes, 2001; Strand, 2006; Werner, 2001).

The fact that arts integration is engaging for students is much discussed in the literature. Grumet (2004) explains:

You will find animation and engagement as kids make pilgrim hats at Thanksgiving. You will find interest and attention as they gather around the dancer who is visiting their school for a three week residency. But their interest in making things is too often contained within these experiences and not intertwined with their academic subjects. In contrast, these integrated arts programs have rescued the arts from educational cul-de-sacs where they have been sequestered. . . . And they have rescued the academic curriculums from their dead ends in the flat, dull routines of schooling that leave students intellectually unchallenged and emotionally disengaged.(pp. 49-50) ■