

2013

Arts and crafts in elementary school : blending with curriculum

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Arts and Crafts in Elementary School: Blending with Curriculum

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Fall 2013

Senior Capstone

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Abstract

Art integration in primary school classrooms has become less common in recent years due to the No Child Left Behind Act, the increased demand for standardized testing and the lack of funding present in school districts nationwide. The use of art in the classroom, whether blended into the curriculum and/or taught separately, has been proven to motivate children to use their creative minds and in turn increase student success in the academic arena. Students from two different kindergarten classrooms were observed during regular class time and assessed based on how the use of art in the classroom aided in their learning of core subjects. Observations show that every student learns differently, but that students respond to subject matter more positively when art is used in one form or another in regular coursework. The result of this project shows that art is in fact crucial to a student's learning process and that schools should allocate more money in the budget for increased art use across the curriculum in all primary school grade levels.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Introduction	5
Literature Review	7
<i>History of Art and Education</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>The Challenges of Incorporating Arts in the Curriculum.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Benefits of Art in the Curriculum</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Art and the Learning of Core Subjects</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Role of Teacher in Art Education</i>	<i>15</i>
Methodology.....	16
Results.....	22
Conclusion.....	25
References	27
Appendices.....	30
<i>Appendix A</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Appendix B</i>	<i>30</i>

Appendix C 31

Appendix D 31

Appendix E..... 32

Introduction

“Art is not what you see, but what you make others see.” – quote by Edgar Degas.

Growing up, I was exposed to a lot of art because my dad was an artist. I always helped him to choose colors to use for his pieces because his colorblindness made it hard to differentiate colors. I was taught to embrace art and not to be afraid to express myself and that is just what I did throughout the course of my education. Even though I was not as artistically talented as my dad, I still enjoyed involving myself in any project that crossed my path. Because of my daily exposure to art both at home and in the classroom, it became a very important part of me and in a way shaped who I am now. Without art being so prevalent in my upbringing, I believe that my choice in career would have been completely different.

In Fall 2004, I started my first semester at College of the Sequoia's, (COS) a junior college in Visalia, CA. Shortly after starting at COS, I took an Intro to Teaching class, which required that I volunteer a certain number of hours in a classroom throughout the course of the semester. I consider my first experience in an elementary school classroom to be the start of my journey as a future educator. The students mostly spoke Spanish, which made volunteering in the classroom complicated because of the language barrier. I remember an art project that we all worked on, and it involved using watercolors to fill in the ocean and the land on a drawing of the globe. To this day, I still have that picture that I painted with the class, and it goes with me wherever I move. I keep the picture because it inspires me to promote the arts in any way that I can, while working towards my dream of becoming a kindergarten teacher.

All throughout elementary school (K-6), visual art was a very important part of the curriculum and helped me to understand core subjects, such as mathematics, science and writing. After the 2007-09 recession, art was one of the subjects most targeted because it was seen as less important than the core subjects listed above. Hawkins (2011) states that, “According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, more than 95 percent of school-aged children are attending schools that have cut funding since the recession.” In my personal experience volunteering in classrooms in the past 6 years, I still have not come across a school that has a fully functional art program.

I believe that art is one of the most important subject areas, because it allows for a child to think outside the box by being creative and using their imaginations. For my capstone project, I have chosen to observe how the use of visual art helps students to learn important core subjects. I am hoping to discover the different ways in which students use art to learn core subjects in school on a daily basis. When I refer to “art” or “visual art”, I am referring to drawing, painting and/or coloring using pencils, colored pencils, markers, watercolors or colored paper, scissors and glue. All of the materials listed are what can be found inside a typical classroom in public schools.

My primary research question is: How is the integration of arts & crafts in primary school curriculum important to a student’s education and learning process? Some of my secondary questions are as follows:

- How can the use of arts and crafts in the classroom have a positive effect on a child’s education?

- Explain how integrating arts and crafts in the curriculum would improve the class setting and influence student achievement.
- Do you think the incorporation of certain types of arts and crafts would be beneficial to the student? Why? Can this type of arts and crafts be implemented into any primary school grade level?

Literature Review

History of art and education

John Dewey, born in 1859, is best known as an American philosopher and was involved in educational reform. A researcher by the name of Jacobson (2011) explained that, "John Dewey...believed that arts were a fundamental component in education because it fostered creativity and self-expression," (p. 15). Jacobson (2011) goes on to explain that, "He believed that access to arts education encouraged inquiry that expanded perception and created understanding," (p. 16). Elliot Eisner, born in 1933, is a professor in art and education at Stanford University. He was best known for his work in arts education, curriculum studies, and educational evaluation. "Eisner made the case for developing focused attention to the cognitive in art. He stressed that environment shapes artistic attitudes and that art education has unique contributions to make in the education and intellectual growth of children," (p. 10). Howard Gardner, born in 1943, is an American developmental psychologist and is best known for his theory of multiple intelligences. "He has made the point that all people do not have the same interests and abilities and all people do not learn in the same way. Schools should help children create meaning from

experience; this requires an education that includes a connection to the senses, meaning and the imagination. Curriculum should foster the theory of multiple intelligences and creative cognition,” (p. 10). Dewey, Eisner and Gardner all believe that art is important in every person’s life. Students are influenced by art, consciously or not, in every aspect of their lives.

The challenges of incorporating art in the curriculum

In elementary school classrooms, the students spend the majority of their time learning the basics, also known as the core subjects. There was designated time arranged for reading and writing or ELA (English & Language Arts) and math, but not much time for learning that involves thinking outside of the box. Though reading, writing and math are important, the classwork that goes along with it doesn’t really allow the students to be creative. Because of budget cuts, art was not a subject that is taught in the classroom on its own, it is usually blended into the curriculum. Bamford, Catterall, Chapleau and Iwanaga, Deasy & Fiske state that, “Internationally, there is a growing body of evidence that creative arts learning and engagement has a range of positive outcomes in terms of the lives of young people both in and out of school settings”, (as cited by Alter, Hays & O’Hara, 2013). Limiting a student’s creative mind can have a severe effect on how they learn the core subjects. Not every student learns in the same way, and it is common for students to fall behind because of limited time and limited resources.

No Child Left Behind Act

Teachers were required to follow a strict curriculum and that does not leave them much room to incorporate creativity into the set curriculum. Hallam, Das Gupta & Lee (2008) explained that, “Given the benefits art has for children, the status granted to art must be challenged to improve the value of art and the time spent on this topic. This would help bring about a more balanced primary school curriculum that offers children a clearly defined outlet for expression and creativity” (p. 279). The NCLBA (No Child Left Behind Act) requires schools that receive funding from the government to offer standardized testing to all students on a yearly basis. Schools with a high percentage of students from low-income families receive Title I funding and are required to meet AYP (adequate yearly progress) through standardized testing each year. If all the students in a school are unable to meet AYP for 5 years, the school must be completely restructured. If by the 6th year, the school still does not meet AYP, it will most likely be shut down. The US Government Accountability Office (2009) says that, “Since NCLBA, district officials and school principals have used several strategies to provide arts education; However, some struggled with decreased budgets and competing demands on instruction time,” (p. 21). With school funding down because of NCLB, schools are unable to offer adequate instruction in the arts to the students and are left using whatever resources are available to provide some sort of artistic enrichment program, if possible. Appendix A shows the amount of time designated to each subject area on average daily in elementary schools across the United States.

Budget cuts & Time management

A study, conducted by Parsad, Spiegelman & National Center for Education Statistics (2012) discusses how students receive art instruction, to what degree students receive education in the arts and who is responsible for providing such instruction. This is the third study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the first conducted in 1994-95, which focused on public school approaches to art education, the second in 1999-2000, the first national data collection on educational backgrounds, teaching methods, types of teachers and specialists in the field of music and visual arts. Parsad, Spiegelman & NCES (2012) explains that, "In 2009–10, most elementary schools that offered music and visual arts reported that they provided instruction at least once a week in these subjects," (p. 6). Appendix B demonstrates the percent of public elementary schools reporting instruction designated specifically for various arts subjects. The chart shows that classroom instruction time in the arts has steadily decreased from 87% in 1999-2000 to 83% in 2009-10. This means that students are receiving less and less instruction in the arts most likely, due to budget cuts and strict curriculum requirements.

Benefits of art in the curriculum

Educate the educators

Giving a student a quality art education may be hard when educators don't receive proper training in the arts themselves. Schools may not have the funding to provide this training to teachers, but it is possible for the teachers themselves to reach out to artists within their community and beyond. "Beside fostering pupils' creative openness and skills, arts

education organizations aim to transfer artistic enthusiasm to teachers in each project. Collaboration with artists can encourage teachers' artistic creative work," (De Backer, Lombaerts, De Mette, Buffel & Elias, 2012, p. 53). With help from outside artistic forces, it was possible that the knowledge gained by educators will influence students to think more creatively in their daily studies. De Backer et al. (2012) goes on to explain that, "...from an educational point of view, the arts as a medium can stimulate several developmental areas of pupils (e.g. creative, dynamic-affective, psychomotor and social)," (p. 54). By understanding the arts and how they can be used to learn most subjects in primary school, students can overcome learning roadblocks that existed previous to their introduction to the arts.

There were teachers that do not consider the integration of art in the curriculum to be beneficial to themselves or to students. A study done by Purnell (2004) explains that, "For arts integration to work, educators and administrators need to stop thinking of art as a pleasant diversion, devoid of content, and learn to see the arts as an important, dynamic intellectual tool for exploring, experiencing and understanding ourselves and the world in which we live," (p. 160). This study involved sending out questionnaire's to 3rd-5th grade teachers regarding how they value art integration, their current practices in the classroom and what resources help the teachers to integrate art into the classroom. Art integration may help students learn core subjects in school, but it also helps the student to discover their own potential by thinking outside of the box. A teacher in Purnell's (2004) study states that, "Basically, the majority of class time is devoted to the fundamentals of learning and the art portion is considered supplemental," (p. 160). The integration of art should not just be supplemental; it should be

required in every class lesson on a daily basis. The use of art in every core subject would allow students to realize their full potential as well as help them to expand their minds.

Primary school teachers are seen not just as teachers, but as many things, such as someone to look up to, a hero and even an art teacher. New teachers gain these titles from gaining experience in the field of teaching. Szekely & Bucknam (2011) explain that, "School subjects are taught and students commit them to memory, but not to the heart. Art teachers help move students through unforgettable sights, sounds, impressions, and amazing beauty. The role of the art teacher is preparing a daily museum to expose students to beautiful things to see, objects and sites they would not experience anywhere else. The daily query of an art teacher is not "what can I say?" but "what can I show students that will inspire them for a lifetime?" (p. 24). All primary school teachers can be seen as teachers of art by their students, but that all depends on how the teachers themselves view the use of art in the classroom and the positive effects its use can have on students. Appendix C demonstrates the percent of public elementary schools that report the availability of arts specialists, the frequency of arts instruction and the availability of curriculum guides for arts subject areas. Based on a study involving teachers and art education, Oreck states that, "The teachers identified professional development workshops with artists as key to their ability to implement arts processes in their teaching," (p. 9). Every student holds amazing potential and teachers are the driving force to bring that potential to life in each and every student they teach. That potential stems from the integration of art in the curriculum and the use of the creative mind.

Community support

In primary school, art is either blended into regular classroom time or taught by members of the community, such as parents or other outside help. Many parents see the use of art in primary school as very important because it allows students to use their creative minds and aids in a students learning of core subjects. Support in the arts from the community can help students and teachers to think outside the box and to provide a more quality education. Presently, funding is not available to provide support from credentialed art educators, which is why parents and other outside forces are the ones providing art classes to students. Jacobson (2011) explains that, "Quality art education belongs in the curriculum and needs to be respected for its academic contributions," (p. 56). Appendix D shows the percent of public elementary schools that reported providing arts activities outside of regular school hours and the percent reporting partnerships with outside artists.

Jacobson is a parent, and has discovered from years of experience that children are receiving limited exposure to art from someone that is actually educated in the arts. With support from the community, Jacobson, who holds an undergraduate degree in fine art, secured a position as an art specialist and volunteered time in primary school classrooms. By doing this, Jacobson was able to help incorporate the use of art in the classroom, but was also able to connect with local art programs. These programs were willing to volunteer time in schools and individual classrooms to educate students in the arts and help blend art in with the curriculum.

Parental influence

The involvement of parents in a child's education is essential to their success in school. With funding in schools being cut, leading to decreased use of art in and out of the classroom, support from parents can be especially helpful. Melnick, Witmer & Strickland (2011) explains that, "Parental influences likely have more of an effect than school on most children, and efforts to involve parents in the arts with their children may be more productive than simply providing arts programs in schools," (p. 154). Parents can help reach out to the community, start programs that focus on the arts, and provide support in the arts at home. Children bring home what they work on in school, and parents can be the driving force that influences their child's creative inner self.

Art and the learning of core subjects

There are many ways to incorporate art into teaching and learning. As noted above, every student learns in a different way. In order for a student to be successful, it is imperative that educators find a way to successfully integrate art into existing curriculum. By integrating the arts into curriculum, students will be able to connect the use of arts to a subject they are learning in school. Gullatt (2008) said that, "According to the researchers, art projects should be an extension of student understanding of the curriculum content, not merely a "color sheet" for early finishers," (p. 16). A few of those researchers include Dewey, Eisner and Gardner, three very influential figures when it comes to art and education. Dewey believed that there was a positive connection between instruction in the arts and cognition. Eisner came up with a system that involved three different levels of art education outcomes. The first is arts-based outcomes, which assessed art curriculum

taught in art programs. The second is arts-related outcomes, which involved the artistic aspects that students carried with them outside of the school environment. The third is ancillary outcomes, which are the outcomes that had an effect on common curriculum.

Eisner believed that the goals of art education should lie within the first two tiers, arts-based and arts-related outcomes, both of which involve the use of art and creativity in and out of the classroom. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences was created with the idea that all people demonstrate strengths in a combination of multiple intelligences, not just one. Gullatt (2008) explains that, "School instruction caters to the logical-mathematical and linguistic intelligences ignoring the other six potential intelligences possessed by students. The additional six intelligences are identified by Gardner as (a) bodily kinesthetic, (b) musical, (c) spatial, (d) interpersonal, (e) intrapersonal, and (f) naturalistic," (p. 22). Gardner believed that these intelligences are all connected to the arts and that students will become more active in the learning process if learning is catered more to their individual intelligence strengths.

Role of teacher in art education

The incorporation of the arts in curriculum is ultimately up to the individual classroom teacher, and is often looked at as something that does not directly aid in a student's learning of core subjects. A study was performed where primary and secondary school teachers in Scotland were asked how they view teaching of the arts in their classrooms. Wilson, MacDonald, Byrne, Ewing & Sheridan (2008) demonstrate that, "The arts were also seen as encouraging transferable skills of benefit in other areas of the

curriculum, particularly literacy and numeracy. Primary teachers suggested that the potential of the arts for teaching other areas of the curriculum (e.g. math through music, English through drama) was insufficiently realized..." (p. 47). Through years of experience, teachers often learn that the incorporation of arts into the curriculum is something that can in fact help students to learn core subjects. Informing the teacher of the benefits of art incorporation early on can shape their teaching methods and have more of a positive effect on all students in a classroom.

Methodology

*Pseudonyms have been used for the names of people, places and organizations.

Prior to writing up the Literature Review section, the researcher studied primary schools located on the Central Coast of California and discovered a public charter elementary school that opened 2 short years ago. A public charter school is generally known as a K-8 school that is open and free to the public, but also accepts donations from families. The National Alliance For Public Charter Schools (2013) describes public charter schools as, "independent public schools that are allowed the freedom to be more innovative, while being held accountable for improved student achievement." Currently this school only provides K-6, but is in the process of expanding and will soon be teaching 7th and 8th grades. The school currently has 300 students enrolled, with about 25 to each kindergarten classroom. I was unable to find the demographics of the school because it is still so new.

On October 8th, 2013, the researcher emailed the principal of the school explaining her capstone project and interest in meeting with her to discuss the details. On October 24th, 2013, the principal and I met to talk about my project. A copy of the researchers Project Proposal was provided for the principal, and it explained:

- a) The focus of the research, including a primary question:
 - a. Is the integration of arts & crafts in primary school curriculum important to a student's education and learning process?
- b) What action would be taken:
 - a. Volunteer in 2 kindergarten classes and observe how the use of art helps the students to learn core subjects.
 - b. Understand why art is so important to a child's learning process
- c) The questions the researcher would ask students, teachers, parents and staff regarding the project.

The principal read through the proposal and expressed that she thought this was a good project. Prior to meeting with the principal, the researcher emailed both kindergarten teachers and briefly explained her capstone project to them, and asked if they were interested in having her volunteer in their classrooms. A quick response was received from the teachers, and a plan was made as to when the volunteering process would start.

The first day volunteering at the elementary school was November 5th, 2013. Each class consists of approximately 25 students each. Per an agreement with Teacher A, the researcher would arrive at the school by 9, and stay until lunchtime (about 12 noon). Teacher A's

classroom was visited first and he immediately informed the researcher that if she needed anything or had any questions while observing, to ask him. Upon walking through the room, it was learned that the students were working on their journals, writing a sentence about “where they like to go” followed by a drawing demonstrating what their sentence explained. Students enlisted the help of the researcher to help them spell words and figure out what they should draw that would best demonstrate what they wrote about. After a few minutes, the students were instructed to put away their journals, and to gather on the rug to learn about the letter Nn, how it sounds, what it looks like, and to learn a few simple words that start with the letter N.

While the class moved on to an English and Language Arts (ELA) activity called ‘The Daily 5’, the researcher noticed some art projects that were hanging on the wall. Teacher A explained in an earlier email that the students had recently worked on a project involving a character called Pete the Cat. Teacher A (Personal Connection, October 7, 2013) explained that this art project “focused on the literary aspects of character and setting. The students painted their settings and created Pete the Cat as the character out of shapes.” Each student’s projects included a setting, a representation of Pete the Cat, using shapes, and the sentence, “I can rock with Pete the Cat!” ‘I can’ is underlined because each student wrote the words ‘I can’ on their project, followed by the rest of the words, printed out. This project covers the concepts of character and setting, includes squares, triangles, rectangles and circles to create Pete, and also allowed the student to express themselves creatively in the painting of the setting.

Once the language arts lesson was complete, it was time for the students to go to recess. When recess was over, the researcher proceeded to Teacher B’s classroom. An

introduction was made to the teacher followed by an observation of the class. At that time, the class was working on learning numbers, more specifically, the number 7. Teacher B played a video which went over each number leading up to 7, followed by a short song for the students to sing that would help them remember the number 7. The students received worksheets to help them better learn the number 7, what it looks like, how to represent it in a drawing, how to count up to the number 7, and understand what comes before and after that number. Once that worksheet was done, the class had the chance to complete a worksheet that included little pictures of objects counting up to a certain number and asked the student to write how many pictures there were of each thing. In this lesson, the class learned the different ways to demonstrate the number 7, whether writing out the number or drawing little pictures. Student A, a student with great imagination, chose to draw 7 different rockets on his worksheet, instead of using the typical tally or circle. Every child learns a different way, and these worksheets did a good job of covering the ways the numbers can be represented. When that lesson was over, it was time for lunch. I walked with the class to the lunchroom, went to the office to check out, and left campus for the day.

On November 7th, 2013, the researcher returned to the school at 9 and quickly learned that the kindergarten classes were participating in an awards ceremony to celebrate 'Caring' and 'Kindness'. After the award ceremony, Teacher A and the students went back to the classroom where they began a lesson about food of the autumn season. Following this lesson, Teacher A transitioned to a discussion involving transportation and then touched briefly on hot air balloons. During recess, Teacher A set up the students tables for an art project involving

different shapes, paint, and hot air balloons. When the class returned from recess, the teacher explained the steps involved in the hot air balloon project.

The students were given a large piece of construction paper with the shape of a hot air balloon drawn on it, as well as a basket. Teacher A explained to the class that they would be drawing triangles, squares, rectangles and circles with different colored crayons inside the designated balloon and basket area as if they were decorating their balloons. He then instructed them to use the paint provided to make the balloon one color and to paint the basket brown. Once each student was finished, they cut out the balloon and basket shapes, wrote their names on the back of each one, and turned it in to the teacher for safekeeping. In this lesson, the students relearned their shapes, learned about different forms of transportation and used their creative minds to design their own colorful hot air balloons. Teacher A explained to the students that they should use different colored crayons for the shapes and paint one solid color for the balloon. Student B was observed using various colored crayons for the shapes, a different color for each shape. When Student B was finished drawing her shapes, she proceeded to paint the balloon one color, red. The project would be complete by using string to connect the basket to the balloon and attaching 'action' pictures of the students to make it look like they are flying away in their hot air balloons. Appendix E illustrates Teacher A drawing shapes on the balloon with crayons, the class setup for the project and the finished product that the teacher used as an example for the class. Lunch followed once the students were done working on their balloons and that concluded observations for the day.

On November 21st, 2013, the researcher spent some time volunteering in Teacher B's classroom. After the teacher introduced the classes Daily 5 ELA lesson for the day, the students proceeded to rotate to different stations to work on reading and writing. Teacher B gave the researcher permission to run one of the stations for the lesson. The students that rotated to this station were instructed to use colored markers to write their names, age and school name on an art project they had previously worked on involving painting leaves using fall colors. Each group that rotated to this station consisted of 5 students each. Each student was given his or her fall leaves art project and were instructed by the researcher to use the markers to write their names, age and school name. Some of the students explained to the researcher that their school name was usually abbreviated and they did not know how to write the whole thing out. That is when the researcher used a dry erase board to write down the full school name, helping each student to successfully write the name of the school themselves.

Student C was given their fall leaves art project and decided to use different colored markers to write each letter of their name, age, and school name. When it came time to write the school name, the student asked the researcher to hold the dry erase board so she could see how to spell the words correctly. Another group of students rotated to the researchers table. When Student D was given his project, he wrote his name, age and school name in various places on the paper, following the shapes of the leaves. This activity took over 30 minutes for the whole class to cycle through the different stations. After the students cleaned up what they were working on, it was time for them to go to lunch.

Results

The research provided in the literature review as well as the observations conducted in the methodology section all supported the original hypothesis: The use of art in the classroom aids in students learning of core subjects. The literature research demonstrates that the use of art in classrooms allows children to use their creative minds and aids in the learning of core subjects, such as English and math. Due primarily to the lack of funding present in schools, art gets put on the back burner, severely limiting students exposure to the arts. Even with the budget cuts, it is still possible for art to be integrated into the curriculum with help from teachers as well as the community.

From the late 19th century to present-day, the topic of art and education had been a concern to philosopher John Dewey, Stanford art and education professor Elliot Eisner, and developmental psychologist Howard Gardner, just to name a few. Dewey, Eisner & Gardner all believed that art and creativity are fundamental to a child's learning in school. Research on the benefits of art use in schools has continued over the years, and has become an important part of elementary school education. Budget cuts prove to be the biggest obstacle when it comes to integrating arts into the curriculum successfully.

The No Child Left Behind Act limits art use in schools because government funding was provided for standardized testing only. If 100% of students were unable to pass the standardized tests, they would be required to meet Adequate Yearly Progress. Without meeting AYP for 5 years, a school could be shut down. The demand of standardized testing in schools does not leave much room in the curriculum for art, but only for core subjects. The majority of

schools provide some sort of art instruction in class at least once a week, when it should be taught and/or integrated into the regular teaching schedule on the daily.

Though there are a few challenges when it comes to incorporating arts in classrooms, a positive way to promote the arts is to provide teachers with a brief art education themselves. Members of the community, such as parents, faculty and local art organizations, can provide art education to teachers. Art should be seen as an important tool that fosters student learning of core subjects. Teachers are seen as an inspiration for students and can promote creativity by demonstrating how art molds the creative mind. Connections with the community can help bring more creativity into schools in the form of volunteers and parental support. If parents learn about benefits of art use in classrooms, the volunteer rate would increase and students would receive a more rounded education. Parental support in the arts at home and in school is necessary for a student to succeed in their studies.

The best way to incorporate art into the curriculum is to blend it into existing lesson plans and to provide art lessons that compliment what students are learning in class. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligence's explains that we all demonstrate strengths in a combination of intelligences. He believed that all 8 intelligences are connected to the arts and that students will be more involved in learning if each strength is addressed individually. The teacher is the foundation of learning for students and support of the arts can be seen as the stepping-stone into a successful education.

Class observations

Analysis of the student observations done at the public charter school helped to reiterate why the use of art in classrooms is crucial to a student's education. In both classrooms, art was integrated into regular curriculum as well as taught separately a few days a week. In Teacher A's classroom, the Pete the Cat art project helped students to learn the concepts of character and setting as well as relearn the different shapes. The students were required to use their creative minds to piece together shapes to make Pete the Cat as well as write a sentence about their pictures using their imaginations.

When working on the Number 7 worksheet in Teacher B's classroom, Student A actively used his creative mind to draw 7 rockets instead of just drawing tallies. Drawing rockets helped this student to count to 7 successfully because he drew objects he was interested in personally. This most likely helps him to retain the knowledge learned by doing the worksheet. Students are notorious for breezing through worksheets just to get them done; instead of taking the time like Student A did, to understand the different problems.

When working on the hot air balloon art project, Student B used different colored crayons to differentiate the shapes drawn on the paper. The different colors helped Student B to keep the different shapes separate from each other as well as making the picture more appealing to the eye with more color. Being able to differentiate the fact that the red crayon was used to draw a square, the green crayon was used to draw a rectangle, etc., Student B was able to clearly understand that the shapes were different from each other and that the different shapes can be used to create different things, such as Pete the Cat.

The fall leaves art project gave students free reign to write wherever they wanted on the page, allowing them to use their creative minds. Student C demonstrated that she was creative and liked using art by writing her name, age and school name using different colored markers. She chose to write everything on the bottom of her project, following the line of the paper. Though all the students had a hard time writing the full school name, most were successful in recreating it based off of what was written on the dry erase board. Having the option to use markers of different colors made the activity more enjoyable for all of the students. Student D followed the shape of the leaves to write his name, age and school name. He demonstrated that writing in a straight line is not always necessary because the readers' eyes will follow the pattern of letters on the page. His project was fun to look at because he made it possible to fully take in his artwork and his writing at the same time.

Conclusion

This project was personally meaningful to me because of my artistic upbringing. I believe that my appreciation for the arts growing up helped me to make the decision to be a teacher later in life. It is important that all teachers use whatever resources are available to them to integrate art into the curriculum on a daily basis. This is not something that teachers can do alone, which is why we need the help of fellow teachers, parents, school administrators and the community. Allowing students to show their artistic side in the classroom can help them to apply that creativity into the learning of all subjects in school.

The combination of research conducted in the literature review section, as well as the observations done at the elementary school support my primary research question. The primary research question was: How is the integration of arts & crafts in primary school curriculum important to a student's education and learning process? My research demonstrates that the use of art in the classroom helps students to learn core subjects. A student's creativity can help he/she to acquire new learning skills, which could in turn help them to excel when participating in standardized testing throughout the elementary school experience. Future research could be improved by interviewing students and teachers. Beyond observations, interviews could help to gain an understanding of the inner workings of children's minds as well as learn how teachers view the use of art in the classroom. Limitations of this project include lack of exposure to all grade levels in the school.

This project helped me to understand where art stands in schools today. I learned that it is possible to help bring more art to schools by volunteering in classrooms as well as reaching out to the community. Lack of resources/funds is the main reason art is overlooked in schools today and community support will help raise awareness. Integrating art into curriculum helps foster a student's learning by allowing them to use their creative minds on a daily basis. With continued research and support of the arts in schools, it is possible for students to acquire an all around balanced education that supports their multiple intelligences equally.

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Appendix A

Appendix A

Average Amount of Instruction Time Elementary School Teachers Reported Spending

Subject	Mean time spent per week (in hours)	Percentage of weekly instruction time
Reading/language arts/English	10.0	39
Mathematics	5.8	22
Science	2.5	10
Social studies/history	2.5	10
Art/music	1.6	6
Physical education/health	1.6	6

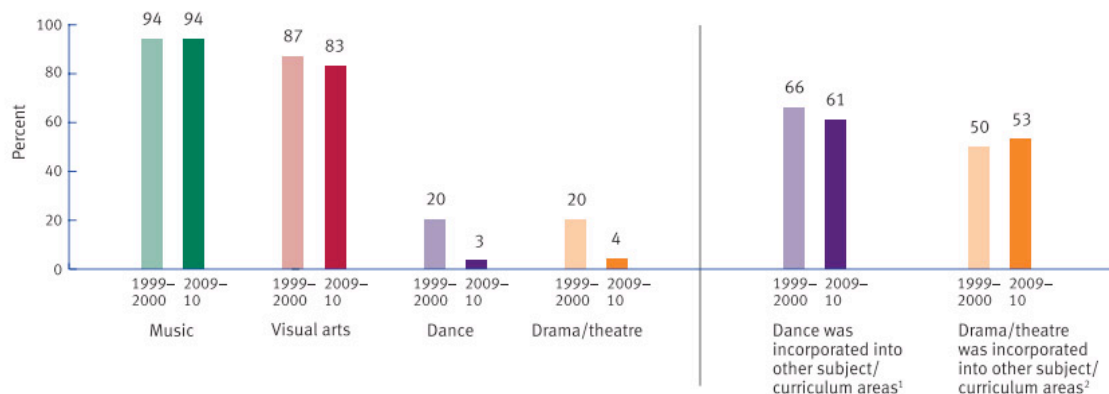
Source: GAO analysis of Education data.

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Appendix B

Figure 1

Percent of public elementary schools reporting instruction designated specifically for various arts subjects and percent incorporating dance and drama/theatre into other subject or curriculum areas: School years 1999–2000 and 2009–10



Appendix C

Figure 2

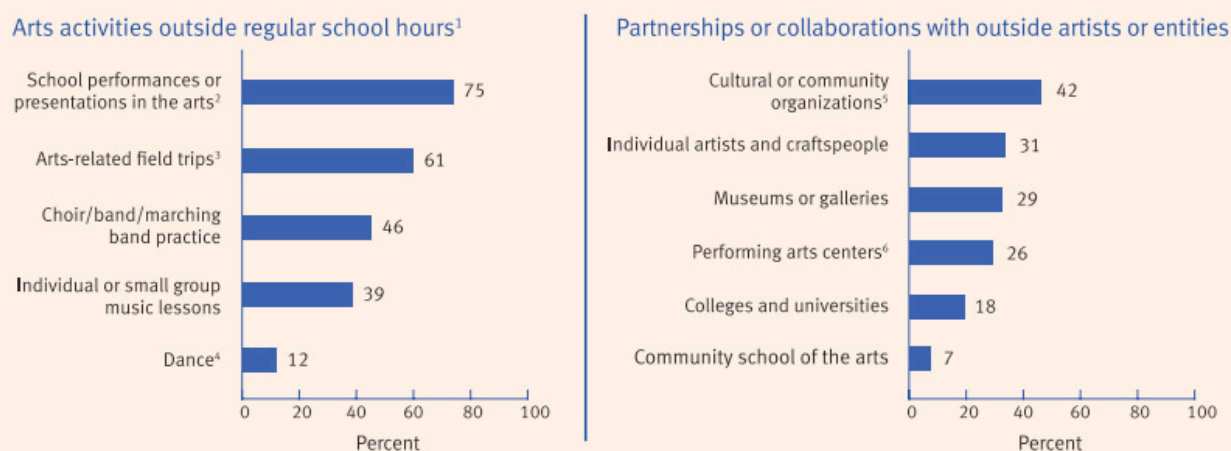
Among public elementary schools that offered instruction in various arts subjects, percent reporting the availability of arts specialists, the frequency of arts instruction, and the availability of district curriculum guides for arts subject areas: School year 2009–10



Appendix D

Figure 3

Percent of public elementary schools reporting that they provided or sponsored curriculum-guided activities in the arts outside of regular school hours in 2009–10 and percent reporting partnerships or collaborations with various outside artists or entities in 2008–09



Appendix B, C & D cited from:

Parsad, B., Spiegelman, M., & National Center for Education Statistics. (2012). *Arts education in public elementary and secondary schools: 1999-2000 and 2009-10*. Available from ERIC: (ED530715) <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED530715.pdf>

Appendix E

