Re-Thinking Creativity: Promoting Arts Integration in Elementary Schools

By

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Abstract

Arts education is an integral part of the Ontario curriculum as a vehicle for teaching skills that are vital for social and economic growth and personal wellbeing. Nevertheless, cuts to arts education programming create challenges for teachers and their capacity to develop arts-rich learning environments. This study offers strategies for teachers wishing to adopt an arts integrated approach to education. The data for this study was collected through an in-depth analysis of relevant literature, as well as four semi-structured interviews with experienced teachers in the field of arts integration. Findings suggest that benefits to arts integration include addressing multiple needs and learning styles of students, teaching social justice issues and moral lessons, and building deeper understanding of important concepts which can enhance the engagement and academic achievement of students. Implications of this study suggest that educational communities offer administrative support that places value on the arts, as well as meaningful professional development opportunities for beginning and in-service teachers. This includes Additional Qualification courses centred on teaching the curriculum through the arts, as well as seminars and conferences that teach effective arts integration strategies offered for all educators wishing to adopt arts-infused pedagogy.

Key Words: Arts Integration, Arts Education, Creativity, Integrated Curriculum,
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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction to the Research Study

As a skill that is vital for social and economic innovation, as well as individual well-being, emphasis on fostering creativity in and through education is experiencing renewed momentum in Canada, as elsewhere (Collard and Looney, 2014). Evidence of this can be found in contemporary emphases on inquiry-based learning and differentiated instruction, two approaches to education that recognize the importance of diverse learning styles, that challenge traditional ways of knowing and learning, and that value problem-posing (and not only solving) education (Craft, 2003; Robinson, 2006; Zimmerman, 2009; Collard & Looney, 2014;). In order to prepare our students for the unknown future, including for jobs/fields that do not yet exist and technologies that have yet to be invented, it is vital to promote creativity in learning. While great strides are underway toward creating more space for creativity in and through education such as the Ontario Ministry of Education’s new goals to combine creativity and critical thinking, there is still much that can be done to prepare our students and teachers for creative teaching and learning. Twenty-first century learning requires that teachers nurture everyday creativity in the classroom, including through arts integrated approaches to teaching. Studies show that students participating in arts integration improve overall in manners of social skills, cooperative learning, as well as positive risk taking, self-confidence, perseverance and motivation, because of its emphasis on building understanding through collaboration and reflection (Marshall, 2005; Brown, 2007;). Moreover, advocates for arts integrated curriculum (Craft, 2003; Robinson, 2006; Zimmerman, 2009; Collard & Looney, 2014;)


find that integrating the arts with other curricular subjects, also benefit students by making instruction more personally meaningful.

Creativity expert Sir Ken Robinson (2006) suggests that one of the ways that we can start implementing creativity into our schools is to abolish the educational hierarchy that so wrongly places math and language above all other subjects in regards to importance. In Ontario, for example, elementary school students are rigorously tested in math and language in Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) testing, so much so that the success of our schools are measured by these results. In order to abolish this hierarchy and demonstrate an equal value for each school subject (including the arts), it is imperative that more emphases be placed on curricular integration and approaches that prioritize inquiry-based learning and differentiated instruction. Additionally, over the past decade, the Canadian government has made drastic cuts to arts programs in education. According to the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO), between 2012 and 2015, the province’s budget will have cut $66 million from its Program Enhancement Grant, which is supposed to fund or enrich existing programs in the arts, physical education, and outdoor education (Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario [ETFO], 2012). In this context of cuts to arts education, it is evermore important that we turn our attention to the significance of an integrated curriculum. Integrating the arts across the curriculum and blending the separation of subjects involves “deep domain knowledge, sophisticated pedagogy and openness to the unexpected” (Collard&Looney, 2014, p.351) and with the proper tools and training this is feasible within our school system. If, however, proper funding and teacher development opportunities are not available or insisted upon, the rhetoric prioritizing creativity in education will be hindered
from translating into practice. Research shows that integrating the arts into other subjects (such as math, literacy and science) can also improve student focus, information retention, and a deeper and more thorough understanding overall (Krug & Cohen-Evron, 2000, Horowitz, 2005; Brown, 2007; Marshall, 2014;). Without this kind of integration, our school systems may be stifling the creativity of young learners, instead of using the creative process as a vehicle for learning. For this reason, Robinson (2006) proposes an education revolution; a radical re-thinking of our education systems, that begins with creativity.

1.1 Research Problem

Recently, the Ontario Ministry of Education presented a renewed vision of education in Ontario which states that while foundational skills such as math and language remain a focus, they now recognize that these should be “combined with creativity and critical thinking, innovative problem solving, effective communication and collaboration,” all of which they consider to be “[the foundational skills that] lead to excellence” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014, para.5). This movement is monumental for our education system that has otherwise been centred around fragmented learning that emphasized individualism and separate subjects. According to recent findings, arts integrated teaching “focuses on finding new ways to ‘make learning visible’, promotes inquiry, engages learners and nurtures their own creativity and stretch their capacity to develop original and high-quality work.” (Collard & Looney, 2014, p.351). Although arts integration is feasible within our school systems, there are some issues that need to first be addressed. Firstly, there is no shared understanding of what ‘creativity’ means, and
there is little guidance on how to implement these new creative approaches (such as arts integration) into teaching and assessment. Collard & Looney (2014), for example, point out that “there is no widely shared definition of creativity in education policy or in school curricula, nor are there any clear reference standards for judging the quality of learners’ creative products at different ages and developmental stages” (p.351). In light of this, it can be difficult to have a structured system based on something we cannot universally define. Other research shows that teachers are indeed uncomfortable assessing creativity for this reason (Zimmerman, 2009; Robinson, 2011; Collard & Looney, 2014;).

Issues surrounding lack of instruction time, teacher development, and funding cuts to the arts also make it difficult for teachers to embrace the idea of an arts centered learning environment. The Ontario Ministry of Education’s “Revised Vision of Education” states that in order to become successful at the foundational skills, students must also “develop characteristics such as perseverance, resilience and imaginative thinking to overcome challenges” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014, para.7). The problem, therefore, is not that the Ministry of Education is failing to see the importance of creative and imaginative thinking within learning, but rather, the problem is that not enough is being done to implement the strategies needed to support these notions. If we can re-think the fundamental principles on which we are educating our children, and start to see the creative capacities for the richness that they are, then we can begin to educate the whole child; body, mind and soul, in preparation for the future.
1.2 Research Purpose

The purpose of this research was to learn how a sample of elementary teachers are integrating the arts into everyday curriculum across subject areas, and to learn from these teachers how their students respond to this pedagogy. This research will identify challenges that teachers face while integrating the arts, and what steps can be taken to support teachers in becoming confident and competent in integrating the arts across the curriculum.

1.3 Research Questions

The primary question that this research will address is:

How are elementary teachers integrating the arts across curricular subject-areas as everyday practice and what outcomes do they observe from students?

1.3.1 Subsidiary Questions

Subsidiary questions include:

- What does arts integration mean to these teachers, in theory and practice? Why is arts integration important to these teachers?
- What barriers and challenges do these teachers face integrating the arts across the curriculum, and what could help alleviate these challenges, in their view?
- What range of factors and resources support these teachers to integrate the arts across the curriculum?
- How do these teachers assess creative thinking as a component of their arts integrated curricula?
What do teachers recognize as indicators of learning during arts integrated instruction?

1.4 Reflexive Positioning Statement

As someone who considers herself an artistic person, I experienced many feelings of inadequacy in the traditional education system. Although I had many artistic talents, it was rare that these talents were valued next to my some of my peers and their talents in math and language. In my elementary school, math, language, science, social studies and other subjects were separated and structured to be taught in specific linear ways. Since beginning to work in the education world, I have seen first hand the benefits of integrating arts and creativity into subjects such as math and language in order to cater to various types of learners and spark a new, more flexible way of thinking.

I want to discover the ways in which we can start to make creativity a priority in education, so that we can stop thinking about separate school subjects and start thinking of the arts as a vehicle for learning.

It is through my experiences as a creative learner and teacher that I gained interest in this topic, and I can only hope that my research inspires teachers to view our education system in a more balanced and accepting manner which encompasses each child’s individual connections with their learning based on a more child focused curriculum.

1.5 Preview of the whole

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the study, as well as an overview of the purpose, the research questions and what inspired me to study this important topic. In chapter 2, I
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present a review of a variety of literature in the areas of creativity and arts integration.

Chapter 3 highlights the methodology and procedure used in this study, including information about the participants, data collection, and limitations. In Chapter 4 I report the research findings and discuss their implications in light of the literature. Finally, chapter 5 presents an overview of what was learned, as well as insights and recommendations for a range of educational stakeholders.
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will focus on reviewing important literature concerning the idea of creativity in the classroom while looking particularly at how teachers can integrate arts into the curriculum to help achieve student success through holistic education. First, this chapter focuses on defining and addressing the importance of arts integration, as well as the relationship between arts integration and creativity. Later in this chapter, I look at specific strategies used by educators to execute an arts integrated teaching practice, as well as the outcomes and benefits of these strategies on student achievement. Issues surrounding assessment and possible social and economic benefits for the future are also highlighted in this chapter.

2.1 Arts Integration

2.1.1 Definition

In order to approach arts integration in the classroom, it is crucial to understand what arts integration is, and how it can be utilized within a school setting. Research shows that arts integration is an approach to teaching in which students can “construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form” (Silverstein & Layne, 2010; p.1). Where some may mistake the term for a focus on mastering a specific art form, Silverstein and Layne (2010) suggest that arts integration should focus on the students engaging in a creative process that encourages meaningful connections to other subjects and disciplines. Although standardized teaching methods can help students to learn and recall information, arts integration challenges students to take the information and concepts that they have
acquired and do something of value with them in order to build a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the material (Brown 2007; Silverstein & Layne, 2010). Research by Marshall (2014) states that art integration not only embraces art objectives, but also “utilizes multimodal arts-based learning to enhance comprehension of academic subjects” (Marshall, 2014, p.105). It is therefore important to view arts integration as a multi-disciplinary practice, which is used to enhance understanding, as opposed to a specific segregated discipline. In order for art integration to be a compelling alternative to traditional pedagogies, while deepening and transforming understanding, teachers who support it must “delineate and promote art integration as the complex, dynamic practice it is, so that those outside the field can see its potential” (Marshall, 2014, p.105).

2.1.2 The Importance of Arts Integration

Although each teacher may find different meanings and purposes for integrating the arts into the curriculum, there are qualities about the arts that can be beneficial, if not crucial to the development and understanding of students. First, desirable qualities such as creativity, originality and expression are constructed through the arts (Horowitz, 2005; Zimmerman, 2009; Collard & Looney, 2014). Research by Horowitz (2005) shows that these qualities can be useful not only in other school subjects, but for lifelong use as well. According to Krug & Cohen-Evron 2000 (as cited in Brown, 2007) one of the challenges that the traditional school setting creates is a fragmentation of knowledge; although efforts to alter this way of fragmented learning as well as subject compartmentalization are in affect in many schools. Research shows that students participating in arts integration improve overall in manners of social skills, cooperative learning, as well as
positive risk taking, self-confidence, perseverance and motivation, because of its emphasis on building understanding through collaboration and reflection (Brown, 2007; Wiebe et al., 2007; Gullatt, 2008; Collard & Looney, 2014; Marshall, 2014). These acquired skills are all segments that help to foster conceptual/procedural skills, and metacognition, which is just one of the many reasons for integrating the arts into the core of education (Marshall, 2014). Studies show that the best integration practices emphasize a unified, differentiated instruction method which integrates the arts into other areas of learning in order to stimulate and educate the whole child (Brown, 2007; Gullatt, 2008; Collard & Looney, 2014; Marshall, 2014;).

2.2 Arts and Creativity

According to recent research, there are ways in which we can begin to validate arts integration and educate those who are hesitant about its theories. Marshall (2005) argues that to begin, teachers must first understand how the mind “perceives, learns and conceptualizes through analogical thinking, metaphor and schema-construction” (Marshall, 2005, p. 231). According to Marshall (2005), approaching creative arts in this way helps educators to better understand the linkages between learning and creating at their most fundamental level. On the other hand, Wright (1990) argues that it is important to acknowledge the past failures of these notions of creativity as well. Although the implications for art education seem obvious and relatively attainable, we have struggled in the past with working creativity and spontaneity into our curriculum (Wright, 1990). Unfortunately, the notion of arts integration and creative thinking do not always prove themselves to be particularly functional, not because of a failure of creativity, Wright
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(1990) argues, but rather, because of a lack of understanding of creativity as a process, not a product. This is problematic on many levels, because the past failures and hesitations about art integration could prevent educators from ever inquiring about the effective strategies that creative thinking can bring forth. Art and creativity fundamentally are conjoined and permeable entities and together, they help to form the cognitive benefits of arts integration.

2.3 Creativity

2.3.1 Definition

Art and creativity are commonly conceived as cooperative entities, which go hand in hand (Wright, 1990). It is therefore as important to define creativity, as it is to define arts integration when looking at this topic. Given the subjectivity involved, Zimmerman (2009) explains there is generally a lack of agreement when it comes to defining creativity. Evidently, creativity’s subjective and elusive qualities are what make it so difficult to define, and is also why those that do define it often vary widely in opinions because they involve the “researcher’s assumptions about the concept of creativity as it relates to the personal, the process and the outcomes” (Saebo, McCammon & O’Farrell, 2007, p. 206). McWilliam and Dawson (2008) add that creativity not only involves ordinary and specialized skills, but creativity is also facilitated by the development of skills. Robinson (2011) describes creativity as an active process. He argues that creativity is not just about the process, but about actively producing something of value in a deliberate way. He calls this process of creativity “applied imagination” (Robinson, 2011, p.142). Creativity is also recognized as a part of a larger scale system that has become a
part of a universalized discussion in the Western world. This notion can be seen in the various attempts that are being made to incorporate creative thinking in our Ontario education system (Craft, 2003). According to Craft (2003) creativity is not only a reflection of the developed world, but a response to it, and therefore is a necessity of economic survival. McWilliam and Dawson (2008) add to Crafts’ discussion about creativity and its correlation with economics. They propose that creativity aids in the development of the capacities needed for the complex social and cultural norms, which are a product of evolving technologies (see also Collard & Looney, 2004). Overall, creativity illuminates the uniqueness and diversity of humans. Creativity is both dynamic and distinct, and can operate and transverse many planes of human intelligence (Robinson, 2011).

2.3.2 The Importance of Building Creative Thinkers

An equally important topic to address is why creativity is so important. Of course, as mentioned above, the definition of creativity is a widely interpreted one, but its benefits to development and many studies show correlations between creativity and academic success. To begin with, research findings by Walker, Tabone & Weltsek (2011) show a strong association between improved academic success and arts education, especially for students from low-income families. This correlation is likely due to what Walker, Tabone & Weltsek (2011) consider a deeper and more meaningful connection to course content through interpretation and embodied meaning making. Additionally, their study found that 78% of students who had been taught literacy through dramatic theatre strategies “sustained their learning gains once they were no longer in classroom settings in which
drama functioned as a pedagogical support for language arts instruction” (Walker, Tabone & Weltsek, 2011, p.370). This suggests that students are likely to carry over their learned artistic executive function even when the arts are not necessarily available to them. Research by Caughlan (2008) also suggests a correlation between arts education and academic achievement. Her study poses that the brain function, reflection and social skills involved in arts based learning “help students work collaboratively, engage in productive critique, complete complex projects, and develop a positive self-concept” (Caughlan, 2008, p. 121). In addition, Martha Nussbaum (2011) claims that human development is rooted in each individual’s capabilities. Abilities such as use of the senses, imagination, cognitive abilities, and reason, are all products of creativity (as cited in, Collard and Looney, 2014). Therefore, it can be argued that in order to develop these capacities, we must have the educational opportunities that are necessary to stimulate them. According to Collard & Looney (2014) when creativity is experienced on a personal level, the practice is centred on the desire for self-expression and identity. Furthermore, Collard & Looney (2014) consider creativity to be a vital necessity not only for the well being of an individual, but for social and economic advancement as well. Research by Anderson & Milbrandt (1998) also present some interesting benefits to authentic instruction in art. Their study poses that through expression and interpretation of the arts, students have the ability to address public issues or use personal experiences, and use these understandings as a vehicle for art making. Anderson & Milbrandt (1998) suggest that this notion “requires that teachers pose problems through which students can demonstrate analysis, understanding of disciplinary concepts, and elaborated communication as they discuss relationships of content to real-life situations” (p.17). In this way, it is crucial for teachers
to facilitate artistic engagement that allow students to tackle important issues and problems that relate to them, which will in turn build communication and problem solving skills in a meaningful way. According to their study, “when students are guided critically and creatively to make or inquire about art for real-world reasons rather than engaging in rote memorization or production, there is a creation and/or interpretation of meaning involved. This construction of meaning is a core life skill.” (Anderson & Milbrandt, 1998, p.17).

Other worthwhile notions of creativity are highlighted in research by Craft (2003), who suggests that although creativity is generally thought to be a universal concept, it could, in fact, be quite the opposite. Craft argues that creativity’s “strong emphasis on individuality and the value it places on being able to think independently of social norms” (Craft, 2003, pg. 120) may not reflect the values more repressive and conformist cultures. One other issue with the concept of creativity that it is that although creativity is celebrated and regarded as a high standard of thinking and learning, there could also be a much darker side to the rise in creative thinking (Craft, 2003; Saebo, McCammon & O’Farrell, 2007; Cropley, 2010;). It is suggested that “the human imagination is capable of immense destruction as well as of almost infinitely constructive possibilities” (Craft, 2003, p.121). This leaves us to wonder, to what extent is it possible to only stimulate positive creativity and imagination in education, and avoid encouraging the darker and more destructive side of what creativity could create. Creativity can undoubtedly be used for good or evil and according to scholars, “not only artists but also criminals can be extremely creative people. This makes it necessary to include an ethical aspect when
discussing creativity” (Saebo, McCammon & O’Farrell, 2007, p.207). This viewpoint is extremely important to consider if we want to move forward with creative education. If we are not careful, and do not appropriately correlate creative thinking and ethics, we may be setting ourselves up for disaster.

2.4 Creativity and our Current Education System

It is the education system’s responsibility to begin reconstruction in order to support creativity, and although a renewed vision of education has been proposed in Ontario, there is still much to be done in terms of preparing our teachers and students for integrated education. Since the latter part of the twentieth century, reconstructions in schools have become responsible for raising academic achievement which were designed to nurture both pupil and teacher creativity (Craft, 2003; Wiebe et al., 2007). This reconstruction, however, still poses several problems in regards to creativity in our classrooms. Although an effort was made in favour of encouraging creativity, “the means by which this and other educational goals were being achieved were extremely constraining for teachers” (Craft, 2003, p.118). A fixed curriculum can often be seen as a constraint- a challenging obstacle which takes up a lot of time, and involves a lot of propositional knowledge or in other words, “professional artistry within a constrained pedagogy” (Craft, 2003, p. 123). In accordance, studies suggest that “hierarchal structures, linear procedures and repeatable techniques can lack a specific appreciation for individual contextualized learning” (Wiebe et al., 2007, p.268). The problem is not that the Ministry of Education is failing to see the importance of creative and imaginative thinking within learning, but rather, the problem is that not enough is being done to
implement this new view of education. This restrictive curriculum, along with budget cuts, poses a huge threat for creativity in the classroom. Whether or not the intention to implement creative practice into the rigid curriculum is there, not enough is being done to educate our teachers on how to use art to teach the full curriculum. Therefore, instead of encouraging creativity, which according to the ministry is a tool that students require to reach their full potential (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014), we are instead stifling it. The question then becomes, “to what extent is the fostering of creativity limited by its subject context?” (Craft, 2003, p.119). Craft (2003) asks readers to consider to what extent it is possible for creativity to be fostered in physical education, mathematics, and language. Craft argues that “creativity is most certainly relevant across the curriculum and is not subject-specific, although it is manifested distinctly in different subjects” (Craft, 2003, p.119). Other research poses that because education systems place so much emphasis on academic achievement and standardization tests, the arts are often left out, or put aside for when there is time (Zimmerman, 2009). In order for creativity to be fostered around this standardization, both teachers and students “need to be able to identify when creativity emerges and know how it should be nurtured and supported” (Zimmerman, 2009, p.392). Integration is complex and can burden teachers with additional perceived variables and therefore teachers need to be educated on how to implement creative practice throughout, and to recognize a creative opportunity when one arises, then integrating the arts and creativity into the curriculum would become a natural process from which both teachers and students could benefit (Craft, 2003; Wiebe et al. 2007; Zimmerman, 2009). Research has established that most elementary school teachers have a limited background in arts education (Kowalchuk and Stone 2003; Zimmerman, 2009;
That being said, the more a teacher can feel prepared about teaching the arts, the more power they can have over how art education is approached, and how art is being integrated (Kowalchuk and Stone, 2003). According to recent findings by Collard and Looney (2014), creative teaching at its best “focuses on finding new ways to ‘make learning visible’, promotes inquiry, engages learners and nurtures their own creativity and stretch their capacity to develop original and high-quality work”. Relatedly, Mullen (2002) also touches on finding new ways to give creative opportunities to students.

Technology is a key aspect in integrating creativity into our current education system. Mullen (2002) highlight a prominent study called Project ARTS, which aims to bring arts education to rural communities. According to Mullen (2002), opportunities to use post-modern processes of learning (such as photography and film making) “engage educators and students as collaborators in re-envisioning schooling through post-modern processes of learning” (p.9). Mullen (2002) poses that this type of integrated learning facilitated intrinsic motivation in her students and promoted deeper understanding of the project’s purpose. If we focus on creativity as this idea of making learning visible and promoting deeper meaning, as opposed to a focus in the fine arts, we will see that nurturing creativity in all areas of the curriculum becomes a very possible and malleable approach to teaching.

2.5 Assessment

One of the most controversial issues when it comes to the topic of arts integration and creative learning is the idea of assessment. Where it is very easy to give a math test to check for knowledge retention and understanding, it is more difficult to assess the arts. Part of this issue is because of the subjectivity of creativity as mentioned previously in
this chapter. Luckily, there is solid research to determine how a subjective practice like
creativity can be assessed practically in educational contexts. Firstly, studies suggest that
a high interest in the implementation of creative teaching and learning has resulted in the
development of assessing creativity, despite the lack of universal definition (Zimmerman,
argue however, that although techniques for measuring creativity are plentiful, many of
these assessments demonstrate an incomplete picture of creative process (as cited in
Zimmerman, 2009). In this case, there is not one form of assessment that is used in order
to test creativity (standardized tests, rating scales, checklists, and projects are just a few)
but rather, multiple measures are taken in order to properly assess the creative process
(Zimmerman, 2009). Commonalities among several researches recommend that best
practices for assessment include the use of well-designed rubrics, opportunities for
students to self-assess, culminating performances, and the use of portfolios to demonstrate
the growth and progress of a student’s creative ability over time (Sullivan, 1993;
Anderson & Milbrandt, 1998; Payne Young, 2009). It is important for teachers to strive to
create assessment practices that “capture critical thinking skills, problem solving abilities,
and imaginative/creative capabilities” (Payne Young, 2009, p.74). Payne Young (2009)
urges that the use of rubrics for the purpose of assessing the arts is not always meaningful
and that rubrics to measure imagination or creativity often fail due to a focus on the
product as opposed to student growth over time. In terms of rubrics for assessment, Payne
Young (2009) recommends that teachers ensure that rubrics are created meaningfully and
with the creative process in mind, not only a final product. One approach would be to
have a rubric for the beginning, middle and end of the art process to compare the
acquisition of knowledge, skill, and abilities over time. Anderson and Mildbrandt (1998) agree that evaluation of the arts should be on-going and non-standardized, and add that “it is critical to connect evaluation meaningfully and directly to student learning to provide a deeper, more revealing profile of student achievement and progress” (p.19). The use of self-evaluation and reflection is also a key component to assessment of the arts and Anderson and Mildbrandt (1998) reference Freire’s (1973) views of self-reflection in that it is crucial, not only to assessment, “but to dialogue and to the very authenticity of human beings.” (p.19). Furthermore, Anderson and Mildbrandt (1998) address that the value of self-assessment lies within “empowering and assisting students in becoming self-regulated learners, as self reflection provides motivational and transformational learning in an environment where personal interest, values, and goals are respected and accommodated” (p.19). With assessment as learning practices such as self-assessment, students not only have the opportunity to reflect upon their learnings, but are also provided with a combination of opportunities, which allow goal setting and reformation. Sullivan (1993) adds that portfolios can be used as “records of intellectual travel with the occasional cul de sac and detour” (p.10) and can provide meaningful and realistic overviews of student progress by allowing students to reflect on their own artistic journeys.

Additionally, Collard and Looney (2014) pose some valuable considerations such as whether judgment of the quality of the work is always against the learners’ own prior performances or if it is sometimes appropriate to refer to external standards (Collard and Looney, 2014). This brings forth a valuable idea about considering the needs to build learners’ own competence in relation to their own work and improvement. By doing this,
Collard and Looney (2014) suggest that it is possible to assess the quality of students’ ideas and to refine them as assessment for creativity. On the other hand, the need for assessment in the arts can pose some issues as well. According to research by Looney (2009), with high-stakes assessment comes the difficulty of initiating original and innovative approaches to teaching creativity, in the sense that teachers are more likely to narrow their teachings to focus on elements that are easier to test (as cited in Collard and Looney, 2014). This idea requires teacher to take on many different roles, and to have a deep understanding of the domain that they choose to teach (Collard and Looney, 2014). Assessment should support students’ learning and achievements. In looking at this research, the validity of assessing the final product (like you would in a math test) is not nearly important as assessing the process of creative thinking.

2.6 The Challenges of Implementing Arts Based Learning

There are many personal, pedagogical and practical barriers that teachers face when integrating the arts across the curriculum. By recognizing these challenges and barriers, teachers can begin to search for and create new strategies for overcoming these challenges in order to promote a holistic learning experience for their students.

2.6.1 Funding Cuts to the Arts

As previously mentioned, over the past decade, the Canadian government has been making drastic cuts to arts programs in education (ETFO, 2012). These cuts to arts education in our school systems are detrimental to the future of our students. The issue with these budget cuts is that it prevents a curriculum in which children are able to engage
in balanced, well-rounded education. There are less arts supplies, less qualified teachers, less professional development opportunities and therefore less fine arts instruction altogether. Our school systems are stifling creativity in the classroom, ultimately limiting students in their learning process and this problem needs to be addressed. Robinson (2011) suggests that there is a direct relationship between general education and subsequent employment, which ultimately pressures schools into prioritizing subjects that seem most relevant to the current economy. As an affect of this sub-sequential thinking, the little government funding that schools receive generally gets allocated to subjects prioritizing sciences and technology which are seen as priorities, as they are undoubtedly relevant to our future. This thinking greatly affects the amount of funds given to the arts and humanities, and therefore arts integration can suffer.

2.6.2 Lack of Instruction Time

Another key reason that teachers stray from arts education is lack of instruction time allotted for the arts. In 2013, the Ontario Ministry of Education depicted a government approved representation of the school day structure and subject time that is appropriate for Elementary schools (Avon Maitland District School Board, 2013). In this school board document, it suggests a minimum instructional time for each subject area. The first two subjects depicted on the chart are, Language and Mathematics. In the primary grades, Language is supposed to receive a minimum of 600 minutes each week of uninterrupted instruction. This number drops only slightly moving into the Junior grades, where the minimum is 500 minutes a week. This makes sense, as language is an important skill, and there are many divisions of Language to be considered (such as reading, writing,
oral communication, etc.). Mathematics is next on the chart and this board’s policy is to allocate 300 minutes of Mathematics instruction each week for both Primary and Junior grades. The rest of the subject areas such as social studies, science, physical education, French and the arts, all receive under 200 minutes (each) of instruction time a week in both Primary and Junior grades. The arts are allocated 200 minutes a week only for Primary grades, and changes drastically to 120 minutes a week for Junior grades (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). This concept of putting “The Arts” under a metaphorical umbrella is a dangerous one. Similar to Language, the arts have many different divisions that should be taken into consideration. Having 200 minutes a week dedicated to “The Arts” means that in only 200 minutes a week, a teacher must cover drama, music, dance, and visual arts in order to develop a well-rounded student. Needless to say, this is not enough time for appropriate instruction in the arts, and this is a major reason why teachers have trouble offering well-rounded art programs. In correlation to this topic of interest, Craft (2003) adds that “the way in which the curriculum is presented and organized within the time available in a school day may offer greater or fewer opportunities for fostering learner and teacher creativity” (Craft, 2003,p.119). According to Craft (2003), the lack of time allocated for the “less important” subjects is a heavy constraint for teacher creativity and therefore may discourage many from thinking about how to construct themes that cross subject boundaries (Craft, 2003). This idea is supported by older research that suggests that the hardest part of developing an arts education program is to determine how to allocate time (Hodstoll, 1985). Hodstoll (1985) proposes that we achieve a part of our goals for creativity through a revision of the subject boundaries- “with different disciplines reinforcing each other in achieving a variety of competences” (p.249).
Evidently, both Craft (2003) and Hodstoll (1985) recognize integration of the arts throughout the curriculum and a blending of subjects as a way to overcome the challenges of a time constricted school schedule. By integrating the arts throughout the curriculum, we not only ensure that students are receiving enough instruction time in the arts, but we are also able to differentiate our instruction to meet the needs of many students at once using the arts.

2.6.3 Hierarchy of Education

In Ontario, our elementary school students are rigorously tested in math and language in EQAO and in other regular standardized testing, so much so that the success of our schools are measured by these results. Although math and language are very important in a student’s learning, focus on these core subjects mean that the creative practices within our schools are often being neglected in lieu of a focus on content knowledge in these “more important” subjects (Anderson & Milbrandt, 1998; Craft, 2003; Silverstein & Layne, 2010). In Anderson & Milbrandt’s (1998) analysis of Efland’s (1976) concept of “school art style” (p.13), Efland’s opinion of the hierarchy of school subjects is highlighted. Anderson and Milbrandt reflect on Efland’s (1976) argument that unlike mathematics or other "core" subjects that are valued, “art is restricted to playing a limited institutional role within the school itself: the therapeutic role of superficially making the repressive school culture bearable through providing a somewhat mindless release” (Anderson & Milbrandt, 1998, p.13). This concept is problematic, because if art is seen merely as a release for students and teachers, and not as a meaningful and important method of learning, then art will continue to be de-valued next to subjects such
as mathematics and language. In this way, our school systems are devaluing the creativity of young learners, instead of using the creative process as a vehicle for learning. The idea of a “Hierarchy of Education” directly correlates with the amount of time that is given to different disciplines in mainstream education (Craft, 2003; Silverstein & Layne, 2010). As previously mentioned, Robinson (2011) discusses schools teaching for subsequent jobs, and therefore holding language, mathematics, and science/technology to a higher importance than other subject areas. According to Craft (2003), this way of thinking possesses a serious threat to the arts, not only in the case of the students, but teacher creativity as well. The question we are left with is “how does a teacher balance professional creativity and judgement against the requirements to teach in certain ways?” (Craft, 2003, p.123). One significant way to work around the hierarchy of education and to ensure that the arts are a valuable part of education is to integrate arts throughout the curriculum (Craft, 2003; Silverstein and Layne, 2010).

2.7 Strategies for Teachers

With all this valuable information in mind, it is important to discover then, what researchers are identifying as strategies for teachers to begin to integrate art across the curriculum. Our responsibility as teachers is not only to develop students' creativity but also to provide opportunities to build their intellectual insight, and their ability to overcome limitations (Payne Young, 2009). Teachers must also facilitate opportunities for students to apply creative processes to real-world application not only in the arts, but in a social context as well (Payne Young, 2009). In research by Anderson & Milbrandt (1998),
the balance of promoting self-expression as well as meaning perfectly sums up a teacher’s responsibility in arts education. They state that

Excellent teaching and learning in art requires a natural relationship between skills and concept attainment and creative self-expression. One rises from and feeds the other. Together they carry the student forward like a left foot and a right, one facilitating and causing the need to use the other. Neglect of either a meaningful idea or the skills to carry it off will result in lack of forward progress. It is the teacher's job to facilitate both qualities in his or her students through careful guided instruction and nurturing (Anderson & Milbrandt, 1998, p.18).

2.7.1 Becoming a Creative Leader

As previously mentioned, integrating the arts requires a lot from teachers and their own creativity. One of the biggest challenges teachers are faced with when trying to integrate the arts into the curriculum is becoming a creative leader for their students. One of the ways in which we can enable our students to feel that their creative ideas are valued is to ensure that we as teachers feel as though our new ideas are met with encouragement and support, that we are able to take initiative to find relevant information, and that we are able to feel comfortable in a risk-taking environment. (Craft, 2003). Kowalchuk and Stone (2003) argue that education programs cannot influence the past art experiences of teachers, but what teachers learn during professional development sessions can still have an outstanding impact on the level of comfort and confidence that teachers feel in teaching through creativity. As creative leaders, we are not necessarily required to produce the ideas ourselves, but rather to foster an environment where everyone can have new and valuable ideas. Another anxiety that teachers have is that an emphasis on creativity will lead to loss of control in the classroom (Kowalchuck & Stone, 2003). In a way that creative leaders in economics and business are consistently considering new ways of engaging more efficiently with customers and partners, teachers as creative
leaders can also use creativity to engage their students, while allowing the students to incorporate their creative ideas as well.

2.7.2 Putting it Into Practice

Much can be said about what should and could be done to promote arts integration in the classroom, but it is most important to observe and learn from the leaders of these movements, who put these practices into play and have seen sequential outcomes. Studies show that integrating creativity and arts into the classroom enlivens, enhances and enriches student learning and success, as well as allows students to perceive and organize new information into concepts that are used to construct deeper meaning (Wiebe et al., 2007; Gullatt, 2008; Walker, Tabone & Weltsek, 2011;). Studies by Walker, Tabone & Weltsek (2011) show that integrating the arts allows students to learn beyond just the recall of facts and information. Deeper understanding occurs when students are asked to appreciate and apply the information in creative ways (Walker, Tabone & Weltsek, 2011). Useful activities that integrate dramatic arts into literacy, such as reporting around historic themes, enable students to apply their knowledge in a meaningful way (Walker, Tabone & Weltsek, 2011). Other practices derive from Orzulak (2006) who insists that the best arts integration practices start with the transformation of the space in the room such as forming a circle, moving the desks around, and getting the students physically and mentally present in the space. Research by Lynch (2007) seeks to highlight the benefits of integrating the arts through specific practices. Studies found that when children interacted with the arts and were allowed to make choices about how to interact with the content, it allowed for students to use their hands, voices and bodies meaningfully, which engaged
the whole child (Lynch, 2007). Examples of integrated approaches to learning are demonstrated by Gullett (2008), who argues that the best practices require students to use higher order thinking skills and aesthetic abilities to gain further understanding of a particular academic concept. In a classroom, this would look like studying a composer and specific music that correlated with a history lesson (Gullett, 2008). The use of dramatizing historical events, or using paintings to investigate different aspects of time periods or mathematics are other ways that the arts can be integrated into the curriculum (Gullett, 2008). In order to implement arts across the curriculum, studies by Walker, Tabone & Weltsek (2011) show that something as simple as creative writing as an aesthetic opportunity to make literature meaningful is monumentally beneficial for students. This study also illustrates how classroom teachers can use theatre and drama to help students understand a theme or concept of a novel, while illuminating how the students could then move from dramatizing, to writing, and then to staged reading (Walker, Tabone & Weltsek (2011). Research also shows merit in having students write expressively, engage in movement correlating with a character or scene within a text or in history, use visual arts to explain connections and emotions evoked from the content, or use exploratory music to respond to a segment of a text (Lynch, 2007; Gullett, 2008; Walker, Tabone & Weltsek, 2011;). While the correlation between literacy and art may be obvious, many researchers and teachers have experimented with the concept of using arts to enrich mathematic programs. Ward-Penny (2008) reflects on his teaching practices and some of the strategies he used to incorporate the arts into mathematics. He poses that dialogue is a key component to students understanding mathematical ideas (Ward-Penny, 2008). To promote dialogue in his classroom he offers “opportunities for communication
by using humour and imagined characters [that] help provide an additional layer, which serves as both an engaging hook and a safety net for pupils.” (Ward- Penny, 2008, p.37).

In this particular classroom, Ward- Penny (2008) showcases his strategies to promote dialogue, which could look like “turn[ing] the classroom into a television-shopping channel. Pupils (or pairs of pupils) ha[ving] to ‘sell’ their quadrilateral to the rest of the class in the manner of a cable television presenter” (p.36). Giving this opportunity to his students would mean that they had to understand, describe, and dramatically present the properties that Ward-Penny wanted them to learn. Evidently, integrating the arts in these ways supports many types of learners, and by involving students in learning catered to their specific intelligence strengths, they become more active participants in the learning process (Orzulak, 2006; Wiebe et al.,2007; Gullatt, 2008; Walker, Tabone & Weltsek, 2011).

2.8 Transforming Education for the Future

2.8.1 What needs to change?

Recent research by Collard and Looney (2014) suggests that creativity is widely acknowledged as a skill that is “vital for social and economic innovation and development as well as for individual well-being”(p.348) in order to prepare our students for the unknown future (i.e jobs that do not yet exist, new technologies that have yet to be invented, and problems that have not yet been anticipated), then creative thinking must be stimulated in the classroom. In agreement with this, McWilliam & Dawson (2008) impose that we must seek to connect pedagogy and creativity in order to assemble a framework for systematically orchestrating creative learning environments. In doing so, sequential
learning will take place, which can only benefit the future of our economy. Anderson & Milbrandt (1998) advocate for teaching art for life’s sake as opposed to teaching art for the sake of teaching art. They propose that teachers should learn to emulate current issues and events in the art community, which “demands that [teachers] understand some of the foundational roles of art in society (Anderson & Mildbrandt, 1998, p.14&15).

Furthermore, their research argues that the foundation of authentic art instruction is to ensure that students are exposed to “life issues in the manner of art-in-the-world” (Anderson & Mildbrandt, 1998, p.16). To teach this way, we must understand the nature of our current issues, and we must also cultivate imagination, creativity and innovation as necessities through our current education system.

2.8.2 Why do we need to change?

Most researchers agree that when it comes to our education systems, creativity and arts integration play integral parts in the future of our society. Research by McWhinney and Markos (2003) agree that the sudden changing demography of our world “calls on us to build on opportunities that were not feasible when survival was the prime focus of life” (p.17). This process is called transformative education, which McWhinney and Markos (2003) suggest is the need to continuously alter our education systems to correlate with how our culture is advancing. By encouraging an arts-based focus in our early school years, we are stimulating the creative mind, and in turn, constructing more creative minds to come face to face with our unknown and vastly progressing future. Saebo, McCammon & O’Farrell (2007), agree with these notions, and suggest that in order to prepare our adolescents for the future, we will need to provide them with an education that “develops
imaginative, flexible and tough-minded thinking” (p.205), and states that the arts
powerfully nurtures the ability to think in this manner. Saebo, McCammon & O’Farrell
(2007), go on to say that success is closely related to the creative application of good
development. If we do not develop our intellectual resources, and if industrial countries
rely solely on their collective brain capacities to maintain our economy, then we are
surely doomed to fail. The challenge then, for schools and other social institutions, is to
begin to mould minds so that the future population is able to take in new initiatives and
not repeat what other generations have done. According to Saebo, McCammon &
O’Farrell (2007), this new generation of thinkers “must be equipped for a world of
challenge and change” (p.209) and creativity is the answer to that challenge.

2.9 Conclusion

This research makes a strong case for the benefits of integrating the arts into
everyday curriculum. Reviewing important literature concerning the idea of integrating
arts across the curriculum and using creativity as a tool for learning in the classroom helps
to establish a deeper understanding of the role that art can play in education. This chapter
looks at defining arts integration and creativity in order to inform educators and clarify
vagueness often associated with the terms. Through research, important conclusions about
the correlation between arts integration/creativity and higher level learning were made,
and changes that need to be made in our current education system were highlighted.
Restrictions to these notions such as the difficulty that comes with assessing the arts, were
looked at in both the issues that surround assessing creativity as well as strategies for
teachers to assess creativity. Other challenges and obstacles were also focused on in this
chapter such as budget cuts, lack of instruction time and a hierarchy of education. 
Looking particularly at how teachers can integrate arts into the curriculum to help achieve 
student success through holistic education, this chapter highlighted some specific 
strategies used by teachers in order to make artistic learning accessible. My research 
illustrates what needs to change in our education systems in order to transform our 
education systems for the future, as well as why these changes are so necessary for the 
future of our world both in an economic and education view point. My research study 
makes a strong contribution to other leading research in arts integration, and demonstrates 
a wide variety of voices, which stand for creative learning. As a unique contribution to 
existing literature, my research correlates with current practices and strategies for arts 
integration with the sub-sequential benefits of creative learning for the future of our 
students.
Chapter 3 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction (Chapter Overview)

In this chapter I describe the methodology used for this research project. I begin by reviewing the general approach, procedures, and data collection instruments, before elaborating more specifically on participant sampling and recruitment. I explain data analysis procedures and review the ethical considerations pertinent to my study. Relatedly, I identify a range of methodological limitations, but I also speak to the strengths of the methodology. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a brief summary of key methodological decisions and my rationale for these decisions given the research purpose and questions.

3.1 Research Approach & Procedures

This research study was conducted using a qualitative research approach involving reviewing relevant literature and existing research, as well as semi-structured interviews with teachers. Accounts of the participants’ personal practice (specifically with integrated arts) helped to highlight strategies used to promote artistic learning despite challenges such as budget cuts. Furthermore, the participants’ personal and professional experiences with the arts were considered, as well as how these experiences helped to inform their teaching approach. For this reason, qualitative research was an appropriate approach for conducting this study. The interpretative and theoretical frameworks that make up the process of qualitative research allow researchers to address the “meaning of individuals or groups ascribed to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2013, p.44). In this study, some of the issues involved include the budget cuts that have been made to fine arts programs
in schools across Ontario. Qualitative research is also appropriate given what I wanted to learn and why, because it encourages reflexivity, which means that there is room to convey my own personal background, biases, and connection with this topic and to speak to how these inform my interpretation of the data.

3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

The main instrument for data collection used in this study was a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix B). This research method is appropriate as it permits the use of multiple perspectives, which allows for a complex and detailed understanding of the issue (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews provide the opportunity to hear about participants’ lived experiences (Creswell, 2013), which can illuminate their reasoning behind the use of certain practices. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest an interview protocol that is not constructed one way (i.e. the interview ruled by the interviewer) but rather, a more collaborative interview process where both the interviewer and the interviewee engage in discussion about the topic (as cited in Creswell, 2013). In this way, the semi-structured format allows for the interviewer to design an interview that attends to their research focus, while leaving room for participants to elaborate and even re-direct attention to areas that the interviewer may not have expected. Although some may question whether or not this process creates too much of a bias, Bogdan and Biklen (1998), state that “the idea is NOT to be a ‘clean slate’, but rather, more reflective and conscious of how ‘who you are’ may shape and enrich what you study” (Bogdan & Bilken, 1998, p. 7-8). In this sense, acknowledging subjectivity is viewed as important.
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The interview protocol was ordered into distinct sections in order to effectively cover all of the necessary information. The first section dealt primarily with the participants’ background in teaching, and specifically their experience with the arts. Next, I focused my questions on their beliefs about the role of the arts in education, as well as how they themselves do this in their teaching practice. Lastly, I focused on the challenges they face in the classroom when using these strategies, and recommendations they have for teachers and the school system, more broadly, in terms of how to continue to meaningfully integrate arts into students’ education.

3.3 Participants

In this section, I review the sampling criteria I established for participant recruitment, and I review a range of possible avenues for teacher recruitment. I have also included a section wherein I introduce each of the participants.

3.3.1 Sampling Criteria

In order to select the most ideal teacher participants for the interview process, I developed the following criteria:

1. The individual has a specific interest and passion for teaching the arts as evidenced by their professional and educational background.

2. The individual has shown leadership, commitment, and/or expertise in the area of arts integration in schools (e.g. conducting professional development for colleagues, participating in professional development in this area, contributing to curriculum
In order to find the ideal participant, I needed to ensure that participants had a specific interest and passion for the arts. It could have been one specific art form (dance, music, drama, visual) or an interest in all, as long as the participant recognized the importance and had experience with teaching the arts. This was verified through their personal relationship to the arts, as well as their professional and educational background. It was important to me that these participants connect personally with the arts, because they would be more likely to strive to overcome challenges to ensure arts instruction could take place in their practice.

Whether it is through providing professional development to colleagues, having completed a graduate degree with this focus, or having written curriculum support materials, it was important to me that teachers had demonstrated leadership, commitment, and/or expertise in the area of arts integration. This criterion was important because it demonstrated that the participant was on the forefront of arts focused research, and saw the importance of sharing their theories with other educators.

By ensuring my participants had a minimum of 5 years teaching experience, I interviewed individuals that had had some time to mould and alter their practice to find the most effective arts integration strategies. As well, since my personal interest in education is also centred on arts integration, I can now use their insights and strategies to inform my own practice and those who work along side me.
3.3.2 Sampling procedures

Given the small-scale nature of this study, as well as the methodological parameters given to work with, both convenience and purposive sampling were used in order to conduct this part of the research. Being immersed within the school system for this program, as well as having several existing contacts that are teachers or are involved with teaching organizations allowed for strong convenience sampling. However, purposive sampling was also used, as criteria were established in order to select the most appropriate candidates for interviews. I contacted teachers and teaching associations, as well as the arts curriculum consultants for York Region District School Board, the coordinator of the ARTSpiration conference, and teacher educators from Simcoe County District School Board who give workshops to teachers about teaching the arts. I contacted these individuals by providing my information, as well as information about my research study and my participant criteria. I provided my information in order to ensure that the educators were volunteering to participate rather than feeling obligated to participate.

In order to develop a complex understanding of this topic, it was important to find individuals on the forefront of the issue, as these participants were more likely to provide insight and experience related to the research (Marshall, 1996). This is why qualitative research methods such as interviews were ideal compared to the research methodology of quantitative studies. According to Marshall (1996), convenience sampling is “the least rigorous technique, involving the selection of the most accessible subjects” (Marshall, 1996, p.523). As previously stated, the nature of this study is small scale, and therefore
this type of sampling is convenient, as well as less costly in terms of time, effort and money (Marshall, 1996). Although according to Marshall (1996), a more thoughtful approach to participant selection is generally preferred for qualitative research, Creswell (2013) suggests that the most important criteria for participants are to be accessible, willing to participate, and recognized for their accomplishments or experience. In this case, convenience sampling provided a range of exemplary teachers and leaders who fit my specific criteria.

Although this research was based mostly on convenience sampling, there is a criteria for participants which suggests that this study also uses purposeful sampling. Creswell (2013) explains that purposeful sampling is when “the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (p. 156). In this way, although the participants were widely chosen based off of convenience, it is still important to recognize their dedication and involvement with my topic, in order to ensure a strong understanding and personal experience with the research problem.

3.3.3 Participant Bios

David:
At the time of the research, David had been a teacher for 15 years and had experience with a range of age groups and subject areas. David had taught almost every grade in primary, junior and intermediate and was currently teaching in a 7/8 split in York Region. Although David specialized in teaching science, he appreciated the impact that teaching science through the arts can have on student achievement. Coming from a school with a
high population of English Language Learners (ELLs), David often turned to the arts to support ELLs with a focus other than oral or written language. David’s history with the arts stemmed from his love of music, which began at the age of 7 when he started playing classical guitar, and when time allowed, he helped the school choir, rock band, and worked on musicals. Aside from music, David also enjoyed running clay-mation workshops both in the classroom and in camp settings.

**Amelia:**

At the time of the research Amelia had been a teacher in Ontario for many years, and had experience teaching grades 1 through 7. As an elementary teacher, she had taught all subject areas, but specialized in visual arts and is qualified in intermediate mathematics. At the time of the research, Amelia’s role within the school board was to facilitate teacher development that used arts integration to foster student achievement. Amelia came from an artistic background, as she was interested in visual arts at a young age. Although Amelia felt that her own elementary education did not support or nurture her artistic talents, she was a big advocate for the arts in schools and found meaningful ways to integrate the arts with technology. Amelia was excited for the opportunity to use her current position to inspire other teachers and reach out to the local and global community through art.

**William:**

William had been teaching for 25 years and at the time of the research was a rotary drama/dance teacher for Kindergarten to grade 8. He taught grade 3 and grade 5 for
several years before finding his love for rotary arts in York Region. William worked with a team of art enthusiasts at an arts integrated school, and worked collaboratively with other teachers to integrate various subjects into his dance/drama classes. William did not have much of a background in arts before entering the teaching world, but attended high school in India where he found his love for Bollywood. William also spent time practicing martial arts, which helped to inform many of his dance/drama pieces. Art therapy was also an important concept for William, who found value in using the arts to help students deal with heavy topics such as bullying and mental illness.

**Katrina:**

Katrina had been teaching for 9 years, and had experience teaching kindergarten, and grades 2, 4 and 6 homeroom, as well as grade 7 drama/dance. Katrina felt strongly about the benefits of imbedding arts across all curriculum areas. At the time of the research, Katrina worked for York Region District School Board partly as a teacher librarian and partly as an instructional coach for teachers, helping educators reach their professional goals. Considering her background in dance and drama, as well as her experience teaching at arts-focused schools, Katrina encouraged the teachers that she worked with to use arts integration in their practice. Katrina described her relationship with the arts as complex, as she had to unlearn a lot of her formal training to bring her passions into an educational setting.
3.4 Data Analysis

Once the data was collected through the semi-structured interview process, the interviews were transcribed in full. Once the data was transcribed, the original research questions were used as an interpretive tool to create codes to break down the research. In accordance with the methods of Creswell (2013), the coding process for my research included organization, reading, memoing (notes), describing and classifying/interpreting data into codes and then themes. Sinkovics & Alfoldi (2012) state that for many qualitative researchers “there still remains a (real or imagined) stigma attached to the concept of non-linear, fluid research” (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012, p.822). With this in mind, I strayed from a rigid and non-linear approach to data analysis, and ensured that my coding process was fluid and dynamic, in order to make room for re-evaluation and re-negotiation of my study’s boundaries.

The coding process started with what Creswell (2013) calls “lean coding”. At first, the data was coded into 6 categories, and then expanded into more categories from there. For this study, the data was coded by looking for common themes and divergences within the categories of data as relevant to the research questions. Creswell (2013) describes themes as “broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea” (Creswell, 2013, p.186) and with Creswell’s (2013) method in mind, I was able to form common themes among each transcript using the categories and codes I had created, synthesizing themes where appropriate. Meaning making followed the coding process, as I unravelled the significance and meaning behind the themes and correlated them with the relevant literature. In accordance with Creswell (2013), the meaning
making part of the research involved looking beyond the codes and themes to make sense of the data I had collected. According to Sinkovics & Alfoldi (2012), qualitative research findings often evolve continuously during the meaning making process, via the interaction between theory and data, and this was something that I experienced throughout my process as well. I had not anticipated the various correlations between transcripts and how they would work their way into my research, and it makes sense why a degree of flexibility retained in all parts of the research process is recommended (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). In addition, Bogdan & Biklen (1998) discuss the importance of embracing the ambiguity of the diverse meanings of a research study, and how they can exist simultaneously. Using these important researchers’ teachings, I ensured a flexible interview process and remained open to the possibility of change and diversity in meanings. Lastly, at this stage of the study, “null data” was considered, in order to incorporate what was not said and its significance. The findings from this process are reported in chapter 4.

3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

In regards to ethical issues during the research process, Creswell (2013) gives insight on ethical considerations before the interview process takes place. Creswell (2013) highlights the importance of considering our roles as insiders/outsiders to the participants, while establishing supportive, respectful relationships that are free of stereotypes. Hatch (2002) states that we should be sensitive to vulnerable populations, as well as power imbalances (as cited in Creswell, 2013). With this valuable information in mind, several
precautions were taken to ensure that the participants were comfortable sharing their experiences and information. In the case that the research results may unwittingly present a harmful picture of the participants, Creswell (2013) suggests being mindful of protecting the participants’ privacy through masking names. In accordance to Creswell’s perspective, all participants were assigned a pseudonym and were notified of their right to withdraw from participation in the study at any stage. Participants’ identities remained confidential and any identifying markers related to their schools or students were excluded. Upon initial contact, the participants were given a letter of consent (Appendix A), stating their consent to be interviewed and audio recorded. This letter of consent not only addressed ethics and procedures, but also specified the expectations of participation (a 45-60 minute semi-structured interview). Any questions or concerns about the letter of consent were addressed accordingly. As noted by Creswell (2013) and Bogdan & Biklen (1998), the participants should not feel pressured into signing consent forms, be it through coercing of the interviewee or the nature of the site of the interview. To ensure confidentiality and safety of the data, the letter specified that all data (audio recordings) is and will remain stored on my password-protected computer and will be destroyed after 5 years. The participants carefully read and signed the consent letter as a part of the interview process. Afterwards, the participants were given a copy of the signed letter, and the original was be kept safely locked away in a filing cabinet. There are no known risks to participating in this study. The interviews were conducted at a time and place that was convenient to the participants, and they were given all necessary information about content, consent and confidentiality before conducting the interviews. After reviewing the topic and content of the interview, participants were told that they could refrain from
commenting on any question or refuse answers. Participants had the opportunity to review the transcripts and to clarify or retract any statements before data analysis was conducted. All data was reported on and analyzed authentically, and no responses were altered or falsified in any way in accordance with Bogdan & Biklen (1998) who state that researchers should not set out to find data to prove or disprove hypotheses that they have prior to their study. All procedures were conducted in the manner specified to the participants in the consent forms they sign. No changes were made to those procedures throughout the course of the research or writing process.

3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths

3.6.1 Limitations

Although qualitative research allows for an in depth study of a topic or issue, there are several limitations and challenges regarding the guidelines for the MTRP. In this particular situation, given the ethical parameters of the research, the interviews can involve only teachers. This means that no parents or students could be involved in the interview process, and no classroom observations could contribute to the research. With these limitations, it is important to consider that not all perspectives were explored. Creswell (2013) implies that some challenges with small sample sizes are that researchers may “lose track of the need to present multiple perspectives and a complex picture of the central phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p.60). With such ethical parameters, however, it is difficult to explore the many perspectives of the study, and therefore many areas of the research will go unexplored. Small sample sizes can also be seen as a limitation, although
research by Marshall (1996) explains that it is not necessarily about how many
participants a study has. Where quantitative research demonstrates the use of large
sampling for use of generalization, Marshall argues that an appropriate sample size for a
qualitative study is “one that adequately answers the research question” (Marshall, p.
523). In other words, as long as relevant, detailed and complex data is collected, sample
size should not matter. Marshall (1996) goes on to say that the researcher may not even
know how many participants are appropriate until the study starts to develop. In
accordance, Creswell (2013) also mentions that sample size should not matter, as long as
extensive detail is gathered. He states that the intent with qualitative research is not to
generalize, but rather to elucidate information in detail (Creswell, 2013).

3.6.2 Strengths

This form of qualitative research also has several strengths, which affirms that
these methods are the proper choice given the limitations we are working within. Firstly,
interviews allow for a more in depth study than a survey would, and it gives teachers a
chance to speak to what matters, as well as their experiences. In this way, this research
validates the teachers’ voices, and allows them to reflect on themselves in order to
articulate how they approach art both in theory and in practice. This allows for what
Creswell (2013) would call a “holistic account” (p.47). Even though perhaps not all
perspectives of the topic are being studied, allowing teachers to have a voice and reflect
on their own experiences allows for the identification of the many pieces that it takes to
create the “big picture”. Another methodological strength for this type of research is the
researcher’s ability to position themselves within the study, this is called reflexivity
(Creswell 2013). When reflexivity occurs, researchers are able to take their own experiences and allow it to inform and shape the study in order to learn what they have to gain from the research.

3.7 Conclusion

To conclude, in this chapter I described the research methodology in depth including my general approach, the procedures I used for data collection, data collection instruments, as well as data analysis procedures. I reviewed ethical considerations that were taken, as well as some limitations and strengths that I foresaw for this study. This chapter outlines specific criteria for the teachers I interviewed as my research participants. Interviews are a particularly effective form of methodology for my topic of research, as they give leaders in this subject a voice. As well, this methodology allows for some reflexivity, which will help to convey my personal background in order to further inform the study. Next, in chapter 4, I report in detail the research findings.
Chapter 4 – RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction (Chapter Overview)

In this chapter I report and discuss the findings from four interviews conducted with past and current elementary school teachers. The interviews focused on the strategies, barriers, and other experiences that these teachers have had while instructing an arts integrated curriculum. While the teachers had many different understandings and personal connections to the arts, each participant displayed a sincere commitment to arts integration through their practices. Since the participants came from multiple teaching backgrounds, two participants described their experiences of an arts integrated curriculum based off of their past experiences in teaching, as well as through a lens of their current positions as teacher educators. The other participants discussed their commitment to arts integration by reflecting on their current practices. Each participant had significantly varying backgrounds in their personal relationships to the arts as well. Three of the participants had little to no formal training in any of the arts, and one participant was formally trained in dance and drama for several years. Each participant’s experience and expertise in arts integration were an integral part of this research and provided valuable insight into the importance and benefits of integrating the arts across the curriculum. Throughout this chapter I strive to ensure the anonymity of the participants. Accordingly, each interview participant has been assigned a pseudonym, which will be used for the remainder of this chapter.
4.1 Key Findings

After analyzing my interview transcripts I decided that the information was best organized into eight key themes that paralleled the subsidiary questions that guided my research and interviews. The themes that will guide this discussion are as follows:

(1) Teachers enact a range of pedagogical and practical strategies for integrating the arts, which prioritize building community in the classroom, and viewing curriculum content through an artistic lens; (2) Teachers understand arts integration as an integral part of their theory and practice, especially in regards to time management, addressing multiple learning needs, and reaching out to/teaching about the global community; (3) In an arts integrated classroom, teachers feel that meaning making is supported through facilitating student interest and the integration of technology; (4) Teachers are faced with a range of challenges and barriers that affect their ability to adopt an arts integrated curriculum such as personal discomfort, assessment of the arts, and lack of instruction time; (5) Teachers strongly believe in the importance of collaboration with other teachers to build arts integrated school communities; (6) Teachers regard professional development, creativity-based workshops, self-driven research and a deep knowledge of the curriculum as core supports for their practice; (7) Teachers believe that being in a classroom setting in which arts are being integrated positively impacts students’ learning experiences in terms of engagement, ability to demonstrate understanding, building emotional intelligences, and empowering students; (8) For beginning or in-service teachers looking to adopt an arts integrated classroom, participants offered a range of valuable advice such as starting
small, taking risks, making mistakes and knowing the students.

4.2 Teachers enact a range of pedagogical and practical strategies for integrating the arts, which prioritize building community in the classroom, and viewing curriculum content through an artistic lens.

One of the main objectives of this study was to understand how teachers are effectively integrating the arts across the curriculum. This study found that teachers implement a variety of strategies that they believe are important in successfully implementing arts-based learning. Several important sub-themes were identified in this section as being helpful strategies for teachers who wish to implement an arts integrated program into their own classrooms.

4.2.1 Teachers believe in the importance of building trust and personal connections to students in order to integrate the arts effectively.

In order to successfully implement an arts integrated approach to teaching, participants felt that the best starting point was to build trusting and personal connections with the students. In doing this, teachers found that a stronger sense of community was established in the classroom, and students were more likely to take risks and feel comfortable in their learning environment. Katrina’s comment on building community in the classroom reflected the opinions of the other participants, she noted:

In my experience I know that for this to really work, the classroom community has to be really solid and the classroom has to be a really safe space for kids to take risks, for them to be silly, to try new things and to put themselves into sometimes uncomfortable situations.
A strategy that William found helpful in building a safe community for students was for him to share some personal and meaningful connections with the class before expecting them to contribute. The process of having a mutual personal connection with his students was one of the ways he was able to not only get to know his students, but to build their trust and respect as a teacher. Here, for example, he explained how he used drama as a means for teaching about bullying:

[I do] some monologues on bullying- when you were bullied or when you were a bully; that’s a hard one. The first thing I’ll do is I’ll tell the kids ‘ok, here’s my sample…’ and I’ll give them some samples of true stuff.

This strategy is significant because it helps to “set the stage” for creative learning. If teachers can build safe communities in their classrooms that allow our students to take risks and make mistakes, then they are supplying for their students a healthy environment for creative stimulation and growth.

4.2.2 Teachers use the arts to reinforce the information being taught in the curriculum.

One strategy that was agreed upon amongst the teachers was the idea of using the arts to underline curriculum expectations. Where various teachers would teach art and other subjects separately, participants in this research agreed that when it comes to an arts integrated approach to teaching, educators should use the arts as a tool for teaching the other subjects. Amelia stated that teachers must ask themselves: “How can [I] bring the arts into what [I’m] teaching to help support it through a different lens?” As opposed to seeing the arts and other subjects as separate entities, it would be helpful for teachers to consider the arts as looking at the curriculum through a different lens. Another benefit to
an arts-based approach is mirrored in the Ontario Full Day Kindergarten curriculum, which is designed around inquiry-based learning. The Full Day Kindergarten curriculum promotes a safe and caring play-based environment for the students, and William suggested that a similar approach can be taken with higher grades as well. He noted that “you make them play and they’re learning about whatever your unit is or whatever you’re researching. It’s a hook, it just draws them in and they’re playing and yet they’re learning at the same time.” As educators it is important to address the fact that our students are children, and although we must educate and prepare them for their futures, we must also adhere to and nurture their creativity and curiosity. For example, Walker, Tabone & Weltsek (2011) demonstrate a strong correlation between academic success and arts education in their research. Through the use of play and theatre, students from Walker, Tabone & Weltsek’s (2011) research demonstrated deeper and more meaningful connections to course content through interpretation and embodied meaning making. Students who learned through theatre and creative play were also able to transfer these learning strategies and carry them on into other classes to benefit their learning in later grades (Walker, Tabone & Weltsek , 2011). If arts integration is approached in this way, then teachers will not only be implementing the curriculum more effectively, but students will be able to learn through an exploration of their curiosity.
4.2.3 The arts are used as a medium or starting ground for creating and implementing unit plans.

Using the arts for unit planning can be an effective strategy for executing an arts-based learning environment. In his interview, David discussed his method of using the arts as an approach to designing and implementing his unit plans. He suggests:

Using the arts as the final piece or the summative project. Using art as the medium and integrating the subjects around it. So it’s kind of a backwards design rule a little bit. Because people will say ‘well I have to teach literacy, I have to teach math, I have to do this…’ but if you create an end goal where you can actually go backwards and say ‘if I want to do this, then I can pull some literacy into this, or I can pull some math into that, or I can pull some history into that’. I say start at the end product and say ‘what do I want to do?’ and then go backwards.

David found that an effective strategy for teachers is to start planning with a summative project based on the arts, and use multiple aspects of the curriculum to build around it. This is because many teachers use a “backwards design” approach to creating lesson plans already, and may find it helpful to keep this approach and have the arts component present as well. David suggested that to support different learning styles, each student can contribute the end goal of the unit differently, and there is no need for the teacher to change their program. Amelia spoke to a naturalistic flow to this type of planning, and commented that “an arts integrated curriculum is really about seeing how pieces fit together and the natural connections between things”. If educators could use this approach to integrate the arts without changing their fundamental practice of teaching, they may feel more inclined to incorporate the arts in to their practices and build the curriculum up around it. This strategy is effective for teachers who can see the benefit of arts integration but are less familiar with how to approach it.
4.2.4 Literacy is believed to be the easiest area of the curriculum to teach through the arts.

It can be challenging to teach complex math algorithms and scientific concepts through arts without any practice, but one subject that consistently arose in literature and in participant interviews was the idea of using literacy and the arts in tandem. In order to successfully apply the arts across the curriculum, Gullet (2008) suggests that something as simple as creative writing as an aesthetic opportunity to make literature meaningful can be beneficial for students. Other research demonstrates the importance of students engaging in expressive writing, or deepening understanding by dramatizing characters or scenes within a text (Lynch, 2007; Gullett, 2008; Walker, Tabone & Weltsek, 2011;). When considering where the arts can be integrated, David affirmed these claims, stating: “Clearly it’s going to be literacy. EVERYTHING can relate back to literacy- no problem. You can inter-weave it wherever you want.” Although some teachers struggle with incorporating the arts into their classroom, research suggests that literacy is the most commonly used subject for arts integration. This may be because the literacy curriculum is made up of several components. Writing reflections, scripts, or studying a text through art can be easy and effective ways to integrate the arts into the classroom. In practice, Katrina suggested that this might look like “doing a read aloud that deals with issues of racial profiling and race, and having the kids explore those ideas through dance using story nouns and verb chains”. Katrina went on to express that not only does this allow her students to critically analyze a text, but it allows them to use movement to demonstrate their understandings of a text as well, which can later help to elevate the quality of their written work. Using literacy as a starting point for arts integration is an effective strategy
because it allows teachers who may not have a wealth of experience with the arts to start integrating these methods in order to promote deeper understandings of texts and better quality writing.

4.3 Teachers understand arts integration as an integral part of their theory and practice especially in regards to time management, addressing multiple learning needs, and reaching out to/teaching about the global community.

This research study demonstrates that teachers who commonly integrate the arts across the curriculum feel it to be a crucial aspect to their teaching practices. Not only do these practices positively affect student success (which will be discussed later in this chapter), but it also proves to be an effective tool for time management, addressing a variety of needs and learning styles, reaching out to the community, and teaching moral and social justice issues. These sub themes are more thoroughly discussed below.

4.3.1 Cross-curricular integration of the arts allows teachers to effectively manage their time by being able to cover a lot of the curriculum at once.

Although teachers find that a common barrier of teaching an arts-based curriculum is lack of instruction time for the arts, both David and Katrina suggested that a cross-curricular integration of the arts actually allows for more instruction time for core subjects. This is accrued through the time that is saved by not having to teach art during the “art block” on a timetable, but instead teaching arts and other subjects jointly. Several of the participants in this research discussed that utilizing an arts integrated approach to
learning takes practice and a lot of experimentation, but when integrated well can save instruction time. Katrina reflected on her own journey into arts integration and explained that:

I didn’t have to worry about my drama/dance period on my timetable because it was so fluid between the literacy, so you could see it as an extra literacy period or whatever. Then I always knew I had enough assessment pieces already, so it ended up lightening my workload. Then once I got those two key pillars of the program, and let’s face it, in terms of a timetable that’s where the majority of your week is spent…the other subject areas really fell into place.

In regards to his methods of time saving, David suggested that he also used a cross-curricular approach to teaching. When teachers are faced with covering so many different subjects, and are only given an allotted amount of instruction time for each, he suggested that “you have to try to cover as much as you can, and one of the best ways to do it is to always look how you can ‘cross-curricular’ what you’re doing.” Though arts integration, teachers are able to address multiple subjects at once, which not only takes up less instruction time in the day, but also relieves some planning. Essentially, these teachers value arts integrated learning because they recognize that it saves them time and will consequently lighten their workload as well.

4.3.2 Teachers feel that teaching through the arts makes it easier to address the needs of each student in the classroom.

One of the most important responsibilities of an elementary teacher is to address the specific needs of each student in the classroom. Teachers in this study strongly felt that one key benefit of adopting an arts integrated practice was the ability to effectively meet the needs of all of their students through differentiated instruction. In his interview,
William encompassed these ideas with a well thought out metaphor, explaining that “everyone has their own learning style, and the good teacher throws a blanket over all of the learning styles.” David also suggested that “a good teacher has to realize that everybody learns differently.” Katrina commented on her experiences of using the arts as a tool to reach each of her students’ needs as well. In her words: “ultimately I see the arts as one tool in a teacher’s tool kit that we can use to differentiate our instruction, or assessment, that we can tailor programming to specific kids.” Evidently, William, David and Katrina all acknowledged the importance of catering to the specific needs of each student, and this correlates to relevant research surrounding this topic. According to the literature, the best integration practices emphasize a differentiated instruction method, which integrates the arts into other areas of learning in order to stimulate and educate the whole child (Brown, 2007; Gullatt, 2008; Collard & Looney, 2014; Marshall, 2014;). This finding supports that it may be helpful for educators to consider arts integration as catering to the child holistically. Where some might assume that only “artistic” students could benefit from an arts-based approach to learning, the reality is that the arts effectively allow teachers to touch upon a broader range of student’s learning needs. Whether the student is a kinesthetic learner, a linguistic learner, or is drawn to more logical thinking problems, the arts have the ability to encompass all of the learning styles and tailor practices to specific and individual needs.
4.3.3 Teachers think that social justice issues and moral lessons are more easily taught through the use of the arts.

Throughout Ontario, issues of social justice, moral lessons and empathy are all being taught to educate students to be respectable informed citizens that have an important voice. This research indicated that teachers felt it was easier to address social justice and moral issues through the use of the arts, as some topics can be heavy and evoke a lot of emotion. Studies by Anderson & Milbrandt (1998) also suggest that students have the ability to address public issues and use personal experiences for expression and interpretation of the arts. They advise that bringing opportunities for students to address social justice issues and other important topics “requires that teachers pose problems through which students can demonstrate analysis, understanding of disciplinary concepts, and elaborated communication as they discuss relationships of content to real-life situations” (Anderson & Milbrandt, 1998, p.17). William discussed the importance of addressing these topics in an educational setting as well. He explained that:

You have to get the kids in the arts thinking about social issues and moral issues- social obligations… because it’s a big world out there and there are a lot of people that don’t treat it (the world) as something that’s shared, you know?

Amelia also discussed the possibilities of changing students’ perspectives through the arts:

The arts are about trying to make people see something in a new way- so shifting into a new way. Just like with the kids. So if they can engage in it and it shifts their way of looking at something, then you’re on the right track.
By using art to alter the perspectives of our students, we can begin to encourage them to see the world differently. Not only can teaching social justice through art challenge the opinions of students, but it can also allow them to challenge the opinions of others and have a deeper understanding of some of the more important issues within our society.

4.3.4 Teachers feel that the arts support their goals in reaching out to the local and global community.

In relation to teaching social justice and moral topics through art, teachers find that their desires to make a difference and reach out to different communities are also supported through the use of the arts. Because fine arts are such a universal entity, using these subjects as a tool for reaching out to various communities makes sense. Networking with other communities can be an integral part of a students’ learning because they are connecting and learning both locally and globally. This allows students to develop a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the world. In William’s opinion, dance is a method of connecting different cultures and should be used to do so. His goal at the time of the research was as follows:

I’m contacting my high school that I went to in India and we’re going to look at doing a live show. They’ll do a half hour show and we’ll do a half hour show and we’ll live-stream it to each other. So kind of make it a global village type of thing.

In order to educate our students about the world, it is imperative that we focus on aspects of our cultures that connect us. Although different cultures may speak different languages and have different customs and religions, every culture can unite to enjoy and
share in the arts, and this takes learning to a new level. Amelia reflects on her own
practices as a teacher educator and how arts have allowed her to reach out to the school
board for which she worked, and also to all of the arts communities related to hers as well.
She found that her position as a teacher educator had also been particularly helpful in
allowing her to reach out to the global community. She remarked:

> I really feel like this position and my role has allowed me to reach out
to a global audience, and it’s some initiatives that we put on and
developed here have taken on global impact so it’s really amazing how
the arts can reach out and touch every aspect of society.

This finding is significant, because the more our society advances, the more easily
we will be able to communicate globally. If we can start teaching our students the impact
that arts can have on a global or even local level, we are preparing them for their futures
and demonstrating commonalities amongst all cultures and peoples.

4.4 **In an arts integrated classroom, teachers feel that meaning making is supported through facilitating student interest and the integration of technology.**

This research shows that teachers feel that arts can be used in order to build deeper
understandings and allow students to derive meaning from their learning. This type of
meaning making happens by making the curriculum more appealing to learners, as well as
using relevant technologies to underscore important concepts.
4.4.1 The arts adhere to facilitating student interest and making the curriculum more appealing to learners.

These teachers believed that arts integration is an effective way of supporting meaning making in the classroom. Not only did they report that the arts help to foster a deeper understanding of concepts for some students, but it can also help to make the curriculum more interesting to learners. David acknowledged that when using arts integration in instruction, he was able to use the same instruction or the same project for everyone, but each student took something different from it. He stated that:

Every kid will take a different piece of it. One will be more artistic in knowing how to pull the pieces [of plasticine] apart and show, for example, how a hurricane comes in and just destroys a house. Or maybe another kid is like ‘you know I’m not really good at that, but I’m really good at editing’, so he’s going to be the editor. [Maybe one student is] really good at making voices and singing.

Inspiring the students by encouraging them to take part in what interests them allows for the curriculum to appeal more to the students. This not only happens when interest is facilitated, but also when a student is able to see themselves in their learning. William discussed his method of incorporating the cultures of his students into his arts lesson. He believed that it was important to consider culture when facilitating student interest, “because culturally there’s a lot of different stuff in the room- if I’m doing Persian dance, a Persian kid sits up and says, I know this one! You know and it really makes them proud”. Allowing his students to see themselves in their learning builds interest from the students and in turn allows for meaning making to occur. This is particularly significant because it demonstrates how art can make the curriculum more
appealing to students, and therefore support meaning making in their learning.

4.4.2 Teachers value technology as a tool for supporting meaning making in the arts.

With technology becoming such a ritualistic part of our students’ lives, it is important to consider the use of technology to enhance the arts in the classroom. Where William used technology to communicate and share dances globally with other cultures, Katrina addressed her use of technology for checking understanding. She stated, “Technology has really helped. I am somebody who really likes to think things through, so sometimes going back and watching a video of a child’s dance helps me understand how they may be understanding or not understanding.” In the past, Amelia had used technology to encourage her students to document their own learning. Amelia suggested that with technology, “students can document their learning. They can blog about it, they can tweet about it, they can take videos and pictures, and these things are accessible and easy to use now so the student can be responsible for reflecting upon their learning process.” In this sense, Amelia was suggesting that technology allowed her to give agency and responsibility to her students while allowing them to choose which form of technology to use. Mullen (2002) also touches on this concept of accessible and meaningful integration of technology into arts education. On discussing Project ARTS (a program designed to bring arts education to rural communities) Mullen (2002) reflects on the student’s ability to investigate aspects of the local community through study of photography and film-making. This art form, Mullen (2002) suggests, “engages educators and students as collaborators in re-envisioning schooling through post-modern processes of learning” (p.9). In correlation to Amelia’s contribution about student’s ability to
document their learning through technology, Mullen (2002) proposes that this type of learning allowed her students to feel empowered, and also aided in facilitating intrinsic motivation.

4.5 Teachers are faced with a range of challenges and barriers that affect their ability to adopt an arts integrated curriculum such as: personal discomfort, assessment of the arts, and lack of instruction time.

One of the main goals of this research was to discover what range of barriers and challenges teachers face in managing an arts integrated curriculum. There were sufficient common elements in this research that suggest that teachers are experiencing similar challenges and barriers across the board. These findings are consistent with literature surrounding this topic that describe cultural barriers, the marginalization of the arts, and assessment as some key barriers that teachers face (Anderson & Mildbrandt, 1998; Craft, 2003; Zimmerman, 2009;) and display a variety of struggles that prevent cross-curricular learning form occurring. Fortunately, the research participants have also offered a variety of strategies and suggestions to help teachers overcome these barriers.

4.5.1 Teachers reported that one of the biggest obstacles teachers face is their own fear and discomfort in teaching the arts.

Participants in this research strongly agreed that one of the biggest barriers for teachers integrating the arts was their own fear and discomfort. David addressed this issue by suggesting that this hesitation for the arts “exists in the adult. I think that as you get older, the barrier can increase more and more and it’s a fear.” Both David and Amelia
discussed how the words “I can’t” can be very detrimental within an arts classroom. “You know- It’s a fear of I can’t dance, I can’t act, I get scared on stage” (David). Similarly, Katrina commented that among the teachers she worked with “there’s a huge amount of resistance and reluctance and fear when it comes to integrating dance”. This fear of the arts is problematic for teachers because if teachers create a phobia around a form of art or the concept of arts integration, it is possible that the teachers are imposing their values or their fears onto their students as well. This is a limitation for students, because it may prevent them from formulating their own opinions surrounding these matters. David suggested that because teachers may have had negative experiences in their own lives, it could lead to the perception that an art form is scary or unattainable. This idea of having fears around the arts can be detrimental to student learning, not only because those values may be transferred to them, but also because if the fear of an art form prevents a teacher from teaching it, that student will likely not gain experience or exposure to that practice.

4.5.2 Teachers reflect upon having cultural barriers that affect their ability to use an arts integrated pedagogy.

Although educators should accept and embrace all of the many cultures our students bring to the classroom, participants of this research found that some cultural barriers affected their ability to use an arts integrated pedagogy. These barriers include restrictions for certain students who cannot participate in music, students who are restricted from dancing, or students who cannot engage in physical contact with other students. Craft (2003) argues that art’s “strong emphasis on individuality and the value it places on being able to think independently of social norms” (pg. 120) may not reflect the
values of some cultures. David reflected on his own experiences with cultural barriers, and said:

You have cultural stuff that prevents you from doing certain things and I can speak on behalf of that. I had a student last year that for cultural reasons could not participate in music class in terms of playing an instrument, singing a song or dancing to music…but they need to have a music mark.

In response to this challenge, David acknowledged that the most appropriate way to address it is through accommodation. He argued that as long as the parents and student agree, the student can be present for the class and have a modified assignment. William added that differentiated instruction is an important part in dealing with cultural challenges, and that often responsibilities can be delegated to these students in order to make them engaged with the class (such as choosing a relevant song for a dance piece). Katrina has also had experiences with this form of cultural barrier, and suggested that it is up to the teacher to become familiar with the values of the community. It is important to consider these barriers as teachers, because although a culture’s beliefs may restrict a student from participating in certain lessons, there is always a way to allow them to know that they are still valued members of the classroom.

4.5.3 Teachers feel that a major barrier is that the arts are not valued, and are often marginalized.

These teachers believed that parents, students and teachers who do not value the arts are just as much a barrier to arts integration as fear is. When teachers can see the value in the arts integrated lessons that they implement, but others do not recognize the values of their practices, this raises some concerns. William noted:
The number of times I go into somebody’s room and I’ll be doing kinesthetic learning and I see the value of what I’m doing, but I’ll see the teacher in the room rolling her eyes or whatever it is while I’m doing it.

Other research poses that because education systems place so much emphasis on academic achievement and standardization tests, the arts are often left out, or put aside for when there is time (Zimmerman, 2009).

When we live in a society where arts practices are consistently on the margin right? They’re seen sort of as an extra or something for the very elite umm then we’ve already made a value judgment about where our priorities and our resources should be put. (Katrina)

This is problematic because without the support of other teachers or parents, the arts will continue to be stigmatized and labeled useless. Especially in the case that the principal does not see the value of an arts integrated approach to learning, a teacher who uses the arts in their instruction may feel pressured to alter their practice in order to feel valued. It was consistent among several of the participants that when placed in a school where arts integration was encouraged, they felt much more at ease than at schools where they were consistently being questioned and criticized about their practices. According to participants, this issue can be addressed through breaking down the barriers built up between the arts and valued programs such as athletics. David mentioned that many principals are drawn to athletic programs because they can help to give students scholarships to higher education, David suggested that these programs should be valued equally.
Another common theme among teacher participants was that the education they were provided with (either in their own primary/secondary education, teachers college or in AQs) were ineffective at demonstrating how to adopt arts integrated teaching practices. Amelia shared that she did not feel that AQs or teachers college prepared her whatsoever for teaching the arts, and that in her early years of elementary school she “had the creativity beaten out of [her]”. She went on to express that it was not until her adult years that she felt valued as an artist and ready to adopt this kind of practice. One of the main issues with teacher education, David shared, is that the workshops and seminars presented to teachers do not adopt the effective teaching strategies that they are trying to implement. He said:

Here’s the weirdest thing- they tell us in teachers college, they tell us in our masters course, they tell us in AQ courses and in pedagogical workshops that you have to adhere to differentiated instruction. Well why is it that every time we as teachers end up in a meeting, it’s sitting and watching somebody speak…It’s so backwards.

In fact, only one out of the four participants found workshops and AQs helpful in building their practices. If we can infer that only one in four teachers are having their needs met in AQs and workshops, this is a serious issue because teachers who are interested in arts integration may never have the opportunity to attend a workshop that successfully allows them to learn these practices. Amelia discussed her own position as a teacher educator and shares that her primary goal is to facilitate teacher development that is focused on student success. In that sense, she gives “professional development courses based on the creative process, that’s all about feedback and innovative cycles and we try,
we fail, we try again, we try something new”. Looking at Amelia’s approach, it is evident that not all workshops and teacher development courses are ineffective. Additionally, Katrina reflected that when working in a school that promoted the arts:

In a staff meeting we would be talking and learning about different ways that we could practice arts integration. We were provided with a lot of resources as well, so you know we would be pointed in the direction of some of the school videos or given books.

If teachers were offered more professional development courses that were, as Amelia suggests, based on the creative process or promoted arts integration, teachers would feel more comfortable bringing the creative process into their classrooms having already experienced how to do so.

4.5.5 Teachers recognize assessment of the arts to be one of the most challenging barriers.

Without doubt, the biggest challenge discussed amongst participants and researchers alike is assessment of the arts. Teachers have difficulty comprehending how to assess the arts because these practices are generally seen as subjective. Although art is often a personal and introspective process, participants and researchers suggest that assessment of the arts can be done effectively if the proper strategies are utilized. Amelia argued that “if we’re just assessing the end result, you’re not getting a very good picture of what the student has learned”. This is true for both regular assessment and assessment in the arts, which is why Growing Success (2010) calls for assessment “for”, “as” and “of” learning. The process of assessing “as” learning calls for formative assessment throughout the learning process. Amelia argued that this is “very different than the assessment piece of like ‘I’m assessing all of this, and here’s your test’… as opposed to like ‘here’s your
learning journey… and look at everything that you’ve shown me that you’ve touched upon along that way”. Amelia stated that this process requires a lot of listening to the students, as well as commenting on their learning, and assessing along the way. A strategy for this, David suggested, is multi and varied forms of assessment. He discussed the effective use of anecdotal notes and states that however time consuming, they are beneficial. He also promoted the use of checklists in the classroom in order to keep students on task; he called these “check points” and they allowed him to see where his students’ were in what Amelia would call their “learning journey”.

So they get feedback right away. Past that point now do your design, draw it, put it out there, check point, get a mark, ok where are you here? Next point- do a write up, get a mark here, next point, do this. So it’s piecing it out so that the kids are getting constant feedback as they call it formative feedback or assessment FOR learning, or whatever the key thing is. (David)

Sullivan (1998) suggests that teachers should focus on portfolio-based assessment that are centered on detailed descriptions of the product, and provide clear and concise criteria throughout the process. This makes it easier to assess creativity in both formative and summative work. Katrina agreed with assessing her students throughout their learning, but mentions that it is important for teachers to regulate their own assessment practices to ensure that differentiated assessment occurs. She states that:

Even if its science class I may be saying ‘I have barely any anecdotal notes’, or ‘I have barely given any descriptive feedback to the kids on the actual quality of the dance- we’ve always been chatting about the scientific concepts, so today is the day that I am going to focus on this’ and that’s just how like I make sure that I’m addressing all of that with the kids while not going crazy.
Katrina and William also mentioned the use of technology in assessment and how it can be helpful to use specific programs and devices while assessing for the arts. Katrina states that:

"Technology has really helped so I am somebody who really likes to you know, think things through sometimes so sometimes going back and watching a video of a child’s dance helps me understand like how things they may be understanding or not understanding."

William added to this by mentioning that in the past he has used PowerPoint presentations as a joint assessment piece with a creative project. He cautioned teachers, and states that in implementing this practice it is important to demonstrate that no subject is more or less important than the other, so to ensure that the technology piece and the creative piece are weighted equally.

One of the strategies that David found useful is the use of rubrics. He stated that:

"In terms of evaluation, I’m a big rubric person. I like giving levels, I don’t like giving percentage marks or letter grades. I’m all about formative, descriptive feedback, as much as you can with 37 kids, and it doesn’t matter what subject it is."

He discussed the importance of making the rubric available to the students throughout the entire assignment so that they can be familiar with the expectations before hand. Furthermore, David suggested that teachers should “create the rubric with the students. It takes time and it can be dry and boring, but now they have ownership of what they’re doing and they’ve decided how you’re going mark them”. A process such a this own does give ownership to the student as David suggests, but also allows for a deeper understanding of the expectations, because they themselves have helped to set that bar.
Evidently, there is not only one form of assessment that is used in order to test creativity (standardized tests, rating scales, checklists, and projects are just a few) but rather, multiple measures are taken in order to properly assess the creative process (Zimmerman, 2009). This idea requires the teacher to take on many different roles, and to have a deep understanding of the domain that they choose to teach (Collard and Looney, 2014). According to Katrina,

“This is where the understanding of both the content area and the art come in. You need to have an understanding of both right? So sometimes we share these ideas with teachers where you’re hitting multiple expectations and a barrier for them would be assessment because they’re sort of like ‘well how many rubrics do I have to have?’

Arguably, it is not about the amount of rubrics that a teacher must utilize in order for effective assessment, but rather the quality of the rubrics. As Katrina suggested, if we have a good understanding of both the curriculum expectations and the art form, these concepts can be integrated into a few specific and clear rubrics for the students.

Another aspect of assessment to keep in mind is the idea of assessing learning skills. In Ontario, assessing learning skills is an important aspect of reports. While teachers avoid the arts because of the difficulty of assessment, Amelia suggested that the arts allows for easy assessment of these learning skills. She explained that in her history of arts integrated teaching practices, she found that her students’ learning was very hands on, with a variety of group and partner work. She explained that through this hands-on learning practice, “you develop all those other things in the learning skills that you have to report on just naturally, because they’re having to learn how to collaborate and communicate with each other, and end up with a common purpose.”
Although assessment of the arts is commonly seen as the biggest challenge among teachers when attempting to implement these types of practices, these participants demonstrate that with varied assessment such as checklists and rubrics, as well as the use of technology and formative assessment, teachers can still have meaningful assessment that is based around creative learning.

4.5.6 Teachers recognize a heavy workload and lack of instruction time as a barrier for implementing the arts curricula.

Another re-occurring barrier for teaching the arts that is present in both the literature and interviews is lack of instruction time. In Ontario, the arts are allocated 200 minutes a week only for Primary grades, and changes drastically to 120 minutes a week for Junior grades (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). This time slot is meant to cover all of the arts (music, dance, drama and visual arts) all in 200 min a week. Many teachers see this as a barrier to teach the arts in schools, and therefore some do not teach it at all. Craft (2003) suggests that “the way in which the curriculum is presented and organized within the time available in a school day may offer greater or fewer opportunities for fostering learner and teacher creativity.” (p.119). According to Craft (2003), the lack of time allocated for the “less important” subjects such as the arts, is a heavy constraint for teacher creativity and therefore may discourage many from teaching art at all (Craft, 2003). Amelia also reflected on some of the challenges that she encountered as a beginning teacher. She stated that as much as she loved the arts, she felt stressed trying to fit them into her practice, knowing that she had such a large workload from the other subjects as well. Katrina mentioned that although she encourages an arts integrated
curriculum (so that the arts can be taught throughout the day within in many subjects) many teachers feel as though they “don’t have enough time because their workload is so high”. Katrina went on to suggest that what teachers do not realize is that by adopting an arts integrated teaching practice, they can actually lighten their work load and have more time to teach some of the heavier subjects such as language or math.

4.5.7 Teachers note that the arts are seen as a deviation from the norms of standard practice and this is problematic.

Many participants noted that a challenge they had faced in their careers was the idea that art is a “non-traditional” practice. In some schools, art is seen as a deviation from the norm, and this concept goes hand in hand with the problem of how little the arts are valued in some schools. Participants agreed that a complex issue to do with arts based teaching is that it is seen as abnormal or a deviation from the norm. On his journey of coming from an arts focused school into a school that did not value the arts, William reflected that “[he] went from being an integrated arts classroom teacher into being a rotary arts teacher… where people weren’t really used to it, that’s when you get some push back from teachers”. He revealed that it is difficult to adopt these practices if after every lesson you receive quizzical looks or resistance from other teachers within the school. According to Katrina:

We live in a society where arts practices are consistently on the margin right? They’re seen sort of as an extra or something for the very elite - then we’ve already made a value judgment about where our priorities and our resources should be put.
RE-THINKING CREATIVITY: PROMOTING ARTS INTEGRATION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

If the arts continue to be deemed as “abnormal” or “extra” as opposed to normality within the education system, then teachers will continue to avoid arts base approaches in fear of deviating too far from what is expected of them. According to Craft (2003), this way of thinking posses a serious threat to creativity, not only in the case of the students, but teacher creativity as well. The question we are left with is “how does a teacher balance professional creativity and judgment against the requirements to teach in certain ways?” (Craft, 2003, p.123). Research (Craft, 2003; Silverstein and Layne, 2010; Robinson, 2011) shows that the only way to work around the hierarchy of education is to integrate arts throughout the curriculum. If we focus on creativity as this idea of making learning visible and promoting deeper meaning, as opposed to a focus in the fine arts, we will see that promoting the arts in all areas of the curriculum becomes a very possible and malleable approach to teaching. Katrina reflected that even within the arts realm there are practices that are considered more standard than others. While many teachers are uncomfortable teaching dance, she mentioned that:

The teachers that I work with are most willing to integrate visual art—especially at the primary level in FDK or full day kindergarten. Visual art and having children draw and represent their understandings through the visual arts in various mediums…. that practice is pretty solid and by solid I mean its considered standard.

William suggested that one way to combat this notion of arts as marginalized or non-standard is to simply “treat it like its normal” and then, he follows, “once the kids think its normal, you’re good”. Perhaps if we can commence with the students addressing the arts as normality, teachers will follow soon after.
4.5.8 Teachers did not identify lack funding as one of the key barriers to arts-based learning.

Throughout the interviews, there seemed to be a lack of focus on what was originally thought to be one of the biggest barriers for arts teachers across Ontario: lack of funding. Though David did mention that one of his biggest barriers is “money and funding”, he discussed funding in terms of professional development and not necessarily in relation to budget cuts to the arts. He said that schools need “funding available to get teachers out of school and into certain types of workshop environments” and that “the biggest challenge with anything beyond your traditional academic subjects is funding”. Research would agree with David’s statements, but it is interesting that this was not a common theme discussed amongst participants as a serious barrier. The fact is, drastic cuts are being made to arts programs in education. Roughly $66 million will be cut from the province’s Program Enhancement Grant in the next few years (Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario [ETFO], 2012). These cuts to arts education in our school system are detrimental to the future of our students. The issue with these budget cuts is that it prevents a curriculum in which children are able to engage in balanced, well-rounded education. There are less arts supplies, less qualified teachers, and therefore less fine-arts instruction all together. The little government funding that schools receive generally gets allocated to subjects prioritizing sciences and technology, which are seen as priorities, as they are undoubtedly relevant to our future. This thinking greatly affects the amount of funds given to the arts and humanities, and therefore arts integration practices can suffer (Robinson, 2011).
4.6 Teachers strongly believe in the importance of collaboration with other teachers to build arts integrated school communities.

This research found that collaboration between teachers was particularly important in establishing an arts integrated teaching practice. For teachers who teach rotary (David and William), the support and collaboration with other teachers are vital to their practice, and Katrina discussed her positive experiences with team teaching. When tackling something as complex as an arts integrated teaching practice, it is beneficial to have the support and opinions of other like-minded teachers and have the ability to use them as resources. Katrina said that what she finds the most useful is:

Conversations with other educators. The same colleague that I present with now and again… this is our second school together so we always know we have each other to kind of bounce ideas off of. We don’t have to begin the conversation by explaining what we’re doing or justifying it; we can just jump right in. I also still keep in touch with other people sort of a cross the region. You can just jump in and have those conversations with them; that’s my biggest resource.

When collaborating with teachers who are familiar with arts integrated teaching, not only can they be used as resources, but as Katrina mentioned, there is no need to justify the approach. The same can be said about rotary teachers working in tandem with the teachers of other subjects. David reflected on his teaching practice and discussed the importance of connecting with other teachers and making things cross-curricular:

So I have worked with the French teacher to do cross-curricular literacy in French, I’ve worked with the geography and history teacher to do an eco-fair type project that actually became a board event, and I’ve worked with the visual arts teacher to create through literacy an arts connected piece that was all about social justice.

If teachers are able to use the arts across the curriculum along with other teachers, it will not only enhance each subject and make the content easier to relate to, but if every
teacher is on board, it demonstrates to the students and parents that there is value in arts integrated approaches to learning. This is one way to deconstruct the notion of the arts as an “extra” as opposed to an integral. Katrina also reflected on her experiences of using teachers’ different strengths in co-teaching. She noted:

I was grade partners with a guy who not only had no background in drama or dance but had an abject fear of integrating them. But his strength was visual art. I wanted to play to my strengths as a teacher; it was my NTIP year or whatever, so you really want to make sure you’re on top of your game. So he and I co-taught. We brought our classes together and co-taught drama and dance and visual art in that way.

Another benefit to working with other teachers is that the individuals who are collaborating have the ability to play off one another and use each teacher’s strength to support one another. Where one teacher may excel at integrating math and music, another teacher may be excellent at integrating literacy and dance. It is then, through collaboration that students can benefit from a well-rounded and balanced teaching paradigm.

4.7 Teachers regard professional development as a key factor in being able to integrate the arts successfully and should include creativity-based workshops, self-driven research and a deeper knowledge of the curriculum as part of their practice.

Professional development and the importance of teachers educating themselves on the practices of arts integration was one of he most significant topics addressed in both the interviews and the literature. If we as teachers are expected to deliver engaging and differentiated instruction that is centered on the arts, then we must be educated on how to do so. As previously mentioned, only one of the participants in this study was a formally trained fine artist, and the others took their enjoyment of the arts and educated themselves
and turned their passion into practice. Although some teachers found that their professional development experiences were not ideal, each participant described the importance of teacher education and self-driven research. The participants’ voices correlated with the literature which both stated, in David’s words, that “a good teacher is a good student”. According to research, integration is complex and can burden teachers with additional perceived variables and therefore teachers need to be educated on how to implement creative practice throughout, and to recognize a creative opportunity when one arises. If teachers can accomplish this, then integrating the arts into the curriculum will become a natural process from which both teachers and students could benefit (Craft; 2003; Wiebe et al. 2007; Zimmerman, 2009;). This finding is consistent with David’s comment, which highlighted his views on what it means to be a good teacher. He said:

If there are any branches of the arts that they’re not comfortable with, then, you know, a good teacher who’s in it for the right reasons should put themself in a workshop, you know? Should try to try something out in the classroom.

David considers himself a good teacher, which is why he makes the time to educate himself and talk to others about areas he thinks he could benefit from:

I’ve been challenging myself with visual arts more and more by… I taught it for a year. And I didn’t really know what I was doing… but I was comfortable enough to say, “I don’t know what I’m doing… I need to go and talk to people. Take a workshop… I know a couple arts teachers and they gave me some ideas of what to do and I made it work for me.

The question then, is why aren’t more teachers partaking in professional development?

One reason David mentioned, is lack of funding.

Honestly this is really where I sit: We need funding available to get teachers out of school and into certain types of workshop environments.
Our board did something called literacy through the arts for a long time, but there was no funding to get you out of the classroom. The biggest challenge with anything beyond your traditional academic subjects is funding.

Another perceived challenge to accessing proper professional development is fear of the arts due to past experiences. Many teachers avoid taking professional development in the arts because they had bad experiences with the arts earlier in their lives. Kowalchuk and Stone (2003) pose a valid argument which states that education programs cannot influence the past art experiences of teachers, but what teachers learn during professional development sessions can still have an outstanding impact on the level of comfort and confidence that teachers feel in teaching through creativity. Katrina indicated that personal study of the curriculum is one of the challenges of an integrated curriculum that teachers sometimes overlook. She articulated, “not all teachers have the knowledge of the content in terms of the actual art curriculum”. This can be problematic because even if teachers are comfortable integrating the arts, there is still a need to be meeting the curriculum expectations. Similarly, Katrina discussed the need for understanding the curriculum of the core subjects as well.

Sometimes especially in mathematics, it’s sometimes a demand of the core subjects. So if we’re trying to integrate dance into math… if I don’t have a strong understanding of the mathematical concepts, adding something else in there that isn’t going to be as effective.

Katrina made some valid arguments, and from these points comes an important message. Whether it is creativity-based workshops, or self-lead research about the curriculum, professional development is a crucial part of being able to integrate the arts. Amelia suggested that in her role as a teacher educator, she ensures to offer “professional development based on the creative process that’s all about feedback and cycles; we try,
we fail, we try again, we try something new.” This, Amelia explained, helps to model the creative process and builds a community where mistakes are encouraged. Therefore, in order to bring the arts into the classroom, teachers should participate in professional development courses, which model the creative process effectively.

4.8 Teachers believe that being in a classroom setting in which arts are being integrated positively impacts students’ learning experiences in terms of engagement, ability to demonstrate understanding, promoting emotional intelligences, and empowering students.

This study demonstrates that there are a variety of benefits for students who are part of an arts integrated learning environment. Both the literature and participants concur that an arts integrated practice has several benefits aside from the lessons being more appealing to students. For this section, several sub-themes aid in demonstrating the many benefits for students who learn in arts integrated environments.

4.8.1 Teachers strongly believe that student engagement is an important indicator of learning in an arts integrated environment.

When asked about the indicators of learning that are often recognized in an arts integrated classroom, each participant answered that engagement was the number one way that they could see their students learning. Some participants determined student engagement by physical signs, and others through their actions and desire to succeed. In his interview, David discussed his experience of knowing when he had captivated
students because those who were not usually focused became enthralled with the task.

Similarly, Amelia recognized student engagement, as well as her own personal success, from the students’ desire to learn and complete assigned tasks. She stated:

I give them a challenge when I go in the classroom, and they’re so on task they don’t want to go to lunch, and they don’t want to go to recess, and when they come back in and the first thing that they do is pull it out and start on it again, then I think it’s pretty successful.

Another strategy for recognizing student engagement in arts based classrooms is to observe and take note of student conversations. Katrina called this “the buzz in the room” and it is an indicator for her that her students are engaged and learning. She stated:

I’ve thought a lot about engagement, and something that I look for when I think about engagement is kind of the buzz in the room; how much of the content vocabulary - so they might be talking about specifically using the language of the elements of dance or the language the water cycle or whatever it is that they’re thinking about, you know - how on topic is that discussion? Especially when I’m not around.

Katrina posed a valid argument in her discussion about engagement. As much as it is important that our students are on task, it is also an excellent indicator of learning if the students’ conversations are focused on the learning and if the students are able to use key vocabulary from their lessons. These types of conversations are crucial for identifying understanding. Katrina also mentioned the importance of noting body language when looking for signs of student engagement. She notes that:

There’s also the sort of physical presence right? The typical things that you may look for: that the eye contact piece is there. Is somebody just being a puppet? You know what I mean - following someone else’s lead? That’s not engagement to me.

This suggests that in recognizing student engagement, we must also be attentive to whether the students are working and engaged independently or whether they are
demonstrating learning through the work of another student. William also recognizes and looks for the physical signs of engagement in students. He remarked that the key to recognizing engagement is in observing body language.

I mean 90% of communication is non-verbal right? A lot of it is body language and you can tell which kids in the room are actively engaged and which kids would rather your head explode any second. You can tell when you’re losing the room pretty fast. (William)

The type of motivation that accompanies engagement is one that cannot be learned. Student engagement is a crucial part to student success, and this is just one of the many ways that arts integration has a positive impact on student success.

4.8.2 Students are able to demonstrate their understanding more clearly through the use of the arts.

One of the other many benefits of approaching the curriculum through the arts is because it allows many students to demonstrate their learning and understanding more clearly. For some students, it may be a language barrier that prevents them from expressing their understanding, and for others it may be that they feel that their understandings are just better expressed through the arts, but this study demonstrates how essential the arts are to demonstrating comprehension. Katrina suggested that teaching through the arts is “another way for students to show what they think, know and understand about a given topic.” In accordance, studies show that integrating creativity and arts into the classroom enlivens, enhances and enriches student learning and success, and allows students to perceive and organize new information into concepts that are used to construct deeper meaning (Wiebe et al., 2007; Gullatt, 2008; Walker, Tabone & Weltsek, 2011). Studies by Walker, Tabone & Weltsek (2011) show that integrating the
arts allows students to learn beyond just the recall of facts and information. Deeper understanding occurs when students are asked to appreciate and apply the information in creative ways (Walker, Tabone & Weltsek, 2011). Katrina also recognized this process and stated that she searches out the “reciprocal relationship in terms of the text, not just exploring things that [the students] already understand about the text through dance, but also understanding new things about the text the more they dance it”. This finding is significant, because it directly relates to student success. Demonstrating understanding through art can allow students who are otherwise unable to exhibit their learning, to complete tasks that are more suited to them and in turn get better grades.

4.8.3 Emotional intelligence is built through critical analysis of the arts, as well as the use of art as a tool for working through personal issues.

As concerns such as bullying become more acknowledged in schools, many teachers are turning to social emotional education as a tool to combat these issues. In this study, participants found that one of the benefits of arts based learning for students is that it allows students to approach and work through their emotions in a healthy way. This finding supports research by Collard & Looney (2004) who discuss that creativity is considered to be a vital necessity the wellbeing of an individual. Furthermore, when creativity is experienced on a personal level, the practice is centered on the desire for self-expression and identity (Collard & Looney, 2004), which is particularly important for students who are working toward their own wellbeing. In accordance, Katrina suggested that the arts are “a really great way to express things that we don’t have words for; some
of those more challenging or touchy subjects”. Because words can be limiting when used to elaborate on emotion and sentiment, the arts are a useful tool to allow students to confront their emotions in a different way. William added that he often uses the arts as a form of therapy in his classes. He stated that art can be used as a way to help people; to approach and relieve them of certain emotions. If teachers can begin to look at the arts as a way of improving emotional intelligence, and use the arts as a tool for helping our students address their feelings, perhaps there will be a notable decline in bullying and other emotional issues in the future, due to enhanced student emotional well being.

4.8.4 Teachers believe that students are empowered by the exploration and agency that the arts bring them.

According to research, studies have found that when children interacted with the arts and were allowed to make choices about how to interact with the content, it allowed for students to use their hands, voices and bodies meaningfully, which engaged the whole child (Lynch, 2007). Many of the participants of this research discussed the idea of using art to give students agency to make choices about their learning. Amelia reflected that, “the freedom of choice can be scary for a lot of kids, and the freedom to learn in a different way; but it can also be very empowering”. David and Katrina both discussed their practices of co-creating rubrics with the students and how it can change the dynamic of the classroom. Instead of the traditional method of the teacher giving the rubric to the students, students are able to make choices about what they want to be graded on. The idea of empowering students through choice can also be translated into giving
assignments. In terms of approaching differentiated instruction, David suggested differentiated assessment as well, and this commences with student choice. David said:

> I occasionally tell the students ‘You can hand it in ANY way you want. If you want to hand in a paper, hand in a paper. If you want to make a poster, make a poster. If you want to do a skit, do a skit. A video, a vlog, a PSA’, and I give them tons of examples. Do a commercial, do whatever. And I don’t get like… 90% of the class doing it, but there’s you know, usually around 20-30% of that.

Although not all students may choose to complete their assignments creatively, it is important to recognize the impact when students are given the empowerment to make that choice. In a traditional setting, the 20-30% of David’s class who chose to complete their assignments creatively may have struggled with the original assignment. In a situation where the students are given choice, those students could approach their learning in their own preferred way, and this will likely be more beneficial to their understanding and also their grade. Amelia calls this “students taking ownership of their learning” and through these practices, students can build their own portfolios for assessment because all of the interesting assignments they have completed have been chosen by and designed by them.

4.8.5 Teachers did not address the potential long-term benefits of students being in an arts integrated classroom.

Though many excellent benefits to student learning were mentioned amongst participants, one aspect that was focused on heavily in the literature, but not touched on in the interviews was the potential long-term benefits that student have to gain from an arts integrated classroom. Research by McWhinney and Markos (2003) agree that the sudden
changing demography of our world “calls on us to build on opportunities that were not feasible when survival was the prime focus of life” (p.17). This process is called transformative education, which McWhinney and Markos (2003) suggest is the need to continuously alter our education systems to correlate with how our culture is advancing. Recent research by Collard and Looney (2014) suggests that creativity is widely acknowledged as a skill that is “vital for social and economic innovation and development as well as for individual well-being” (p.348). In order to prepare our students for the unknown future (i.e. jobs that do not yet exist, new technologies that have yet to be invented, and problems that have not yet been anticipated), then creative thinking must be stimulated in the classroom. One issue with our current education system is that “many of our established ways of doing things, in business, in government and education, are rooted in old ways of thinking” (Robinson, 2011, p.19). One participant added that she believes an arts integrated approach to learning helps to prepare students for their future in the sense that they’re learning to synthesis their learning. Amelia stated:

I think how in the “real world” as we call it, like in our day, when do I ever sit down and do math for 20 min? And do writing only for 20 minutes? And only do science for 40 min and you know, that kind of a thing? Where umm… we don’t. We take all of it and we synthesize it, and we turn it into um what we’ve learned and our schema and then develop it and, engineer and create.

In agreement with this, McWilliam & Dawson (2008) impose that we must seek to connect curriculum, pedagogy and creativity in order to assemble a framework for systematically orchestrating creative learning environments. In doing so, sequential learning will take place, which can only benefit the future of our economy. Saebo, McCammon & O’Farrell (2007), agree with these notions, and suggest that in order to
prepare our students for the future, we will need to provide them with an education that “develops imaginative, flexible and tough-minded thinking” (p.205). Evidently, there is much to be said in the research about long-term positive affects of the arts in the classroom, and it is therefore surprising that the research participants mentioned very little about this topic. Perhaps, since teachers are so focused on the current matters surrounding arts integration, they have yet to realize the positive long-term affects of the programs they are implementing.

4.9 For beginning or in-service teachers looking to adopt an arts integrated classroom, participants offered a range of valuable advice such as starting small, taking risks, making mistakes and knowing the students.

When asked what advice they would give to new or in service teachers looking to adopt an arts integrated approach to teaching, participants gave a range of encouraging advice. David suggested that teachers start small when they begin this practice. He proposed starting off by trying one thing. “Try one thing. Just try it. Just see what it’s like. If it works, great, if it doesn’t, go another route…. Always be willing to try something new and get out of your comfort zone” (David). This is good advice, because if we want our students to take risks and try new things, we must be willing to do the same. As teachers we lead by example, and this is one of the ways we can encourage risk taking in the classroom. Amelia agreed with David; “Try it! Right? Like you cant go wrong. So if you show the students that you’re a learner with them, you’re not “sage on the stage”- you
don’t have to know everything. You’d be amazed how much more children will respect you” (Amelia).

In addition to this, William stated that students will “forgive all your mistakes you know? Because there’s going to be lots- you’re going to make them! And they’ll love you anyways”. It is important for teachers to create safe spaces within their classrooms in order for students to feel comfortable making mistakes, but just as we forgive our students mistakes, they forgive ours as well. We must not let the fear of making mistakes deter us from teaching the arts. In addition to being kind to ourselves and letting ourselves make mistakes, Katrina added that teachers must:

Give [themselves] permission to go at [their] own pace, so don’t feel like you need to be an arts integrations specialist the very first day of school at all times, and instead pick something and do it really well and know it really well so you can justify it.

Another word of advice is that practice make perfect. William suggested that we should not force curricular ties, but rather, if we know a unit well enough, and if it is implemented enough times, it is easier to identify where certain strands of the art curriculum can fit. Just as we must know our curriculum, Katrina suggested that teachers should also be familiar with a number of key strategies in order to start a creative exploration in the classroom. She mentioned that she has “key drama games that I always have in my back pocket that I know the specific purpose for, so for example,’ABC Conversation’”. Katrina also comes equipped with dance games and versions of “Story Nouns and Verb Chains” that she can use and re-use within different contexts.

In regards to teaching practices, Amelia advocated that “teachers are more of a guide; You help guide their learning and help bring in things that might help them, but it’s
their journey so you’re really that support along the way, as opposed to standing on the stage and preaching out the information.” Katrina added that we should demonstrate a critical lens when teaching certain topics. She proposed that “the arts can be a site of transformation, but they can also be a site of reproducing some really problematic paradigms. I’m thinking about when we choose to put on musicals and it’s a very heteronormative kind of story- a sort of a damsel in distress. What kinds of paradigms are we reproducing? What are the mimetic risks with that?”. Teachers should always consider and critically analyze the works of art that they discuss or work with in the class. Not only in terms of problematic paradigms, but also about how we represent cultures and which cultures/communities are represented in the art that we study. William summed this up exceptionally when he said that teachers much teach to the heart. He suggested that teachers should “try to find the heart in whatever message [they’re] teaching the kids and be enthusiastic about it”. Teachers have a lot of power to make a difference in the world, and one of the ways we can do so is through teaching and building critical citizens who are tolerant, respectful, accepting to all communities.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings of this research study and correlated participant interviews with relevant literature about the topic of arts integration. The participants chosen for this study demonstrated their dedication to arts integrated teaching through their meaningful discussions and advice to other teachers. Though several barriers and challenges were discussed during these interviews, teachers should not deter from teaching the arts in a cross-curricular practice. Each participant has demonstrated
their ability to overcome the obstacles that they face in integrating arts-based approaches, and so too can beginning and in-service teachers looking to adopt these practices. My research study contributes to the existing literature by affirming many challenges, strategies, and benefits of the arts from the viewpoint of practicing teachers. It also contributes to existing research by bridging the gap and demonstrating what should be done in the classroom (the research) and what is being done in the classroom (the practice). However, there is still much to be done in terms of readying teachers for arts integrated teaching. The teachers interviewed in this study were advocates for the arts who recognize the importance of arts education. Unfortunately, there are still many teachers who marginalize the arts to make room for other subjects, and hopefully this research can demonstrate to the education community that arts integration is possible and beneficial not only to the students, but to the teachers as well. Moreover, this study helped to broaden my own understanding of the how to integrate an arts-based curriculum and the benefits to doing so. It was interesting to observe how the participant research correlated with the literature in terms of highlighting similar challenges and benefits of arts integration. Additionally, all four teachers made it clear that with some professional development, risk taking, and overcoming of fear, every teacher can integrate an arts-based curriculum in order to create deeper and more meaningful understandings for their students, and to engage in a holistic and well rounded teaching practice. Next, in chapter 5, I summarize the research findings, and discuss the implications of these findings for the broader educational community. I also consider the impact that this research will have on my own pedagogy.
Chapter 5 – IMPLICATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The research presented in these chapters reports the practice and pedagogy of teachers who are intentionally integrating the arts across the curriculum, or who advocate for this type of practice. The findings from this study serve to reinforce and contribute to the case being made by other researchers that suggest that there are significant benefits to an arts integrated approach to teaching (Kowalchuck & Stone, 2003; Marshall, 2006; Brown, 2007; Lynch, 2007; Gullatt, 2008; Silverstein & Layne, 2010). They also shed light on some concrete ways to enact this work.

In this chapter, I give a summary of the research findings and discuss the implications for the educational community in establishing arts-centred learning programs. Furthermore, I give descriptions of recommendations and implications for new and in-service teachers looking to adopt an arts integrated pedagogy. I also consider the impact that this research will have on my own pedagogy, and finally, I discuss what further research might be done on this topic.

5.1 Overview of Key Findings and their Significance

Chapter 4 reported and discussed the findings from four interviews conducted with past and current elementary school teachers. These interviews focused on strategies, barriers, and benefits of an arts integrated curriculum. I discussed the implications of the findings in light of the literature that was reviewed and discussed in Chapter 2.
Participating teachers identified a number of reasons why they believed it was beneficial for teachers to adopt an arts integrated teaching pedagogy. According to my findings, the most perceptible impact that arts integration has on students is engagement, likely due to the fact that teaching through the arts enables educators to differentiate instruction and assessment meaningfully. This ensures that the needs of each student are being met. Additionally, the arts help to build a deeper understanding of important concepts for students because students are challenged to think critically and abstractly about ideas, which can also promote comprehension. As well, by facilitating student interest and allowing students to see themselves in their learning, research shows that students develop emotional intelligence through practicing the arts, and a sense of empowerment from the exploration and agency that art encourages. Other benefits of adopting an arts integrated pedagogy directly affect teachers and their functionality. This study found that the arts was an integral part of the participants theory and practice, because it allowed them to more efficiently manage their time, and use the arts to reach out to/impact the local and global community in a positive way. Furthermore, teachers also strongly emphasized the importance of building a sense of community in the classroom to promote a learning environment that fosters creativity. As well, participants suggested that collaboration with other educators is extremely important in order to build arts integrated communities within the school.

The teachers interviewed for this research also discussed a variety of barriers (both personal and external) that challenge teachers who wish to incorporate the arts into their pedagogy. Some of the personal barriers discussed in the research include a fear of failure
in regards to teaching the arts, which can stem from a lack of personal experience in the arts, as well as a fear of deviating from the norm within the educational sphere. External barriers discussed in this research include cultural barriers of various communities, lack of value of the arts, challenges with assessment, ineffective additional qualification courses, and a lack of instruction time for teachers throughout the day.

In order to combat some of these challenges, teachers suggested that it is imperative to collaborate with other teachers and use others as resources, and it is important to seek professional development opportunities that are effective and meaningful in terms of teaching teachers to be comfortable with arts instruction.

Lastly, participants offered advice to beginning and in-service teachers wishing to adopt and arts-based pedagogy. Participants suggested that the best way to approach this type of practice is to start small, take risks, make mistakes (in order to learn from them) and get to know the students and their needs.

After correlating the data that was gathered for this study with relevant literature, one problem becomes very clear. Although there is a great deal of literature highlighting the benefits of arts integration for both students and teachers, and although the Ontario Ministry of Education has altered their education goals to emphasise creativity (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014), there are still many barriers and challenges that teachers struggle with. This research aims to bridge the gap between the plethora of existing research which has proven that an arts integrated approach to education is beneficial (Anderson & Milbrandt, 1998; Kowalchuck & Stone, 2003; Marshall, 2005; Brown, 2007;
and the teachers who wish to adopt this teaching style but do not know how. The research participants in this study, who have all confronted and overcome the typical challenges faced by teachers who wish to have an arts integrated pedagogy, offer ideas and strategies for new and in service teachers to bring the idea of arts integration from research into practice.

5.2 Implications

This research highlights some important implications both for the broader educational community, as well as for my own personal practice. The research suggests that teachers and educational communities should build up the arts in order to teach to the whole child, effectively and meaningfully teach all curriculum strands, and to better our students for their futures.

5.2.1 Broad: The Educational Research Community

In order to engage students with a holistic and rich learning experience, it is essential for educational communities to recognize the value of the arts in schools. These research findings suggest that this can have implications for student engagement, students seeing themselves reflected in material for learning, developing student agency, and fostering social justice education. Furthermore, in order to enhance instructional practices and ensure that students’ different needs are being met, teachers and educational communities must recognize the potential in the collaboration of the arts and other subjects. The findings from this research suggest that the arts can be integrated with literacy through creative and expressive writing as or about characters in a text, script
writing and story nouns/verb chains for exploring literary concepts. The arts are a useful tool for teachers who wish to more effectively manage their time, address the needs of many students at once. The arts can also be used as a tool for backward design of unit plans. The arts can be a way to create conditions that allow students to feel comfortable taking risks in the classroom, which has implications for subject areas like social studies and its attention to controversial social issues. To promote these ideals, there must be a shift in the areas of both pre and in-service teacher training, in school communities, as well as in specific classroom teacher practices.

The educational community should advocate not just for arts education, but also for meaningful and purposeful integration of the arts across the curriculum. This is important because arts integration allows teachers to differentiate instruction and meet the needs of all of their students, and it enables students to build a deeper understanding of content while building emotional intelligence. Integration of the arts also allows teachers to spend more time on core subjects while still assessing and evaluating for the arts, and ensures that all curriculum strands are being covered effectively and efficiently.

In regards to the broader educational community, it is important that institutions for pre-service teachers offer appropriate teacher training for this type of teaching. The interviewees in this study all agree that more professional development programs (both for pre-service and in-service teachers) should offer workshops and classes that focus on arts integrated learning. Based on the findings presented in this research, effective professional opportunities might take on a similar structure to a lesson for students. More and more educators are advocating for inquiry based learning and active participation in
lessons that involve the students up and moving in the classroom. This study suggests that it may be beneficial to approach adult learning in a similar way, which allows teachers to actively participate in their professional development and gain experience teaching core subjects through the arts. One participant highlighted that her goal as a teacher educator is to offer through her professional development sessions, a model of the creative process, which allows space for trying a new concept, failing, evaluating and trying again. This mirroring of the creative process allows teachers to become familiar with the messiness that is arts based learning, and can help teachers to feel more comfortable in these settings. If professional development could help model what a creative learning environment might look like, teachers might feel more comfortable offering this type of learning environment to their students. Offering these workshops has the potential to not only build understanding, confidence and competence in the arts, but also allow teachers to build collaborative relationships with other teachers. This form of collaboration is essential to growth and development in the arts.

Lastly, teacher training, school institutions and teachers alike should work to make art a meaningful part of education. By using and working with art that evokes emotion, critical thinking, expression and growth, teachers can establish a richer understanding of course content while educating the whole child. Meaningful and purposeful use of the arts allows teachers to establish relationships between their students and the arts, which can help to build confidence, empowerment and emotional intelligence in the students. Therefore, teachers should not teach the arts out of obligation, but rather, the arts should be taught to enhance core subjects and to meet the individual needs of many students.
Some implications for how teachers can prepare for teaching arts-based pedagogies (aside from seeking out professional development with a focus on the arts) are found in the advice given by research participants. They suggest that teachers should start small. Tackling only a few arts integrated lessons a week can help teachers become more comfortable with the creative process, and can help to build a teacher’s confidence in the arts. This might look like integrating the arts into something that easily connects to art, such as literacy. This small step could come in the form of a dramatic representation of a text, or even creative writing and art making about key concepts in a book/novel. Once teachers have a strong grasp on integrating the arts into literacy, they may branch out and look for other opportunities to integrate the arts such as using drama to promote math conversation, or using dance to explore important concepts in science. Teachers also suggest that knowing the community of students within the classroom is important. Arts integrated lessons can be intertwined with the interests of students and can help students look deeper and more meaningfully into concepts and world issues that are important to them.

5.2.2 Narrow: My Professional Identity and Practice

As I move forward in the world of education, the process and content of this research study will help to inform and inspire my personal pedagogy. My future practice will be informed not only by this research, but also by active and ongoing research throughout my time as an educator. This study has helped to shape my views of arts
integration, and I hope that my findings will also inform other pre or in-service educators that wish to establish an arts integrated learning environment.

After conducting this research, I recognize the benefits and importance of integrating the arts across the curriculum. I have come to understand that integration of the arts can often be more practical and meaningful than teaching the arts on their own. In that case, in my future practice, I will use an arts integrated pedagogy to allow for myself more time to teach core subjects, while still having a heavy focus on the value of the arts curriculum. By teaching this way, I will be able to meet the arts curriculum expectations simultaneously with other curriculum subjects, and my students will be challenged to look deeper into curriculum content.

This approach to teaching will also help me to differentiate instruction and assessment in order to meet the needs of all my students. Whether the learning goals are based on social-emotional concepts, or I am targeting specific learning styles (such as kinaesthetic or visual), these research findings support that using the arts can help to differentiate instruction and assessment so that the needs of every student is met. Each student has various strengths and challenges, and each student learns differently, and the arts are just one of the ways that we can target the needs of each student to allow them to achieve academically and socially.

In regards to assessment, I will strive to integrate as many forms of assessment as possible, in order to evaluate a range of skills and creative processes. Checklists, rubrics, and checkins/mini student conferences will be used as assessment AS learning to ensure
that students are progressing creatively. As well, I will give plenty of opportunities for my students to self-assess their work throughout the creative process to ensure that students are reflecting on their progress and challenges, and in doing so, becoming self-regulated learners. I will use portfolios as a method of demonstrating the growth and progress of students’ work over time, and will also give students the opportunity to participate in culminating performances or presentations, which highlight and praise their creations. This research has helped me to recognize that assessment of the arts should be ongoing and non-standardized and although this may be more difficult than standard practices of assessment (such as tests), I recognize the importance of assessment AS learning and appreciate the meaningful implications behind it.

Furthermore, in my practice I will use the arts in a meaningful way that allows my students to challenge stereotypes, injustices, prejudices and other problematic ideologies. I will use the arts to promote critical thinking and understanding and allow my students to address relevant issues such as bullying and other social justice issues through the study of the arts. I have learned that the arts are a powerful tool for change, and can help students to see many different perspectives of a topic or issue. Additionally, with the help of technology, I will use the arts to reach out to local and global communities to allow my students to build relationships with other students close by, and from different countries to promote diversity and respect for all populations, cultures and abilities.

Finally, when I become an educator, I will use the arts to make my lessons exciting and enjoyable for my students, and to promote student engagement. Studies show
that student success is linked to engagement, and the arts are a useful tool in promoting engagement in learning.

5.3 Recommendations

After considering the available literature and the perspective of four in-service teachers who advocate for the arts, it is recommended that in order for students to have their individual needs met in a meaningful, empowering and holistic manner, teachers should integrate the arts (music, dance, drama and visual arts) into other subject areas. Not only does this approach to teaching benefit students in terms of engagement, targeting multiple learning styles, and giving students agency, but it is also beneficial for teachers in regards to time management and reaching out to the local/global community through art.

For teachers who do not feel comfortable teaching or integrating the arts, this research recommends building relationships and collaborating with other teachers who may be more experienced or have different artistic strengths. Through collaborative teaching, teachers are able to utilize a range of instructional strategies and approaches to teaching the arts that they may not otherwise have access to. Some of these strategies include team teaching to educators’ strengths (if one teacher is stronger teaching one art form than another), sharing arts integrated lesson plans and building community within the school. Furthermore, the research suggests that the support and encouragement from other teachers in the school community can be extremely helpful when experimenting with new strategies.
The interviewees also recommend attending meaningful and effective professional development workshops that focus on arts integration or teaching the arts in general. It is recommended that these workshops model the creative process for teachers so that they have the capacity to bring these processes into the classroom. There are a range of effective professional development opportunities and resources offered by school boards, but teachers must be willing to seek out the ones where teachers can actively participate in the creation process, and also learn how to facilitate creativity.

One research participant also recognized the importance of using art pieces in the classroom that are free from problematic paradigms such as dramatic skits that only represent the females as the damsel. It is recommended to teachers who wish to use art in the classroom to avoid stereotypes and problematic paradigms, and to ensure that diversity, equity, and social justice are being reinforced. This type of social consciousness can be practiced in choosing songs, and can even relate to the pictures in the storybooks that teachers read. If we are to use art, we must use it ethically to ensure that all of our students feel represented and respected, and to ensure that we are teaching about a multitude of populations, abilities and cultures.

Additionally, not only should educators be conscious of the art they select to use, but it is recommended that teachers utilize the arts as a tool for challenging stereotypes and other social injustices. Through art, students are able to confront social issues that are meaningful to them in a deeply personal way. This can look like expressive representations of social injustices through visual art, tableaus and plays which provide a
platform for students to challenge these notions, or studying/playing music that openly contest important issues.

Lastly, teachers are encouraged to make art meaningful in their classroom. It is important for teachers to get to know their students and their interests in order to make art meaningful. If teachers can use art to address the needs and interests of their class, students will be more engaged, and artful learning will become more personal and relevant. When teachers break down the barrier of the typical teacher-student dynamic (which places the teacher as the “sage on the stage”) and approach learning in a co-facilitated manner with a key focus on the interest and personal experiences of the students, art can be used meaningfully and purposefully to empower students, give them voice, and give them agency both in their own lives and in a greater context. Teachers are also recommended to use art for community building within the classroom. This could look like fostering a safe and inclusive atmosphere through cooperative games and art activities, and could help to make the students learning more meaningful in a social context. Arts integration is an excellent method of using art for a purpose, and teachers should ensure that the arts that they are incorporating within their lessons are relevant and related to the course content, student interest, or lives of students in general.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

Among some of the literature that was studied was the theory that the arts have the ability to aid in child development through enhancing and nourishing cognitive function and emotional intelligence. Further research is needed on the psychological benefits of the arts on a more scientific level. This type of research could help build awareness and
understanding of the value of the arts in educational communities, and further encourage arts-based learning in the classroom.

Some of the literature used in this study also touched on the possible benefits of creative-based education systems for the future economy. It would be interesting to learn more about how building creative and critical thinkers through art could benefit the future economy in terms of preparing students for jobs that have not yet been invented, and solving problems that we may not have the capacity to understand at the present moment. This might occur through studies over time which focus on students’ positive creative learning experiences in elementary school, and whether or not they are able to translate these learnings and creative problem solving techniques into a University or workplace context. Furthermore, studies could also compare groups of students who were immersed into an arts-based learning atmosphere, and groups of students who were offered very little arts education and compare their abilities to perform successfully in the workplace in terms of creative approaches to new ideas, leadership, and collaboration.

Lastly, I would be interested to learn more about how the arts can be used to teach about social justice issues. Social justice is an immensely important idea for students not only to recognize and challenge social justice issues, but to formulate their own opinions and beliefs about the world. It is sometimes enough to make art for pleasure, but if we can teach students how to make purposeful art that aims to change people’s perspectives, then we can demonstrate how art can change the world.
5.5 Concluding Comments

This study is rooted in the notion that an arts integrated teaching pedagogy is a valuable and worthy methodology. Relevant literature and valuable voices in the artistic community were used to inform this research study, and the findings of this research highlight implications for the education community in establishing arts-centred learning programs. These implications include more useful and relevant teacher education and professional development experiences, as well as placing value on arts education so that it is no longer labeled as a deviation from the norm. With emphasis on these small implications, the educational community has the ability to take what can be said to be a linear and rigid education system and turn it into a fluid entity where each child’s abilities and learning styles are met and appreciated.

This study focuses on useful strategies that current teachers are using to integrate the arts across the curriculum, in order to combat some of the barriers that teachers can encounter while adopting an arts based approach to learning. While the ministry of education encourages a shift towards promoting creativity, and research presents us with a multitude of benefits for an arts integrated pedagogy, not enough is being done to ensure that this approach to teaching is occurring. An arts integrated approach to learning is, however, feasible through recognition of the value of arts education and a change in the perspectives of in-service teachers who allow barriers such as budget cuts and personal anxieties to prevent them from adopting an arts integrated pedagogy. This research is a
starting point of bridging the gap between what research says about the benefits of arts education, and what teachers can do to access the vast potential of arts based learning.

Ultimately, teachers, administrators and broader education communities must work together to find the balance between instructing core subjects and supporting their students’ growth and development to become critical and creative thinkers. Teachers must strive to blend artistic expectations with core expectations and in doing so, they will not only promote a deeper and more thorough understanding of curriculum content, but will ignite the curiosity of learners and build well-rounded students through differentiated instruction and holistic teaching.
REFERENCES


Appendix A: Consent Letter

Date:

Dear _______________________________,

My Name is Victoria Blom and I am a student in the Master of Teaching program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). A component of this degree program involves conducting a small-scale qualitative research study. My research will focus on arts integration. I am interested in interviewing teachers who have shown leadership in integrating the arts across the curriculum. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

Your participation in this research will involve one 45-60 minute interview, which will be transcribed and audio-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient for you, outside of school time. The contents of this interview will be used for my research project, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a research conference or publication. You will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain your anonymity and I will not use your name or any other content that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information will remain confidential. This data will be stored on my password-protected computer and the only people who will have access to the research data will be my course instructor Angela MacDonald-Vemic. You are free to change your mind about your participation at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may also choose to decline to answer any specific question. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published, which may take up to a maximum of five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to participation, and I will share with you a copy of the transcript to ensure accuracy.

Please sign this consent form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. I am very grateful for your participation.

Sincerely,
Victoria

Victoria Blom
905-715-5514
v.blom@mail.utoronto.ca
RE-THINKING CREATIVITY: PROMOTING ARTS INTEGRATION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Course Instructor’s Name: Dr. Angela MacDonald-Vemic
Contact Info: angela.macdonald@utoronto.ca

Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Victoria Blom and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: ______________________________________

Name: (printed) _____________________________________________

Date: ______________________________________
Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Hello, and thank you for participating in this study. This research aims to learn about integrating the arts (dance, music, visual arts and drama) across the curriculum. The interview will take approximately 45-60 min. During the interview, I will ask you a series of questions about your teaching practice and experience with arts integration. I want to remind you of your right to choose not to answer any question. All data will be reported on and analyzed authentically, and no responses will be altered or falsified in any way. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions

Background Information
1. What grades and subject areas do you currently teach? What grades and subjects have you previously taught?
2. Where do you currently teach? Can you tell me a bit about your school? (size, demographics, program priorities).
3. How many years have you been teaching?

As you know, I am interested in learning how you integrate the arts across the curriculum, and one criteria of participation was that you have demonstrated leadership and commitment to this area...

4. Can you tell me how you developed an interest in the arts (generally speaking)?
   • How would you describe your personal relationship to the arts?
   • Can you describe your professional and educational experience with the arts?
5. What is your current involvement in the arts broadly speaking?
   • Is there a specific art form that you are most interested in personally?
   • Are there any organizations, arts councils or boards that you are involved in?
   • How long have you been involved in the arts in these ways?
6. What specific experiences contributed to developing your skills in arts integration in school curriculum?
   • Did you find your teachers college experience to be helpful in this area?
   • Were there any AQ courses specifically that contributed to your development?
   • Did your undergraduate major help to shape these skills?
   • Have you experienced teaching arts in other contexts besides schools? (i.e. galleries, workshops, privately).
7. At what stage in your teaching career did you begin to enact an arts integrated curriculum?

I’m also interested in your personal practice regarding arts integration, but I know that arts integration looks different to everyone, so I’ll start with some general questions about your beliefs on the topic:

Teacher Beliefs and Values
8. What does the term “arts integrated curriculum” mean to you?
9. Are there certain art forms that you prefer to integrate over others?
10. Why did you begin implementing an approach to arts integration when you did? What prompted you to begin teaching this way?
11. What do you believe students have to gain from arts integration? In your view, what are the benefits of arts integration? Typically, how have your students responded to the arts integrated approach to learning?
12. In your experience, what are some of the key barriers to the implementation of arts integration in schools? How do you think those barriers could be minimized?

We'll switch now to discussing your personal practice and how you specifically integrate arts across the curriculum.

Teacher Practices
13. What does arts integrated curriculum look like in your classroom?
14. Can you tell me more about how you integrate the arts into subjects such as literacy, math, science and social studies?
   - Are there certain art forms that you feel are easier to integrate than others and does this vary with age group?
   - Are there certain art forms that you feel students respond best to? Does this vary with age group?
15. Can you give me an example of how you have integrated the arts one or more of the subject areas I mentioned (literacy, math, science, and social studies)?
   - What grade and subject were you teaching?
   - What were your learning goals?
   - What opportunities for learning did you create to realize those goals, and how did you integrate the arts toward that end?
   - How did your students respond to this opportunity for learning? What outcomes did you observe from them?
   - How did you assess and evaluate student work? How, if at all, do you assess the arts component of student work when integrating the arts this way? What do you assess?

Because of all of your personal experience and involvement in the arts, I’d like to dig a little deeper and focus on some of the challenges you’ve had, as well as some advice you could give to beginning teachers.
Challenges, Supports, and Next Steps
16. What challenges do you face integrating the arts across the curriculum? How do you respond to these challenges? How might the education system further support you in meeting these challenges?

17. What range of factors and resources support you in this work?

18. What recommendations or advice do you have for beginning as well as in-service teachers who are interested in adopting an arts integrated approach, but are less confident in how to do this?

Thank you for your time and valuable participation in my research. Once the interview has been transcribed, you will be given the opportunity to review the transcripts and to clarify or retract any statements before data analysis is conducted.