



Chart Strategic

Course... Balance Priorities

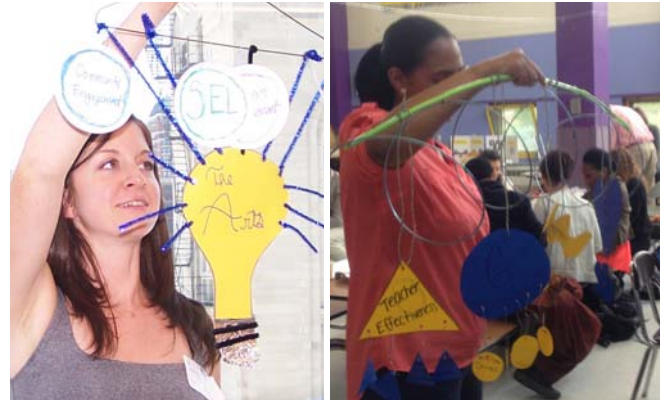
Arts Integration Helps Schools Meet Goals

By Cheri Sterman, Crayola Director of Education

Arts integration enriches other academic disciplines with complementary content and standards. It increases student engagement and relevance—making personal connections between otherwise isolated subjects. What helps educators embrace arts integration, as a successful strategy to increase rigor and standards rich teaching?

Not a New Burden

When teachers observe students hard at work, immersed in arts- integrated lessons and the reason-to-believe becomes obvious. This interactive, arts-rich way of teaching may initially overwhelm some teachers. Their initial reaction to anything new is often “please, not more...” Todd Fraley, principal of Horace Mann Elementary in Sedalia, Missouri, found that when he asked teachers to use art as a cross-curricular teaching strategy, teacher leaders had to show peers how art helps achieve their goals—not add a new burden. “All educators are inundated with directives. I understand teachers’ concerns. Some quietly hope ‘this too will pass’. When I first heard about art-infused teaching I thought ‘art is a vehicle I don’t know how to drive’, which I’m sure many other principals feel too.” Fraley shares his revelation, “When I saw the impact art integration had on student motivation and literacy achievement, I was a quick convert.” Fraley continues, “What makes this magical is how student-driven the experiences are. Student insights help teachers shape the lessons. When we ask students to ‘describe what is going on in art’, ‘what do you see that makes you say that?’ and then urge them to dig deeper, considering ‘what more do you see,’ we are treating students like wise investigators. That empowers learners,” Fraley explains. “I have seen incredible impact... These art-based thinking strategies are really accomplishing our objectives.” Every art discipline involves problem-solving and reflective thinking, and builds observation skills—critical skills for learning.



Keep it Simple

Sara Stone, principal of Redwood Heights Elementary School in Oakland, California, has had similar experiences. While she readily embraced becoming an arts-integration school, she knew she’d have to keep it simple for her teachers. “We decided to use art, not only as a rich subject area on its own, but as a fundamental tool that brings new perspectives and competencies to students across all subjects.” Stone describes how her entire faculty now uses art-infused teaching strategies. They established a Creative Leadership Team, a group of teacher leaders who coach colleagues in arts-infused teaching. “It has now become part of our daily practice for every teacher in our school. When teachers saw that reluctant learners were leaning forward and contributing strong insights based on their art observations, they realized that classic lecture techniques were not as effective as asking students to think and create like artists do.”



Change is a Strategically Planned Process

Schools throughout Prince George County, Maryland, know about Superintendent Dr. Kevin Maxwell’s commitment to arts integration. Many are developing strategic plans to more deeply embed arts integration as a school-wide teaching strategy. Tara Minter and Dwayne Little, principal and resident principal of Rosa Parks Elementary School in Hyattsville, Maryland,

established a Creative Leadership Team, led by art teacher Eileen Cave, to provide professional development and coaching for classroom teachers. “We help teachers build their own creative capacity first so they can be more confident in using creative lessons with students. Our 3-year plan started with professional development, co-teaching and coaching,” Cave says. Dwayne Little explains, *“We know change takes time. Our Creative Leadership Team helps classroom teachers see how arts integration brings Common Core to life. It is true arts integration when both the Common Core standards and the new Core Art Standards are being met. Line up the standards and see how many times Common Core says demonstrate, illustrate, create, present, interpret, respond, connect—all the processes that art teaches.”*



Art Processes and Standards

Schools across the country are exploring how closely their College & Career Math and Language Arts Standards align with the New Core Art Standards. “We read works of art as text. Creating is the highest level of thinking on Bloom’s taxonomy. The art processes align with learning standards across the curriculum,” Stone says. Students who are deeply grounded in artistic processes achieve fluency as they convey meaning in multiple ways.

The new National Core Arts Standards are organized around artistic processes. Each process contains Anchor Standards and Essential Questions.

Creating: Conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work

Presenting/Performing/Producing: Interpreting and sharing artistic work

Responding: Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning

Connecting: Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context

Anchor Standard examples include: “Select, analyze and interpret artistic work for presentation”; “Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work”; and “Relate artistic ideas and words with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.”

Examples of Essential Questions from the new art standards include: “How does art help us understand the lives of people of different times, places, and cultures?” “How is art used to impact the views of a society?” and “How does art preserve aspects of life?”

On a practical level, Sarah Stone sees daily examples of this occurring in her school, *“Students examine the cultural and historic context of paintings. They are proficient at observing historical context clues in modes of transportation or dress and can often pin-point the historical era in a painting.”* Stone eagerly talks about science and art connections, *“[Like art] so much of science is based on observation and evidence-based inference.”* Student comments about waterways, landforms, and weather are well grounded in what they observe and create in art. Stone convinced her teachers art integration is applicable to every subject, *“In math, the Common Core tells us not just to seek one right answer, but help students consider multiple ways of solving problems. Teachers asking students ‘What do you see in this problem? Explain your thinking. What makes you say that?’ are using art-based processes of interpreting what is seen and connecting the meaning to other contexts.”*



Sketch a Strategic Plan

While standards shape the priorities teachers address within the classroom, an overall school strategic plan helps shape the priorities for the entire learning community. Chart the school’s strategic course, visually. Mapping where the school is today and how to get to the desired destination is a strategic planning tool. Often a visual can help outline the strategy.

Ask essential questions to build consensus around school goals. Build colleagues' understanding of how artistic processes deepen learning in all subjects. Align on a vision of what this school will be in the future. Map the paths that will get you there. Sketch options to document the conversations. Decide on the strategic journey this school leadership team will drive. Ask:

- Moving towards a “desired destination”, where should our school be 2- 3 years from now?
- Where are we now?
- What paths could we take to get there?
- What are key milestones along those paths that would help us articulate success metrics and move to next steps?
- How could this be sketched as a visual map?

A strategic change map should be customized for your school—show your Desired Destination and Current Situation. Decide what paths are meaningful for your journey towards that destination. Paths can address any strategies that will help your school get there.



1. **Destination**—in top right corner, write where school should be, 2-3 years in the future
2. **Current Situation**—write in lower left corner
3. **Multiple Pathways**—sketch key strategic paths. Schools often select curriculum/assessment, professional development, partnerships, school culture, district alignment, or family/community engagement as possible paths. Decide what will help your school reach your destination.
4. **Success Metrics**. Note key milestones to punctuate each path. What success metrics would help you know if a milestone is met?



Visualize the Balance

Once the desired destination is articulated and a plan for your school’s strategic journey is mapped, visual metaphors can help teachers see where arts fit into the school’s priorities. If teachers feeling overwhelmed by new initiatives is a barrier, using this visual art experience can help teachers see the plan.

Use Alexander Calder’s mobiles as a visual metaphor to help participants see how priorities can be balanced.

This exercise can help teachers have these epiphanies:

- Art integration actually balances out other stressful mandates, such as high-stakes testing.
- Art can serve as an umbrella that helps learners make sense of otherwise disparate content.
- Art integration helps build a creative, collaborative culture within the school.



Alexander Calder

Art Exercise: Create and label shapes that represent key priorities. Assemble these into a mobile, making sure it is balanced. The conversations during this exercise should help faculty align and better understand how the arts fit in the overall context of the school’s priorities.

