



# ARTS INTEGRATION

▲ A Strategy to Improve Teaching and Learning, Promote Personal Competencies, and Turn Around Low-Performing Schools

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# Abstract

This paper connects the dots between arts integration, students' personal competencies, and school turnaround. Its thesis is that by intertwining art forms and methods with content in all subject areas, students learn more about art and the other subjects and build their personal competencies for learning. The paper includes the story of an inner-city elementary school that significantly turned around its performance using a schoolwide approach to arts integration. Core to all aspects of the discussion is a focus on students' engagement in their learning and the role arts integration plays in enhancing students' capacity and desire to learn.

## From Wilson Arts Integration Elementary School

"Kids at Wilson LOVE coming to school each day...their passion for learning and the arts is overwhelming." (Wilson parent)

"Arts integration gives us the flexibility to know how to learn." (Wilson student)

# Arts Integration's New Paradigm for Learning

## Students' Role in Learning

With the national focus on preparing all students for college and career, educators recognize more than ever the importance of providing a quality education for every student. The question is, "How do we accomplish this goal?" It seems that no matter what we do, we are still missing the mark with many students.

Arts integration is a strategy to motivate students, engage them in their learning, and promote their academic success. Arts integration is an instructional approach that can transform a school culture, enhance students' personal competencies, and accelerate learning. Arts integration is a strategy for reaching disengaged students and turning schools around.

Redding (2013) noted that most school reform efforts focused on *leadership* and *instruction*. The roles of the adults in school reform—state officials, district staff, school

leaders, teachers, and parents—were typically addressed. Less often, school reformers discussed the *students' role* in their learning. This role included the students' capacity and desire to learn—in other words, the students' personal competencies.

The National Academy of Sciences noted the significance of having students involved in their own learning through metacognition, active learning, and transfer of knowledge (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999). William Lofquist (1993) challenged the paradigms adults employed when interacting with youths. According to Lofquist, adults typically viewed youths as objects whereby the adult was in control, and the youths were recipients of services the adults provided. He believed adults rarely viewed youths as resources or partners actively engaged in their own development and learning.

This notion of students as resources in their own learning was further articulated by Palmer (2007), who discussed the teacher's role with students in higher education: "When I ask teachers to name the biggest obstacle to good teaching, the complaints I hear are, 'My students are silent, sullen, withdrawn...they do not engage well with ideas'" (p. 40). Palmer also used an analogy shared with him by the dean of an experimental college who often heard faculty complain about the quality of their students. The dean finally said to the faculty that "they sounded like doctors in a hospital saying, 'Don't send us any more sick people—we don't know what to do with them. Send us healthy patients so we can look like good doctors'" (p. 42). Palmer used this analogy to illustrate the assumption that students were "brain-dead."

The dominant treatment is to drip data bits into our students' veins, wheeling their comatose forms from one information source to the next until the prescribed course of treatment is complete, hoping they will absorb enough intellectual nutrients to maintain their vital signs until they have graduated. When we teach by dripping information into passive forms, students who arrive in the classroom alive and well become passive consumers of knowledge and are dead on departure when they graduate. (2007, p. 42)

Palmer (2007) felt schools should be more sensitive to students' needs, less "defensive" about the educator's role, and more focused on identifying "creative modes of teaching" (p. 43). The federal pendulum may be swinging in this direction as well, given the recent core beliefs outlined by Secretary Arne Duncan for the renewal of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The second core belief states, "Arts, history, foreign languages, and advanced math are essentials, not luxuries."<sup>1</sup>

Changing the conversation to focus on the students' role in learning requires a discussion of the impact of teachers' methods of instruction on students' desire to learn. In many classrooms, the interaction between youths and adults still reflects the paradigms described by Lofquist (1993). Shifting the paradigm by focusing on how and why a student learns highlights the potential of the arts to propel student learning. There is increased acknowledgment among educators and researchers that arts integration benefits students personally and academically, including performance in math, reading, and social studies (Deasy, 2002).

Mezirow (2009) contended that education could be improved by including a variety of art forms. Learning took place when students wrote poems, took photographs, or participated in other arts-related experiences. To this extent, the arts helped reveal experiences and insights in ways that were not readily available in traditional learning materials or methods.

## What Is Arts Integration?

Arts integration is one of several types of arts education, and arts education of all kinds is an essential component of a quality education. President Barack Obama's 2008 Arts Policy Campaign proposed allocating funding for arts education as a strategy to bolster the American promises of "creativity and innovation." The President formed the Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH) to discuss findings, recommendations, and implications for policy development. It conducted an 18-month review and analysis of "challenges and opportunities facing arts education" (PCAH, 2011, p. 1). The review included "firsthand observations in neighborhood schools across the country, including schools in the toughest neighborhoods" (PCAH, 2011, p. 1) and found significant data demonstrating the impact of arts education on "student academic achievement and creativity" (PCAH, 2011, p. 1).

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/americas-educational-crossroads-making-right-choice-our-children%E2%80%99s-future>, para. 44.

Arts integration teaches core academic content through the use of multiple art forms, such as drama, visual arts, music, and dance. Students engage in a creative process that connects an art form with subject matter to meet objectives for both, deepening an understanding of both. Arts integration facilitates interdisciplinary linkages. It enhances students' personal competencies that propel learning in all subject areas.

The term “arts in education”—that is, “the different art disciplines in a variety of roles within the greater scene of education, including non-arts classrooms and subjects” (Davis, 2008, p. 14)—denotes a larger viewpoint than arts integration. Davis included vocabulary to understand the moving parts of arts in education. Other terminology she used were *arts included*, *arts expanded*, *arts professional*, *arts extras*, *aesthetic education*, and *arts cultura*. She noted that arts-based education, as articulated by the Artful Learning model at the Leonard Bernstein Center for Artful Learning at Gettysburg College, essentially meant that teaching and learning were based on the arts. The arts in this environment provided the subject matter “as a model for teaching, learning, and assessment, and provide a window through which non-arts subjects are explored. In arts-based schools, the arts are taught seriously in their own right” (Davis, 2008, p. 14).

Davis (2008) also differentiated between arts integration and arts infusion. She defined arts integration in a context where the arts were interwoven with core content, “included as equal partners with the objective of improving teaching and learning within subjects and across the general curriculum” (p. 16). Arts infusion simply meant the arts were included in the curriculum. “Artists or works of art are brought from outside to enrich whatever is going on in arts and non-arts classes or activities” (p. 17).

An understanding of the deeper meaning of arts integration, as a distinct type of arts education, is critical to knowing how to support

- students in their own learning, including promoting personal competencies;
- teachers in improving their practices;
- leaders in promoting an engaged and collaborative culture among all; and
- stakeholders in promoting their collective will to turn around low-performing districts and schools.

The John F. Kennedy Center defined arts integration as “an approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form. Students engage in a creative process which connects an art form and another subject and meets evolving objectives in both” (Silverstein & Layne, 2010, p. 1). In other words, various art forms are used to promote learning in core content areas, while also promoting students' learning and appreciation of the arts, both performing and fine arts. Silverstein and Layne provided a useful unpacking of this definition<sup>2</sup> (See Appendix C.). The Kennedy Center provides a checklist which educators can use to ascertain whether their program is a comprehensive arts integration program or a different kind of arts education program (Silverstein & Layne, 2010).

The Chicago Arts Partnership in Education (CAPE) described arts integration as “teaching and learning in which arts learning and other academic learning are connected in ways in which the arts learning AND the other academic learning are both deepened.”<sup>3</sup> An arts integration approach promotes students' individual and collaborative work. According to CAPE, “Students are encouraged to reflect on the learning process, revising and documenting their findings along the way. This important step allows time for self-assessment and introspection.”<sup>4</sup> Students share their learning with each other through demonstrations and critique.

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.kennedy-center.org/education/partners/A1definitionhandout.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.artsintegrationams.com/> para. 1.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.artsintegrationams.com/> para. 3.

An arts integration approach promotes student learning and cognitive development in areas such as spatial memory and verbal skills as well as mental and physical development (Ho, Cheung, & Chan, 2003; Malyarenko et al., 1996; Silver, 1989). Arts integration also contributes to supporting competencies (cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, social/emotional) identified by Redding (2014b) in his personal competency framework. By nurturing these competencies, students become engaged and successful learners. In addition to promoting the identified personal competencies, an arts integration approach engages the student as an active participant in the school's reform efforts. By incorporating an arts integration approach into a school turnaround model, adults begin to realize not only students' role in their learning, but also students' role in managing their own behaviors. As a result, less time is expended on discipline and classroom management, contributing to more instructional time. A national trainer for the Kennedy Center at the 2014 Partnership for Education Conference remarked that she had never observed classroom management problems in an arts-integrated classroom.

The National Advisory Committee on Cultural and Creative Education (NACCCE) defined creativity "as an imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are original and of value" (Cochrane & Cockett, 2007, p. 59). NACCCE encouraged educators to assess every aspect of their schools as a culture and as an organization. This included examining leadership, learning, instruction, and curriculum to understand the necessary ingredients for building a creative school. According to Silverstein and Layne (2010), the key to arts integration was students' involvement in the creative process; students do not simply "repeat (a song), copy (an art project), or follow directions" (p. 5). Their work must be unique. Silverstein and Layne (2010) identified the connection between creativity and arts integration by noting that in arts integration students used their imagination while exploring

and experimenting to create original work that reflected their emotions, beliefs, and learnings through different art forms.

A unique feature of arts integration is its interdisciplinary linkages. With an arts integration approach, connections are made between a particular art form with a particular curriculum area. Art forms can also connect to a school's needs or concerns, which might include areas such as bullying or character education (Silverstein & Layne, 2010). Silverstein and Layne provided an example of an arts approach within a curricular area:

[S]tudents are challenged to create a tableau (motionless stage picture) that depicts a defining moment of the Trail of Tears. They must examine the social studies content, find out what led to the United States government forcibly relocating the Native Americans west of the Mississippi River, and determine the impact the dislocation had on the Native Americans. They must then distill their understandings into a tableau, which requires them to consider stage composition, characters, actions, relationships, and expression. Because a tableau is so concise, students must return to the social studies curriculum to determine the most significant information. Once the tableau is created, students are challenged to compose short statements that they will speak within the tableau. Again, they must return to the social studies content, synthesize it, and make inferences. With each rotation through the cycle, student learning in both theatre and social studies is reinforced and deepened. The more they learn about the Trail of Tears, the more their tableaus develop; the more their tableaus develop, the more they build their understanding of history. (p. 7)

## Implementing Arts Integration

When districts and schools choose to transition to an arts integration instructional approach, significant professional development—including modeling, mentoring, and coaching—is necessary to help teachers and administrators make the shift. As is the

case with any rigorous instructional model, an arts integration approach is not a silver bullet or quick fix. It requires commitment at all levels of the education system for successful implementation. In particular, job-embedded and ongoing professional development is essential to launching a successful arts integration program. Most arts integration schools require a significant amount of professional development annually with ongoing meetings and involvement in professional learning communities where integrated lesson plans are generated and other important work occurs.

The professional development for arts integration should focus on teachers' reflections upon practices. This approach helps teachers move professional development directly into instructional practice through collaborative work in professional learning communities. While there are various approaches to professional development for arts integration, the Kennedy Center's Partners in Education Program uses the following comprehensive approach in working with districts and schools to ensure adequate professional development for teachers and leaders to achieve the desired teaching and learning outcomes. Their professional development formats include

- participatory workshops,
- courses and summer institutes,
- demonstration of teaching in classrooms,
- arts coaching, and
- study group/professional learning communities.

Garrett (2010) studied the advantages of an arts integration approach for elementary school teachers. Arts integration professional development in her study was an aspect of the Intensive Development in Education Arts model. She examined three important questions:

- How do teacher participants in arts integration professional development describe their experience?
- How are teacher practices influenced by the program?
- How are teacher beliefs and self-efficacy influenced by participation in the program? (p. 1)

Using both qualitative and quantitative data, Garrett (2010) found that arts integration assisted teachers in designing more beneficial lessons, "improved classroom management, and increased teacher efficacy" (p. 1). Teachers participating also noted that their students demonstrated "improvement in academic achievement, engagement, collaboration, and motivation" (p. 1). Other significant findings were that participating teachers indicated the Intensive Development in Education Arts training improved their classroom practices, including their capacity to create lesson plans, use different methods of assessment, and meet diverse student needs. Since students were active participants in their learning, due to collaboration between and among teachers and students, teachers reported classroom management was less challenging. Teachers also conveyed to researchers that arts integration "made learning fun" for students (p. 1).

Garrett (2010) concluded that arts integration was a "learning process rather than a simple transference of information from teacher to student; therefore, it requires a long-term commitment to allow the new skills to permeate the teachers' general instruction technique" (p. 1). She felt this finding indicated the importance of teachers receiving more arts integration professional development. She concluded that "by engaging in the Intensive Development in Education Arts program, teachers experienced the opportunity to acquire research-based strategies to add to their pedagogical repertoire, create meaningful changes in the way they think about teaching and learning, and develop curriculum for increased student capacity" (p. 188).

Garrett's (2010) research on professional development for arts integration, while promising, has limitations, as she noted. First, there was no comparison or control group of teachers who did not use arts integration or who were not enrolled in the Intensive Development in Education Arts program. Next, Garrett did not control for teachers' prior experience with arts integration. Finally, she relied on oral reports from teachers on improved student achievement

and did not collect actual data on measures of student achievement.

# Arts Integration and Student Learning

Researchers conducted studies that indicated a positive relationship between arts integration and improved student learning and engagement for youths from all socioeconomic backgrounds (Catterall, 2012; Walker, McFadden, Tabone, & Finkelstein, 2011). Correlational studies collected by Fiske (1999) demonstrated that students participating in the arts generally surpassed their peers on traditional measures of academic achievement. Researchers cited in the report found that students achieved at high levels when engaged in the arts. One especially significant finding was that “learning in and through the arts can help ‘level the playing field’ for youngsters from disadvantaged circumstances” (p. viii). Fiske noted that Catterall’s (1998) analysis of the U.S. Department of Education’s NELS.88 database consisting of 25,000 students found that students engaged at high levels with the arts “outperform ‘arts-poor’ students by virtually every measure” (Fiske, 1999, p. viii). The richness of the NELS.88 database allowed Catterall to find statistically significant differences when comparing high and low arts participants in lower socioeconomic groups.

Catterall (1998) also found convincing evidence that ongoing involvement in certain art forms—music and theater—were associated with successful achievement in reading and math. The students in this study were followed for 10 years, beginning in the mid-1990s, and were contacted again at age 26 in 2009. When reporting data by college attainment rates, attendance, types of degrees earned, and even college grades, 71 percent of low-socioeconomic status (SES)

students with meaningful experiences in the arts attended some sort of institution of higher education after graduating from high school, while only 48 percent of students with minimal exposure to the arts attended some kind of college. Additionally, of the low-SES students immersed in rich arts experiences, more than twice as many (39 percent) attended a four-year college compared to 17 percent of the low-SES students with low exposure to the arts (Catterall, 2012).

Fiske also cited the work of Shirley Brice Heath, who devoted a decade to studying many afterschool programs for low-income students. These programs were organized in three groupings: (1) sports/academic, (2) community involvement, and (3) the arts. Her research found that all students participating in these programs did better in their academic and personal lives than their non-participating peers in the same socioeconomic groups as documented and tracked by the NELS.88 data. However, the researchers were surprised to find that youths in the arts programs were doing the best (Fiske, 1999).

Fiske (1999) asserted that learning through the arts was not linear in nature. Instead, arts integration was a dynamic process in which learning in one area encouraged learning in another. This process, in turn, supported and stimulated learning through a “complex web of influence described as a ‘constellation’” (Fiske, 1999, p. viii). He also found that in effective programs, adults were coaches and facilitators. Finally, he offered reasons arts

integration changed the learning experience. The arts:

- reached students who were not otherwise being reached;
- reached students in ways that they were not otherwise being reached;
- connected students to themselves and each other;
- transformed the environment for learning;
- provided learning opportunities for the adults in the lives of young people;
- provided challenges for those students already successful; and
- connected learning experiences to the world of real work. (Fiske, 1999)

Fiske (1999) provided convincing evidence that the “arts can and do serve as a champion of change in learning” (p. xii). He challenged educators to be “champions of change,” making the arts a nonnegotiable part of students’ learning experiences (Fiske, 1999).

An arts integration approach promotes important skills for the 21st century that are not captured by typical standardized tests in reading and math (Rabkin & Redmond, 2004; Scripp, 2007). Some of these process abilities include collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and problem solving. However, it is important to investigate the role of arts integration and results from typical achievement measures. For example, Vaughn (2000) found that musical training enhanced “spatiotemporal reasoning,” which may encourage mathematics achievement.

In a meta-analysis of studies using theater and performing arts in the classroom, Podlozny (2000) found these art forms improved story recall. Another study (MacLeod, Gopie, Hourihan, Neary, & Ozubko, 2010) found that producing a word orally resulted in better recall later than when the word was read silently. Teaching

methods common to the arts are powerful when intertwined with content from other subject areas.

### Arts Integration’s Role in Promoting Personal Competencies

Integrating methods from the arts with content from various subject areas leaves the learning experience in ways that result in greater mastery of the subject objectives as well as greater understanding and appreciation of the arts. Arts integration also enhances the student’s capacity and desire to learn.

Redding (2014a) described a “something other” that parents and teachers sought for students and often found missing in the ordinary school curriculum and instructional methods:

Parents seek for their children *something other* than what they usually expect them to acquire through the regular school program, and they turn to extracurricular activities and out-of-school experiences to find it. Teachers know that each student brings to a learning task a *something other*—certain attributes that affect how the student responds to the challenge. [This] *something other* is the constellation of four personal competencies—cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and social/emotional—and the learning habits that flow from them. (p. 3)

These four personal competencies in Redding’s (2014b) framework were derived from a meta-analysis that identified and rated the relative effects of 28 factors on learning (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993; 1997). Redding provided brief definitions of these *student* factors, which were among the most powerful influences on learning in the meta-analysis:

- Cognitive Competency—prior knowledge that facilitates new learning

- Metacognitive Competency—self-regulation of learning and use of learning strategies
- Motivational Competency—engagement and persistence in pursuit of learning goals
- Social/Emotional Competency—sense of self-worth, regard for others, and emotional understanding and management to set positive goals and make responsible decisions. (p. 4)

Learning through the arts has been associated with academic achievement in other content areas (Deasy & Fulbright, 2001; Fiske, 1999; Winner & Hetland, 2000). The arts, then, enhanced students' personal competencies in ways that carried over to all learning endeavors. They contributed to students' capacity and desire to learn.

DeMoss and Morris (2002) selected 30 students in the CAPE Program across 10 classrooms where experienced teacher-artist partnerships existed. The authors studied “arts integrated learning units versus learning processes and outcomes in comparable non-arts units” (DeMoss & Morris, 2002, p. 1). In most CAPE schools in Chicago, 85 percent or more of the students receive free or reduced-price lunches. DeMoss and Morris's sample came from a variety of socioeconomic, age, and achievement backgrounds. Students were equally distributed by high, medium, and low achievement classifications. These students served as their own control group, offering explanations and justifications for the “differences in their learning process and outcomes in arts and non-arts units” (DeMoss & Morris, 2002, p. 21). Data were collected through observations, interviews, and written reflections.

**Cognitive competency.** DeMoss and Morris (2002) concluded that arts integrated instruction promoted learning for meaning and understanding rather than a “recall of facts for tests” (p. 1). In a study on memory and arts integration, Rinne, Gregory, Yarmolinskaya, and Hardiman (2011) noted

that arts integration encompasses numerous ways of processing information shown to enhance long-term memory, an important aspect of cognitive competency.

**Metacognitive competency.** Students across all achievement levels, in the DeMoss and Morris (2002) study, demonstrated significant increases in their capacity to systematically determine their own learning after arts integration units. Similar gains were not noted after traditional classroom experiences.

**Motivational competency.** DeMoss and Morris (2002) found that arts integrated instruction created more autonomous and “intrinsically motivated” student investment in their own learning (p. 1). Likewise, the study found that arts integrated instruction changed students' “characterizations of learning barriers into challenges to be solved” (p. 1).

**Social/emotional competency.** Since arts integration helps students make meaning of information and experiences and develop mastery of content, Silverstein and Layne (2010) contended that as “mastery grows, so do students' feelings of self-efficacy—the belief in oneself and one's ability to achieve” (p. 8). This observation aligns well with Redding's (2014b) description of the underpinnings of motivation and aspects of social/emotional competency, including a sense of self-worth.

Redding (2014a) called for personal competencies to be intentionally incorporated into schooling:

The personal competencies are both means for learning and goals in their own right. They are malleable, evolving over time, and subject to instruction and example. By including the enhancement of personal competencies in the design of the school community, the school, and the classroom, the competencies are intentionally strengthened for all students. (p. 13)

Arts integration is an ideal vehicle for bringing the *something other* into the education mainstream.

### Arts Integration’s Role in Turning Around Low-Performing Schools

As educators continue to experiment with innovative strategies to turn around low-performing schools, arts integration is a promising turnaround strategy. In April 2012, PCAH launched an arts education initiative to support turning around low-performing schools. The program is called Turnaround: Arts—Creating Success in Schools. This project was developed cooperatively with the U.S. Department of Education and the White House Domestic Policy Council. It is a public-private partnership aimed at closing the achievement gap and increasing student engagement in learning.<sup>5</sup>

Turnaround Arts is administered by the “Arts Education Partnership, a national coalition of the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the U.S. Department of Education.”<sup>6</sup> Partners in Turnaround Arts<sup>7</sup> provide supplemental support and resources for the project.

The project started with eight turnaround schools across the country. Schools selected were in New Orleans, Louisiana; Des Moines, Iowa; Lame Deer, Montana; Bridgeport, Connecticut; and the District of Columbia. These public schools were performing in the lowest 5 percent compared to other schools in their state. The hypothesis being tested was that “high-quality and integrated arts education boosts academic achievement,

motivates student learning, and improves school culture in the context of overall school reform.”<sup>8</sup>

Similar to the programs described earlier, this program included a summer institute (the Aspen Summer Leadership Institute), onsite professional development, and partnerships with local arts and cultural groups. These resources were supplemented with “art supplies, musical instruments, and community engagement events.”<sup>9</sup> Presidentially appointed artists on the committee adopted selected schools. In 2012, artists participating in the program were Chuck Close, Sarah Jessica Parker, Kerry Washington, Forest Whitaker, Yo-Yo Ma, Damian Woetzel, and Alfre Woodward.<sup>10</sup>

In May 2014, the PCAH announced its intent to expand its “successful Turnaround Arts initiative” (NAMM Foundation, 2014, para. 1). Additional artists engaged in the program included Marc Anthony, Elizabeth Banks, Frank Gehry, and Elton John, among others. Booz Allen Hamilton conducted an evaluation<sup>11</sup> of the first cohort of eight schools. Researchers found that seven of the eight schools “improved their overall reading proficiency rates; 6 of the 8 schools improved their math proficiency rates; and every school improved in either reading or math. 3 of the schools had double-digit point gains in math, and 2 of the schools had similar gains in reading proficiency rates” (Stoelinga, Silk, Reddy, & Rahman, 2015, p. vii). Data indicated that the gains were significant in both math and reading.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://turnaroundarts.pcah.gov>

<sup>6</sup> See <http://turnaroundarts.pcah.gov/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/National-Turnaround-Arts-Press-Release1.pdf> para. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Partners in Turnaround Arts include the Ford Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, Crayola, NAMM Foundation, the Herb Alpert Foundation, the Aspen Institute, Booz Allen Hamilton, Inktel, and SKDKnickerbocker.

<sup>8</sup> See <http://turnaroundarts.pcah.gov/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/National-Turnaround-Arts-Press-Release1.pdf> para. 1.

<sup>9</sup> See <http://turnaroundarts.pcah.gov/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/National-Turnaround-Arts-Press-Release1.pdf> para. 6.

<sup>10</sup> See <http://turnaroundarts.pcah.gov/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/National-Turnaround-Arts-Press-Release1.pdf> para. 6.

<sup>11</sup> See [http://www.pcah.gov/sites/default/files/Turnaround%20Arts%20Phase%201%20Final%20Evaluation\\_Full%20Report.pdf](http://www.pcah.gov/sites/default/files/Turnaround%20Arts%20Phase%201%20Final%20Evaluation_Full%20Report.pdf)

From 2011–2014, Turnaround Arts schools “demonstrated a 22.5% improvement in math proficiency rates and a 12.62% improvement in reading proficiency rates” (Stoelinga et al., 2015, p. vii). Of note is that the Turnaround Arts schools also had higher rates of average improvement than comparable School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools. Turnaround Arts schools had “significantly higher rates of average improvement in both math and reading” than demographically similar SIG schools in

their “districts and states, improving 6.35% more in math and 7.04% more in reading from 2011–2014” (Stoelinga et al., 2015, p. vii). These schools also exceeded average gains compared to schools in their home districts. Not surprisingly, based on the previously cited theories and research, dramatic improvements were also noted in attendance, disciplinary actions, out-of-school suspensions and in-school suspensions, and overall disciplinary actions (Stoelinga et al., 2015).

# An Inner-City School Turns Itself Around

## Lessons from Wilson Arts Integration Elementary School in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

### Background and Context

Wilson Arts Integration Elementary School in Oklahoma City is an example of a school using arts integration to turn around teaching and learning. Over a decade, this inner-city elementary school went from being one of the lowest performing elementary schools in the district to the highest performing elementary school as an arts integration approach was systematically implemented.

The Oklahoma City Public School District is the largest district in Oklahoma. It serves about 45,000 students in 55 elementary schools (including Wilson Arts Integration Elementary School), 17 secondary schools, 4 alternative centers, and 13 charter schools. Fifty percent of the students are Hispanic, 24 percent African American, 17 percent Caucasian, 4 percent Native American, and 2 percent Asian; 13 percent of its students receive special education services; and 31 percent are English learners. Forty-one languages are spoken in the district. Almost 90 percent of the students in the district receive free or reduced-price lunch.<sup>12</sup>

The Oklahoma City Public School District is similar in many ways to most inner-city districts in the United States. As districts were forced to desegregate in the 1960s and 1970s, this triggered “white flight” to the suburbs, leaving most inner-city districts and schools, over time, poor with the majority of their students being ethnic/racial minorities.

Inner-city districts also found themselves with a weakened tax base. Inner-city schools were left black, brown, and bankrupt.

In school year 2014–2015, Wilson Elementary Arts Integration School served 390 students in grades prekindergarten through six. Fifty-four percent of the students received free or reduced-priced lunches; 6 percent of the students were Hispanic, 27 percent African American, 52 percent Caucasian, 3 percent Native American, and 3 percent Asian. Students receiving special education services constituted 10 percent of the student population, and 3 percent of the students were English learners.

### History of Wilson Arts Integration Elementary School

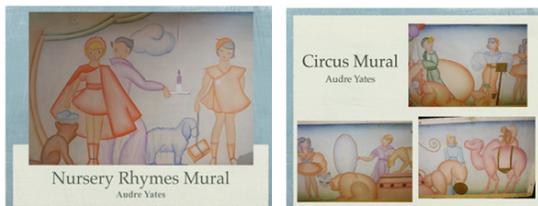
Wilson Arts Integration Elementary School’s mission is to “further students’ learning through the arts while promoting creative thinking, problem solving, and responsible citizenship.”<sup>13</sup> The school’s motto is “Nurturing our quest for knowledge through the arts.” Wilson has always embraced innovation. It was the first school in Oklahoma City to have a school lunch program on campus, an in-school library, and now an arts integration program strengthened by strong partnerships and community engagement.

In 1919, Wilson Elementary opened its doors as a seven-room school with indoor plumbing. Even early in its history, the arts played a role in Wilson’s evolution. During

<sup>13</sup> See <http://okcps.wilsons.schooldesk.net>

<sup>12</sup> See <http://okcps.k12.ok.us/AboutOKCPS/tabid/1623/Default.aspx>

the 1920s, the PTA used \$139 to purchase a Victrola and some records for the school. In the 1930s, an artist painted a mural in the kindergarten classroom (Nursery Rhymes) and was later commissioned by the school to paint a similar mural (Circus Mural) in the adjoining primary room (see photos). In 1937, the fourth, fifth, and sixth graders participated in a 900-piece orchestra at a local park. Also in the 1930s, Wilson opened a children's museum onsite.



During the 1950s, a Wilson parent, a native of Poland and professional artist, painted a mural in the cafeteria. The school held a monthly square dance for fifth and sixth graders in the auditorium. Tickets were sold for ten cents, which was used to pay for the square dance caller. By the 1980s, after white flight, renewed interest was ignited in the neighborhood surrounding Wilson due to its history. An outdoor creative play area was built in 1978 by the Heritage Hill Neighborhood. In the 1990s, several other individuals contributed murals to the school, which was celebrating its 75th anniversary.

Wilson Elementary School “danced” with arts integration for decades before realizing it had rich school and community experiences with the arts, which could pave the way for arts education in a more meaningful, integrated way to transform teaching and learning.

Although these beautiful murals enhanced the building, the children inside the building were not learning. Wilson was ranked in the lowest 10 (of 55) elementary schools. Wilson Elementary, between the 1950s and the white flight of the 1980s, was located in an upper-income area within Oklahoma City. As the district's demographics shifted, some of these families remained in the neighborhood, but they placed their children in

private schools. In recent years, families who moved away had an interest in moving back to the neighborhood but wanted a quality school for their children. Consequently, the community decided to reengage in their neighborhood school and called for school reform.

As a result of this renewed community interest, in 1996, the district brought in a new principal, Beverly Story, and empowered her to find the right model to make Wilson successful. The staff decided to seek out alternative approaches to transform this inner-city school. They visited several schools, but once they witnessed arts integration, the die was cast. In 1997, they visited arts integration schools in South Carolina, Maine, Indiana, and Hawaii to understand the real meaning of this approach. By 1998, the Oklahoma City Public School District designated Wilson Elementary as Oklahoma's first specialty school in arts integration. In 1999, Wilson was chosen to partner with the Kennedy Center. Anita Arnold, executive director of the Black Liberated Arts Center (BLAC, Inc.) in Oklahoma City, brought Wilson's leadership together with the Partners in Education leadership. BLAC, Inc. remains Wilson's most significant arts partner, supporting professional development needs with training from the Partners in Education program.

BLAC, Inc. began as an idea of John Smith, who relocated to Oklahoma to accept a position with the Oklahoma Symphony. With the symphony's failure, Smith accepted a job at Langston University, a historical Black university, in the music department. Smith felt that African Americans struggled with self-expression and identity. With the assistance of a friend, Alfred Cohran, Smith searched for ways to use the arts for self-expression. With the overwhelming interest in the African American community, BLAC, Inc. was incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 1971. BLAC, Inc. started with a “music component, a literary component, a visual component, and finally a theater component” (BLAC, Inc., n.d., para. 2). The

arts programs were apparent in festivals, arts education programs, lectures, poetry readings, and theater productions. Because of its reputation for excellence, BLAC, Inc. garnered respect from the larger Oklahoma City community. BLAC, Inc. earned the sought-after Governor’s Arts Award for its theater work and for its national and international awards (BLAC, Inc., n.d.).

During the first five years of integrating arts into the curriculum (1996–2002), Wilson’s scores improved. Wilson’s grade determined by the Oklahoma A–F school grading system was improving as well, even with an influx of low socioeconomic status students, some of whom were coming from a nearby homeless shelter. During this progression, principal Story retired, and Kirk Wilson took over the helm. In an interview, he stated:

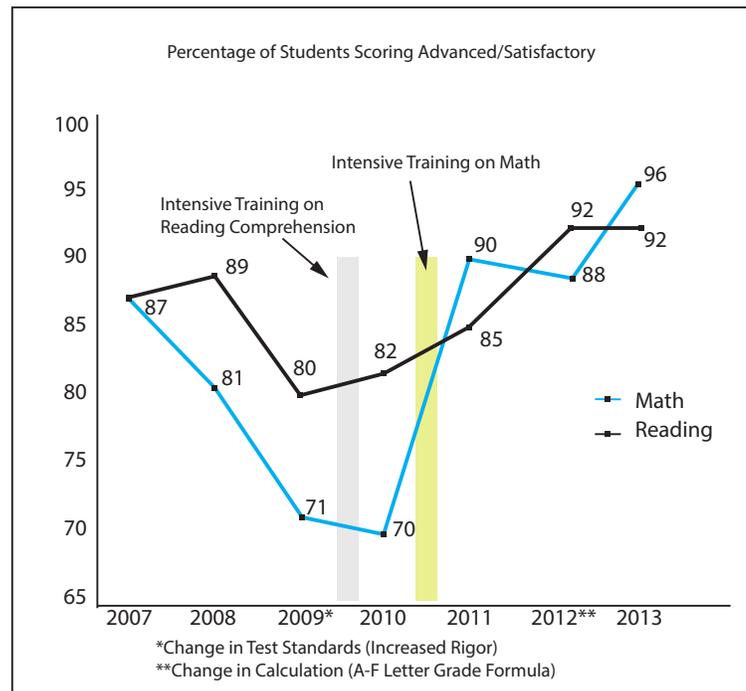
In 2010, Mrs. Story retired after righting the Wilson ship, and an extensive search was conducted to find a suitable replacement. I was

just finishing my first year as head principal at Hayes Elementary School in the Oklahoma City Public School District. I was afforded the opportunity to take the reins at Wilson. With my background in the arts (competitive public speaking, debate, and teaching in high school and college), I felt that I would be a great fit. Little did I know that true arts integration would shape my view on teaching and learning, but I can attest to that fact. (K. Wilson, personal communication, 2015)

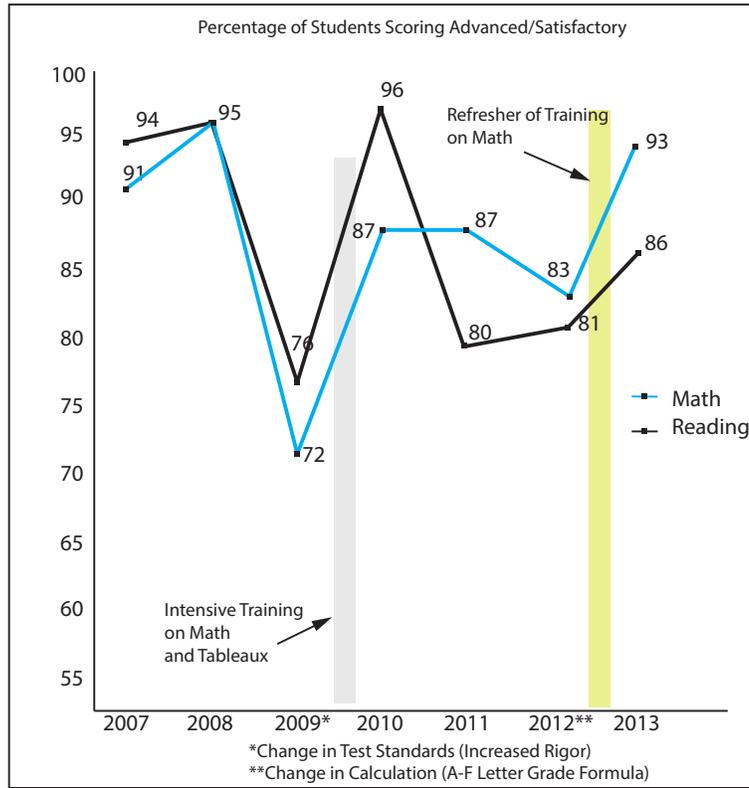
### Wilson’s Trajectory of Success

The following figures provide longitudinal data demonstrating the school’s journey from a low-performing school to a high-performing school. Also acknowledged in these data are intervening variables that note significant events during this journey. These variables include intensive professional development on integrating the arts in reading and math, changes in the state test, and implementation of the Oklahoma A–F letter grade accountability system.

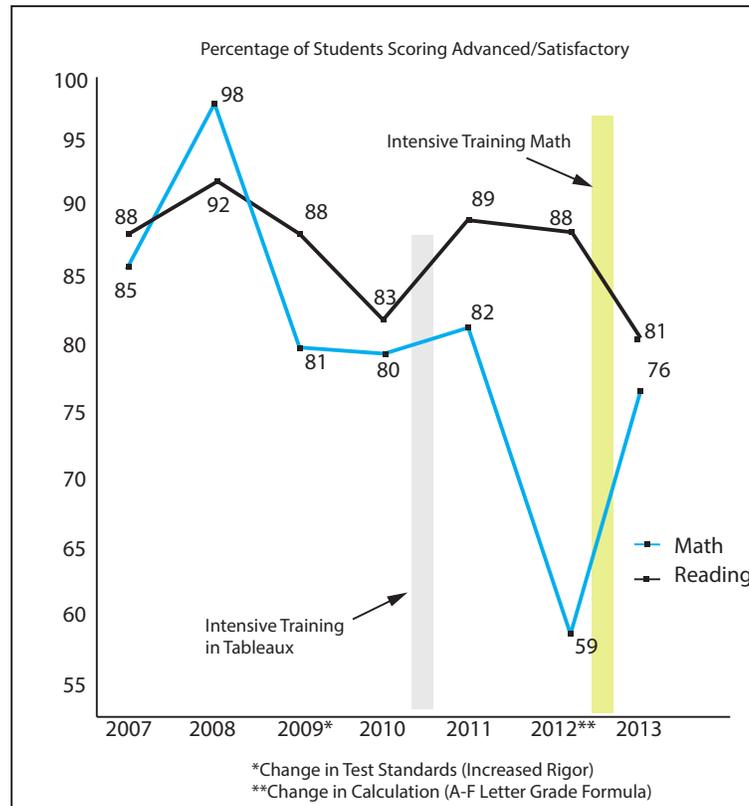
**Figure 1. Wilson’s Third-Grade Data, 2007–2013**



**Figure 2. Wilson's Fourth-Grade Data, 2007-2013**



**Figure 3: Wilson's Fifth-Grade Data, 2007-2013**



### Interview with Kirk Wilson, Wilson's Principal<sup>14</sup>

In December 2014, Belinda Biscoe interviewed Kirk Wilson, principal at Wilson Elementary Arts Integration School, to collect his impressions and insights about both the benefits and challenges of implementing a schoolwide arts integration program. Highlights from this interview follow:

*What contributes to a successful arts integration school?*

Strong leadership within the school dedicated to implementing arts integration as a part of its mission in every respect is essential. There is no accountability if the leadership is not strong and committed to this approach. The teaching staff, support and administrative staffs, parents, and community must also be committed to this approach if the goal is to improve teaching and learning.

Also, professional development for teachers and leaders is absolutely essential—having well-organized professional learning communities where teachers can share best practices and lesson plans and continually discuss student progress monitoring.

The professional development must be job-embedded, ongoing, and afford opportunities for reflection. I have found reflection to be an essential ingredient for improving teacher practice. It is important to point out that all teachers must be engaged in this approach. Teachers do not have to be artists for an arts integration approach to be successful. Knowledge gained through professional development must immediately be implemented in classrooms. Professional learning communities help make this happen.

*Can only arts teachers be successful using an arts integration approach?*

This is often the misconception, but in fact, it is not true. All of our regular classroom teachers integrate the arts into their core subjects. But, again, professional development is ongoing, year after year after year. In addition, all students attend a visual art class twice weekly and receive vocal music instruction twice weekly. Third- through sixth-grade students attend classes for instrumental music/strings/Orff<sup>15</sup> twice weekly. There are also honors classes. Kindergarten through second-grade students receive instruction in Orff weekly.

*What are the factors that might contribute to failure in an arts integration school?*

An arts integration approach without execution and full implementation is doomed to fail. More effort, more planning, more resources, and more preparation are all necessary with an arts integration approach. We have lost some teachers over the years who could not make the commitment. Again, without ongoing, job-embedded professional development, including mentoring and coaching, this approach is also doomed.

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<sup>15</sup> The Orff approach is one of several developmental approaches to teach music education to students (American Orff-Schulwerk Association, <http://aosa.org>). It integrates drama, speech, and music into instruction. In other words, it is an approach to teaching music education focusing on the child that treats music as a basic system like language and believes that just as every child can learn language without formal instruction, so can every child learn music by using a more friendly, child-oriented approach.

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<sup>14</sup> Kirk Wilson was principal of Wilson Elementary School until June 2015.

# Implications and Recommendations

## Implications

Arts integration contributes to improving teaching and learning, enhancing students' personal competencies (capacity and desire to learn), and turning around low-performing schools. Arts integration achieves these results by changing the paradigm about the students' role in learning. Studies clearly demonstrated that arts integration helped students connect to content, experiences, and what they have previously learned. Most importantly, students were more likely to be actively engaged in their learning. A few studies found students were more willing to continue exploring topics and issues outside of the classroom because of arts integration experiences.

Arts integration supports the academic needs of diverse student groups. Findings cited demonstrated increased benefits for disadvantaged students, who enter the classroom with fewer experiences that enhance and enrich their understanding of the world around them. Several studies cited the benefits of students' engagement and active participation in their learning. These benefits included the promotion of personal competencies, improved academic achievement, higher attendance rates, fewer issues with classroom management, an ability to empathize and take the perspective of others, development of higher-order thinking skills, and a desire for lifelong learning. Students also took more responsibility for their learning. It is important to note the role of arts integration in promoting more abstract thinking and creativity. Learning to collaborate and problem solve, important 21st century skills, are nurtured through an arts integration curriculum.

Emerging data on recently funded arts integration turnaround schools are demonstrating promising findings. On a variety of measures, including achievement, students in arts integration schools are outperforming their peers in demographically similar schools.

Another important finding was the significance of quality professional development to ensure commitment, enhance understanding, and improve practice. It must be ongoing and job-embedded. This approach to teaching requires commitment and funding to ensure teachers and administrators have access to appropriate and adequate professional learning experiences.

While there are some scientific studies on arts integration, clearly more are needed on its role in improving teaching and learning. Many studies were observational or self-reported in nature. Both qualitative and quantitative studies are important to help us understand arts integration, but more scientific studies will offer stronger evidence for arts integration as a research-based approach to improve teaching, learning, and school reform.

## Recommendations

- 1. Districts and schools considering an arts integration approach need to do their homework.**
  - Ensure staff and administrators have a clear understanding of the approach and the commitment it entails to implement it with fidelity.

- Contact experts who can provide an orientation to begin the awareness process.
  - Plan visits to schools and districts where successful implementation and results can be demonstrated.
  - Avoid activity traps, including random acts of professional development.
  - Develop a systematic, capacity-building, three- to five-year strategic approach to ensure a clear vision, direction, and thoughtful approach to implementing an arts integration curriculum with fidelity.
- 2. Districts and schools must plan adequately for whole school reform.**
- Align an arts integration curriculum to state standards.
  - Garner support from stakeholders, partners, and families.
  - Ensure everyone commits to the mission, including the students.
  - Provide opportunities for students to try out arts integration experiences. Gradually integrating various art forms works well for some schools.
  - Work with staff to understand how to support all students through an arts integration lens, including students with disabilities and students who speak other languages.
  - Identify multiple measures to assess student learning. Standardized tests will only tell an aspect of a student's story.
  - Plan well from standards to curriculum, to instruction, to assessment (including formative assessments and progress monitoring to inform instruction).
- 3. Teacher and administrator preparation is imperative when adopting a schoolwide approach to arts integration.**
- Provide professional development from experienced and knowledgeable professionals with an understanding of arts integration, curriculum and instruction, administration of an arts integration program, school reform, stakeholder engagement, and diverse student populations.
  - Commit to the change. Changing practices is challenging. Once a decision is made to adopt arts integration as an approach to overall school reform, commitment to change becomes a journey.
- 4. As more outcome data become available, policymakers need to consider funding to support alternative programs for school reform.**
- Include arts integration approaches that demonstrate adequate planning in turnaround options.
  - Assist schools in preparing to inform and involve parents, partners, and stakeholders.
- 5. More funding is necessary to expand the research on arts integration, allowing for qualitative as well as quasi-experimental and experimental studies, given the promising findings to date.**
- Build on the excellent research and past and present practices, recognizing that as the evidence unfolds, more information on best practices and lessons learned will be available.
  - Work to operationalize terms like arts integration and other arts education terms.
  - Conduct more arts integration studies focused on teacher and learner outcomes.
  - Undertake more studies that control for fidelity of implementation and other intervening factors.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Arts Integration Models

### The Kennedy Center's Partners in Education

The Partners in Education program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts “is designed to assist arts organizations throughout the nation to develop or expand educational partnerships with their local school systems” (Kennedy Center, n.d.b, para. 2). A primary goal of these partnerships is to provide professional learning in various art forms for all teachers. The Kennedy Center's Partners in Education, located in Washington, D.C., has supported and promoted arts integration for over 20 years. It conducts research in arts learning and affords opportunities for networking and partnering for arts education around the country. (<http://www.kennedy-center.org/education/partners>).

### A+ Schools Program

The Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts promotes creative leadership and innovation in the arts through partnerships. The A+ Program was established in 1995 and is a “creative think-and-do tank” (A+ Schools Program, n.d.) associated with the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, where it relocated in 2003. The A+ program ignites passion and engagement for students by connecting the arts to core academic content (<http://www.aplus-schools.ncdcr.gov>).

### Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education

Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE) was founded in 1992. CAPE's ongoing core values focus on collaboration and meaningful partnerships with donors, school leaders, artists, and arts organizations. CAPE's mission is to increase “students' academic success, critical thinking, and creativity through research-based, arts-driven

education” (CAPE, n.d.b, para. 2; <http://www.capeweb.org>).

### Transforming Education Through the Arts Challenge

Transforming Education Through the Arts Challenge was founded in 1996 as a partnership of the Annenberg Foundation, which emphasizes school reform, and the J. Paul Getty Trust's Getty Education Institute for the Arts. Its goal is to explore how to integrate the arts into the core curriculum of schools in the United States. A primary goal of the funding is to determine how the arts can integrate and support overall school reform. Schools receive professional development, technical assistance, instructional resources, and networking opportunities to enhance teacher and principal knowledge, skills, and understanding of comprehensive arts education and whole-school reform to support their development of strategic plans to help with achieving the program's goals and objectives (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, n.d.a; <http://annenberginstitute.org/challenge/sites/tetac.html>).

### The Center for Arts Education

Founded in 1996, the Center for Arts Education (CAE) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting excellent arts education as an important aspect of all children's education in the New York City public schools. CAE has contributed almost \$40 million to assist schools and cultural groups to revitalize arts programs. To date, CAE has provided services to over 500 schools, 490,000 students, 21,000 teachers, and 75,000 parents, while partnering with over 400 cultural groups in the New York public schools (<http://centerforartsed.org>).

### Learning Through Art

Learning Through Art (LTA) is an arts education program of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Founded in 1970

by Natalie K. Lieberman, the program has served over 100,000 socioeconomically and culturally diverse students in the New York City Public School District. LTA emerged in response to the elimination of music and arts programs in the New York public schools. Lieberman founded *Learning to Read Through the Arts*; she later joined Guggenheim as a trustee. In 1994, this program joined with the Guggenheim Foundation to become Learning Through Art. LTA deals with the lack of arts

programming in public schools by allocating experienced teaching artists to classrooms and providing an innovative, state-of-the-art approach to education through art. LTA benefits students and educators alike by encouraging critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity (The Guggenheim Museum: Learning Through Art Program, n.d.; <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/education/school-educator-programs/learning-through-art>).

## Appendix B: Accomplishments and Highlights for Wilson Arts Integration Elementary School

- In May 2004, Wilson's vocal and instrumental music teacher, Bobbie Pierro, was selected as one of ten finalists for the Barbie Arts Teacher of the Year Award.
- Wilson principal, Beverly Story, was named the District Administrator of the Year from the Oklahoma Association of Elementary School Principals.
- Wilson drama teacher, Greg Eskridge, was named a 2008 recipient of the Ann Shaw Fellowship Award by Theatre for Young Audiences USA.
- The Wilson School prekindergarten program was featured in the January/February 2010 issue of Oklahoma Today magazine: <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/oktoday/2010s/2010/oktdv60n1.pdf>
- In October 2011, Wilson educators Greg Eskridge (drama) and Susan Bumgarner (prekindergarten) received the Clara Luper Arts Integration Award at the Annual BLAC, Inc., arts ceremony.
- In October 2012, Wilson principal, Kirk Wilson received the Clara Luper Arts Integration Award at the Annual BLAC, Inc., arts ceremony.
- Wilson drama teacher, Greg Eskridge, received the State Superintendent's Arts Educator Award for drama (2012).
- In February 2013, Wilson prekindergarten teacher, Susan Bumgarner

was invited to sit with the first lady, Michelle Obama, for the State of the Union Address by President Barack Obama. Bumgarner was also able to visit with U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, at the U.S. Department of Education to support the President's push for early childhood education, which was announced at the State of the Union.

- Wilson vocal music teacher, Meredith Ziegler, received the State Superintendent's Arts Educator Award for music (2014).
- April 2014, Wilson principal, Kirk Wilson, was asked to present at the South Central Comprehensive Center's "SC3 Regional SIG Summit" on the progress of Wilson since the institution of the Kennedy Center Arts Integration partnership. Shortly thereafter, he was asked to present yet again on Wilson's success at the Oklahoma State Department of Education's "Vision2020 Conference" in June 2014.

A more extensive listing of highlights by year is available from Wilson Arts Integration School.

## Appendix C: Unpacking the Kennedy Center’s Partners in Education Definition of Arts Integration

“An approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form. Students engage in a creative process which connects an art form and another subject and meets evolving objectives in both.”

Definition Terms	Silverstein and Layne’s (2010) interpretation
<p><b>Approach to teaching</b></p>	<p>Arts integration is not a one-shot activity. Rather, it is an approach to instruction rooted in “one’s daily practice” (p. 2). Teaching approaches focus on “how something is taught rather than what is taught” (p. 2). Approaches range from traditional, teacher-centered instruction to more progressive, student-centered instruction. Arts integration as an “approach to teaching” builds extensively on a “progressive, student end of the continuum” (p. 2). Accordingly, this approach is based on the understanding that learning is “actively built, experiential, evolving, collaborative, problem-solving, and reflective” (p. 2). Some practices supporting arts integration include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building on students’ previous knowledge</li> <li>• Creating opportunities where students learn from one another, deepening “their understanding”</li> <li>• Using students’ assessment of their work and their peers to enhance the learning experience</li> <li>• Having “opportunities” for students to revise, improve, and share their work</li> <li>• Involving students in reflection about their learning, “how they learned it, and what it means to them” (pp. 2-3).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Students construct and demonstrate understanding</b></p>	<p>Silverstein and Layne (2010) note that arts integration offers many ways to help students make meaning of their learning and to exhibit this in ways that go beyond recall. In other words, students are able to use their learning to show “deeper understanding” (p. 3). Students’ observable demonstrations serve as a formative assessment to inform instruction and as a summative assessment to assess what they have learned.</p>
<p><b>Through an art form</b></p>	<p>Silverstein and Layne (2010) identify the following as art forms where original work can emerge: visual arts, dance, drama, and music. Using an arts integration approach, students create understanding using these art forms. Arts integration allows students to be active participants in their learning by “observing, listening, and moving” (p. 5).</p>

<p><b>Students engage in a creative process</b></p>	<p>The National Advisory Committee on Cultural and Creative Education defines creativity “as an imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are original and of value” (Cochrane &amp; Cockett, 2007, p. 59). According to Silverstein and Layne (2010), the key to arts integration is students’ involvement in the creative process. It means that students do not simply “repeat (a song), copy (an art project), or follow directions” (p. 5). Their work must be unique. The authors describe a five-step process where students “1) imagine, examine, and perceive; 2) explore, experiment, and develop craft; 3) create; 4) reflect, assess, and revise; and 5) share their products with others” (p.5). This process allows students to produce work and to communicate their feelings, thoughts, views, and understandings through a variety of modalities.</p>
<p><b>Which connects an art form and another subject area</b></p>	<p>A unique feature of arts integration is its interdisciplinary linkages. With an arts integration approach, a particular art form is connected with a particular curriculum area. Art forms can also connect to a school’s needs or concerns, which might include areas such as bullying or character education (p. 6).</p>
<p><b>And meets evolving objectives in both</b></p>	<p>The last part of this definition addresses two thoughts. Initially, teachers establish objectives in the art form and the core subject areas. Objectives in both areas are “balanced,” with accountability for learning established in the art form and the subject area. Next, as the objectives in the core content areas stretch students to build deeper understanding, objectives in the art form “must also evolve if students are to remain challenged” (p. 8). It is expected that objectives will “evolve” and “unfold” in time as student learning deepens. As student mastery is achieved with each objective, teachers continue monitoring student progress and adapt objectives to maintain student engagement “within a unit or across a year” (p. 8). Silverstein and Layne also contend as “students’ mastery grows, so do their feelings of self-efficacy—the belief in oneself and one’s ability to achieve” (p. 8).</p>

All page numbers refer to Silverstein & Layne, 2010, unless otherwise noted.

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# ARTS INTEGRATION



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