

## *Advocating Global Arts Education in Early Childhood and Elementary Education*

### **Philosophy of Teaching the Arts**

by

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“What art offers is space—a certain breathing room for the spirit.” This quote from John Updike perfectly describes why there is a distinct need for the Arts in education. Students are being inundated by the amount of content they must learn in a short period of time. There is an absolute necessity for students to be able to step outside of a regular content-only curriculum in order to thrive and flourish. In today’s schools, where students are pressed to meet the rigors of prescribed standards, it is imperative that they have the breathing room that the Arts provide in order to become healthy, productive students and adults.

The Arts are vital to a well-rounded education. There is absolutely no substitute for the freedom of expression proved by visual arts, music, drama, theatre, dance, and creative movement. The Arts have the power to dramatically transform lives as no other subject in school can. By integrating them into the curriculum, it is possible to change any lesson from the mundane to inspirational and creative. More importantly, students are far more likely to remember those lessons that integrate and incorporate the Arts than those that have been taught without any attention to them. If students learn best by doing rather than hearing, why would we not integrate the Arts? Why would we not have them draw, paint, sing, play an instrument, act, dance, or perform? It only makes sense that we integrate the Arts into our curriculum. Additionally, by integrating the Arts into the curriculum, there are more ways to assess and evaluate students who may succeed or perform better in artistic endeavors rather than the typical assessments that are given in many classes.

There are a variety of ways to integrate the Arts in to the curriculum. Reading has become one of the major focal points of education, therefore it only makes sense to start with the subject of language arts. When choosing literature for the classroom, lessons can be designed that allow students to act out certain parts of the story. Additionally, many stories concerning folklore have accompanying songs for the students to sing. It is also possible for students to draw or paint how they envision parts of a story that they have just read. Another subject where students can benefit from Arts integration is science. Students can use one type of object found in nature to create a collage, or create an entirely different picture of another type of object found in nature. Much of appreciating nature, which is the basis of science, can be shown through artistic expression. In the subject of social studies, music has played a very large part. Oral histories set to music have been a way to hand down information, and the music involved in wars, such as the Star-Spangled Banner, has huge impacts on history.

Without Arts there is no culture, and without culture, societies cease to exist. But the Arts provide more than just a cultural foundation. They produce a way to escape from the realities of content and testing without ever leaving the room. They give students a way to breathe, and in the next breath, succeed.

