

Russell-Bowie's Syntegegration or disintegration? Models of integrating the arts across the primary curriculum considers the current state of Arts education, particularly in Australia. While the said country may be the focus, the similarities between our curriculum and theirs are numerous.

First and foremost, she invokes the principle that many educators, as well as the government, see Art as secondary to literacy and numeracy (or languages and mathematics) – which they spend the majority of their time teaching (1). She indicates, through research, that learning through the arts can be effective in increasing the literacy and numeracy scores, thus acknowledging and even supporting the possibilities of integration of the arts in various subjects (or learning across the curriculum). This integration, by sheer need, would support different literacies, different intelligences and learning styles (2). While this integration may be helpful on many levels, as well as challenge the students both emotionally and intellectually, it is important that the educator realizes that “too much integration” may hinder on learning, as one may lose the emphasis on individual subjects (4).

According to her research, there are three “true models” of integration, all of which she considers valid when used by a creative and resourceful teacher (4-5). The first is the *Service Connection* model, where “concepts and outcomes are learned and reinforced in one subject by using material or resources from another subject with no specific outcomes from the servicing subject” (5). The next is the *Symmetric correlations* model, where “common or shared resources, materials or ideas being used within two or more subjects to achieve authentic outcomes in both subjects”. These two subjects are deemed equally important (6). Finally, there is the *Syntegegration* model, which she deems as the “preferred” model as it develops multiple intelligences, thus developing multiple literacies. For this model, it is necessary to adopt themes, particularly those that would be meaningful to the children, which are both age-appropriate and based on their interests (8). All in all, learning through the arts challenges the students, but also allows them to

grow as individuals: **Academic Achievement**; **Respect** for self and others; **Training** in life – general skills; **Self-Expression** (9-10).

While this model is interesting and works well in the Primary stream, I question its relevance at the Secondary level. The biggest issue is that there are different courses, often taught by different teachers. This means that the “preferred model” is next to impossible to implement in Ontarian secondary schools. The *Service Connection* model could be done in our schools, as we could add an Arts component to many of the classes. What is important to note is that most of the arts (visual, dance, drama, music) can be used in the majority of subjects. As a History and Classical Studies/International Languages teacher, the Arts play a key role in my courses, particularly the Visual Arts and Drama. I like to have my students analyze various works (such as photographs, propaganda posters, statues and paintings), in order to give them a better understanding of the times and themes studied. I also have my students create artworks for these classes, such as scale models of various things, such as battle scenes or buildings. I also have them develop propaganda posters. I think that incorporating the arts in any classroom is important and beneficial to the students – it gives them a visual understanding of the topic, and many of the students better understand and remember the anecdotes associated to them.

Source:

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