



INSTITUTE for EDUCATION and the ARTS
Education Alive!

**A DISCUSSION OF BEST PRACTICES
IN ARTS EDUCATION:
A PRINCIPALS' DISCUSSION ON THE VALUE OF INTEGRATING THE ARTS**

Roundtable Report from the National Overture of Education and the Arts

learning academic
artistic experience
creative processes
connections
Ohio
2005
Feb.

Introduction

The following report is the third in a series of Best Practices in Arts Education Roundtable Discussions presented by the Institute for Education and the Arts (IEA).

On February 24, 2005 in Columbus, Ohio, a group of 15 public elementary school principals and three Columbus Public Schools central office administrators gathered for a professional development leadership session on the integration of the arts in teaching literacy. Participants heard from David Bloome, Professor at the College of Education, The Ohio State University, on his research on the use of the visual arts to teach literacy in the elementary grades and then participated in two examples of teaching literacy through the arts, using music and dance. Following these presentations, participants engaged in a short roundtable discussion of the pros and cons of this approach to teaching. The discussion focused in particular on the challenges to principals as school leaders in balancing the need to meet federal requirements and standardized achievements with the need for providing effective and engaging learning environments for their students. As the participants asked IEA to share the results of this conversation with the Columbus Superintendent and district offices, they asked not to be individually identified.

The Institute for Education and the Arts promotes the effective and regular use of the arts to teach core academic subjects. Hosting and facilitating frequent and regular public dialogues on key questions of effective arts integration and effective teaching and learning is central to the mission of IEA. The Institute will continue to support and encourage Roundtable Discussions and other dialogue formats in communities across the country.

The arts enhance the quality and effectiveness of every child's learning process. Helping ensure that the arts become a regular, frequent and integrated aspect of every child's education, integrated into subjects across the academic curriculum, is a central element of the Institute's work.



Ronald F. Stowe
President



Donna Power Stowe
Vice-President

The Conversation

I would like to first open it up to you and ask for your reactions and comments on some of things that have gone on tonight. Any thoughts, questions, hesitations, challenges, doubts, reinforcements?

I have a greater appreciation tonight for my music teacher. They had a performance with third grade students where they did folk tales, and I was a little skeptical, but after I saw the dress rehearsal yesterday I saw it all fit together, music and literature. Coming here tonight gives me a greater appreciation of how the arts, physical education, music, how it fits in with the literacy program. I have a greater appreciation and understanding of how my arts team can work with my students in literacy.

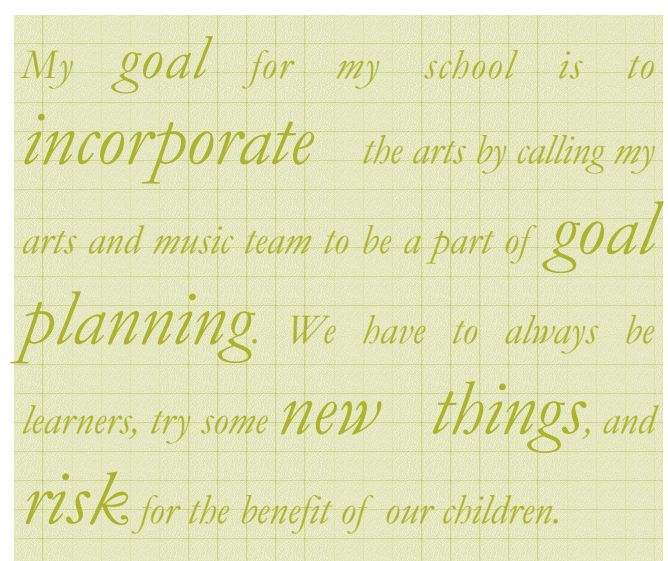
Anybody want to pick up on that? Suppose you saw one of your teachers who was supposed to be teaching reading and instead the class was singing. Before you had gone through this conference, what would you have thought was going on in the classroom?

I have seen my music teacher doing this, and I didn't understand it. Now when I go into the classroom I understand what it all means just from your presentation.

There was a memo that came out saying that students in second grade shouldn't use drawing, Well, all day today I watched a teacher who was working in a kindergarten, first, second, third, fourth, fifth grade classroom and by golly he *did* have the children draw first and then go to the brainstorming stage, then go to organizing your thoughts, then go into your different types of writing. And it started with a picture. I have a greater understanding of how to have the students draw the picture first and then write their story. How really awful of us to think that there is just one way to reach our children.

I think of the diversity and the cultures of the kids we work with in Columbus. I think using the arts is a great way of getting through to them. They are so used to television and games that the teachers just can't get through to them the same ways they did years ago. They have to do everything they can to reinforce skills. Kids love music. With music, dance, or one of these arts we can reach a lot more kids through reinforcing skills.

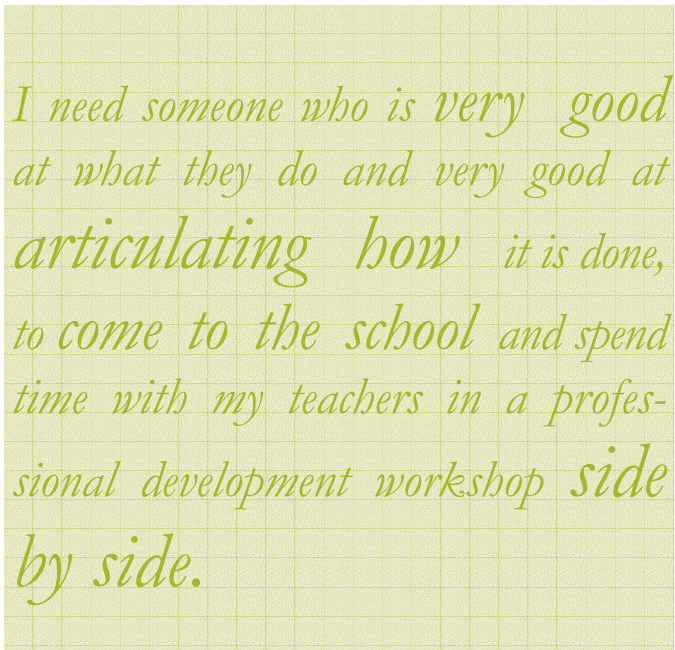
I am in a school where there isn't that deep appreciation for the arts, and they think that it is play instead of part of the instruction. Huge difference in that. So, my goal for my school is to incorporate the arts by calling my arts and music team to be a part of goal planning. We have to always be learners, try some new things, and risk for the benefit of our children.



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You have identified some things that you started to do to lead this school forward to use more of the arts. What are some other things that could be part of the principal's leadership role in a school if you want to see more of this going on, if you think it really is an effective way to help your children do better?

The stumbling block, at least in my building, is that my teachers are five years or younger into the system, and I don't feel they have had the professional development that they need. It is very difficult to find people to give that to them. That is what I need in my building. I need someone who is very good at what they do and very good at articulating how it is done, to come to the school and spend time with my teachers in a professional development workshop side by side.



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I was thinking the same thing. I am just sitting here wondering how many of our music, art, or physical education people can bring that kind of expertise into schools? How many of them either come out of their own schooling with that expertise or are having to professionally develop it? I think doing professional development days like this is great, and I think we are doing more in terms of being able to get those people out of the buildings during those professional development times. But those development sessions aren't necessarily geared towards the art, music, or physical education. My hope is that they are going to come away with some of those skills that you demonstrated.

How many math teachers are prepared to teach the deep math as opposed to giving 50 problems and doing them over and over again? Music, art, or physical education teachers are more prepared to go deep into having the students make connections.

In doing that, I think when principals, curriculum directors, and superintendents go to the buildings and do their walkthroughs they can see the results or see what is happening and be able to make the connections immediately.

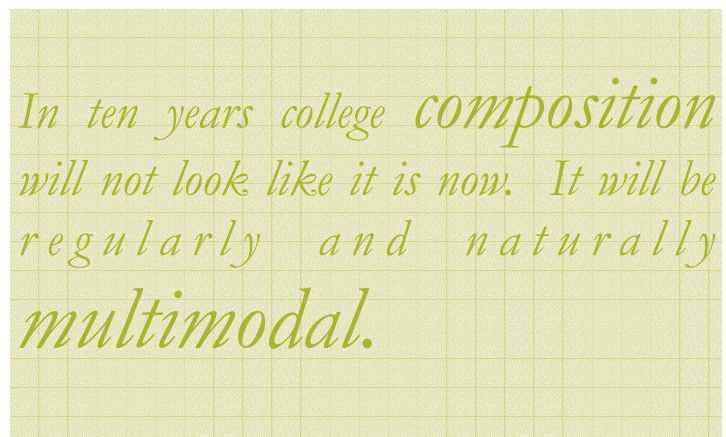
We have integrative planning in our school where teachers are sitting down and talking about what is going on in the classrooms, including with the arts. The challenge is that in the district we have Article 211. So we have new teachers that are coming in who don't have any clue because our teachers are expected to go into the arts and participate as a model learner. Well, they come into the building and say "I have to go into the arts classroom. I don't get this as my planning time?" So sometimes our system doesn't provide the support to continue the specialized

programs. That makes it very difficult because they are supposed to bring those things back into the classroom, but sometimes it just kind of stops. That's not universal, but I see it happening. They don't have a chance to come back with what they learned and practice it, tweak it, practice it, talk about it, practice it, tweak it, talk about it. They know how to do this, they just don't feel like they have the time to cover everything and plan it in. So, how do we get that done?

Some of it is through what you've taught them here in Columbus.

There is such a richness to life that we are losing because we are just sticking to the basics. Life is not about the basics. Basics are a piece of life, but there is a richness, a texture, there is a joy that is missing in far too many classrooms because we have to read and write and do arithmetic only on a surface level. It is the depth, it is the experience of life that I think our children are missing out on, which is not right. I think if we continue down the path we're on, we are going to have little non-thinking robots that can regurgitate facts, but the experience of life will not be there.

Our kids don't get these experiences and they need more. Our kids need more experiences; they need opportunities.



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I heard someone say, "Teach them to read, get them to graduate and get a job and earn money so then they can go out and get some experiences."

How will they know to begin to experience it though?

Yeah, they never have.

What is your personal take on what you just said?

I would like to turn things around and ask how reading helps dance instead of asking if dance is supposed to help reading. We are talking about a bigger concept of literacy with different ways of expressing understanding. That is a mind shift, and we are moving that way not only in our district but in our country. We're getting into the more textural places, the ambiguous places, the deep experience places. A collective voice such as the one at this table begins to see a change.

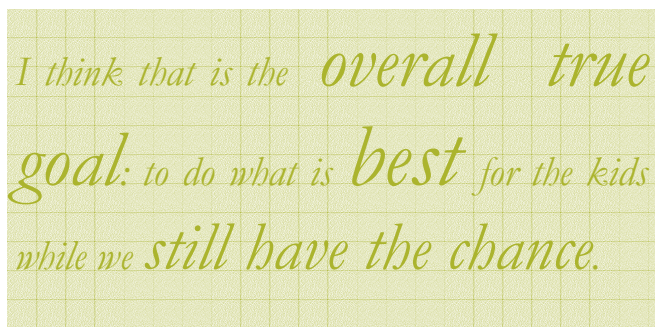
Can I jump in here just a little bit? Think of your second graders, and I want you to think about what college composition is going to be like in ten years. In ten years college composition will not look like it is now. It will be regularly and naturally multimodal. Compositions will include text, video, pictures, graphics, will not be necessarily unilinear, will be multilinear. We will expect it and it will be regular. That is what your second graders will be facing when they hit college

composition expression.

There is a show by Art Supports Literacy that has student artwork as well as an artist's statement of how this artwork helped them develop their literacy. The statement is either a writing about the process that they used to create the work of art, or it is a poem about how this artwork inspired them. The art of writing is actually incorporated into the elements of the artwork. It is amazing the range that these children are exhibiting.

I have had teachers that participated in the project, *The New Language is Artful Reading*. It has been occurring over the course of the school year, and they have had a lot of different experiences. Also, we sometimes had people bring the arts to the school. We need to bring it to

the students, and so even though I don't have an art room, even though I don't have a music room, we still make it happen. I think that is the overall true goal: to do what is best for the kids while we have the chance.



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Somebody encouraged us and our class to do this integrated arts experience where they did Jazz, they did movement. Several of my teachers did it this the past summer and it is so cool. The Greater Columbus Arts Council put on the concert.

A group of my teachers went, and they came back so pumped up. It led to a partnership where a jazz arts group and a whole bunch of other artists were coming in. We got something in the mail about it and my teachers just were like "go, go, go, it is going to be so good!" They did it over the summer and it was just incredible.

I am a strong believer in arts, but what we as principals have got to do is say please. Our task is that we must get these kids to pass the test so they won't drop out of ninth grade and they will end up graduating from high school. We have restrictions placed on us that we as principals can't supersede, our boundaries and our timelines. My feeling is that we can get teachers in the schools to do what they do with the arts and model their programs around our restrictions. We can't take away our boundaries for them, but we can make it a lot more fun. If we don't make things fun for kids they are going to drop out whether they pass the test or not.

I agree, but how many of these types of teachers do we have?

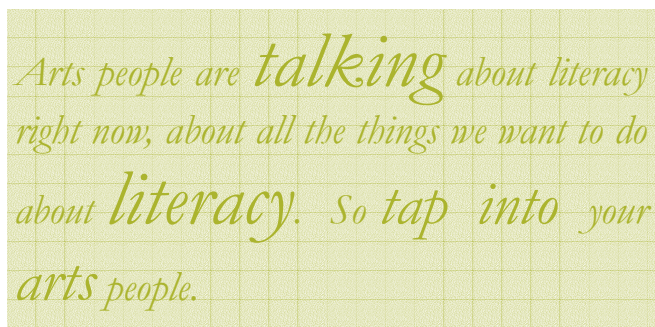
If our teachers have less than five years of experience why isn't this teacher training occurring in universities?

I went down to a little campus in Southern Ohio and they have this very nice program that looks at integrative interdisciplinary learning, multiple intelligence, and this kind of work. They come up to Columbus and various other parts of the state and immerse themselves over the summer in

interdisciplinary studies. They will take a week, or several weeks, of dance and then music, visual arts, drama, and creative writing. Then there will be a whole series of classes where they take these artistic disciplines and integrate them into their academics. That has been happening here for three years. Ohio State doesn't have anything like that yet. They are getting there, they are having extensive conversations, but they aren't in that place yet.

In your packet is information on a course that I am doing this summer at Ohio State. I recently did the first course for Columbus, a professional development for our teachers. There were 28 teachers, and they came in teams of three to four teachers at a time. It was one of the best experiences I have had in all the professional development work I have done in the last 15 years because they were interested, they wanted it, they wanted to go further, they wanted more, and it was just an amazing day.

When you are talking to your arts people you might really be surprised. I think we arts people are talking about literacy right now, about all the things we want do about literacy. So tap into your arts people. I think they are more willing than you might think.



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The workshop that you guys have done has really made a difference because I can see the change occur within the building of how these people accomplish their goals.

I hate to cut this off, but we are at the end. Is there one last burning comment?

Have you talked or thought about sharing what you have shared with us in high schools?

Indeed, and having you say that reinforces it. I did want to say that, as I said in the beginning, we do learn from you. This is the beginning of a reciprocal relationship as we learn from you, how we learn not only what the issues are but what it is that we can do to help forward your concerns. We are working with Sally (our local coordinator), but we are also working with the Ohio Arts Council and have some contacts that are growing with the Department of Education as well as other places.

The Institute for Education and the Arts aims to broaden the awareness, understanding, and support for teaching through and about the arts to help all children in grades K-12 engage effectively in their learning and to improve achievement in all core subjects.

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