

Arts Integration—Simple tips and tricks to bring the arts to every subject

Wait a minute—aren't we art teachers? Don't we integrate the arts everyday? Well yes, that is true. But what about other teachers at your school? Do you wish they valued the arts more? Wouldn't it be nice if all of the teachers at your school used the arts to help students learn? You can help your school see the value of a complete arts education. Here are some suggestions and resources:

- **Start small with friendly people:** If the teachers at your school are like the teachers at my school, they have enough on their plates. Between testing, data, meetings, and changing curriculums, adding another thing (even a fun thing like arts integration) may encourage resistance. This is not your fault. Start with teachers who are supportive of your program. When you pass back student artwork to them, tell them they could use the art as writing prompts. This works really well with portraits and landscapes, but I've had classroom teachers have used abstract sculpture, even clay pieces, as starting points for writing. Every classroom teacher has to practice writing with his or her students. You've just provided the material. You are not only supporting visual literacy in your classroom, but you are also encouraging literacy throughout the school. Besides, as much as we would like our students to write about their works of art, when do we have time to go through the entire writing process?
- **Educate with your displays:** The arts connect with everything. Next time you hang up a display of student work, include some classroom standards you covered along with your art standards. Didn't cover any classroom standards? Check again! If you read an Eric Carle picture book before your students made collages, you did some language arts. Studied Miro's constellations series? Look at the science standards for that grade level and chances are they include the solar system. Made a grid drawing for Chuck Close portraits? Hello math! Write a sentence or two with your display that points out how you tied your lesson to another standard. Point it out to anyone who will listen, especially your administration.
- **Be a leader:** This is a hard one. If you want people to value the arts at your school, you have to be a leader. Maybe you lead a staff development on arts integration for your staff. Perhaps you let classroom teachers borrow some reproductions and art materials to create art in their classrooms. I have many duplicate posters and some art supplies from previous years I lend out without worrying if they come back in one piece. You can share art PowerPoint presentations over email if you don't want to lend out your posters. Praise teachers who use arts integration in their classrooms. Take pictures of their displays and share with other teachers who might be on the fence and need addition encouragement. Remind classroom teachers they do not have to know everything about the arts. Some teachers don't like arts integration because they do not feel confident enough to try it, or they're afraid they'll do the wrong thing. Let them know you are there to help and there's no such thing as a wrong answer in art.
- **How much arts integration do you do?** Do you incorporate music during art projects? How often do you let your students dance around the classroom? Ever had students act out a work of art? No? Me neither! This is where we all probably have room to improve. Even though your students may love your art class, using music, movement, and drama can enhance your teaching and give those students who may not be the best artists other ways to shine.

Resources for arts integration

ArtsNow <http://artsnowlearning.org/> ArtsNow is an Atlanta-based art organization that works with schools to encourage arts integration as a way to improve student achievement. Their curriculum guides are free once you create an account. Lots of great resources!

Artsedge <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators.aspx> The Kennedy Center's amazing arts integration resource. Lessons, standards, awesomeness.

NGA Classroom <http://www.nga.gov/education/classroom/> The National Gallery's interactive website. Many classroom teachers at my school love these lessons!