Project MAINE GUIDE

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to Arts Integration

sidexside

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INTRODUCTION

In 2023–2024, Side x Side conducted a series of monthly webinars to share information about the Side x Side arts integration model and connect arts integration to current educational themes and practices that support holistic and comprehensive education. This guide brings together the various topics and resources shared in those sessions. We hope it will be helpful as you explore arts integration. Many of the links and content are also available on the Side x Side website.

After a brief overview of arts integration and the Side x Side model, connections to topics such as play and child development, place-based education, multiliteracies, visual literacy, and museums and arts integration are explored.

This guide complements the monthly Side x Side 2023–2024 webinar content, all of which can be found online here: sidexsideme.com/projectmaine/webinars/

ARTS INTEGRATION

What is arts integration?

Although there are a variety of models and approaches to arts integration, one important characteristic of high-quality arts integration is that students simultaneously work toward meeting standards and learning goals in *both* an arts discipline and another subject area. Thoughtfully designed arts-integrated curriculum is inclusive, holistic, and fosters creative and critical thinking.

Conversations with the arts teachers in your building and/or becoming familiar with the National Core Arts Standards are important first steps when creating robust arts-integrated lessons or units.

The Kennedy Center has developed helpful resources with key concepts and definitions, summaries of research studies that support arts integration, and sample lessons and units that teachers may find useful as they begin to explore the possibility of arts integration in their own school and classroom settings.

The Side x Side Model of ARTS INTEGRATION: Collaboration, Connection, Community, Celebration

The Side x Side Arts Integration Model centers collaborations between teaching artists and K–12 classroom teachers (and students!). To start, a teaching artist and a classroom teacher plan an arts-integrated unit that connects curricular content and an art form. To support these collaborations and curricular connections, teachers and teaching artists utilize a Teaching and Learning Map. These planning maps help ensure that arts learning goals are connected with at least one other content area (literacy, math, science, social studies, etc.) for each unit.

"The quality of the relationship between the classroom teacher and the teaching artist or organization working together in a classroom can make a profound difference on student learning. The most important ingredients for successful arts education partnerships are a jointly-developed curriculum and ongoing, varied professional development for teaching artists and public school educators. Through collaborative work together, public school teachers and teaching artists come to understand each other's strengths and weaknesses and trust each other to provide support and focus attention on goals. And by working together, teaching artists and classroom teachers can ensure that the curriculum, lesson plans, and assessment tools are designed for students to meet local, state, and/or national arts learning standards."*

*Excerpts from "The Practice of Partnership: High Impact Art Education Partnership with k12 schools" National Guild for Community Arts education. 2005-2014 report.

A typical Side x Side unit starts with what is known as the "kick-off." This initial session builds excitement and provides a preview for students of what lies ahead. A kick-off often involves a special visit by a community member or "visiting expert," whose own work brings a new perspective or real-world connection to the unit. During Side x Side arts-integrated units, teaching artists visit classrooms at pre-scheduled times and lead class sessions where students engage in a creative process and create art projects or performances. Teaching artists work closely with teachers throughout the unit to design inclusive programming that fits each particular school and classroom context. Side x Side projects last anywhere from six class sessions to several weeks.

A Side x Side arts-integrated unit culminates with what is known as a "Celebration of Learning." It is at the celebration where students present, perform, or display their work, sharing it with others. Community members and families and are invited to celebrations as well as students and teachers in other grades and classrooms. These final arts projects and performances are examples of authentic assessments. Students demonstrate what they learn and *create* for a real audience–just as all artists do!

How can I bring arts integration partners to my school?

For Maine teachers who are not in proximity to Side x Side services, the Maine Arts Commission (MAC), through Creative Ground, provides a teaching artist roster for reference. MAC also provides funding for K–12 teaching artist projects in Maine classrooms through organization project grants.

National resources for funding arts integration are available through Americans for the Arts. Its Art Education Action Kit provides helpful arts integration resources and advocacy materials. Local and national teaching associations and professional groups also provide funding opportunities for curriculum design and special projects for teachers.

You can also check with local school district offices and Parent Teacher Organizations about funding opportunities. Many districts have formed local foundations or nonprofits that sponsor projects like arts integration. Websites like Donors Choose are additional options. It may also be helpful to ask your building or district art teachers and/or Unified Arts teams about local and national sources for funding and supplies.

Where can I get art materials on a budget?

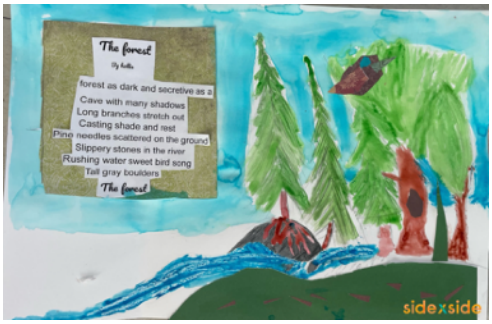
When sourcing materials there are lots of options. Start locally at arts and crafts supply stores. They may give discounts for educators and should be able to help you choose the correct brushes, paper, paints, etc. Larger suppliers often have reduced bulk prices and offer teacher discounts. Office supply stores are a great resource for bulk card stock and tagboard. Visiting places like hardware stores, local resale shops, or Ruth's Reusable Resources can help you find the art materials you need.

How can I get started with arts integration in my classroom?

Bookmaking and Visual Project Journals are two accessible ways to get started with arts integration. Both are highlighted in archived Project M.A.I.N.E. webinars accessible on the Side x Side website through a free membership.

Through Bookmaking and Visual Project Journals, students at any grade level can demonstrate their learning in virtually any discipline. These arts-integrated projects provide teachers with avenues to differentiate instruction and facilitate student choice and voice in the classroom. When students are provided with choices, creative outcomes and intrinsic motivation are more likely. Demonstrating learning through an art form such as Bookmaking or through Visual Project Journals also has the potential to motivate students and support personal expression.

In addition, when students discuss and describe the contents of what they make, they practice oral language skills, vocabulary, and share knowledge and understanding. Project journals help students to observe closely and document their learning over time. Drawings and diagrams in books and journals may support student comprehension and recall of factual information. Students also deepen literacy



skills through writing stories, creating original poetry, or authoring informational texts in book form. When adding graphics and illustrations to their books, students develop visual literacy. For more examples, see Side x Side's Visual Program Diaries

CONNECTIONS & INTERSECTIONS

There are many ways to connect arts integration practices across K–12 core curricula. Side x Side has shared some interesting and widely applicable connections in an effort to offer creative ideas and processes with many potential curricular combinations. The connections to current educational practices offered below provide suggestions on basic curricular concepts that any educator could integrate within their classroom.

Many of these connections could be easily merged within standard K–12 curricula. Other resources can be good stand-alone activities that simply help to bridge curricular models. No matter the application or use, the connections we share are simply connections and ideas to take and implement in a way that address the needs and contexts of your classrooms and learning spaces.

The following connections include themes that intersect with theories of play across content and modality, place-based teaching and learning, multiliteracies and visual literacy.

PLAY AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

The presence or absence of play, particularly in child development, has a great deal to do with competency, resiliency, emotional health, and brain size. Play is "not frivolous and not just for kids, but something that is an inherent part of human nature." – National Institute for Play

Why is play important?

Many researchers have found play is a natural and critical part of child development. The parts of the brain that are most developed in the early years are the ones that respond to active experiences. The brain is structured to learn from experience first. Research shows that when mammals play, their brains are activated in a way that can change neuron connections in the prefrontal cortex which impact emotional regulation and problem solving. Play can also release chemicals in the brain including oxytocin which helps regulate emotions and supports social skills and dopamine, a neurotransmitter that impacts memory, motivation, attention, and mood.

It takes careful planning and thought to design environments and experiences that allow children to reap the benefits of play. Supporting the most beneficial play activities and processes for all student learners is an important component in this work. Students from various cultures and communities may not find play a comfortable or intuitive process in learning. Students who are introverted, survivors of trauma, or with different learning needs may also struggle with some of the more unstructured approaches to playful learning. Not all teachers are comfortable creating classroom environments that may be very different from their own schooling experiences or education. All this is to say that there are many challenges and barriers in this complicated work of play!

The Side x Side team of teachers and teaching artists have designed arts-integrated lesson plans and resources that incorporate play and play-based strategies. Play is inherent to arts integration when students experiment with dramatic movement, characters, voice, and different materials. We invite you to use the Side x Side resources and begin building a classroom of play, creativity, and engagement for all students.

LEARNING OUTSIDE AND PLACE-BASED EDUCATION

H*ow and where we learn* is important. Learning outside the classroom provides a context for learning that supports new and different ways of processing information. The article, When Vines Talk: Community, Art, and Ecology, highlights the many ways this can happen. Learning spaces outside of the classroom may also create different modes and pathways for students to understand and process information. When students engage with content in ways that require moving their bodies like observing, drawing, solving problems with their peers, and answering questions through hands-on activities, learning and meaning-making are activated. This approach to teaching is grounded in the belief that learning is actively built, experiential, evolving, collaborative, and reflective. Teaching and learning in outside spaces helps to enhance student understanding of the environment and place while also fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and community awareness.

Side x Side has many resources that highlight ways in which teachers and teaching artists create outdoor experiences for learning across curricula and across grade levels.

Additionally, Side x Side has resources that support teachers in creating art and environmentally-based lessons that support student-centered learning.

MULTILITERACIES

Teaching with multiliteracies in mind acknowledges the idea that *“Meaning is made in ways that are increasingly multimodal—in which written-linguistic modes of meaning interface with oral, visual, audio, gestural, tactile, and spatial patterns.”*
- Claire McLachlan in the entry, *Multiliteracies in Early Childhood Education.*

Proponents of multiliteracies argue that definitions of literacy should be expanded to include making meaning out of visuals, sound, and movement.

Whether single language, multilingual, or English language learners, thoughtful integration of materials like comics, graphic novels, drama, film/video, and digital media in the classroom provide various access points for all students, deepen meaning making, and support development of multiliteracy skills across content areas. Arts integration opportunities happen when students learn to create their own original

comics, sequential art, visuals, performances, films, or digital media. Arts-based multiliteracy education requires students to "read" visual imagery and then transfer these visual literacy skills to their own arts-based work.

Diversifying arts integration practices, processes, and mediums, like adding forms of multiliteracies in your classroom, ensures that all students have access to learning in ways that are engaging and relevant to their lives.

Resources for teaching arts-based multiliteracies in the classroom

Software such as Comic life can be used to create comics related to core content and serves as a great classroom resource for all grade and ability levels. For visual-based imagery, a good resource on composition is the book "*Picture This*" by Molly Bang.

The National Core Arts Standards now include Media Arts Standards that may be helpful to consult when designing arts-integrated, multi-modal, and digital curricular components.

There are many wonderful websites that support the integration of arts education and ELL across grade levels. And don't forget that Side x Side also has resources for using film and digital media in your classrooms!

VISUAL LITERACY

According to the National Art Education Association:

Visual literacy is the ability to interpret, comprehend, appreciate, use, and create visual media, using conventional as well as contemporary and emerging media, in ways that advance thinking, decision-making, communicating, and learning.

Cognitive psychologist Abigail Housen discovered in her research on aesthetic development that both children and adults look for stories in art, even when the artist did not intend them. In this first "Aesthetic Stage," viewers are considered "accountive" storytellers. They make concrete observations about an artwork that contributes to a creative storytelling process visible, and provide art-making experiences in which students practice these strategies. If selected appropriately, both contemporary and historical artworks with narrative content have the potential for many levels of interpretation and are especially intriguing for young viewers.

Side x Side has been helping K–12 teachers implement arts-integrated lessons and units for more than ten years. Visual and creative literacies are at the core of everything Side x Side does. Side x Side has many examples of lesson plans and resources that support visual literacy in the classroom.

MUSEUMS AND ARTS INTEGRATION

Museums and museum educators play a critical role in supporting both student and teacher learning and arts integration. At museums, learning takes place through sensory and tactile inputs with a range of contemporary and historical artifacts, objects, and art. In museums, learning experiences support collaboration, reflection, and play, and encourage exploration.

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) recently released a longitudinal report on the impacts of arts-based field trips on students' social-emotional and educational outcomes. The snapshot of findings report that students who attended multiple arts-based field trips:

1. Exhibited higher levels of school engagement as well as increased tolerance for people with different opinions and higher conscientiousness by demonstrating less careless answering of survey questions.
2. Demonstrated greater desire to consume art in the future.
3. Performed significantly better on standardized tests and received higher course grades.
4. Had fewer behavioral infractions and attended school more frequently than students who did not.

This study is the first longitudinal and experimental research that reveals the academic and social-emotional effects of multi-visit arts-based field trips on students. It provides compelling evidence that art-based field trips may benefit academic performance and social-emotional well-being. It also demonstrates that benefits of exposure to multiple, quality arts field trips in a single year persist over time. Results from this experiment suggest that a broad curriculum for K–12 students that includes arts-based field trips can support students' social-emotional growth and academic progress.

Many Maine-based, national, and international museums provide regular opportunities for teacher professional development, teaching skills such as Visual Thinking Strategies or providing cultural resources and tools (like those from the Abbe Museum) that support teaching history and contemporary issues.

The archived Side x Side webinar featuring a panel of museum educators illustrates just how committed Maine-based museums are to engaging teachers, students, and schools across the state. In addition to in-person experiential learning, their online education tools and resources deepen curricula and provide resources for teaching and learning in creative and innovative ways.

SUMMARY

This guide and the accompanying year-long series of webinars are designed to support your journey with arts integration. The tools and resources outlined in this document and archived on the Side x Side website provide ideas and examples of ways to reach all students in your classroom through arts-based creative learning.

Arts integration not only provides tools and curricular resources to support rigorous and standards-based education, it also creates ways for teachers and students to connect with each other, grow as creative problem solvers, and better understand themselves and the world around them. Arts integration promotes hands-on learning and student-centered practices which not only work to empower students in their own learning, but also creates a classroom culture of play, collaboration, and creativity.

APPENDIX: RESOURCES

ARTS INTEGRATION

- The Kennedy Center
- National Coalition for Arts Standards
- National Core Art Standards
- Maine Arts Commission: Teaching Artist Roster
- Maine Arts Commission Organizational Project Grant
- Americans for the Arts: Arts Education Policy and Funding
- Americans for the Arts: Arts Education Action Kit
- National Art Education Association
- New England Teaching Artist Collaborative
- Edutopia: 10 Studies Every Teacher Should Know About
- Teaching Contemporary Art with Young People
- Arts Education and ELL

SIDE X SIDE

- Side x Side Arts Integration Model
- Side x Side classroom examples
- Side x Side's Visual Program Diaries

BOOKMAKING

- Ezra Jack Keats Bookmaking Competition
- Opening up the Sky: An Introduction to Creative Writing and Bookmaking in Inclusive Settings

SUPPLIES

- Blick Art Supplies
- Artist & Craftsman Supply
- Ruth's Reusable Resources

MUSEUM EDUCATION

- Abbe Museum Educator Hub
- American Alliance of Museums
- National Museum of the American Indian
- Smithsonian Teacher Resources
- Center for Maine Contemporary Art
- Portland Museum of Art Classroom

PARTNERSHIPS

- School-Community Collaboration: Insights from Two Decades of Partnership Development
  Hands, E. (2023). Springer Publications.
- Pathways to Community Engagement in Education Collaboration in Diverse, Urban Neighborhoods
  Hands, E. (2023). Springer Publications.
- 5 Steps to better school-Community Collaborations: Simple ideas for creating a stronger network
  By Brendan O'Keefe, Edutopia

PLAY

- National Institute for Play
- Scientists Say Child's Play Helps Build A Better Brain
  Article by Jon Hamilton from NPR's Morning Edition, Aug. 6, 2014
- Why We Play
  Article from the National Institute of Play

PLACE-BASED OUTDOOR LEARNING

- Promise of Place / Place-Based Education
- The Art of Education: 9 Amazing Artists to Inspire Nature-Related Art Projects
- Portland Public Schools: Outdoor Learning
- PBS: Art and Environmental Education Resources

- The National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF): Environmental Education Resources

VISUAL LITERACY

- NAEA Position Statement on Visual Literacy
- VTS: Overview of Aesthetic Development
- Picture This: How Pictures Work
  By Molly Bang

MULTILITERACIES

- Multiliteracies in Early Childhood Education
  Excerpt from Oxford Bibliographies
- Comic Life
  By Plasq
- Media Arts Standards
- Resources for using film and digital media