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Foreword by Ilona V. Missakian, Ph.D., guest editor

The articles featured in this issue cover a variety of arts integration contexts and a variety of populations. Professionals included in the research for this issue are teachers, pre-service teachers, teacher educators, paraprofessionals, administrators, and teaching artists at elementary to college levels. Students in the studies at these levels are experiencing arts integration in many ways during class instruction, performing arts classes, special education adaptations, and nursing preparation. Researchers are keen to point out the struggle facing those who are aware of the benefits of arts integration in situations where the arts are under scrutiny for their value or relevance to programs and outcomes. The opening piece, an opinion, sets the tone for the inquiries and findings here which the following book review and articles unpack as they examine lessons, strategies, perceptions, contributions, and as they review existing efforts.

Opinion

Reconsidering the Value of a Visual Arts Education by Christopher Willard

The limited perception of visual arts as a capitalist enterprise comes under thoughtful criticism in this opinion piece. The author examines the relevance of what artists essentially do—express, analyze, encounter unknowns/ambiguity/ethical challenges—to learn and to create more than stereotypically transfers into skills for a “job.” The argument suggests a re-evaluation of arts as a student pathway to and through post-secondary choices of focus.

Review

Book Review of Arts Integration in Diverse K-5 Classrooms: Cultivating Literacy Skills and Conceptual Understanding by Liane Brouillette published by Teachers College Press by Barbara Cohen

Cohen describes how the text offers examples of arts integration models with theoretical backing into class instruction via drama, music, dance, and visual arts which show student gains in comprehension and communication. Additionally, skills contributing to language acquisition and executive function are also highlighted in several areas. The text provides valuable material for classroom teachers, researchers, and humanities scholars seeking to understand further the contributions of arts to learning and expression.

Articles

Unity in Diversity: The Preserved Art Works of the Varied Peoples of Abeokuta from 1830 to Date
Chris Funke Ifeta, Olatunji Idowu, John Adenle, Bukola Odesiri Ochei

The authors offer an overview of Nigerian art through features of the many artefacts observed over time and of the different ways that they have been crafted and exhibit tradition. As the researchers examine the current ways that such art is being presented, they add insight into how the art is being sustained and made relevant to youth. They focus not only on preservation of the art but also on its potential for production on a larger industrial scale.

Teaching and Learning through the Arts

Stakeholder Perceptions of the Effects of a Public School-Based Theatre Program for Children with ASD by Thalia R. Goldstein, Matthew D Lerner, Sarah Paterson, Lena Jaeggi, Tamara Spiewak Toub, Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, Roberta Golinkof

Special education teachers, administrators, teaching artists, and paraprofessionals are the stakeholders in this study that the researchers focus on to examine their perceptions of how teachers and their students with autism-spectrum disorders respond to a musical theatre program (taught by teacher artists). Several survey forms are used to generate data about perceived efficacy/usefulness of strategies that are not unique to drama/theatre alone, but apply in other contexts, also. An identification of needs regarding motor and social skills is mentioned. The authors notice that though the stakeholders may use different language to express their perceptions, they can come to consensus.

Connecting Arts Integration to Social-Emotional Learning among Special Education Students by Rebecca Casciano, Lina Cherfas, and Lauren Jobson-Ahmed

With the federally-funded program, Everyday Arts for Special Education (EASE), in focus for the study, the authors examine SEL (social-emotional learning) competencies—engagement, self-control, interpersonal skills, and leadership—for special education students. The authors draw on classroom observations, workshop observations, and teacher interviews, weaving these elements to highlight the methodology and activities of EASE which factor into the discussion of implementation and engagement. Seeing success here, the authors indicate a need for more research on the impact of arts integration impact for students with disabilities.

Using the Arts to Create a Pedagogy of Creativity, Innovations, and Risk-Taking (CIRT) by Christine Cho and John L. Vitale

The authors examine the definition of CIRT for generalist elementary teacher candidates, noting first the lack of consensus concerning the initial term “creativity.” They highlight how multiple factors associated with creativity become lenses with which to look at innovation and risk-taking. Music and visual arts are especially noted in the piece for their impact on student imagination, concentration, problem-solving, and engagement. The authors support the use of the arts for teachers to work with their students for language, numeracy, critical thinking, and learning beyond the classroom.

Making Content Relevant (or Not): Exploring the Outcomes of a Project-Based Curriculum in Post-Secondary Art Appreciation by Carolina Eve Blatt-Gross

The author develops an art appreciation course for primarily non-art majors on a campus with no art minor, major, or department, striving to make the content meaningful and relevant to the students. Including various media to help examine the connection of art, culture, public/campus artwork and project-based activities, the author collects a variety of student responses and creative outputs that suggest that they found value in the opportunity of the art appreciation course to themselves and their different studies.

Research Approaches

Csikszentmihalyi's Concept of Flow and Theories of Motivation Connection to the Arts in an Urban Public High School by Jane A. Beese and Jennifer L. Martin

Referencing Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow to reflect upon the responses of performing arts high school students, the authors connect the students' experiences to the projection of flow states. Through interviews, students share their feelings during preparations, practices, and performances in visual, musical, and dance pieces and give testimony to a range of emotions and realizations. The authors urge educators to devote themselves to student engagement and enrichment via learning goals that the arts can contribute to meaningfully.

Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

Challenges and Supports to Elementary Teacher Education: Case Study of Preservice Teachers' Perspectives on Arts Integration by Jamie Hipp and Margaret- Mary Sulentic Dowell

Pre-service elementary teacher responses are in focus for this case study which reports the perceptions of the participants as they completed student teaching and a capstone project. Challenges identified reveal the ongoing concerns such as time, resources, and working around testing while supports include mentor teacher facilitation and student performance. The authors make several recommendations to improve how pre-service teachers are prepared to integrate arts in education with the contributions of administrators, teacher educators, and mentor-teacher training.

Medical Humanities

Turning Theory into Practice: A Case Study in the Arts by Ilene D Lieberman, Mara E. Parker

The authors give a detailed report on the development and sequence of a curriculum for nursing students using music and visual arts to address the students' professional skills of listening and observation. The selections for the music and visual pieces reflected several classical music compositions and recognized masters and included the campus art gallery. The course results as presented in the authors' data show growth in the skills of the students although the students themselves may not have recognized the changes that their responses suggest. The implications for clinical practice and other disciplines are considered as well.