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Why the Arts?

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Bridgewater State University

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of arts integration within a PreK classroom in Northeastern Massachusetts. A single observation took place over the course of three hours within a PreK classroom of a childcare program that advocates for the integration of the arts. Nine students and one lead teacher were observed. One lesson was observed and assessed according to an arts integration checklist that looked for observable displays of arts integration within the lesson. In addition, an interview was conducted with the program director. The study found that the teacher met objectives across two content areas, but additional research suggests that professional development opportunities would be beneficial for educators to effectively integrate arts into the curriculum.

Introduction

The arts provide hands-on experiences for children that actively engage them in their learning. They are a means for children to express themselves in ways that they may be unable to verbally or in written form at a young age, and provide a context for learning in an explorative and engaging way. Previous research focused upon the relationship between the arts and literacy development led to this study, an extended look at the integration of the arts across content areas. The study attempted to answer the following questions: Will the observed lesson meet MA curriculum objectives in both arts and an additional content area? Were positive social interactions fostered among one or more children? Does professional development increase the use of arts integration?

Findings of this study add to the conversation of arts integration in early childhood education, and suggest the need for both educational and professional development opportunities for educators in order to better understand the impact of arts integration and strategies for incorporating the arts into classrooms.

Review of the Literature

WHAT IS ARTS INTEGRATION?

Anderson and Krakaur (n.d.) describe the integrated arts approach as the following:

Arts integration is generally defined as the linking of a content area and an art form; for the purposes of reaching a deeper level of engagement, learning, and reflection than without the art form. In an integrated classroom, students are working ‘with’ the art form and ‘through’ the art form to reach academic, social, and personal goals. (p. 3)

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (2014), founder of ArtsEdge, an educational program whose mission is “to connect people, to provide arts-centered learning

experiences, and to lead the way in digitally-supported arts learning for all citizens,” extends upon this definition by describing three types of arts integration that programs may implement solely or in collaboration with one another.

The first type of arts integration is called “Art as Curriculum.” Through this type of curriculum, students meet objectives strictly related to the arts. “Students develop knowledge and skills in a particular art form,” and “the programs are guided by national, state, or local standards for each of the art forms” (John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, 2014).

The second type of arts integration, “Arts-Enhanced Curriculum,” occurs when “the arts are used as a device or area to support other curriculum areas” (John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, 2014). While the arts support another curriculum area, there are not necessarily any objectives being met within the art form.

The third type of arts integration, however, achieves learning objectives in both an art form and another content area: “the arts become the approach to teaching and the vehicle for learning. Students meet dual learning objectives when they engage in the creative process to explore connections between an art form and another subject area to gain greater understanding in both” (John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, 2014).

ARTS INTEGRATION IN RELATION TO THE CONTENT AREAS

The Massachusetts Department of Education (2003) provides the content areas for preschool children in *Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences*. The content areas are listed within the guidelines as the following: English language arts, mathematics, science and technology/engineering, history and social science, health education and the arts. The next portion of this literature review describes the impact of the arts in these content areas. History and Social Science, however, is not addressed individually within this literature review, but

rather within the context of both English Language Arts and Health Education. (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2003)

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Researchers argue that the language of art is one that children learn and use beginning at birth, as one of the first forms of nonverbal communication. “Long before the first human uttered a word, our ancestors mimed, danced, carved bone flutes, beat rhythms on drums, and painted images on cave walls to express their thoughts and emotions” (Cornett, 2006, p. 234). Cornett argues that given the historical evidence supporting the importance of the arts as a means of communication, without the integration of the arts throughout each area of curriculum, educators deprive children of using this innate form of communication. Rather, “learners are limited to reading, writing, speaking and listening to process ideas” (Cornett, 2006, p. 235). Cornett implicates that limiting children to these verbal literacy skills is not developmentally appropriate, especially for children struggling to communicate verbally. Barnett (2013) supports this statement, noting that the arts are a useful method of assessment for educators: “students who don’t perform well on tests, or those struggling to learn English, may have trouble expressing what a character’s motivations are. ‘But if they can act it out, teachers can see that they really understood it...the arts end up being this phenomenal tool for assessing kids’ understanding” (p. 21). Children use the arts to communicate their ideas.

In addition, Cornett (2006) explains that the problem solving process for the arts is no different than reading and writing processes, or the scientific method: “The symbol systems and materials are different but otherwise the processes are basically the same: purposeful problem solving through data gathering, experimentation, drafting, revising, editing, and publication or ‘public sharing’ of ideas in a variety of forms (p. 236). The differences, therefore, exist in the

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vocabulary used to construct these images, and the specific images utilized through the arts:

“...instead of using words, students may be drawing lines or shapes and using color or texture to express thoughts and emotions. Students learn the vocabulary of drama and dance that calls for use of body, space, energy, and time in imaginative ways-imaginative in the sense that students are creating images that express thoughts and feelings” (Cornett, 2006, p. 236).

Similarly, “process drama deepens engagement and ultimately understanding through fictional episodes where ‘time’ is slowed down and tension increased...Students have an ongoing opportunity to execute and refine critical literacy skills” (Anderson, (n.d.) p. 4).

“Preschool age children understand and use linguistically specific features such as noun phrases, conjunctive clauses, adverbs, and mental and linguistic verbs most reliably in symbolic play contexts with peers” (Anderson, (n.d), p. 9-10). When children utilize different registers through dramatic play, they expand their vocabulary and pragmatics and therefore enhance their literacy skills. (Cornett, 2006, p. 238)

Schools across the country have reported successful education programs through the integration of the arts. In Chicago, Illinois, for example, “the ‘embrace of the arts’...propelled school achievement from the bottom 10% in the district to the top 10% in the first year of arts-integration” (Cornnet, 2006, p. 239). In California, “language arts test scores of students in these teachers’ classrooms increased by 87 points,” said Barnett (2013) in regards to third and fourth grade teachers trained in arts and literacy practices, funded by the Developing Reading Education with Arts Methods Project (p. 21).

MATHEMATICS

Geist, Geist, and Kuznik (2012) state the innate connection between mathematics and music: “musical elements such as steady beat, rhythm, melody, and tempo possess inherent

mathematical principles such as spatial properties, sequencing, counting, patterning, and one-to-one correspondence” (p.74). These connections, therefore, create opportunities for educators to integrate mathematical learning through a musical medium. In a research study done on the relationship between a musical beat and human attention rates, researchers found “that 120 infants, ages 5-24 months, were more engaged with rhythm-only stimuli (for example, a steady drum beat) than with speech only stimuli. The results of this study indicate that children have the potential to be more engaged when listening to steady beats than when listening to verbal-only instructions” (Geist, Geist, & Kuznik, 2012, p. 74). Furthermore, “music enriches the mathematical learning environment for children because such activities are infused with a degree of pleasurable intensity, promote the fun of learning, and allow the child to be an active participant” (Geist, Geist, & Kuznik, 2012, p. 76). Through music, educators can introduce mathematical concepts in meaningful and relevant ways, incorporating songs and instruments that interest the children, providing interactive experiences that are developmentally appropriate for early childhood learners.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY/ENGINEERING

Bergen (2009) discusses the importance of play and creativity in relation to the scientific fields. “Professionals in many scientific, mathematic, and engineering fields articulate the need for creative and innovative thinkers in their professions and advocate for the use of playful learning methods to assist students in developing the intellectual abilities required for excellence in these fields” (p. 413). Bergen (2009) advocates for the use of a play as a medium for children’s learning because not only does it provide a context within which children can explore new ideas, but it provides a means of communication for children who cannot fully articulate their ideas and emotions, and fosters a positive learning environment for children (p. 416).

Reviewing play as a medium for learning, Bergen (2009) describes the different types of play, and how each type relates to scientific learning. Engaging in imaginative play, for example, children “perform transformational operations on their roles, objects, and themes. Practice in using transformational operations appears to be closely linked to creative thought, which supports...that play can be a vehicle for constructing logico-mathematical knowledge” (p. 417). In a study done of the recipients of the MacArthur Foundation “genius awards,” researchers found that “many MacArthur fellows, honored for their creative work as adults, reported engaging in extensive imaginary worldplay in their childhood,” and that this type of play, “involving extended periods of elaborate pretense with scripted events, dynamic actions, and detailed settings and scenery...was a prevalent activity in childhood” (Bergen, 2009, p. 418). Just as worldplay as a child seems to impact adult creativity, the same can be said across areas of play.

Construction play, for example, involves higher-level thinking “when [children] attempt to solve problems that the construction materials...pose because the solution requires divergent rather than convergent thinking” (Bergen, 2009, p. 418). Children engaging in games with rules practice skills within the context of both “intellectual and sociomoral development” (Bergen, 2009, p. 420). Bergen (2009) writes, “children who play games in which they design or adapt rules use a wider range of strategies and negotiate differences more effectively,” promoting positive social skills development as well (p. 420).

Increasingly, professionals within the scientific and mathematical fields recognize the importance of play in early childhood education in order to foster creativity and innovation, “two characteristics related to playfulness [that] are often described as important aspects of engineering work productivity” (Bergen, 2009, p. 422). “In a study of creative innovation,”

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Bergen (2009) writes, “Joseph Anderson discusses the advantage of a playful approach to innovation by comparing work and play. He describes work as tiring while play energizes, gives direction, and helps to focus activity” (p. 419). Within the context of a highly technological world, the benefits of play cognitively and creatively, become increasingly important and necessary to foster within children’s experiences, so that scientific and mathematical learning become the engaging and thought-provoking experiences that they are meant to be.

HEALTH EDUCATION (SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT)

Not only do the arts improve academic learning, but they foster the development of social-emotional skills as well. The importance of the arts in connection with children’s learning is seen through Lesley Koplow’s book, *Unsmiling Faces: How Preschools Can Heal*, when she demonstrates the importance of play therapy for children who have suffered or currently suffer from social and emotional trauma.

In one example, Koplow (2009) describes a four-year-old girl in the foster system, whose biological mother lost rights to the child. The young girl, currently under the care of her third caregiver, has just received news that her teacher is pregnant and will have to leave the classroom once she has her baby. During free play, the young girl asks her teacher to wear an apron with a pocket on the front of it. The girl, who usually enjoys playing the role of “Mommy,” wants the teacher to take that role this time instead. As the teacher engages in play with the child, the child expresses that she wants to get into the pocket of the apron; when she realizes that she cannot fit, the child moves under the apron instead. The teacher, going along with the play, expresses, ““It looks like I will soon have a baby!”” (p. 103). The child then emerges from under the teacher’s apron, and the teacher holds her like an infant. The girl states, ““I’m a baby too’,” to which the teacher replies, ““You want to make sure that we take care of

baby Wendy even after the new baby comes” (Koplow, 2009, p. 103). Through this play opportunity, the child is able to “express her need for nurture as well as her competitive feelings about the teacher’s baby,” as she plays through her issues of abandonment: “the play about being inside and being born to someone responsive allowed Wendy to experience something precious even as she begins to deal with the loss of her departing teacher” (Koplow, 2009, p. 103).

As seen through the example described above, the arts play a critical role in children’s social and cognitive development. Koplow (2009) notes, “Recent research supports our clinical observations and shows that by playing, children activate synapses in their brains that allow them to think in increasingly sophisticated ways, thus improving their potential as learners” (p. 97). Children who have experienced emotional trauma, however, may lack the skills necessary to engage in play, and therefore cannot efficiently process real-life experiences or communicate effectively with their peers. Therefore, opportunities for play become especially important for these children: “play becomes a primary avenue for helping these children to accomplish unfinished developmental tasks and to share their triumphs with others in social and growth-promoting ways” (Koplow, 2009, p. 98).

In a video about a school that created a “Scrapstore Playpod” made entirely of loose-parts, the positive impact of the arts on socio-emotional development is seen through staff interviews. Materials found on the playpod included tires, wheels, boxes, and sheets, among other items that children used to construct structures such as tents, cars, and ramps to include in their play. One staff member in the video states, “The materials in the playpod don’t dictate the way that children play with them. Children are free to use their imagination” (*Scrapstore Playpod*, 2009). The use of the loose-parts playground provides opportunities for children to engage in dramatic play, and foster positive relationship building among the children, while

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providing opportunities for the children to problem solve and engage in conflict-resolution on their own: “[The playpod] has helped integrate children, who were finding playtime and lunchtime a difficult time for them,” notes another staff member (*Scrapstore Playpod*, 2009).

Families noticed changes as well: “I’ve had, anecdotally, had several parents who’ve come up to me and said, ‘My child is much, much happier at school now because they dreaded lunchtimes, and now they’re really enjoying them’” (*Scrapstore Playpod*, 2009). This video reflects the importance of play-based learning through the arts, and showcases the academic and social-emotional skills that children acquire and practice when given the freedom to make choices in their play, and construct their own play materials, rather than be handed more concretely-representative play objects, such as toys. This type of learning through the arts encourages exploration, and promotes developmentally appropriate learning for children, as “children make meaningful and purposeful decisions, rather than simply following directions or copying” and “different levels of difficulty or complexity are possible” within the children’s play (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

While research upholds the benefits of arts integration, the challenge surrounding incorporating the arts into curriculum seems to be held within the execution of the integration and the lack of professional development opportunities for educators regarding *how* to incorporate the arts across curriculum.

“Although play is not often acknowledged as a major contributing factor in mathematicians’ work, their methods of inquiry resemble many of the behaviors of children involved in meaningful play,” states Sharron Whitton, mathematician (Bergen, 2009, p. 421). However, despite the relationship between play and adult creativity that professionals are able to

relate to and identify with, “our early childhood classrooms are seeing less time devoted to opportunities that encourage creativity,” (Lindeman, 2013, p. 105). Children are limited to the kinds of explorative experiences they can have because “teachers and parents direct or dictate the use of materials,” rather than allow children to play with the materials and create uses for those materials as they desire (Lindeman, 2013, p. 105).

Additionally, there is pressure placed upon educators to ensure that their children meet the necessary learning standards before advancing to the next grade level, resulting in a focus on product rather than process. “When the public is concerned about the educational productivity of its schools the tendency, and it is a strong one, is to tighten up, to mandate, to measure, and to manage” (Eisner, 2000, p. 6). This shift, however, stifles creativity, and limits the capabilities of both educators and children to explore the use of the arts in the classroom to support children’s learning.

In a study done with college students, preservice teachers “participated in an interdisciplinary geometry lesson...experiencing an arts-based pedagogical approach in the lesson” (Pool, 2011, p. 1). Participants combined photography with geometric learning, and student responses after the activity suggest an appreciation for arts integration. As one student wrote, “The best part of this lesson was learning about learning in new, creative ways. It made me want to participate, and put a new twist on a ‘boring’ subject such as geometry” (Pool, 2011, p. 8). Through the study, students were able to experience the advantages of utilizing an arts approach to learning. Still, researchers found that students, while they saw the benefits of the arts integration, “had difficulty translating theory into practice when creating their original lesson plans” (Pool, 2011, p. 1). Therefore, while educators can research the benefits of arts integration, real-life experiences and professional development opportunities are necessary in order to

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effectively incorporate arts integration into all areas of curriculum.

Methodology

The purpose of this case study was to answer the following questions: *Will the observed lesson meet MA curriculum objectives in both arts and an additional content area? Were positive social interactions fostered among one or more children? Does professional development increase the use of arts integration?*

In order to assess the impact of arts integration within a real life setting, a case study was conducted in a preschool classroom of a program that advocates support of the arts and promotes itself as an arts-based childcare program. Nine preschool-aged children and one lead teacher were present in the classroom at the time of the observation. The purpose of the observation was to assess the lesson, within the context of both the arts and an additional content area. The observation took place during a regular school day; the nature of the observation was explained to the director of the program prior to the observation, and permission was given for the observer's placement in the preschool classroom. The observer did not engage in any activities during the observation, but remained seated in one area of the classroom for the length of the observation. In addition to the classroom observation, an interview (appendix A) was conducted with the director of the program in order to obtain a direct perspective of the expectations for arts integration held by this particular program.

The purpose of the observation was to assess how the arts integration is utilized within an early childhood classroom setting. A modified version of (John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, 2014) Arts Integration Checklist (appendix B) was utilized in order to seek out designated elements of an effective, arts-integrated lesson. The checklist included elements and

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questions involving teaching strategies, children's comprehension, children's active engagement in the art form, and connections between content areas, including objectives from more than one content area within a single activity. In addition, for this study, socio-emotional skills, and how the arts promote positive socio-emotional development and interactions among children within the classroom were added. Also added to the checklist for this study was a professional development component, concerning opportunities for staff to learn about arts integration and how to successfully incorporate the arts into the classroom. Learning objectives, procedures and methods of assessment were observed and analyzed in relation to children's demonstrated understanding of the concepts by utilizing arts integration within the activity. Pictures were taken of the children's work in progress as a means of assessing understanding and learning objectives.

In regards to the director's interview, questions involved the presence of the arts throughout the program, professional development opportunities, staff backgrounds regarding the arts, and assessment through the arts and other content areas.

The content areas of the arts are investigated to determine if all four areas are present within the observed classroom. The four content areas are visual arts, music, theater and movement and dance. The observation sought to identify at least one of the four content areas of the arts within the lesson.

The program serves children from the ages of three months old through five years old. Located in a suburban city, north of Boston, the program serves families of the city, as well as four other surrounding communities.

This observation took place over the course of three hours. Because of the three-hour partial-day observation as opposed to observing the classroom for an entire day, which can last

up to ten hours depending upon children's arrival and departure times, the observation only reflected one lesson.

Findings

On the morning of the observation, the teacher asked her students to join her at the large group area for the group's morning meeting. Each day, the teacher uses a message board to display a message relating to the day's upcoming activities to her students. That morning, the message read, "Good morning! Today is Monday, April 14, 2014. We are learning about two artists – Picasso and Matisse. What is an artist?" After reading the message aloud to the children, the teacher proceeded to ask her students, "Who can tell me what an artist is?" Some of the student responses included, "It's somebody who colors a lot and makes pictures," and "They can also be a student and go to paint school and learn more about how to paint." The teacher then asked, "What else might an artist use to make art?" Responses included, "Mix colors. With ink," "Artists can also use watercolors," and "Feathers."

Expanding upon the conversation, the teacher asked students to talk about what materials they have made art out of, and asked the children if they have ever made art from things outside found in nature, to which they stated, "Yes." Discussion from this part of the conversation included, "I've made mine out of paper and glue," "Cotton balls and maybe some like, a little kind of like, soft paper," and "I made an entire space out of tape."

Discussing the types of materials used to create art, the teacher transitioned into a brief description of the related activity for that day. "Matisse used paper. He cut out shapes and placed them together. Today we are going to make art like Matisse for our art project. I have special

paper for you,” to which the children reacted positively, smiling and exclaiming, “Yay” or “Oh” or “I like that” in response.

Before beginning that lesson later that day, the teacher first began with a read aloud at the large group area with the entire class, of *A Weekend With Picasso* by Florian Rodari. Rather than read the entire story, the teacher read only parts of the story. ““When the artist feels, ‘I need to create something,’ the artist creates something’,” the teacher read aloud, to which one of the children responded, “Hey, it’s like we can be artists too!” The teacher read parts of the story about Picasso’s *studio*, introducing this new vocabulary word, explaining that a studio “is the room where the artist works,” and ended the read aloud with a segment about Picasso’s *muses*, and told children, “You are each going to get a muse.” “What’s a muse?” asked one of the children. “Your inspiration,” the teacher explained, transitioning into an explanation of the activity. “You’re going to sit across from your friend and you’re going to paint a picture of them. And then tomorrow when the painting is dry, you’re going to cut the pictures into shapes and then put them back together. And you’re not going to put them back in the same way, you’re going to reassemble them in a different way. And then we’re going to turn our house area into an exhibit.”

Taking a piece of paper, the teacher asked a child sitting by the window to hold the paper up to her face, making a shadow. “You should fill the whole paper with the portrait of your friend. See how her silhouette takes up the paper? That’s how much you should draw of your friend,” the teacher explained. The teacher did not explain the meaning of *silhouette*, as it appeared the children already understood the concept.

After this explanation, the teacher directed students to the large group tables, where she assigned students to sit across from one another, and told the students that the friend across from

each child was his or her partner for the activity. “We’re going to use skinny brushes and thick brushes, and you’re going to decide which brushes work best for your painting,” the teacher told the children. She then instructed one side of the tables to paint first. “Look at the person across from you and tell me what colors you need.” Because not all of the paint was already on the table at this time, as the children identified aloud which colors they needed, the teacher added those paint colors to the table. “I need purple for her glasses, and green for her shirt and pink over it,” one of the students declared, observing his partner.

As the children continued with the activity, the teacher reminded students, “Draw what you see.” When children asked for a paint color that was not available in the classroom, the teacher responded, “If there’s a warm color and we don’t have it use another warm color. If there’s a cool color and we don’t have it you can substitute it.” Warm and cool colors were a concept that the children already understood, and while most of the students mixed colors whenever possible, some students did substitute observable colors for what colors were available in the classroom. As one child stated, “Green/red make black so I don’t need black paint.”

During the activity, I heard questions such as, “Are we supposed to draw the smocks?” as the teacher and other children reminded their peers, “Draw what you see!” If a child seemed to forget an aspect of his or her partner, the partner would look across the table at the painting and make comments such as, “That’s not what my hair looks like,” or “What about my eyelashes?” The partner painting would then often make statements such as, “Oh” or “I know, I’ll do it!” and proceed to add the forgotten details. In this way, children worked with their partners to ensure that all details had been portrayed in the paintings. The children closely examined each other’s work, both as an observer and subject of the portrait. If a child stated that he or she was finished, the teacher examined the portrait, and if there was a detail missing, she helped the child compare

to painting to the subject in order to determine what still needed to be painted. As the children finished their paintings, they placed them on the drying rack in the classroom and either sat back at the table for their turn as a muse, or if both partners finished the activity, the children played elsewhere in the classroom, choosing alternative activities while their peers finished the first part of the lesson.

Reviewing the checklist (appendix B) I found the following categories observable within the context of the lesson: Approach to Teaching, Understanding, Art Form, Creative Process, Connections, Evolving Objectives and Socio-Emotional Development. In regards to the approach to teaching, the activity provided the opportunity for children to work collaboratively as they took on the role of either muse or painter within their pairs. The teacher challenged children to observe and portray as many details as possible to represent their partners, and the teacher gave children the choice to paint using their fingers or different sizes of brushes, depending upon their artistic preferences. Because this activity reflected only one part of the lesson, the paintings created would soon evolve into another artistic representation, once the children engaged in the process of cubism and reconstructed the portraits of their partners. When the lesson was completed in its entirety, children would have the opportunity to reflect upon their experiences, and describe how their final portraits compared to the initial paintings, and the physical appearances of the child that each portrait represented.

Evidence of the children's understanding of the activity is seen through Figures 1, 2, and 3. While differences within the portraits in progress reflected differences among children's abilities to portray attributes of their partners in great detail, students successfully demonstrated the ability to observe characteristics of a partner and portray those characteristics through painting, creating visual representations of real-life physical appearances. In Figure 1



for example, the child painted the words on her partner's shirt, which read, "I love my sister." In Figure 2



, the child portrayed his partner's glasses and earrings in addition to her physical attributes. This activity actively and thoughtfully engaged children in their experiences, and the portraits reflected mindful decisions in capturing details, including shirt designs, hair styles and facial features such

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as eyelashes, shown in Figure 3.



As seen through the nature of the activity, children demonstrated their knowledge of portraits through their paintings, as well as knowledge of color mixing, in addition to warm and cool colors, as they created substitutions for missing paint colors in order to more accurately portray their peers. Children created original works, using their partners as their inspiration. Children had the opportunity to revise their work before setting the paintings aside to dry, and areas in need of revision were prompted through conversation with both peers and the teacher.

Reviewing the lesson (appendix C), there are some aspects of other content areas, within this lesson, which is why I did identify observable characteristics regarding connections between content areas and evolving objectives. The purpose of this activity, as explained by the teacher, was for each child to have a muse, just as Picasso did, and create a portrait of each muse within the context of cubism, Picasso's artistic and stylistic technique. The read-aloud prior to the painting activity, which provided a context for the activity to be done within, can be arguably linked to standard RI.Ma.3, a reading standard for informational text within the Massachusetts

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Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy. This standard, within the context of *Key Ideas and Details* within the PreK reading standards, states, “With prompting and support, represent or act out concepts learned from hearing an informational text read aloud (e.g., make a skyscraper out of blocks after listening to a book about cities or, following a read-aloud on animals, show how an elephant’s gait differs from a bunny’s hop)” (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011, p. 17).

In the context of this activity, the teacher encouraged a sense of connection between Picasso and the children as artists, both working within the context of the same style. Through visual representations, the children used their peers as inspiration just as Picasso used people and other materials as inspiration to make his works of art, connecting the story and life of the artist to the children’s activities within the classroom. Doing so, therefore, supported the research question, *Will the observed lesson meet MA curriculum objectives in both arts and an additional content area?* Through this activity, the children experienced what it feels like to be an artist, referencing objectives within the history and social science content area: “Observe and discuss the various kinds of work people do outside and inside of their homes” (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2003, p. 29).

Another aspect of learning, necessary to this activity, was the need for observational skills, a skill that falls within the science and technology/engineering content area, as part of the category, *Inquiry Skills*. Guideline 4 within this category states, “Record observations and share ideas through simple forms of representation, such as drawing” (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2003, p. 20). In order to successfully meet the visual arts objectives within this activity, observational skills were a necessary requirement for the children to demonstrate. The second part of the activity, done at a later date, shifted the learning focus more heavily towards

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reconstructing the portraits within the context of a specific style of painting, cubism, including other materials and objectives that focused on the development of children's fine motor skills, such as cutting and gluing and refocused upon the history and social science content area objectives, looking at what it means to be an artist and paint within the style of a specific artist.

Ultimately, I found that this activity more closely identified with the type of arts integrated referred to as "art as curriculum," as described in the literature review, suggesting that this activity fulfilled objectives only within the context of the visual arts content area. While observational skills were necessary for this experience, and the children both studied Picasso and painted within his style, the additional content areas were used to enhance the visual arts experiences rather than meet explicit learning objectives pertaining to concepts within the sciences or history and social science.

In regards to socio-emotional development, this activity promoted collaboration between partners, supporting the research question, *Were positive social interactions fostered among one or more children?* Children were invested in both roles of the activity. Being the subject of the painting gave the children a sense of importance, knowing that they were the ones being observed, and being a painter gave an equally strong sense of importance, because the child painting wanted to make sure his or her partner was satisfied with the portrait. Throughout the activity, I observed the children review one another's work, pointing out missing details, or reminding partners, "Draw what you see," an imitation of the teacher's instructions. The children acting as subjects were not afraid to tell their partners if they felt that some aspect of the portrait was missing or inaccurate. I saw the children smile at one another as they worked in partners to complete the activity, and heard statements, such as "Wow," "Hey, that really does look like me," "Yup, that's me" and "You did a good job," as they voiced their approval of their partners'

depictions. The children helped one another and offered affirmations to their partners throughout the activity, validating, it seemed, the importance of each child in the eyes of his or her partner as a member of the classroom community.

Addressing the quality of the childcare program in relation to the arts and professional development opportunities, while the program does require twenty hours of professional development engagement for teachers each year, the program does not specifically require any professional development regarding the arts and arts integration, which did not support the research question, *Does professional development increase the use of arts integration?* “It’s not required for [teachers] to have an arts background,” the director of the program stated in regards to professional development. “But we do attract staff with an arts background. We have a literacy teacher who is an illustrator and author as well.” She then commented on the challenges that some teachers face in order to integrate the arts into the classroom environment. “Some teachers who are doing the arts have a hard time incorporating it. It’s about the process and we want children to get the experience, how to hold the pencil, the paintbrush, and mix colors. Every project should have a goal. There should be multi-faceted goals that [the teachers are] creating,” she explained, commenting that some teachers struggle because they focus more upon the product of the art form being created rather than the process of the experience for the children.

With that being said, while teachers are not required to have art backgrounds, there are two music teachers on staff, who provide daily music lessons to the preschool children, and music time throughout the week for infants and toddlers, as part of a music and movement class. Preschool families are given the option to choose between the piano and violin, and the chosen instrument is what the children receive lessons for each day. Incorporating these lessons, the director found, has shown cognitive benefits within the children’s development as well.

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“Children who have exposure to the arts and music, their brain developments occur more rapidly. Children who learn instruments, they have more discipline,” the director has found. “We encourage teachers to play music throughout the day. I want children to be exposed to all different types of music. You’ll hear all sorts of music in the environment so they can appreciate it. But inadvertently there’s a difference you’ll definitely notice between children who come here at a preschool age versus children who have been here from infants,” she commented. The children who have been in the program for longer periods of time, she believes, demonstrate longer attention spans and more discipline within activities, showcasing more patience than peers who have not received as much exposure to music and lessons during challenging activities.

To showcase the arts within the program for families to assess, the program holds performances twice a year. The performances include songs, movement, piano and violin recitals, and visual art displays. As the director explained, these performances serve as a means of arts-based assessment for educators:

We do one [show] in the winter and then we do one that we’re actually getting ready for again in May. You hope to see a progression. At the beginning of the school year we get a baseline of where they are. The children who have been here longer do better the first time around. This year we introduced the violin, there’s a lot more discipline that goes into it and it’s definitely more challenging for children. The first performance is not always the best but by springtime we see a huge improvement within many of the children. At the end it’s more of a motivator to be more interested and involved in their practices...And the children usually love it, and the parents love coming too. For the piano piece, there’s just the piano. The classrooms have also added singing or dancing. For the toddlers, their recital is everything: fine motor, gross motor. They’ll use their instruments and they’ll use ribbons to dance with too.

The performances held throughout the year serve not only a means of assessment for educators, but also an opportunity to involve families in their children’s learning, and celebrate children’s achievements from throughout the school year.

Limitations

There are certain limitations to this study. Although the study took place at a program that serves children from the ages of infancy through preschool-age, this study did not observe children and teaching across the age span. Only one preschool classroom was observed. Because children's cognitive and developmental abilities differ by age, this study's ability to be generalized across the program is limited. The learning objectives across content areas, as well as skill development, vary depending upon the age group of the children, and therefore ways in which the arts integrate into the curriculum and activities of the classroom will formulate in different means of learning experiences as children's ages vary.

Furthermore, this study is limited in its ability to generalize arts-integrated childcare programs, as arts integration is not limited to one specific method. The methods and activities observed in this preschool classroom reflect only this teacher's style of arts integration incorporated into her classroom. This childcare program has its own philosophy and mission. While it may reflect similarities to the missions of other arts integrated education programs, it cannot generalize all arts education programs.

The time constraint allowed for the observation of arts integration in only one area, as opposed to multiple content areas. In addition, the lesson observed was a two-part activity and only the first part of the activity was observed. This study was self-contained, limiting the discussion of arts integration to this single observation.

While the teacher demonstrated certain methods of teaching throughout this single lesson, it is possible that she utilizes other forms of art integration depending upon the content area that she works within during a given time. It is possible that her ability to effectively integrate the arts into content areas may be more or less successful depending upon the content area; she may

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demonstrate exceptional abilities to integrate the arts in one area and yet find herself challenged by the integration of the arts in another content area. The time constraint limits the observer's ability to wholly assess the teacher's quality of incorporating the arts into the curriculum.

In regards to the observer, there were no guidelines in place for the presence of the observer within the classroom during the observation. Because the observer was in clear sight of all of the children throughout the observation, the children's concentration may have been influenced by the observer sitting in the classroom as they engaged in play and completed their activities. It is possible that the children may have been more distracted during their activities knowing that there was a person observing in the room. The observer effect may have also influenced the teacher. Because the teacher was made aware of the observation prior to the observation, it is possible that this influenced the teacher's choice of lesson plan for that day and her interactions with the children during the time of the observation.

Conclusions & Future Research

This study aimed to investigate the impacts of an arts-integrated curriculum within a PreK classroom. Previous literature supports the integration of the arts across content areas; the arts serve as a medium to bridge learning between content areas, supporting deeper development of children's cognitive and socio-emotional skills. However, given the limitations of this study, a longitudinal study is necessary in order to analyze the impact of arts integration as a tool for providing more cognitively enhanced learning experiences for children. The case study conducted observed a single lesson within one preschool classroom. Nine children and one teacher were observed over a three-hour period. The lesson observed met objectives in both the visual arts content area, and the history and social science content area, with links to the science

and technology/engineering content area. Through the lesson, the teacher utilized observational skills to foster learning about a profession in an artistic way.

An interview with the director revealed that some teachers find arts integration challenging, and while most teachers within the program have an arts background, experience within the arts is not a requirement. Educators do not have access to professional development opportunities in relation to arts integration.

I found this study to be a preliminary investigation of the benefits and challenges that may exist within the context of an arts integrated curriculum in an early childhood classroom. Future research should extend beyond a single lesson, to include an analysis of lessons incorporating art across all content areas, and utilizing all art modalities, as this study observed a lesson using the visual arts only. Research can extend throughout other classrooms and childcare programs as well. Furthermore, educators should be provided hands-on, experimental professional development workshops, providing them with resources for implementing arts integration into their classrooms with confidence.

Appendix A

Director Interview

Observer: *What types of professional development opportunities do you offer for teachers?*

Director: We're required by the state to have twenty hours of professional development in the early childhood field. I didn't specifically focus on the arts and the influence of education [during my studies] but I know that children who have exposure to the arts and music, their brain developments occur more rapidly. Children who learn instruments, they have more discipline. It's not required for [teachers] to have an arts background, but they we do attract staff with an arts background. We have a literacy teacher who is an illustrator and author as well. We encourage teachers to play music throughout the day. I want children to be exposed to all different types of music. You'll hear all sorts of music in the environment so they can appreciate it. But inadvertently there's a difference you'll definitely notice between children who come here at a preschool age versus children who have been here from infants.

Observer: *How does art reveal itself through your curriculum?*

Director: Babies have their own instruments but it's for their music and movement class. But the preschoolers all have daily practice, music or piano. We give the families a choice, some kids didn't do well with the piano and violin was exciting so they opted for that this year. Parents who have been here for a while, they want their kids to continue [with] the piano. We signed up the newer kids for the violin program, and next year we're going to make it for the older kids. It's a more difficult instrument to use but we've found that it requires a lot more muscle development. It requires a lot more attention too. So I figure the older children are more centered to do that. Then there's also the thought that the older they start, the easier it will be. We also have to talk to the violin instructor. She has taught Suzuki in other settings, which makes learning more fun and playful for students. It requires a partnership with the parents and it's difficult to do with this setting.

Observer: *Do children meet objectives in both the arts and another content area?*

Director: Some teachers who are doing the arts have a hard time incorporating it. It's about the process and we want children to get the experience, how to hold the pencil, the paintbrush, and mix colors. Every project should have a goal. There should be multi-faceted goals that [the teachers are] creating. It was so many different things that are being reinforced. In the toddler classroom they do the letter of the week, so if they do "F" they'll make the letter and they may make it green and make it look like a fly. Art is supposed to be relaxing, it should be multi-sensory and people focus on product. You're focused on what is supposed to be and not the experience. Even in the instruction and how it's given, not everyone perceives it the same way."

Observer: *How do you assess learning in curriculum areas?*

Director: With the infants we use the developmental milestones. Given that, we've adapted what is considered social skills for toddlers. We look for different things. Are they happy to be at school? Are they interested to be with their friends? We have a checklist that we have with the classroom for each age group and then we have the common area. We're hoping to get all of the kids mastered with certain skills before exiting the program. Some kids are more verbal and can say things a lot easier but they don't have those skills that they can remove it out of context. If I say, for example, go get me the yellow apron, they may get me the green one because they haven't mastered that skill out of context.

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Observer: *Is there an arts-based assessment that you utilize?*

Director: We do our performances twice a year. With the toddlers they do their performances so the mastery of songs and movement shows but it's also subjective. Because the children who may do well in the classroom get onto the stage and decide not to perform, and then you have the children who may be more shy in the classroom but then they shine on the stage. With the piano it's more clear, they work on the numbers and the keys, so that's more clear. They practice every day. She simplifies it so that if children are not reading they can still understand the music, because she color-codes everything.

Observer: *How do you showcase the arts in your program?*

Director: We do one [show] in the winter and then we do one that we're actually getting ready for again in May. You hope to see a progression. At the beginning of the school year we get a baseline of where they are. The children who have been here longer do better the first time around. This year we introduced the violin, there's a lot more discipline that goes into it and it's definitely more challenging for children. The first performance is not always the best but by springtime we see a huge improvement within many of the children. At the end it's more of a motivator to be more interested and involved in their practices...And the children usually love it, and the parents love coming too. For the piano piece, there's just the piano. The classrooms have also added singing or dancing. For the toddlers, their recital is everything: fine motor, gross motor. They'll use their instruments and they'll use ribbons to dance with too.

Observer: *What types of arts opportunities do you offer through your program?*

Director: Visual centers – giving children the opportunities to experience different mediums, sensory experiences...we try to bring a lot of nature into the classroom. Teachers will find materials that we use and bring them into the classroom. We recycle and reuse products such as jars not only for visual arts but making musical instruments too.

Appendix B

Arts Integration Checklist – Pablo Picasso Cubism Lesson: Part One

Category	Observable Characteristic	Was the characteristic observed within the lesson?	
		Yes	No
Approach to Teaching	Are learning principles of Constructivism (actively built, experiential, evolving, collaborative, problem-solving, and reflective) evident in the lesson?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Understanding	Are the students engaged in constructing and demonstrating understanding as opposed to just memorizing and reciting knowledge?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Art Form	Are the students constructing and demonstrating their understandings through an art form?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Creative Process	Are the students engaged in a process of creating something original as opposed to copying or parroting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Creative Process	Will the students revise their products?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Connections	Does the art form connect to another part of the curriculum or a concern/need?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Connections	Is the connection mutually reinforcing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Evolving Objectives	Are there objectives in both the art and another part of the curriculum or a concern/need?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
*Socio-Emotional Development	Does incorporating the arts promote positive interactions among children?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
*Socio-Emotional Development	Does incorporating the arts promote positive self-expression within children?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		Was this characteristic observed within the program?	
*Professional Development	Does professional development increase the use of arts integration?		<input type="checkbox"/>

*These categories for analysis were added components for the purpose of this study.

(John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, 2014)

Appendix C

*Formatted Lesson Plan for Activity Observed

Pablo Picasso Cubism Lesson Plan: Part One

HEADER INFO

This was a two-part activity that the children completed in pairs. For part one, each child painted a portrait of his or her partner. The paintings were left to dry overnight, and then the children reconstructed the portraits by cutting and reassembling the portraits in another way, to reflect the cubism art form.

OBJECTIVES

Visual Art:

- The children will paint a portrait of a peer
- The children will demonstrate knowledge of color mixing
- The children will demonstrate the ability to paint in the style of a particular artist

Inquiry Skills

- The children will observe and portray details and attributes of their partners through visual representation in the form of a painting

LINKS TO LEARNING STANDARDS

1. Visual Arts 18 – Explore a variety of age appropriate materials and media to create two and three-dimensional artwork
2. History and Social Science 10 – Observe and discuss the various kinds of work people do outside and inside of their homes
3. Inquiry Skills 4 – Record observations and share ideas through simple forms of representation, such as drawing

ASSESSMENT PLAN

- The teacher asked children questions as they painted in order to assess children's ability to observe and record the physical details of their partners. She used questions such as, "What do you see?" and "What colors do you need for ..."
- After the paintings dried, the teacher planned to observe the paintings and determine how detailed children were able to portray their partners, looking for facial features, clothing details, and hair depictions

CONTEXT

- **DAP**
 - The activity does not require children to sit quietly and passively for long periods of time
 - Children make meaningful and purposeful decisions, rather than simply following directions or copying
- **Connections**
 - The paintings created by the children will be used to create an art exhibit within the dramatic play area
 - The book, *A Weekend With Picasso*, will be placed in the reading center with additional books already in place regarding Picasso and Matisse

VOCABULARY

- *Studio*: The room where the artist works
- *Muse*: An artist's inspiration, that helps them decide what to paint
- *Cubism*: The painting style that Pablo Picasso painted in, breaking apart shapes and putting them back in a different way, not the same as before

PROCEDURE

1. The teacher read segments from the story, *A Weekend With Picasso* by Florian Rodari, aloud to the whole group.
2. As she read, the teacher introduced the vocabulary words, and examined illustrations with the students, asking questions such as, “What is a studio?” or “If you look closely, can you see the hands?”
3. After reaching the segment about what it means to be a muse, the teacher began an explanation of the activity.
4. Asking a child to help with the explanation, the teacher used the painting paper to create a silhouette, in order to demonstrate how much of the paper should be painted.
5. The teacher assigned children to a partner and directed them to the large group tables.
6. The teacher had one side of the table paint at a time.
7. Once a child completed his or her painting, the child placed the painting on the drying rack and the child previously acting as the muse now switched roles with the painter, completing the activity.

MATERIALS

- *A Weekend With Picasso* by Florian Rodari
- Blank, white paper
- Paint
- Paintbrushes
- Water
- Cups
- Palettes
- Smocks

ACCOMMODATIONS

One of the children in the classroom has social anxieties when asked to complete a group activity. Therefore, the teacher allowed this child to choose an alternative activity while the rest of the children worked in pairs, seated at tables of two or more children. To accommodate the child’s anxiety, the teacher will have this child complete the activity with a peer at a later time during the day, when the two children can sit at a table by themselves without any other peers engaging in the activity.

(Lesson Plan Format: Bridgewater State University’s Early Education and Care major)

*Because I observed at an early childhood education program in Massachusetts, I chose to format the observed lesson plan within the context of the Bridgewater State University Early Education and Care Lesson Plan Format, as I am a student of Bridgewater State University, located in Massachusetts and therefore relevant to use within the context of the observation. By placing the lesson observed within the context of a lesson plan, readers can more easily understand the intention of the lesson. The objectives and assessment plan were verbally stated by the teacher at the time of the observation. The remaining aspects of the lesson plan were completed as I witnessed the lesson occur.

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