



Arts Education in Maryland Schools Alliance

Arts Integration

Creating an Arts Integration School

What is Arts Integration? Arts integration is instruction that integrates content and skills from the arts - dance, music, theatre and the visual arts - with other core subjects. Arts Integration occurs when there is a seamless blending of content and skills between an art form and a co-curricular subject.

Why do it? Arts integration is highly effective in engaging and motivating students. It supports academic achievement and improved social behavior of students while enhancing school climate and parental involvement. The arts provide students multiple modes for demonstrating learning and competency. A rich array of arts skills and intellectual processes provide multiple entry points for students linking to content in other subject areas. Similarly, arts instruction is deepened through integration of content from the other subject areas. It enlivens the teaching and learning experience for entire school communities. At its best, arts integration is transformative for students, teachers and communities. The imaginations and creative capacities of teachers and students are nurtured and their aspirations afforded many avenues for realization and recognition.

How do you do it? Arts integration is a fundamental culture shift. It takes time to build awareness, understanding and commitment among members of the school community.

Ongoing professional development is essential to give classroom teachers facility in arts disciplines and to enable them to analyze curriculum to find the natural connections between arts curriculum and the curriculum in other subject areas including creating lessons and units of instruction.

Collaboration is essential - between classroom teachers and arts specialists. Common planning time is critical.

Arts specialists are key resources, collaborators and leaders in developing arts integration programs.

Arts integration specialists are extremely valuable resources for guiding the planning of professional development and for supporting collaborations among teachers and with partners, such as cultural institutions and teaching artists.

What are budget and structural priorities for becoming an arts integration school? Staffing including as many arts disciplines as possible and an arts integration specialist or lead teacher is a priority. Some schools use part-time or shared positions to extend their reach.

Professional development - schools that are highly successful arts integration schools provide ongoing training experiences for the teachers. Teachers' capacities in arts integration deepen over time. Scheduling common planning time that enables classroom teachers to collaborate with arts specialists and others is vital.

Arts organizations and teaching artists can collaborate with teachers providing rich arts integration experiences for students and professional development for teachers.

What is a realistic timeline? It may take three years to fully realize potential as an arts integration school. Planning to achieve this is important. While schools tailor their own pathways to successful arts integration programs, there are some useful steps many follow. The following phases are not intended to be prescriptive but rather suggestive of the process:

Phase 1:

- Build awareness and commitment within the school community including parents
- Look at arts integration models in schools in Baltimore and across Maryland
- Begin to build staff in the arts
- Engage the school community in planning
- Begin to identify and engage partners from the cultural community
- Have a team participate in professional development in arts integration and share their experience with colleagues
- Make budgetary decisions that reflect commitment to arts integration

Phase 2:

- Continue to build staff in the arts
- Provide professional development for more teachers in arts integration.
- Address leadership for arts integration through arts staff, trained classroom teachers and an arts integration specialist
- Identify art integration mentor teachers on staff who could assist in the training of new personnel
- Network with other arts integration schools in the city and state
- Share successful arts integration units with the school community
- Display curriculum maps - curriculum mapping is the process of delineating natural connections between and among curricula for various subject areas, identifying the outcomes met through an arts integrated lesson or unit
- Seek cultural experiences for students linked to arts integration through collaboration with arts organizations and teaching artists

Phase 3:

- Continue with what is above and attain specific goals such as:
- Reach staffing in all four arts disciplines even if utilizing part-time staffing
- Reach the point that all teachers have received professional development in arts integration with some having extensive training
- Share your work with your world and celebrate the imagination of your students and teachers!