

Advocating Global Arts Education in Early Childhood and Elementary Education

Philosophy of Teaching the Arts

by

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The arts, as taught in many schools, include music, theatre, dance, and visual arts. Each discipline is important in its own right. They are ways to express opinions, thoughts, and emotions. Every culture has art and art is a prevalent part of every society, making the arts a tool that a teacher can use to level the learning field across different ethnicities and socio-economic statuses. Teaching the arts will also broaden students' ideas, understandings, and appreciation of the different forms of communication provided by the arts. Every student should have the opportunity to develop a basic understanding and appreciation of each subject and should develop an even deeper understanding and proficiency in at least one.

Students do not always have the means to study the arts outside of school, making it very important for teachers to incorporate the arts. The two ways art can be taught is through independent study of the individual arts disciplines and through an integration of the arts with the subject content taught within a regular education classroom. Independent study of the arts leads to in depth analysis of specific works of art, developing the critical thinking abilities of students. This can also foster students' creativity in developing their own work and allow them to analyze artists' influential works. Integrating the arts with the subjects already being taught can help students make connections that would not be evident if studied independently.

Integrating the arts may seem challenging but it is something well worth the effort. During language arts study students can practice not only reading and writing, but they can also perform creative theatrical pieces, perhaps including music and dance. Students can also experience illustrating the books they read to further develop their fine motor skills while creating visual art pieces. Students can also further their language comprehension through the analysis of song lyrics. This activity is a great way for teachers to prepare lessons that are cross-curricular in design. Many song lyrics are influential to society and can become part of a social studies lesson. In social studies, students can analyze political propaganda found in wartime posters and political cartoons. In addition to reading and performing literary pieces of historic importance. Music is very closely related to math. In order to understand beat, tempo, and note values written on a sheet of music, a student must first understand a concept of numbers. Many students find math difficult and mundane, but integrating the arts can get them thinking creatively. Students can make works of art out of geometric shapes, or write literary adventures involving math problems. Teachers can provide opportunities to further understanding of science concepts by having students' apply their knowledge to the creation of visual art pieces, musical song lyrics, or dances which parallel movements seen in nature.

Another reason to integrate the arts with academics is the diverse learning styles of students. Howard Gardner described at least eight different intelligences. As teachers integrate the arts, they can create lessons which appeal to a wide variety of intelligences.