

Applications of Arts Education

The newsletter for Vermont's Visual and Performing Arts Educators and supporters

February 2021

Leading with Arts Education

Looking Ahead

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Reinforcing the Role of Arts Education and Integration

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Looking Ahead

Arts education empowers students to embrace difficult learning, engages them in enduring processes, holds relevance in students' lives both in and outside of school, and is responsive to the academic and social emotional needs of students. This issue aims to reiterate these inherent qualities of arts education while expanding upon the need to sustain quality arts programs in schools. In doing so, it includes a discussion on reinforcing the role of arts education, information on the Continuity of Learning: Arts Recommendations and Resource Compendium documents, and sections celebrating 2020-21 successes of Vermont arts educators.

Reinforcing the Role of Arts Education and Integration

The influence of arts educators should be broad and integrated throughout instruction. Essential elements of arts integration depend on its implementation and the context of instruction, but the outcomes of student-driven creative learning are consistent. Through the arts, students engage in authentic learning and respond to academic challenges with their own voice; they can determine how and why they learn and apply arts and non-arts content. Applying knowledge and skill through arts-based production, performance, and investigation can yield positive outcomes for teacher empowerment as well as student academic achievement and agency (Hardiman et al., 2014; McComb et al., 2019).

Establishing and maintaining visibility and positive perceptions of our schools' arts programs can be a challenge, especially with added demands of all teachers during the 2020-21 school year. Perceptions of arts education, however, can be elevated in a collaborative teaching community. Strong collaborative relationships have often been noted as essential for the success of arts program. (Schlaack & Steele, 2019; Upitis, 2005). In a collaboratively planned and taught arts integration program, Upitis (2005) found that non-arts teachers have more positive perceptions of programs and the arts in general when curricula are co-created and taught with arts educators, whereas those who take a less collaborative approach struggle to find as much value in an arts integrated experience. A focus on collaborative professional learning and instructional planning can serve as a powerful tool for arts educators to promote their programs while ensuring students can engage in both arts and non-arts content authentically and holistically.

Continuity of Learning: Arts Recommendations

Regardless of learning model, students should continue to develop and sustain skills in artistic literacy while demonstrating proficiency in the [National Core Arts Standards](#). Considerations and recommendations for providing these opportunities are described in the [Continuity of Learning: Visual and Performing Arts Recommendations and Resource Compendium](#) document. The purpose of this document is to support Vermont programs in providing a holistic learning experience to students while upholding the [Education Quality Standards](#) as they pertain to the arts. These considerations can serve to support preservation of the arts in schools and the essential skills and qualities obtained from arts education while balancing the myriad demands on schools and educators during the pandemic:

February Spotlight

Steve Damon, music educator at Guilford Central School (GCS) has been taking action to ensure cultural and racial representation among the artists that his students explore. The unit is titled “Legacy: Hearing the Unheard Musicians”, referencing an article Steve wrote for Massachusetts Music News on Charlotte Fellman entitled “Legacy.” As Steve states: “Her legacy as Music Director for Boston Public Schools from the ‘40s to the ‘80s was/is huge. She (while schools were segregated) brought together children of all races, all neighborhoods, all colors.” In January, he presented the unit and his approach as a workshop to members of The Massachusetts Music Educators Association, per their request.

Mr. Damon aims to show his students all the faces of music, emphasizing minoritized and traditionally underrepresented groups in his class discussions and through the Legacy unit. Focusing on interpretation and response, GCS sixth graders are tasked with communicating directly to contemporary musicians who are women and/or people of color. Students offer musicians three comments after hearing their music. Recently, after viewing and listening to videos of California-based musician, Zera Starchild, students responded with “I thought that her singing was very empowering and I really liked the combination of rap and guitar” and “I think that she could perform that song and give a lot of people a drive to keep fighting for rights and I think it could make a huge impact on a lot of people and the world.” Steve suggests that he wants “to introduce [his] students to musicians to whom they can relate and look up to”, demonstrating how bringing in musicians with whom students can interact is an integral part of GCS’s music program and Mr. Damon’s teaching style.

Other Highlights from the Field

Congratulations to **Dorsey Hogg** of Georgia Elementary! She was named Vermont Art Educators Association's Teacher of the Year.

Despite social distancing restrictions, Mt. Abraham's theater program had a successful and widely viewed fall production. Students participated in a series of performances that were live streamed online through local television programming. Three of the twelve plays were student-written. **Megan LaRose**, vocal director at Mt. Abraham Union M/HS, supported this student-centered work, highlighting the program as a major success for the school and district.

Announcements

Vermont Music Educators Association Virtual Conference: The VMEA virtual conference will take place on February 10, 2021. Music educators from Vermont and beyond are holding sessions on a variety of topics and strategies. [Information on the conference and sessions can be found here.](#)

VT VAPA Educator Networking Sessions: Monthly virtual networking opportunities are continuing for visual and performing arts educators from across the state. These sessions will focus on maintaining and continuing to develop a sense of agency through networking, sharing strategies, and reflective dialogue. If you are interested in participating in these sessions, please complete the appropriate registration form:

- [Visual Arts Teachers Registration](#)
- [Performing Arts Teachers Registration](#)

References

Hardiman, M., Rinne, L., & Yarmolinskaya, J. (2014). [The effects of arts integration on long-term retention of academic content.](#) *Mind, Brain, and Education*, 8(3), 144-148.

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Schlaack, N., & Steele, J. S. (2018). The collaborative residency project: The influence of co-teaching on professional development in arts integration. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 19(11).

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