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Philosophy of Art

 It is very important to me as a future teacher to find ways to make learning more meaningful, engaging, and hands-on for my students. One of the ways I intend to do this is through integrating music, art, theater and dance (collectively, “the arts”) into my everyday lesson plans. As former First Lady Michelle Obama has noted, “Arts education isn’t something we add on after we’ve achieved other priorities like raising test scores and getting kids into college. It’s actually critical for achieving those priorities in the first place” (Levin-Epstein, 2016, p. 39). A teacher who wishes to effectively integrate the arts into curriculum and who desires to foster student appreciation for the arts must begin developing a unique skill set early in his or her career. Such a teacher will invest time developing his or her own appreciation of the arts and will devote time and attention to becoming acquainted with the current research regarding the advantages of an arts-rich curriculum. Though this may sound overwhelming, teachers can and should rely on assistance from other professionals in the field of arts. For example, working professional artists can be invited into the classroom to provide work-based learning that reinforces classroom lessons. This approach makes learning mirror the world of work, and helps students answer the perpetual question, “Why do I need to know this?” (Petersen, 2017, p. 56).

I believe every student learns differently, but all students learn a tremendous amount through engaging and multiple rich exposures, which ideally will include an arts component. Accordingly, integrating the arts into curriculum will benefit my future students by aiding their learning, because the arts are essential tools for thinking and communicating (Heller, 2017, p. 1). Arts integration also teaches students discipline (Levin-Epstein, 2016, p. 61). Additionally, arts instruction can help students meet the demands of college and career because arts education has been found to contribute to the teaching of workplace skills such as the ability to work independently, self-reflection, adaptability, and creativity (Petersen, 2017, p.55).

I believe that students deserve to show their individual and group creativity through their work and have a voice in how they want to showcase their learning. Integration of arts into curriculum supports this goal. Arts education is a fundamental component of student self-expression and empowerment because the arts do not merely teach students about the performing or visual arts; the arts teach them about themselves (Levin-Epstein, 2016, p. 42).

Giving students resources and information about the arts demonstrates the arts’ importance. This foundation of arts appreciation is then reinforced and expanded in the students’ secondary years. Student advocacy for arts instruction, combined with community and parental support, makes it more likely that arts instruction will survive the perpetual threat of budgetary cuts. Teachers should also advocate in their districts for strong art programming and support in order to strengthen cross-curricular art programming. Teachers should likewise request continuing education concerning best practices for properly integrating the arts.

As a future educator, I will strive to keep my students my first priority, with their best interests driving every educational decision I make so that their learning is as successful as possible. Achieving this goal will necessarily involve the integration of arts into everyday curriculum. Doing that effectively will require that I stay up-to-date on best practices for arts integration and develop relationships within the local arts community so that I can access the wisdom and talents of professional artists. It will also be important that I be a passionate advocate for the arts and arts instruction both within my classroom and my school district.

References Cited

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