

ARTS FOR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT:
**Arts Integration—A Vehicle for Changing
Teacher Practice¹**

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The Minneapolis Public Schools

BY

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Executive Summary

Arts integration, a teaching approach that uses concepts integral to both arts and non-arts areas, is increasingly being used to reach disenfranchised learners while at the same time replenishing teachers and changing teacher practice. The purpose of this paper is to present evidence of teacher practice change from research on a large urban school district's arts integration initiative by addressing the question, "What effect has arts integration had on teacher practice?"

The data collected for this study included personal teacher interviews, group interviews, and classroom observations. Generally, the Annenberg teachers at each school comprised a small group of teachers within the school (ranging from two to ten); however, some sites (particularly sites with a small number of staff) included the entire staff within the project. The complete Annenberg team or a representative sub-set of each school team participated in team interviews. There were over 90 participants in total from the 37 participating schools. The teams consisted of teachers, the Annenberg coordinator, and in some cases collaborating artists. Researchers conducted team interviews in March 1999, and April 2000. The interviews explored changes in teacher practice on many levels (e.g., use of standards, use of arts integration, collaboration among teachers and artists) and guided teams in reflection on their process and lessons learned over the first two years of implementation.

In addition, classroom observations and follow-up personal interviews were conducted at four case study sites throughout the first two years. Researchers observed and recorded several lessons at each site. After each lesson observed, a researcher interviewed the classroom teacher about the history and evolution of the observed lesson as well as the impact the lesson may have had on teacher practice.

The data gathered from the personal interviews, group interviews, and observations came from teachers and classes in a variety of schools within the school district. The schools ranged from elementary schools to high schools and from traditional school sites to non-traditional "opportunity centers." The experience of each school with the arts varied greatly from site to site with some schools entering the project as magnets for the arts and some schools entering having no music or visual arts specialists on staff.

All interviews (both group and personal) were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The data were then entered into a qualitative software program and coded to appropriate categories (e.g., Teacher interaction with students, conceptions about what a classroom looks like or is run, delivery of instruction, reflection about teaching, use of standards, collaboration with other teachers, use of professional development, and other practice changes). Emergent patterns and themes were then analyzed and trends from year one to year two were identified.

The results include two significant areas of teacher practice: changes in the way teachers conceptualize how learning can take place within the classroom and changes in

instructional choices. Within teachers' conceptualization of the classroom, teachers found themselves:

- Thinking differently about the classroom
- Making room for integration despite some barriers
- Creating child-centered vs. adult-centered classrooms
- Positively changing classroom climate
- Rethinking what is displayed or emphasized within the classroom and beyond
- Using more and varied resources to teach

In addition, teachers significantly changed the way they approached classroom instruction. Teachers who were deeply involved with project reported they were more likely to:

- Take risks
- Make more connections to the "core" curriculum
- Build teaching skills beyond the teacher's "bag of tricks"
- Re-energize their approach to and thinking about teaching.

In many schools across the nation, and particularly in urban settings, children often come to school ill prepared to learn (Crosby, 1999). There are many and varied reasons behind this lack of preparation. For example, students may have a tumultuous home life, speak a different language, or have a high rate of transience (Crosby, 1999). In addition to students being ill prepared to learn, teachers often face great difficulties in finding adequate ways to engage such students in learning on a daily basis due to lack of resources, high burn-out, or lack of adequate professional development (Byrne, 1994). At the center of this is a strong need for an approach to teaching and learning that not only engages students in learning, but also teachers in teaching. Schools, districts, and states have all grappled with the question, “How do we reach low-achieving students?” but have rarely asked the question in tandem with “How do we replenish teachers at the same time?”

Theorists such as Dewey (1938) and Gardner (1993) have argued the merits of using an integrated or enriched curriculum because it provides multiple avenues for students to access concepts and connect their learning. The Cognition and Technology Group at Vanderbilt (1993) found that integrated curricula provided students with rich experiences that motivated them to learn. They stated, “The good news about this approach is that opportunities to explore topics in depth can be more motivating to students and help them learn to think more deeply about issues” (p.34).

Cognitive science and student-learning researchers have emphasized that developing educational environments that enhance thinking and independent learning is vital to ensuring student success (Cognition and Technology Group at Vanderbilt, 1993). Ames (1992) stated that in order to increase the quality of low-achieving students’ engagement, it may be necessary to change the classroom structures that are theoretically related to instructional goals because *different instructional goals elicit qualitatively different motivational patterns*, which are often reflected in the broader context of classroom learning environments. Ames also indicated that one way to reach low-achieving students is by providing experiences wherein students are oriented toward developing new skills, trying to understand (instead of simply complete) their work, improving their level of competence, or achieving a sense of mastery based on self-referenced standards.

In the past decade, an explosion of interest has occurred in the potential for the arts to enrich the general curriculum in K-12 education (Freedman & Ingram, 2000). Arts integration, a teaching approach that uses concepts integral to both arts and non-arts areas, is increasingly being used to reach disenfranchised learners while at the same time replenishing teachers and changing teacher practice. Yet, given the potential of many of these arts integration reform efforts, the literature on such initiatives has been inadequate, either too condemning or promotional in nature, and often disconnected from the realities of teaching and learning (Hutchens and Pankratz, 2000).

Although a few studies have recently surfaced which explore possible student-level effects of this movement (see Burton, Horowitz, and Abeles, 1999; Catterall, Chapleau, and Iganaga, 1999; Catterall, 1995), little to no research has focused on changes in teacher classroom practice. Experience with previous reform initiatives, such as site-based decision making or minimum competency testing, has shown that unless reform initiatives change teacher practice, student achievement is unlikely to improve

(Conley, 1997). The purpose of this paper is to present evidence of teacher practice change from research on a large urban school district's arts integration initiative.

The Role of Arts Integration

In 1993, at a White House ceremony, Walter H. Annenberg (U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain and philanthropist) announced the half billion dollar "Annenberg Challenge." The Ambassador intended his gift to be a challenge to citizens around the country to invest in the survival of our public schools (Sommerfeld 1993). In 1997, a large Midwestern urban school district received 3.2 million dollars of the Annenberg Challenge as matching grant money to implement the Arts for Academic Achievement (AAA) initiative in K-12 schools. The mission of this project was to raise student achievement in the district by incorporating the arts into all subject areas, thereby, not only motivating students to learn, but also providing teachers with the tools they need to change their practice and reach low-achieving students more effectively.

Sampling

This study was part of the Annenberg Challenge grant that funded 37 schools in a midwestern public school district (40% of the schools) to participate in the Arts for Academic Achievement project during the 1998-1999 and 1999-2000 school years (with funding continuing through 2002). The Annenberg Foundation gave the school district \$3.2 million dollars in matching grant monies, which were then matched by the community at the end of the first school year. The goal of the project was to make changes that enhance the way teachers teach, students learn, schools are run, and policy is made.

Initially, forty-five schools applied for the Annenberg money and thirty were funded (seven more were funded in the second year). Each school team submitted a unique proposal indicating their level of commitment, goals, and possible collaborative partners. Three levels of commitment were possible: exploratory, committed, and full partner. Of the 30 schools funded, 14 were exploratory, 13 were committed, but none were full partner (three did not indicate a level). The goals and objectives of each school differed greatly from expanding an existing fine arts program to creating a new curriculum based on the arts. Collaborative partner possibilities also differed from site to site. Some schools wanted to deepen existing relationships with collaborative arts partners whereas other schools wanted to identify and begin working with at least one arts partner.

In order to capture the range of goals, levels of commitment, and various starting points of each site, four schools were chosen as case sites. They were chosen based on geographic area, socio-economic status, racial composition, grade levels, and level of commitment. These four schools (as realistically as possible) are a fair representation of the diversity of sites participating in the program and were the source of in-depth classroom observations and personal interviews.

Data Sources and Methods

The data collected for this study included personal teacher interviews, group interviews, and classroom observations.

Generally, the Annenberg teachers at each school comprised a small group of teachers within the school (ranging from two to ten); however, some sites (particularly sites with a small number of staff) included the entire staff within the project. The complete Annenberg team or a representative sub-set of each school team participated in team interviews. There were over 90 participants in total from the 37 participating schools. The teams consisted of teachers, the Annenberg coordinator, and in some cases collaborating artists. Researchers conducted team interviews in March 1999, and April 2000. The interviews explored changes in teacher practice on many levels (e.g., use of standards, use of arts integration, collaboration among teachers and artists) and guided teams in reflection on their process and lessons learned over the first two years of implementation.

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Analysis

All interviews (both group and personal) were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The data were then entered into a qualitative software program (NUD*IST) and coded to appropriate categories (e.g., Teacher interaction with students, conceptions about what a classroom looks like or is run, delivery of instruction, reflection about teaching, use of standards, collaboration with other teachers, use of professional development, and other practice changes). Emergent patterns and themes were then analyzed and trends from year one to year two were identified. This approach facilitated checking reliability among the three coders and assured accuracy in findings.

Results

Teachers’ Conceptions of the Classroom

How teachers view the classroom is an important but often overlooked aspect of teaching. The classroom is so much more than the physical space where learning occurs. It encompasses everything from how teachers view classroom management (e.g., the responsive vs. authoritarian classroom) to how they physically choose to arrange their

space. For example, the literature on teacher practice has recently explored the idea of the “student-centered classroom” wherein students are viewed as leaders and explorers instead of being viewed as empty containers the teacher is required to “fill up.”

Understanding how teachers conceptualize their classroom is the first step in changing teacher practice. If a teacher imagines that the ideal classroom is quiet and task-oriented, then she will do everything in her power to make her classroom reflect that ideal. If, however, she is exposed to new ideas about what the ideal classroom may look like, she may change her practice to attain that new ideal. Six areas of conceptions about the classroom changed as a result of integrating the arts through the AAA project: 1) Thinking differently about how education can take place in the classroom; 2) Making room for integration (dealing with district requirements and resistant colleagues); 3) Shifting from adult-centered to student-centered classrooms; 4) Changing the climate of the classroom; 5) Altering what is displayed or emphasized; and 6) Expanding the resources that get used within the classroom.

Getting Teachers to Think Differently About the Classroom

When many AAA teams reflected about the project, they often noted that the biggest challenge they faced was getting teachers to think differently about the way education could take place within the classroom. One teacher summarized, “That’s our biggest battle right now— changing the way the teachers are thinking.” Some teachers spoke about seeing how different subjects fit together. One teacher stated, “My experience has basically been in visual arts and I am now seeing how I can integrate dance, music, and architecture/sculpture.” While another teacher noted, “Sometimes when teachers do this, they first think it’s really going to be difficult. Once they get into it, they see how connections can be made, and without trying it they might not ever get that, they might not see that it is simple to make these connections.” A teacher from an arts magnet school commented, “My perception of the fine arts was that they have their arts classes and strings classes, but there was no connection to the classroom. They didn’t make any connection in the classroom nor did I.”

On the other hand, some teachers were at a more advanced place in their thinking about making connections before the project even started. These teachers, nevertheless, changed their ideas about how to use the arts after being in the program. For example, one veteran teacher commented,

A new development in thought processes for myself was to realize that it’s not just to bring in artists for residency or an extended time for the students, but to make sure that while they’re there, it is something that’s going to last for years and years. What they bring into the school that year, working with those teachers and those students, is something that can be carried on with a curriculum or that the teacher’s own style of teaching will be enhanced, or the methodology will be added to their tools based on their time with this artist. It’s a whole different way of looking at its presenter.

Another teacher pointed out, “The more we do, the more that comes to mind that we can do. We just keep going and it gets more exciting as the time goes by because somebody else thinks of something else they'd like to do.”

Partnering artists played a large role in helping teachers change their mental models of the classroom. Through observing or working closely with the artists, many teachers changed their conceptions about how a classroom could operate. For example, one teacher reflected,

The artist has a different temperament, and there are different parameters on what she finds acceptable. I have taught school for a long time, but I have been in one room with one group. She has taught this kind of movement to many different kinds of children, many different ages of children, so her view is much broader than mine. So, I am learning from her what is acceptable in presenting the arts and in drawing artistic performances out of children.

Other teachers changed their ideas about the noise and activity level of the classroom. They were more willing to have students moving about the room and talking with one another than they were before the artists came into their rooms. Some teachers even found that their classroom management changed as a result of being exposed to their artists' new management styles. These teachers tried different management techniques (e.g., positive reinforcement or displaying student work) or completely changed their views of discipline.

State and district requirements.

At first, many teachers were concerned about how they could fit the AAA project into their already crowded classroom schedules. Many teachers saw the project as completely separate from what they did everyday in the classroom. They felt that with the state and district requirements, there would not be enough time or space to add arts integration. However, the process of arts integration challenged this perception. In fact, many teachers were able to use the arts to meet other requirements. For example, one teacher said,

I almost hesitate to say it, but it's like you're in the classroom every day and you're setting all these plans up and you go, 'Oh my gosh—I can't...How can I do anything MORE? How can I do anything that I don't *have* to do?' And then, you get these professional artists who come in and say, 'Well, we're going to put on a performance' or 'We're going to do a dance.' And you just go, 'Ah-ha! Good!'

After the first year of the project, teachers found that arts integration was truly a vehicle for meeting most state and district requirements. As one teacher pointed out, "Our big selling point is that we are not trying to increase the amount of work for classroom teachers, we're trying to make it easier for them to get these concepts across. It's a kind of reaching out and seeing different ways of covering this material. . . . It's a different way of doing it, but it ultimately makes things easier."

Resistant colleagues.

Some AAA teams and teachers had difficulties getting past the preconceived ideas their *colleagues* had about what a classroom could be. For example, one art specialist who attempted to partner with a science teacher shared, "The comment that I've heard is people say, 'This is science, we can't do this here.' Just this real negative defense goes up." A few teams also found that their principals were quite resistant to changing their ideas of what a classroom could look like. In addition, they found that their principals put up roadblocks that inhibited implementing the project. One team shared, "Actually, what we're doing is reinventing the school to be arts-oriented, which we were not. We lack the support; the administration is not arts-oriented, and that's a big deal if you want to have an arts-oriented school. So if you think it's very difficult to find the time to motivate the teachers, [it's even more difficult to motivate the administration]." Another team said, "Our principal seems not to take this grant seriously or to heart. She called our twelve thousand dollar grant 'piddley.' She said, 'I don't have time for these piddley grants.'"

On the other hand, after the second year of integrating the arts, many teachers were able to alter their colleagues' preconceived ideas about what a classroom could be. For example, one teacher commented, "I see teachers who haven't been involved in art, getting involved in art. Teachers who don't come out of their rooms are coming out of

their rooms.” Another teacher said, “I know teachers are doing some things that they didn’t do a year ago in terms of building these things right into classroom situations.” One teacher even attempted to change her principal’s view of the classroom:

Our principal has never come into my classroom, but she came in this spring and sort of stood in the doorway. We do things with our bodies a lot, and we were pretending we were seeds and then we were growing into plants. The principal said, ‘I thought it was supposed to be a science lesson.’ And I said, ‘But it was. We were just using movement and storytelling to move it along.’

Child Centered vs. Adult Centered

Most teachers were trained in classrooms where the teachers were the leaders and the students were the followers. Yet, many arts integrated experiences allow the students to explore concepts and make connections at their own pace. In this way, arts integration caused teachers to shift the focus of the classroom from an adult centered environment to a child centered one. For example, one teacher said,

So, I guess I relaxed a little bit more, in the reading class, and I've let it become more child-led rather than adult-led, and that's what a lot of the joy in this reading is for the children because they are the participants, I'm just not an information-giver, spewing this stuff out. They're searching for information, they're doing the reading, they're doing the stuff, all I'm doing is providing them with the books that they're interested in.

Another teacher noted, “There's another piece to that too, though, and that's the willingness to laugh with children and make some choices in terms of what they are showing so they are helping to create the presentation. And that's a different approach from the idea that ‘I know best and you will do what I tell you.’” An elementary teacher who used Visual Thinking Strategies while integrating visual arts into her classroom also reflected, “I don't really have to switch modes anymore. It is natural and we have a conversation going. Instead of me being the authority in the front of the room, we are a group of people discussing art. They like that, they feel better.”

Classroom Climate

Although partnering artists were still viewed as authority figures, they often had different relationships with the students than the classroom teacher did. The artists were coaches, facilitators, even cheerleaders for some students. This shift in the relationship between an authority figure and the students changed the classroom climate in some cases, which ultimately changed the way teachers thought about the classroom. In particular, some teachers found that the arts created relationships among students and between teachers and students that did not exist before. For example, one teacher

remarked, “The arts being such a collaborative process, the process of creating and doing and being a part of art, you are collaborating with your audience and other actors -- the people around you. You are establishing relationships, which is what the arts can do for a classroom and for groups of adults.”

Some teachers found that their students also formed relationships with the artist, which significantly changed the classroom climate. One teacher shared, “Exposure to another adult is good for them. They don't switch to any other classes-we're it for the whole day. When that other person comes in, it's like ‘Wow, she is here today,’ and they go up and hug her. I'm still in the room doing it with them, but she is the star, which is fun.”

What is Displayed or Emphasized

Teachers found that they chose to display or emphasize student work in a completely different way than they had before the project. Prior to the project, teachers displayed the “prettiest pictures” on the classroom walls and in the hallways. Now teachers choose to display work that reflects a significant learning concept and the depth of knowledge children have mastered. For example one teacher shared,

It used to be that we liked pretty pictures and we could have our art teacher put nice pictures up all over the place--very attractive. Now, I think we're a little more sophisticated in the sense that we recognize that illustrations and words can really target an area of the curriculum that may have been more isolated. It certainly wasn't hooked into other things. Now, it's not just what is the most beautiful [picture] that we put on the walls. It may be, ‘What are the best thoughts?’

On the other hand, some teachers noted that they did not realize how important it was to prominently display student work, but through the process of arts integration realized that students were hungry for that level of recognition. One high school teacher commented,

The arts have shown me that one of the steps of the process that we had left out with kids is giving them that final copy --getting to see a display or getting to be in a museum or on a bulletin board. It showed the performance part of even writing and of reading--that they are able to read their poems with some expression and have it not just be words but really entertainment. For me that's a whole aspect that I hadn't given enough time to. Mostly I want to work with the kids on their writing and make them better writers, but I never dreamt how much publishing and putting up on bulletin boards and recognizing in an artistic way what that would do for kids.

In contrast, however, some schools where the arts had been present before the AAA project found that they had too much emphasis on the arts product instead of the process. These teachers changed their thinking about what an arts experience could emphasize for their students. In some cases, by reconceptualizing what would be

emphasized within their own classrooms, teachers began to help others expand their thinking as well. As one teacher shared,

Another challenge that we've all had to make in different ways is the 'process vs. product' issue. That's difficult because there's an expectation in the school that they'll have this wonderful performance. How much time do we have to do process when we have to make sure that the product looks so good? And that becomes a big problem. It's a part of the education of the community to start to find more ways to communicate the wondrous excitement at sharing the process.

Resources Used in the Classroom

Some teachers not only changed their thinking about their classrooms, but they began to use the resources within it differently. Some teachers physically moved the items within the room around to make it more conducive to movement or large activities. Others found spaces outside of their assigned classrooms and temporarily adopted these makeshift spaces as classrooms outside of classrooms. In some cases, teachers even found ways to reuse items within their classrooms to enhance an arts integrated lesson. For example, one elementary teacher shared, “While the artists [were] there, . . . they pulled apart computers and used all kinds of different materials that probably wouldn't have normally been used. And I know that once those things are used, I know our teachers think about what else they can use that kind of gets their minds going for creativity. They are thinking about using different materials and trying to access that.”

Instructional Choices

After teachers changed their thinking about the classroom and how it could physically and pedagogically be changed, most teachers found that they were able to effectively change the way they taught students on a daily basis. Teachers changed their instruction in several different areas: taking risks, building and going beyond an activity repertoire, enhancing questioning skills, making connections to the curriculum, transforming activities into deep knowledge, and re-energizing teaching through AAA.

Taking Risks

For many teachers, doing new things in the classroom is inherently risky because it goes outside their area of expertise. In some cases, however, it is also risky because teachers feel they are expected to be the experts in math, science, reading or other non-arts areas. The AAA project offered a safe venue for teachers to try different instructional styles without the added pressure of being “the expert.” For example, one teacher noted, “It’s been wonderful to work with [the artist] and have her come into the classroom. She is outstanding and she does things I never dreamed of! She’s got a wonderful imagination and it’s freed me from having to know it all.”

The project allowed teachers to, as one teacher stated, “feel comfortable using the arts [and helped] develop some areas of expertise that they did not already have.” Other teachers observed, “It allows the teachers to be learners and put them in a position where

they can learn from the artist and not always have to be the expert.” Even specialists, who are often viewed as the school experts in their arts areas, found the same permission to take risks within their teaching. For example, one visual arts teacher shared,

I was able to have students write about their work, but I didn't have the expertise of a professional visual artist to come in and look at our sketches, and then say, 'Here's what your sketches need' and then how to apply them to the canvas. So having the visual artist there do a demonstration painting of brush stroke technique and color, the kids were wowed, they were like, 'Oh my gosh.' Then all the questions rose, and the students asked, 'How long did it take you to get to be this kind of an artist? And, how did you learn to do that so well?' That was critical, and I couldn't have done that without the Annenberg funding.

For most teachers, the first change in teaching practice was feeling safe enough to take risks in altering their instructional choices. Some teachers initially felt uncomfortable with arts integration because they, themselves, were not artistic; some teachers found that they were afraid at first to deviate from the mandated district curriculum; yet others were, at the outset, afraid to try something new with their students until they saw an artist demonstrate what could come of it. One teacher shared, “The most positive thing is that I've changed – just collecting stories, reading stories, taking more risks.” One music specialist commented, “I feel like it's becoming more natural to integrate the core curriculum into the music time.” A high school teacher also said,

I have been taking some risks that I wouldn't normally take. [The artist's] poetry is more of a slam type poetry. It's a little more powerful and violent or emotional than I would pick. I would pick some safer poems like Frost and some of the more traditional poems. He has just done a wonderful job of bringing the African American poets, Native American poets, Asian poets. He has really opened my repertoire of poems and ideas to deal with. Seeing the kids respond to that poetry is really powerful. [The artist] and I have talked a couple of times about how I can maybe try it on my own.

Working in an Annenberg school also allowed teachers to take risks because they knew they would have the support of their team. For example, one teacher said, “That's a huge risk for me because I've never done an original play. But I feel safe doing that at an Annenberg site. I would only feel safe doing that at an Annenberg site because when you see others doing things around you, it starts to affect you and get inside of you.” Another teacher noted, “You begin reaching a little bit farther because there's a comfort level—there's a group of people, that you know, who are involved in arts. All of the sudden there's a network that's underneath me that you can grab at very quickly. So you're willing to try things that you might not have.”

Other teachers found that risks to them personally were outweighed by the benefits to their students. One teacher observed, “I look at how I teach and what I teach in a different way. And I don't think of myself as an artist. I have limited music experience, but I've found that's one of the things that hooks my kids, so I am willing to

do it. I have limited drama experience but we've tried to do little plays and different things and just tried to expand their horizons and mine."

Connections to the "Core" Curriculum

As the project continues, teachers are better able to make connections between the arts and the "core" curriculum. As one teacher neatly summarized, "We're making more connections to the curriculum every year. Each time we do it, we discover more connections." Another teacher reflected, "I don't think we've ever done anything like this, have we? This cross-disciplinary stuff? We've tried it at various times but never so successfully. I really saw the difference, because kids, when they came to me, they really understood how these sounds are produced. It really tied in [to the curriculum] and made a difference." One specialist observed,

It has really changed my integrating the curriculum with the first grade team. I had done little bits of integrating where they'd say, 'We're doing nocturnal animals' and I would do whatever [I had around]. This year it helped me know what questions to ask, 'Oh, I want to see their handouts. Oh, what do you want me to do? Oh, where are you here, here, and here?' I utilized their visuals. They gave me their books. It's really made my working with the first grade team much more natural. So, I don't even question it.

One school chose to do a concentrated curriculum-mapping project in order to find a unit that the specialists and science teacher could collaborate on. One team member stated, "The first thing we did, was to go through our 5th grade curriculum that was related to earth science. The science unit that we chose was called variables. We integrated all the arts with it: We combined dance, art, and music along with science. . . . In fact, I don't know how I ever taught before." The dance teacher also added,

This helped me to understand, to get to know how we can work with different kinds of classes, that music and science have the same variables, but just in different things, that science can be related to almost any subject, and I've learned how to do variables better too. How music, dance, and art are alike by changing variables and having a standard phrase.

On the other hand, for some teachers making connections to the "core" curriculum was difficult initially because the district had changed so many of the requirements in reading, math, and science. However, teachers found that after getting accustomed to both the process of integration and the new curriculum, they were better able to make meaningful connections. For example, one teacher commented,

It takes seeing the connection. There are some stories and stuff in our reading that we can now--after we've gone through the whole book, we can tie to different things and maybe do with music or art and stuff like that. Always, when you're learning new curriculum, you don't know until you experience it, where you can make your connections. And we've had

new science curriculum, new social studies curriculum and new reading curriculum, all within the last year or two.

Building Skills: Beyond the “Bag of Tricks”

Perhaps most teachers were attracted to the AAA project because it offered them a chance to add to their “bag of teaching tricks,” however, many teachers went far beyond simply acquiring new activities to altering the way they think about teaching on a daily basis. Most teachers, after being exposed to new instructional approaches, were able to directly use their new skills to teach concepts in a variety of ways. These teachers observed that “It has been more than just participation and awareness, it’s been building skills that we can use.” Although schools, teams, and individual teachers started at varying levels of commitment and experience, most teachers eventually fell into three levels of instructional change through arts integration after the basic level of augmenting the “bag tricks:” 1) Discovery of how arts concepts and non-arts concepts support one another; 2) Substantial change in daily instruction through co-teaching; and 3) Transformation of *activities* into substantial deep knowledge.

Discovery

After initially risking change in instructional delivery (i.e., just trying a few arts integrated activities), almost all the teachers discovered elements of the arts (movement, critical thinking, creating original products, etc.) that overlapped with other non-arts subjects. They were then able to use these elements to more authentically integrate the arts with other subject areas instead of just doing isolated arts activities. For example, when teachers came to a lesson they felt was “dry” they would use an arts element to enhance it. As one teacher noted, “I’ll set up some lesson and I’ll think, ‘Oh, that’s pretty dry. What can I throw in here?’” Teachers also made a conscious effort to use the arts on a regular basis. One teacher stated, “I know how my teaching has changed because I do lots of movement. And I go back to the different classes that I was able to take for Annenberg and pull things out. I use it every day in my classroom.”

This level of discovery often involved teachers adding some arts elements to lessons they previously taught without such integration. Almost every teacher interviewed had such an experience to share. This level of discovery might include experiences like “It has influenced the way I teach new vocabulary after it’s presented. I have kids act it out. They act out the word without other students knowing it and then they try to guess what word was acted out.” Or, experiences such as one high school teacher shared,

I had the kids read an article and then I handed them drawing paper, and I told them they had to personify (draw) their responses to it. When I told them they were going to draw, their little jaws hit the floor. They were very excited. I was really happy that I thought of having them do something other than write. What was most interesting was they really

captured the essence of what I was looking for. I was just blown away. I definitely will do more of that kind of thing.

The most important part of the discovery level is that teachers could start “risking” arts integration without feeling like they had to have a prescribed method. The level of discovery, in the end, brought teachers to a greater understanding and higher level of comfort with the arts and arts integration by allowing them to explore its process, elements, and possible connections. One teacher best summarized the level of discovery by saying, “Teachers on our team are doing some things that they didn't do a year ago, in terms of building these things right into classroom situations and it *is* really a learning experience. We've done more things differently this year than we did a year ago.”

Substantial changes through co-teaching.

After the initial discovery phase, a majority of the teachers who were co-teaching (working directly with an artist in their classroom) made substantial changes in the way they teach. Often, these intense partnerships involved co-teaching as well as co-creating curriculum and assessments. Through this process of arts integration, teachers found a support and motivation system that allowed them to go well beyond adding arts elements to “dry” lessons. These teachers changed the way they looked at curriculum, individual student’s ability, and even themselves as teachers. For example, one teacher found,

For me personally it is a way to grow. I find I am thinking and questioning what I do in the classroom more. I find it kind of exciting to work together. You have two people working together for one purpose. Teaching can be a very lonely profession and when you have an artist you are working and interacting with, it is a wonderful experience. There are two of us talking to each other as adults and interacting with kids. I think it is a wonderful way for me to grow as a teacher, and I consider myself very fortunate.

Another teacher shared,

I find that collaborative teaching is much more exciting, much more energizing, than being on your own, in your own world. So as a teacher, I improve when I work with other people—especially positive working conditions where you are uplifting each other and you're supporting each other and it's healthy and your comfort level is very high. So you can make a mistake and not feel like everyone goes, ‘What kind of teacher are you?’ But, when you're in those really comfortable collaborative situations, it makes ALL of us better teachers. And I think the students learn more.

The substantial changes that occurred at this level fostered more than just teacher’s comfort and exploration of the arts integration process. This level propelled teachers into an entirely different way of planning for and facilitating learning. In most cases, it also changed the way teachers not only looked at the possibilities within the curriculum, but the possibilities within themselves as teachers.

Transforming activities into deep knowledge.

The term deep knowledge comes from Newmann, Secada, and Wehlage's authentic pedagogy work. Newman, et al. assert (1995), "Knowledge is deep when central ideas of a topic or discipline are explored in considerable detail that shows interconnections and relationships. Knowledge is deep when instead of being able to recite only fragmented pieces of information, students develop relatively systematic, integrated, or holistic understandings of central concepts" (p. 88). Some teachers, after two or more years of working directly with an artist, were able to transform many of the *activities* they used into units of learning based on holistic deep knowledge. Newmann, et al. explicated the student level of deep knowledge, but one could argue that *teachers* first have to go beyond fragmented understanding in order to lead their students through such a rigorous curriculum.

Only some of the teachers involved in the program actually attained this transformational level. In most cases, these were teachers who had had previous experience collaborating with artists or integrating the arts before the project started. In other cases, some teachers who did not have previous experience, but who were part of an arts-focused school were able to work at this level as well. At the transformation level, teachers went beyond making changes in the way they presented curriculum to making more valid and substantial learning connections based on the concepts central to both the arts area and the non-arts area of integration.

For example, many teachers found that the first year of the project, they grappled with just *how* to integrate the arts and really focused on incorporating arts integrated activities into their lessons. However, after their initial attempt, they often went back to the unit or lesson and found ways to make the learning more substantial than just an activity connected to the curriculum. One teacher explained, "We started thinking about what we could do to really enhance reading and writing more than just copying letter forms or making posters."

One team that functioned at the transformation level used drumming to enhance reading skills, and each year they were able to make the drumming experience more meaningful and directly related to reading. When asked about this process, one teacher articulated, "How does teaching a child drumming make them a better reader? It's about focus. It's about concentration, sequencing, and looking for patterns." The team isolated the concepts that were integral to both reading and drumming and used both drumming and reading to reinforce these concepts. In this case, the emphasis changed from reading with some drumming added to a sustained focus on the concepts used in both reading and drumming. By having students master these integral concepts, students became both better readers and better drummers.

Re-energized Teaching Through AAA

The project not only helped teachers discover and implement new methods of instruction, but also allowed them to be more excited about teaching overall. Due in part to the way the project was implemented and run and in part to the nature of arts integration, teachers reported feeling supported and energized by the project. Many

teachers made comments like, “It has really energized me as a teacher and gotten me out from behind the overhead projector, out in front of the classes. I’m moving my body and doing more energetic things with the kids that [the artist] brought to us and taught me, and also just using different vocabulary, skits, and dialogue. Thank you!”

Teachers found an honor and prestige that they had not expected in being associated with the Annenberg project in their school. Teachers also directly credited the Annenberg project with giving them new experiences to use in the classroom and changing their classroom practice: “I would never be doing what I’m doing now if we hadn’t had the Annenberg grant to get me to do that [arts integration workshop] last summer. I never would have experienced it.” One teacher added, “It has been valuable to me because I am able to help my children learn to express their learning in other ways besides just writing or reading. I am really excited about the Annenberg grant because it gives me an opportunity as a teacher to be able to help them learn and express themselves in many different ways.” Finally, one teacher summarized the sentiment of many teams and schools by saying, “The Annenberg grant has allowed us as a school to move out of the stagnant pond we were in and into a more focused and thoughtful way of teaching using the arts.”

Discussion

Integrating the arts with the core curriculum areas was a completely new way to think about education at most sites within this large urban school district. Risk-takers led the way in working with community artists to integrate arts with district and state required curriculum (particularly in reading, math, science, and social studies). School administrators and colleagues observed that even a “piddley” amount of money could change how teachers taught and change classroom environments to better support student engagement and learning.

Through observing and co-teaching with artists, many teachers shifted their perceptions of classroom dynamics and expanded the possibilities for engaging students. Teachers could more easily take the risk of trying something new by working with an artist who served as the “expert” in a specific arts area. Because teachers were not expected to be the “experts” while an artist was present, teachers could, without embarrassment, become learners along with their students. They were able to see how arts integration worked and felt more comfortable replicating it later on. Through co-teaching with artists, teachers acquired new skills, but moreover, they adopted new approaches to designing lessons for their students.

Teachers found co-teaching with artists the most powerful professional development activity of the project. District level project leaders provided valuable support to project teachers through training opportunities and an annual three-day Urban Arts Retreat, where teachers learned what other artists and colleagues in other schools were doing. However, it was with their artist partners that teachers could plan and reflect, and most of all, “field test” integration of the arts – they learned through hands-on experiences just as their students do.

Arts integration changed classroom climate. Teachers discovered that arts activities put students more in charge of their learning and found students felt better about school as a result. Teachers also discovered that high quality arts activities required

collaboration among students, thereby building relationships among students and between adults and students.

By the second year of implementation, teacher-artist partners developed increasingly authentic and meaningful connections between and among forms of art and non-art disciplines. Teacher-artist teams saw positive results from cross-disciplinary teaching, which opened their thinking to other possibilities. Some teachers' initial worry that they would have to cut required curriculum disappeared as teachers found arts integration resulted in deeper learning of the non-arts concepts, while engaging students with art forms they might not otherwise experience.

The pre-requisite to increased student achievement – effective and authentic instruction – has occurred through the AAA project. Teachers changed their teaching in fundamental ways. Teachers used the arts to enhance learning in every area from new reading vocabulary to abstract, central concepts such as “variables.” This shift in teacher practice is the starting point for long-term, systemic change in the way students are taught and schools are run.

Perhaps even more encouraging is the fact that the AAA project has two more years of implementation and data collection. Interviews, observations, and surveys will be collected through the school year 2002. Project researchers expect that these initial findings will be even more definitive and significant within the sites studied for this paper and will be replicated in sites added to the project during school year 2000-2001.

These preliminary findings have not only persuaded the school district to reallocate district resources, but also to aggressively pursue foundation funding in order to sustain and expand “learning in and through the arts.” In addition, individual project schools are eagerly searching for resources in their own communities as well as from city and state organizations that traditionally support arts education. Most importantly, however, district administrators and teachers have a renewed enthusiasm for and deeper understanding of effective teaching as a result of integrating the arts with non-arts curriculum.

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