

COMMON CORE

Use Arts Integration to Enhance Common Core

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These days, integration in any area, be it STEM or the arts, seems to be the buzzword to curriculum designers everywhere. There are so many resources floating around out there with the claim of integrating content areas. Yet, **true integration is often difficult to find.** Indeed, integration is a rare yet seemingly "magical" approach that has the capacity to turn learning into meaningful practice.

Which of course, as any teacher will tell you, **is anything but magic.**

Integration requires **collaboration, research, intentional alignment and practical application on behalf of the teachers** who take on this challenge. From the students, **integration demands creativity, problem-solving, perseverance, collaboration and the ability to work through the rigorous demands of multiple ideas and concepts woven together to create a final product.** **Integration is not simply combining two or more contents together.** It is an approach to teaching which includes intentional identification of naturally aligned standards, **taught authentically alongside meaningful assessments which take both content areas to a whole new level.** Put together, these components set the foundation for how we will be able to facilitate the **Common Core State Standards.**

Shared Features

So far with Common Core, the often-highlighted **integration approach is through STEM.** However, **Arts Integration is just as effective yet many times overlooked.** What is striking is that both **STEM and Arts Integration are linked through definition as an approach to teaching through two or more content areas.** Still, the arts have some unique parallels to the Common Core Standards that may make their implementation a beneficial addition for teachers and administrators. These parallels attest to the rigors of the arts and the need for their processes in today's global workforce and the unforeseen future.

1. *Process Produces Product*

I developed many of these Arts Integration lessons (<http://educationcloset.com/category/lesson-plans/>) which provide students with time to compare sources, conduct research and focus on the process of their work. **The products created are naturally richer and more extensive than from a "traditional" approach.** The importance of shifting our focus from products to processes can be found within the Common Core Math Practices (http://ccsstoolbox.agilemind.com/pdf/CCSSI_Standards_for_Mathematical_Practice.pdf) -- most of which are aligned with the Artist's Habits of Mind (<http://www.pz.harvard.edu/projects/the-studio-thinking-project>) .

2. *Access Points*

An Arts Integration approach is naturally engaging to students and to teachers. Almost everyone has one art form (visual art, music, dance or drama) with which they connect and use to make sense of the world. And our society places a high emphasis on the arts. We are bombarded with advertisements for iPods and iPads, music, movies and shows that are often produced with high

visual impact. By weaving the arts into and through our content in naturally aligned ways, we are providing relevance to student learning, and giving them an opportunity to connect their world to our classrooms.

3. *True Equity*

The emphasis on **process-based learning** and using **access points** that are relevant to every child makes teaching and learning an equitable opportunity for everyone in the classroom. By using Arts Integration, **teachers and leaders can ensure that students are learning in a way that meets their own unique cultural, social, emotional and intellectual needs.**

4. *Analytic Practice*

When studying any piece of art, composition, drama or dance, one **must be able to analyze the components that create the whole.** Additionally, **the ability to synthesize these parts into a whole work is critical to making meaning for each audience member.** Common Core **Reading** and Math Standards have both identified the need for this critical practice, and many teachers are struggling with implementing it in the classroom. **Arts Integration may be a pathway to providing those opportunities.**

Strategies for Implementation

Arts Integration seems to be hidden from view because teachers are nervous about their own artistic abilities, and also their ability to effectively facilitate a lesson that includes authentic arts standards. Yet **Arts Integration strategies have a variety of levels, and many can be implemented quite quickly in classrooms.** The keys to using Arts Integration successfully are:

- Collaboration between arts and classroom teachers to find **naturally-aligned objectives**
- Using an arts area in which the classroom teacher is **comfortable** (for many, this starts with visual arts)
- Creating a lesson that **truly teaches to both standards**
- **Assessing both areas equitably**

Here are some quick sample arts strategies to try if you're just starting out. (For full descriptions, just click each link.)

1. *Mirroring*

A drama and dance technique, this is a fantastic way of connecting to Common Core Math Standards. It provides students with a way to share understanding using movement, concentration and problem-solving skills. This technique involves partnering students and having them "mirror" each other's actions.

2. *Stepping into the Painting*

This visual arts strategy involves carefully inspecting a chosen painting **as a way to interpret personal meaning for each student.** **Students then combine their interpretations to create a global story from the painting.**

3. *Call and Response*

This music technique is practiced all the time in general music classes as a way to build improvising and composition skills, and to practice fluency. It can be used effectively with reading or math concepts and, because it is rhythmically based, the classroom teacher can guide the exercise with simple handclapping.

Are We Building Cooks or Chefs?

Arts Integration is about the tools that we use to provide the opportunities for teachers and students to create their own meaning. By taking a traditional approach, we are shortchanging our teachers from the true art of their craft. This leads to burnout and resentment, which we desperately need to address if our students are to succeed. **And our students deserve an opportunity to own their learning for themselves and to make deep, meaningful connections**

through the curriculum. Arts Integration allows us to build chefs who make choices -- not cooks who merely follow the recipe. By fostering a community within our schools where authentic Arts Integration is taking place, we can meet and exceed expectations set by Common Core and move into a culture of true inquiry and learning.

Sample Arts Integration Lesson Seeds

Looking for Arts Integration lesson seeds that connect with Common Core Standards? Click the links below for some samples that I have created. Please share your own lesson seeds in the comments area below.

- Reading the Art (<http://educationcloset.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/readingheart1.pdf>) : Connects reading standards (using Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robinson_Crusoe)) and visual arts standards (using illustrations)
- Mobile Battles (<http://educationcloset.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/mobilebattles.pdf>) : Connects STEM standards and visual arts standards in exploring the current cell phone platform wars
- West Side Shifts (<http://educationcloset.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/west-side-shifts.pdf>) : Connects reading, math, drama and music standards in developing an understanding of complex texts and how that is conveyed through complex rhythms in music (using Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Side_Story))
- Artful Thinking Science (<http://educationcloset.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/scientificart-fulthinking.pdf>) : Connects the earth's relationship in the galaxy, an understanding of measurement, use of observation skills, and Vincent van Gogh's "Starry Night" painting (<http://www.vangoghgallery.com/painting/starryindex.html>)
- The Magic Opera (<http://educationcloset.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/the-magic-opera-lesson.pdf>) : Correlates reading comprehension, plot development and fluency with studying a classical composer and musical genre, form and melodic patterns (using Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *The Magic Flute* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Magic_Flute))

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