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Music and Art
October 30, 2014

Plan for Creating an Artistically Rich Classroom Environment

Students remember information more when they are motivated, interested, and engaged. Integrating music and art is one way to accomplish this while also promoting student creativity and making learning fun. Unfortunately art and music have a tradition of not being as valuable or necessary as other subjects such as Math, English, and Science. However in this age of booming technology, science, research and discovery; creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving are becoming much more valuable in the competitive job market, rather than just high test scores. As teachers, despite whatever allotted amount of class time is given for the arts, it is our responsibility to integrate the arts into all subjects to promote rich interdisciplinary learning in our students.

In subjects like English Language Arts or French as a Second Language, I would integrate music and art frequently. I noticed from volunteering, observing, and helping students in a Grade 5 French Intensive class, that students are often stumped when it comes to writing. Integrating art by having children draw pictures before writing helps students get their ideas out and think freely. Monster Match is an example of successful integration of art into language arts. Monster Match requires students to create and draw a monster and write a description of the monster. Students then describe their monster to a partner without showing the drawing to them. The partner draws what he/she interprets from the description and then the two students compare their monster drawings. This activity integrates art, writing, listening, and oral communication

skills which is good for any language class, appealing to all learners: visual, oral, and kinaesthetic.

When teaching math, I hope to integrate art and music whenever possible. Games such as mathematical musical chairs, musical war, and smart board fraction matching games (using notes, geometric shapes, and numbers) are a few examples. Also, singing songs or playing instruments when learning about time in Math provides students with physical understanding and experience of time in music, and feeling different rhythms.

Art and science go hand in hand as many observations are represented through drawing, and experiments can be conducted which involve painting, experimenting with colours, or an artistic final product. Activities such as vinegar and soda explosions using different colour paints result in an artistic product but also teach students that certain elements react when combined. Putting dye into milk shows the repellence of the milk from dish soap and allows students to create different colour designs.

The arts are also an important channel for educating children on culture and history. For example, teaching students a Québec traditional cultural dance during a French class is a very rich integration activity, incorporating History, Physical Education (dance), Music (the accompaniment), and French (verbal directions given in French).

Creative demonstrations such as Role-playing, drama, and dance, can be used as formative evaluations or fun group work activities for students. After reading a book, doing an experiment or learning a concept, students could collaborate and demonstrate their comprehension through drama, dance, role-playing, art, or music.

Personally, I believe that music should be incorporated frequently throughout the average school day. I plan to use educational songs whenever possible to help students grasp concepts. Music not only aids in remembering information, but engages and motivates students. Music also makes the words come to life, making learning exciting and fun. In my classroom, I hope to have a song or two of the week, which will help students get to know new words, a style of music/artist, or a concept that is being learned in certain subjects. I want to play different genres of music and have music playing during times like indoor recess or lunchtime to provide a rich exposure of musical literacy to the students.

It is important when integrating music and art to provide options for students and allow them to soar with their creativity. Some students, who perhaps have less experience in the arts may desire more structure and guidance, where as more advanced or curious students prefer less structure. This is why I believe it is good to have options for assignments and choice of the creative element used, for example having choice between using clay, painting, and sketching.

Teachers should encourage student creativity and production by giving students options. For example a final project for an English class could either be: write an essay, write a poem, write a song, paint or create a piece of art and write how it relates to the topic, choreograph a dance and write about the interpretation, or write a play. The options are endless. All of these options require some form of writing, but some students may be much more motivated to write when they are writing a song or about a piece of artwork that they created.

Unfortunately, art and music are not a priority compared to other subjects like Math and English. Since students have so little scheduled/required exposure time (maybe 1 hour a week each if that) for art and music, I believe it is the teacher's duty and responsibility to integrate art

and music into other subjects to make an artistically rich learning environment and promote creativity in students. This will not only boost student creativity but captivate them so they remember what they have learned, apply this knowledge in their lives, use their gifts to contribute to society, and help make the world a better place.