



Some Ideas for Implementing Arts Integration in Your Classroom by Ed Grooms

Ed Grooms is an award winning retired teacher in the areas of
Theatre, Language Arts, and Gifted Education.

“Alabama, Alaska, Arizona ... the beginning of the “50 Nifty United States” song, is an example of effective Arts Integration. The students learn the music concepts of rhythm and melody as well as the social studies concepts of map skills and the states of the United States. Integrating the arts into core subject areas effectively uses all learning modalities. Students rehearse and are motivated to rehearse because learning through the arts is fun.

When students get a concept kinesthetically they often retain it their entire lives. The lasting power of kinesthetic learning was recently demonstrated to me by former student on Facebook. I used tongue twisters to teach diction in drama class. The former student, now approaching age sixty, posted a picture of a ladder leaning against a tree and said, “This is for you Ed Grooms--- Lift the ladder later, lisped Lester, Lester lisp lift the ladder later.” His diction experience was retained, and demonstrated in written and pictographic form over forty years after it had been taught! “What the body learns the body remembers,” quotes Tom Tobias Fine Arts Director for the State of Missouri. For more information, check out his video on Educate.Today (Professional Development-21) where he discusses the “The Arts and Student Learning-Brain Research and the Arts.”

I believe teachers using Arts Integration as part of their tool kit can reach more students. With a drama background I naturally infused the arts into my Language Arts and Gifted classes. While there are several studies that document the impact of the arts on student learning, Missouri teachers may find *Arts Education Makes a Difference in Missouri Schools** of particular interest. However, any teacher of the arts will have anecdotal evidence that can be more powerful than statistics. In that vein let me share an experience that impacted my entire teaching career.

In 1971 I began my teaching career in Monroe City, Missouri. My drama class was structured as a performance class. I did not use a textbook, but I required my students to read three plays per semester to pass the class. I conducted a one-on-one interview with them to determine if they had read the plays. Shortly before the end of the first quarter the school counselor asked how Dortha was doing in Drama I. I told him she was one of my best students and had an A in the class. He said, “I don’t understand that because she can’t read.” Needless to say, I was dreading the interview with Dortha. I was sure she would fail for not reading the plays. On the day of her interview she sat down and before I could start the interview she said, “Mr. Grooms I can’t read, but I had my mom read me three play, and I memorized them.” She immediately began reciting

the lines to the first play. Needless to say with happy tears in my eyes I told Dorthea she would keep her A in the class. Success and a passion for drama motivated Dorthea to overcome her reading issue. I grew as a teacher, because Dorthea motivated me to find ways for all students to succeed. My class motivated some students to keep coming to a school, because they experienced success.

I fully realize arts integration may seem daunting for teachers who come from a non-arts background, and that's why Educate.Today has numerous resources to help you with ideas and to begin conversations with your arts and non-arts colleagues. Examples include Professional Development videos 20, 22, and 23 that address Student Learning and the Arts. Additionally, there are teacher tools that incorporate science and the arts. Teacher Tool 294: *Arts Integration Activity--Roller Coaster Rhythms* is just one example. This tool, accompanying Sample Video-81, provides an Arts Integration activity combining science, engineering, and music. Students learn about roller coaster design and construction by creating a musical composition.

To see more ideas like the ones mentioned above, I invite you to explore the Arts Integration videos on the Educate.Today website, many with teacher tools for you to build from and all with identified state and national standards and engaging content. You can find them by clicking on the Arts Integration button in the search section of the home page or by typing "Arts Integration" into your keyword search.

For student engagement and lasting impact add music, dance, visual arts or drama to the curriculum. In time students may remember the Periodic table like they do the Fifty Nifty States song---"West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming."

*http://www.moaae.org/arts_education_research0.aspx