

ARTS-INTEGRATED LITERACY INSTRUCTION: PROMISING PRACTICES FOR PRESERVICE TEACHING PROFESSIONALS

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ABSTRACT

Classroom teachers are facing increasing responsibility to integrate the arts during literacy instruction. In order to address the arts effectively, teachers require understandings, confidence, and competence with visual arts, music, dance, and theater. Therefore, educator preparation programs must develop the knowledge and skills of preservice teachers about the arts through their curriculum and programs. With the current definition of literacy in mind, the purpose of this article is to highlight three promising practices that educator preparation programs may implement to facilitate the development of requisite knowledge and skills of pre-service teachers for pedagogically sound arts-integrated literacy instruction.

Keywords: teacher education, educator preparation programs, literacy, arts integration

The International Literacy Association (2016) recently redefined literacy as “the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, compute, and communicate using visual, audible, and digital materials across disciplines and in any context” (para. 1). In order to address this current, more global definition of literacy, teachers must implement instruction that is standards-based, pedagogically sound, and integrates aspects of literacy throughout the curriculum. Educators have recognized that literacy is a “foundational subject” and have acknowledged that weaving literacy into the curricular areas of mathematics, science, and social studies “empowers students” (Bruce & Davidson, 1996, p. 4). During the past 30 years, influxes of professional resources have guided teachers in developing their ability to infuse various integrated approaches with literacy throughout the curriculum (Vacca, Vacca, & Mraz, 2005). More recently, educators have broadened their understandings of cross-curricular literacy integration to include:

- visual arts (e.g., Andrelchick, 2015; Dambekalns & Medina-Jerez, 2012; Samuels & Samuels, 2014; Ward, 2014);
- music (e.g., Adams, Pedersen, & Narboni, 2014; Jones & Pearson, 2013; Risinger, 2012; Walby, 2011);
- dance (e.g., Adams, 2016; Becker, 2013; Rosenfeld, 2013; Ward, 2013); and
- theater (e.g., Daane, Wells, & Scherr, 2014; Monobe & Son, 2014; Pieczura, 2013; Polly, 2012).

Recent literature has advocated that an arts-integrated approach to literacy instruction provides students with opportunities to use “modalities with which they [are] familiar and comfortable using as a means to introduce, reinforce, and extend curriculum” (Carney, Weltsek, Hall, & Brinn, 2016, p. 239). As shown in Table 1, an arts-integrated approach to literacy is appropriate for all levels of learners as a way to support instruction across the curriculum.

Table 1

Examples of Arts-Integrated Literacy Instruction across the Curriculum

Visual Arts & Literacy	Within the art classroom, Andrelchick (2015) encouraged development of visual literacy among high school students through (a) reading the labels of art materials, museum brochures, and museum labels/text panels; (b) communicating with artists through their websites; and (c) exploring museum websites.
Visual Arts, Math, & Literacy	Ward (2014) explained how she used the art works of Jasper Johns to reinforce mathematical concepts and aspects of literacy among preschoolers.
Visual Arts, Science, and Literacy	Dambekalns and Medina-Jerez (2012) described an interdisciplinary collaborative effort between an art teacher and two middle school science teachers who integrated their unit on cells and organelle functions with visual literacy.
Visual Arts, Social Studies, & Literacy	In order to broaden understandings about the Black Experience during the Civil Rights Era among high school students, Samuels and Samuels (2014) outlined a lesson that integrates visual analysis activities with a technology-based WebQuest.
Music & Literacy	Through listening and application activities, Walby (2011) developed the understanding of musical vocabulary among middle school students.

Music, Math, and Literacy	In an elementary music class, Jones and Pearson (2013) connected reading and notating music and the value of musical notes with concepts related to fractions.
Music, Science, & Literacy	While exploring sound waves in an elementary science class, Adams et al. (2014) provided students with access to musical instruments from a variety of cultures so they could listen to, analyze, and use musical terminology to describe the unique sounds that each instrument created.
Music, Visual Arts, Social Studies, Literacy	In order to avoid the marginalization of music and the visual arts, Frederick (2012) advocated for an integrated approach during all levels and areas of social studies instruction.
Dance & Literacy	With the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts in mind, Adams (2016) used elements of dance to focus upon linguistic development among students of all ages.
Dance, Math, & Literacy	While teaching music at the elementary level, Rosenfeld (2013) developed an innovative way to integrate dance, math, and literacy with the Math In Your Feet program.
Dance, Science, Social Studies, Math, & Literacy	Becker (2013) articulated several benefits associated with dance and provided a brief overview of several ways that dance can be incorporated across the elementary curriculum.
Dance, Social Studies, & Literacy	In a K-12 setting, Ward (2013) explained how the inclusion of African dance develops aesthetic appreciation for the African culture and enhances the worldview of students.
Theater, Math, & Literacy	Polly (2012) reinforced number concepts and problem solving among elementary students through analysis of seating arrangements in an actual theater.
Theater, Science, & Literacy	Through theatrical performances and literacy activities, middle and high school students portrayed the flow of energy (Daane et al., 2014).
Theater, Social Studies, & Literacy	Monobe and Son (2014) explained how they used drama and children's literature to broaden elementary understandings about global conflicts among students.
Theater, Social Studies, & Literacy	Pieczura (2013) provided an overview of several creative drama techniques, such as pantomime and puppetry, that teachers may use to enhance social studies and literacy instruction at all levels.

Several studies conducted within the past ten years have yielded findings that suggest a variety of benefits that were realized when literacy skills were integrated with arts instruction (e.g., Brooks & Smith, 2013; Kinney & Forsythe, 2005; Phillips, Gorton, Pinciotti, & Sachdev, 2010; Rose & Magnotta, 2012). Despite these findings, school-wide approaches to the integration of the arts have been limited and have failed to provide students with consistent and frequent opportunities to learn under the guidance of an arts specialist (Parsad & Spiegelman, 2012). Therefore, instruction through the arts often becomes the responsibility of classroom teachers who may have limited knowledge in the discipline (LaJevic, 2013).

PREPAREDNESS OF PRESERVICE TEACHERS

Within educator preparation programs, preservice teachers bring diverse backgrounds related to their prior experiences with the arts (Battersby & Cave, 2014; Russell-Bowie, 2013). These experiences may have an effect on their beliefs regarding the importance of arts-integrated instruction and their levels of confidence to integrate the arts (Russell-Bowie, 2013). Consider a preservice teacher who lacks a background in visual arts, music, dance, or theater. Without a strong understanding in these areas, this teacher will most likely lack the confidence needed to integrate the arts into their classroom instruction successfully.

It is clear that greater efforts are needed to develop the understandings, confidence, and competence of preservice teachers with the arts so that they are prepared to design classroom environments that foster arts-integrated literacy learning. Curriculum and programmatic decisions within educator preparation programs are largely driven by legislative and policy mandates (e.g., statewide limits on the number of hours in a degree program and state educator certification curriculum requirements), staffing considerations (e.g., recruitment of qualified faculty/staff), and financial constraints (e.g., faculty/staff budgets). With these in mind, the purpose of this article is to highlight three promising practices that educator preparation programs may implement to facilitate the development of requisite knowledge and skills of preservice teachers for pedagogically sound arts-integrated literacy instruction.

PROMISING ARTS-INTEGRATED PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT LITERACY INSTRUCTION

UNIVERSITY-HOSTED ARTIST RESIDENCIES

University-hosted artist residencies are creative and promising approaches to cultivate understandings about arts-integrated literacy instruction among preservice teachers (Krieg & Jovanovic, 2015; Laverick & Migvanka, 2014). Artist residencies involve the employment of local arts specialists, such as actors, dancers, musicians, or visual/digital artists, to develop the knowledge and skills of preservice teachers within their area of expertise. As preservice teachers participate in meaningful arts-integrated literacy learning experiences, arts specialists are also able to model successful cross-curricular connections and reinforce effective lesson planning.

Laverick and Migvanka (2014) presented evidence that demonstrated several benefits associated with two university-hosted artist residencies:

- Papermaking artist residency – In this university-hosted artist residency, preservice teachers learned about the history of papermaking, techniques for making paper, and ways to incorporate papermaking throughout the curriculum.
- Puppet making artist residency – In this university-hosted artist residency, preservice teachers learned techniques for making puppets and connected puppetry to dramatic play.

As part of a required course, preservice teachers participated in these two university-hosted artist residencies and reported positive experiences. Findings showed that preservice teachers: (a) discovered creative ways to plan arts-integrated lessons, (b) learned how to integrate arts throughout the curriculum, (c) developed understandings related to art concepts and techniques, and (d) made connections between the art techniques of papermaking and recycling.

COMMUNITY PARTNER WORKSHOPS

Another worthwhile practice that supports arts-integrated literacy learning experiences for preservice teachers is the facilitation of workshops conducted by community partners (Colley, 2012; Hirsch, 2012). Community partners are local arts-based organizations, such as museums, symphonies, theaters, and dance companies. Through participation in community partner workshops, preservice teachers have the opportunity to link the pedagogical knowledge that they are learning in the university classroom to the real-world application of the arts in the community.

Colley (2012) described a workshop approach for preservice teachers that created a successful collaboration between an educator preparation program and an arts specialist from a local community performing arts theater. Within this approach, preservice teachers were expected to enroll in a course that included a series of four workshops with the arts specialist. These workshop experiences provided preservice teachers with the necessary scaffolding needed to understand how to teach literacy lessons through drama. In the first workshop, preservice teachers analyzed the scriptural elements and the use of monologues in a play with a performance scheduled at the community performing arts theater. After this analysis, preservice teachers attended one of the play's live theatrical performances. The second workshop extended their experiences with the live play by requiring them to deconstruct the play's script, storyline, and characters. After this exercise, the preservice teachers were given an assignment using a current newspaper story in which they worked collaboratively with their peers to develop characters based upon the story. Each group member selected one of these characters and composed an internal, external, or think-aloud monologue of the character's thoughts that may have occurred during the event. During the third workshop, preservice teachers shared their personally-created monologues, and then, working collaboratively, wove their parts together to create a skit. While working on this final script, the arts specialist facilitated class discussions and provided feedback on their scripts regarding the point of view of each character, the order of characters' appearances, and stage production logistics. The last workshop included a finalized script revision, followed by a taped

performance that was later edited to remove filming errors and make appropriate additions, such as the insertion of titles and credits.

ARTS-RELATED COURSE COMPONENTS

A final approach that benefits the understanding of arts-integrated literacy instruction among preservice teachers involves the completion of specific learning experiences within a course. Ideally, these learning experiences are richer and more meaningful for preservice teachers when they take place outside of the classroom because they develop understandings about arts integration and literacy while creating awareness about potential partnerships within the community (Whitin & Moench, 2015). The following are examples of arts-related course components that support integrated arts and literacy instruction.

Creative drama techniques. Erdogan (2013) integrated the use of creative drama techniques among preservice teachers as a way to inspire their writing. Using the following creative drama method, preservice teachers used creative drama techniques, such as role-playing or improvisation, to produce their writings:

1. Preparation/warming up activities: These activities activated the bodies and senses of preservice teachers and began building group dynamics.
2. Animation activities: These activities guided preservice teachers to develop and shape their writing topics.
3. Evaluation/discussion: Preservice teachers evaluated and continued to explain how the creative drama techniques impacted their writing.

Exploring creative movement. Kaufmann and Ellis (2007) noted that preservice teachers are often self-conscious and hesitant to explore creative movement. However, after observing children at play, they recognized that creative movement was natural for children and that they were “uniquely creative in their play” (p. 9). After coming to this realization, preservice teachers confronted their perceptions of themselves as creative individuals by composing an essay that described how they routinely engage in self-expression. Kaufmann and Ellis went on to explain how they helped preservice teachers develop budding knowledge of dance elements using the following learning cycle:

1. As a whole group, preservice teachers matched movements with an established rhythm.
2. In small groups, preservice teachers created and performed a movement pattern.
3. Feedback was provided to each small group regarding how specific dance elements enhanced the creativity in their group’s movement patterns.
4. Small groups reconvened to expand and perform their revised movement patterns.

As preservice teachers become comfortable with creative movement, they should realize its interconnectedness to printed text: each communicates meaning that is interpreted by the audience (Frambaugh-Kritzer, Buelow, & Steele, 2015). Thus, preservice teachers should be encouraged to develop their understandings, confidence, and competence with creative movement as a mechanism to integrate print-based literacies with embodied literacies. Examples of activities include:

- Reading about the water cycle and performing each stage of the water cycle with creative movement.
- Viewing a video of a performance, analyzing the creative movements, and composing a written evaluation of how each creative movement contributes to the overall story told through the performance.
- Creating a dance map that uses visuals and words to communicate specific instructions for each creative movement.

Music identity project. Talbot (2013) developed the music identity project as a way for preservice teachers to explore and communicate their unique identities through music. Preservice teachers first identified ten songs that characterized their identities. Next, each preservice teacher shared their musical selections during class and described how these selections related to their identity. The preservice teachers then selected one song from their list to analyze carefully and shared their song with the class, noting its specific musical features, such as lyrics and instrumentation.

In order to expand “ideas of literacy,” preservice teachers must develop an understanding of oral, visual, and written music (Begoray, 2008, p. 10). This discovery will support them with the implementation of arts-integrated literacy instruction. For example, preservice teachers may write in learning logs about their interpretations of lyrics and melodies or their experiences with creating music. Preservice teachers may also engage in reflective writing practices that foster their metacognitive understandings with musical listening activities, their personal development of musical knowledge and skills, as well as ways in which they successfully or unsuccessfully integrated music and literacy during their field experiences. Similar to reading printed texts, reading music requires the reader to make sound-symbol connections to create meaning. Thus, providing preservice teachers with opportunities to interact with printed music supports their ability to recognize patterns, make predictions, and use context to facilitate comprehension.

“Seeing with a Critical Eye” journal. Whitin and Moench (2015) described an exploratory journal exercise intended to develop the artistic knowledge and emotional connection with a work of art among preservice teachers. First, Whitin and Moench facilitated several interactive exercises during class to develop artistic understandings, such as design elements and interpreting works of art. Next, the preservice teachers were expected to visit a museum, either in-person or virtually, and select one painting or photograph to observe for 20 minutes. After observing, they responded to structured prompts in their journals, such as:

- What words would you use to describe this picture?
- What do you think this picture is about?
- How would you describe the lines in this picture? The shapes? The colors?
- Pretend that you are inside the picture. What does it feel like?
- Why do you suppose the artist made this picture? (p. 37)

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Educator preparation programs face numerous challenges as they prepare preservice teachers for success in their future classrooms. Many programmatic decisions are driven by legislative and policy mandates, state educator certification curriculum requirements, staffing considerations, and financial constraints. In addition, educator preparation programs must impart the requisite content knowledge and pedagogical understandings among preservice teachers to develop efficacious teaching professionals who value a more global definition of literacy. Moreover, educator preparation programs must remain aware of the fluctuating politics that influence K-12 curricula to ensure that their respective programs prepare preservice teachers for the realities of the classroom. This article emphasizes the importance of preservice teachers encountering quality arts-integrated literacy experiences during their educator preparation programs. In doing so, they develop the knowledge, poise, and abilities that enable them to incorporate the arts effectively during classroom literacy instruction (Lummis, Morris, & Paolino, 2014).

Technological advancements during the 21st century have expanded the meaning of literacy to include “multiple, dynamic, and malleable” knowledge and skills needed to engage with “cultural and communicative practices” within complex and diverse environments (National Council of Teachers of English, 2013, para. 1). With this in mind, teacher educators recognize the important task of preparing preservice teachers to meet the literacy needs of their future students (McTavish & Filipenko, 2016). Therefore, education preparation programs must continue to engage in increased efforts to restructure their programs to promote literacy competence among preservice teachers.

Recent investigations regarding arts instruction within public schools in the United States has brought attention to the declining exposure that students have to instruction in the arts with qualified arts specialists (Parsad & Spiegelman, 2012). This exposure to the arts often becomes a responsibility of the classroom teacher, thereby necessitating the development of content and pedagogical understandings about the arts among preservice teachers. Accordingly, educator preparation programs must identify how they can overcome the challenges they face and then design effective systems and procedures to better prepare preservice teachers for this current reality among K-12 schools.

In light of the recent literature acknowledging the benefits associated with literacy skills development when integrated with arts instruction (e.g., Brooks & Smith, 2013; Kinney & Forsythe,

2005; Phillips, Gorton, Pinciotti, & Sachdev; 2010; Rose & Magnotta, 2012), educator preparation programs are strongly encouraged to expose preservice teachers to arts-integrated literacy instruction using creative programming and available partnerships. In doing so, preservice teachers begin to view themselves as competent practitioners who are prepared to employ arts-integrated literacy instruction in their future classrooms (Jinyoung & Choy, 2008). This article highlights three promising practices that have been successful among various educator preparation programs: university-hosted artist residencies, community partner workshops, and arts-related course components. Teacher educators are keenly aware of the limitations and constraints that educator preparation programs face as the needs of the public schools change. Navigating through these outlined challenges can be an arduous and perplexing process. However, educator preparation programs must be committed to ensuring that their programs nurture and develop future teachers who are savvy in the area of arts-integrated literacy instruction.

In closing, it should be noted that the highlighted practices in this article are intended for preparation efforts with content classroom teachers, not arts specialists. These practices demonstrate how education preparation programs may prepare future classroom teachers to implement an arts-integrated literacy approach. This instructional approach exposes students to enriching experiences that support learning in the content areas, as well as the efforts of arts specialists. It is equally valuable for students to have consistent and frequent access to quality arts instruction with a highly qualified arts specialist.

Lastly, this article reinforces the importance of collaboration among professionals. Each of the three practices provided rich examples of how teacher educators collaborated with other teaching professionals, community partners, and arts-based organizations. It is unreasonable to expect that teacher educators are able to foster understandings within their area of expertise and the arts exclusively. Although teacher educators have the ability to play a strong supporting role with arts-integrated literacy preparation efforts, preservice teachers must also have continuous engagement with arts instruction under the guidance of an experienced and skilled arts specialist.

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