Chapter 1  
Art Integration:  
A Methodology for Learning

THE CLIFF

It stands alone in silence
never losing its strength
except sometimes a wave
will come and dig beneath
the sandstone shell

It cannot lose more than a chip
but slowly it disintegrates from
all the time the tide has come and
all the time the wind has gone

Joey Strauss, fifth grader

Reading poems like this one by Joey, a fifth grader in southern California, reminds me how fundamental the arts are to human development, expression, and communication. Joey wrote this poem after closely observing the cliffs on a beach near his school as an assignment for his science class. In teaching a unit on ecology, his teacher sought to put her students directly in touch with nature. Having them observe and document aspects of their environment—in this case, the local beach—is important, she argued, to their learning. But what makes this class unusual is that the teacher also used an art form—poetry—as a way to have the students reflect on, work with, and apply their
observations. The arts provide a methodology by which her students can transform their observations into a creative form as they learn about nature. The teacher has experienced again and again that using the arts as a teaching methodology allows her students to think more deeply about subject matter.

This integrated poetry activity is representative of the potential of the arts in the construction of knowledge: that of a methodology for exploring subject matter in a deep and meaningful manner. Not only do the arts serve as an engaging medium, but they provide students with the tools to work with ideas as well. In so doing, they also expand the expressive opportunities available to children in the classroom. Whereas traditional schooling relies heavily on testing and writing as the principal modes of assessment and expression, the arts expand the modes available to children as they seek to understand and express their conceptions of the world around them.

I’ve never met a kid who wasn’t capable or who didn’t have enormous potential. What most kids need is opportunity. Sadly, children are losing opportunities to learn as schools continue to focus narrowly on reading and math instruction and on measuring student achievement via standardized test scores in those areas. Diane Ravitch (2010, p. 226) cautions that “Our schools will not improve if we value only what tests measure. The tests we now have provide useful information about students’ progress in reading and mathematics, but they cannot measure what matters most in education. Not everything that matters can be quantified.” Ravitch goes on to advocate for emphasis on a curriculum that educates children in becoming responsible citizens—a curriculum that includes the arts. “If we do not treasure our individualists,” she contends, “we will lose the spirit of innovation, inquiry, imagination, and dissent that has contributed so powerfully to the success of our society in many different fields of endeavor” (p. 226).

In this chapter, I will provide several compelling arguments focusing on the arts as key in educating our children. Our schools are home to learning and set the stage for the ability of the next generation to become engaged citizens and participants in society.

Noted writer/entertainer Bill Cosby observes that “It matters not what our national, racial or regional differences are; we are all prone to acculturate ourselves toward using the arts to help us understand ourselves more fully and act as a motivating force in our daily lives” (qtd. in Asmal, Chidester, & Wilmot, 2003, p. 282). The following poem, written by Piero Mercanto, a seventh grader, reflects precisely the power of the arts as a source of acculturation. Piero reflects upon himself as a learner and what it is like to enter a new world. Piero arrived in the United States as a Spanish-speaking child. This poem describes his entry into his new world.

EL MUNDO

Al llegar a otro mundo,
Es como caer en un
Hoyo negro todo sin
Color y sin risas.
Es como buscar,
Algo que no se
Te ha perdido y que
Nunca podrás
Encontralo.
Cada día se va
Y ni me doy cuenta,
Como se va. Tal vez
Se lo lleva el viento,
Tal vez no.

THE WORLD
To arrive in another world
is like falling into a
black hole all without
color and without laughter.
It’s like looking
for something you
have not lost and
you will never find.
Every day passes
and I can hardly account
for it. Perhaps
the wind takes it,
perhaps not.

Piero Mercanti, seventh grade, translated
by Maria Marrero

Whether learning a new language or a strategy for fitting into a new culture, the arts
give students like Piero a reliable and important outlet to express their knowledge, feelings,
and unfolding understandings. This is not a novel idea. In broader terms, Nelson Mandela
often spoke of the importance of both arts and sports in the building of community. In writ-
ing about Mandela, Cosby puts it this way: “He [Mandela] has boldly noted that the creative,
performing arts and visual arts are the most common and the most notable vehicles through
which constructive cultural engagement can take place. . . . They present us with a keen
insight as to who we are as well as who we wish to become” (Asmal et al., 2003, p. 283).

ARTS AND KNOWLEDGE
I consider knowledge as an evolving and nonstatic action. As we learn, we are constantly
changing our understanding of the world. What I think about today will surely change
as I gather more and more experiences tomorrow. Bodies of knowledge that often take
priority as a focus of study in schooling should instead serve as a springboard from
which children may explore ideas about their relationship to the world. In other words,
bodies of knowledge are not fixed. For example, as scientists continue to explore aspects of the natural world, their theories evolve and change accordingly. In the realm of history, events and stories may be interpreted and reinterpreted according to perspective and additional documentation.

In describing knowledge, I do not mean the reiteration of someone else's great ideas. Instead, I would concur with Eleanor Duckworth (2006) when she writes, “By knowledge, I do not mean verbal summaries of somebody else’s knowledge. . . . I mean a person’s own repertoire of thoughts, actions, connections, predictions, and feelings” (p. 14). Accepting this premise, a teacher may play an important role in the classroom by having her students actively work with knowledge rather than simply mimicking others’ knowledge. Here, the arts are important.

Having been on the beach and documented aspects of nature along with Joey (the child whose poem is at the opening of this chapter) and the other children in his class, I have witnessed students as they work toward making sense of their surroundings. Writing poetry gives them a structure through which to apply their observations. In doing this they are actively working with a knowledge base and constructing understandings of nature through an art form. The art form enables each child to apply his or her observations in an imaginative manner, creating a personal connection to the subject matter. At the same time, because students are engaged in the activity they are in a strong position to retain and apply their understandings in the future.

Placing the students directly in touch with nature is a sound pedagogical approach in and of itself, but asking the students to write poetry following their observation activities gives them an opportunity to reflect even more deeply on their work. As the students consider the complex aspects of nature, the poem is a form through which they can actively reflect upon their experiences. In his sketchbook, Joey recorded the following notes based on his observations of that day. It is fascinating to see the leaps Joey made from notes to poem.

---

**Cliffs**
- solid sandstone
- full of holes and crevices
- covered with brush
- iceplant

**Waves**
- forming far away
- it grows to a few feet high
- a surfer catches it
- it crashes
- and turns to foam on the sand

**A Rock**
- worn smooth
- dark black holes
- streaks of white
It is evident from his notes that Joey paid close attention to his surroundings. As it happens, his observations are recorded in what some might consider a surprisingly poetic manner. I, too, was surprised in the beginning. But I have learned that when children are constantly engaged in thinking imaginatively, they begin to naturally apply their observations and understandings in creative ways. I have come to learn that applying one’s imagination can be a practiced skill. In writing his poem, Joey has taken his observations, seriously worked with them, and transformed them into something else.

Transformation is a key to knowledge construction and acquisition. The activity of writing a poem has given Joey an opportunity for learning and an outlet for expressing his ideas and questions. At the same time, each student is engaged in “practicing” his or her imagination. By working on something in a manner that stretches his or her thinking, the child is simultaneously engaged in critical and reflective thinking. The arts allow that imaginative and critical thinking to emerge in a personal and creative manner. Consider the following poem written by Rell on the same day, after she documented the rush of incoming waves.

THE WAVE

No one is there to ride it
but the sun
who glimmers with glee
at riding
being closely followed
as it washes to shore
in turn.

Rell Parker

Whereas Joey was fascinated by the cliffs, Rell focused on the waves. Both successfully completed the nature observation assignment by carefully documenting an aspect of the beach. Both used their observation notes to create a unique poem. In this example, the teacher and I know at the very least that the students are engaged in a process of learning through applying observations to a deeper level by using them in a concentrated and serious way. As well, each child is an emerging poet and can share his or her original compositions with the class, often to the amazement of peers.
ARTS AND LEARNING

When people of previous generations think of the arts in education, they think of their own elementary music class in which they probably sang songs accompanied by a teacher on the piano, guitar, or other simple instrument. They have recollections of art class where the art teacher had them sculpt a clay bowl or draw a still life. Today’s college students, however, have not been so lucky. Most of them have had very limited experiences with formal arts instruction in their public school education. Budget cuts and the No Child Left Behind legislation have effectively curbed arts education. My students, however, are keen consumers of popular culture, and have tapped into their own rich cultures that honor the value of the arts.

The arts have not always been separate subjects. Historically, when arts were introduced into education in the United States, they served a particular purpose. Music was first introduced into the public schools in an urban setting (Boston, in 1838) to promote hymn singing. Boston was also home to the first drawing program, which was introduced as a result of the Industrial Drawing Act of 1870, passed by legislators (composed and signed by manufacturers). The Industrial Drawing Act was designed to introduce drawing to children for the purpose of training individuals for work related to design in manufacturing. Since the 1950s, however, the arts have been taught as something added onto a core of “basics.” Although some might argue that the arts are basic (as I would), for the most part the arts have remained removed from other learning.

There are three ways in which I describe the arts as integrated into learning: learning about the arts, learning with the arts, and learning through the arts. For many, the most common form of arts education involves a professional who teaches about the arts. In this familiar model, an arts specialist usually handles the job: The music teacher takes the children for an hour or so each week and teaches about music; the art teacher in his unusually colorful separate room teaches about visual arts. If you were lucky, there might have even been a drama or dance teacher in your school whom you met with on a weekly basis. Although this model has served education well, we see its importance slowly diminishing in direct proportion to shrinking educational budgets. The arts, often considered a “frill,” have been cut as the basics—particularly reading and mathematics—receive attention.

Cutting the arts, besides being incredibly unfortunate for our children, is also against the law! However, only a handful of states have what I call “arts education police,” whose job it is to ensure that all children receive their rightful education—one that incorporates the arts. According to the No Child Left Behind legislation of 2002, all children are entitled to a comprehensive and equitable education that includes the four arts areas of visual arts, music, drama, and dance. Furthermore, national standards in the arts address a developmentally appropriate method for teaching the arts, and nearly every state has adopted its own frameworks for arts education.

Taught as disciplines unto themselves, the arts reveal many aspects of human nature and give students multiple outlets to express their innermost thoughts. Keeping the arts separate from other subjects, however, severely limits their potential as a methodology for teaching and learning in general. As taught in traditional settings, the arts allow students to travel to places of mystery, dreams, and adventure. Kept separate from the
sciences, math, social studies, or the language arts, the arts are limited in their potential and practical use in the classroom.

The emphasis throughout this book is to broaden the potential of arts in the classroom by outlining a *methodology* for learning. I define *arts* in the very broadest sense to include the performing arts (e.g., music, dance, drama) as well as the nonperforming arts (e.g., visual arts, photography, literature, sculpture). I define *methodology* as the means by which teachers engage students in learning that is meaningful to them, and that provides a forum through which they actively grapple with the complexities of knowledge.

Reflecting upon our own and others’ knowledge changes us and the way we perceive the world. According to Karen Gallas (1994), “[creating knowledge] makes you powerful and gives you authority within community. It enables you to feel some control over your history as a learner” (p. 111). Using the arts as a way to teach subject matter places the learner in the position of truly working with ideas and taking control of learning in a manner that is at once intellectual, personal, meaningful, and powerful.

The arts, as a methodology for teaching and learning, provide the teacher with an expanded repertoire of actions and activities to introduce subject matter. By exercising their imaginations through subject-matter-related artwork, children are more likely to make new connections and transcend previous limitations. Imagination is an attribute that serves all people in all endeavors—not only artists. Creativity is fundamental to any field. For example, the chief executive officer of a company must be able to employ his or her imagination to stay competitive. A computer programmer must be creative to invent new programs or video games. A chef must utilize powers of imagination to create tasty, visually appealing dishes. The power of the imagination as a practiced skill must not be overlooked or lost in learning. The arts, as a teaching methodology, empower students to practice those skills.

Teaching through the arts also is a keen way to open the world of learning to English language learners. A teacher in the SUAVE program (see Chapter 10) offers this:

> [Teaching through the arts] opens the floodgates of the second language, the gate that keeps [students] back, that keeps them limited and maybe questioning their own self-worth. It opens that gate because they have been actively involved and showing you they are feeling really good. It helps them so much to feel that yes, I can learn this and I can do this because they had all of this great self-expression come out and they have been validated. I think that the self-esteem thing is such a powerful piece in the classroom. (Goldberg, 2004, pp. 63–64)

The arts are humanity’s expression of life itself. Viewed in this manner, they have not been used to their fullest in learning and teaching in typical North American school settings. Even though many art programs present students with important lessons concerning techniques such as perspective in drawing or singing in tune, history shows us over and over that the arts play an even greater role in capturing and promoting cultures. The arts present many kinds of knowledge, and students may learn a tremendous amount by examining their content. The songs, paintings, or poetry of a culture may represent the history of a people; drama might explore the political tensions of a community; playing with the colors in a sand sculpture might provide inspiration for the scientist who explores different combinations of molecules.
In light of the previous argument, I believe that we should evaluate the more common approach to arts in education and consider its limitations as well as its contributions. In short, I propose an expansion of the role of arts in teaching and learning such that art be more fully integrated as a methodology for learning and a language of expression in the general classroom. This approach broadens the definition of the role of the arts in learning to include their use as a medium or language to translate, reflect on, and work with ideas and concepts.

As a methodology, the arts become a process toward learning. This notion is parallel to one developed by Sonia Nieto (1996) as she discusses multicultural education: “Curriculum and materials represent the content of multicultural education, but multicultural education is above all a process” (p. 317). Both multicultural education and art as methodology require an ongoing and dynamic process. Both involve content, and both stress process through attention to active participation, learning environments, learning styles, culture, and language abilities in the classroom. This is played out in infinite ways.

At the university where I teach, we often have special programs. At one point we received a grant that enabled a group of musicians, Voice of the Turtle, who play Spanish Jewish music (Ladino), to be in residence for a week. The premise of their visit was to engage students in humanities, arts, and education classes with the incredible vessel of knowledge (content) housed within the songs of the Spanish Jews in exile, as documented in the Diaspora over the last 500 years. In 1492 Jews and Muslims were expelled from Spain and many traveled to Bulgaria, Morocco, Eastern Europe, Mexico, and Greece, among other countries, in a resettlement effort. During their exile, the Jewish Spaniards kept alive their language and history through songs and poetry. They also created new songs and poetry that reflected and documented their evolving history and the changes in their lives and cultures.

When the Ladino musicians performed at the university, they offered much more than entertainment and an eclectic style of music. They engaged the students in a process of learning. Captured in their songs was a rich series of history lessons, linguistic lessons, musical lessons, and cultural lessons. Their residency brought them to the Spanish Civilization class, where they presented a history lesson through song; to the Critical Music Listening class, where they introduced the students to instruments and music theory as it related to Spanish songs; to the Linguistics seminar, where the students compared the Spanish of 500 years ago to present-day Spanish; and to the Education class, where student teachers learned how Ladino culture could be introduced to children in multicultural classrooms.

The group also visited a fifth-grade bilingual (Spanish–English) classroom, where they interacted with students and engaged them in writing poetry to a traditional melody. After presenting the fifth graders with a few songs and stories from their repertoire, they played a haunting, melancholy song without words and asked students to create a poem to accompany the melody. Engrossed in the activity, children composed an amazing array of poems, both in English and in Spanish, which they later recited to the accompaniment of the musicians. The level of engagement was phenomenal, and the poems surprised us all. Here are two of the poems written that day.
VOZ DE LA TORTUGA

Triste me siento
No siento alegría
En mi corazón
Mi corazón se parte en dos pedazos
No me siento alegre en este día
Dejenme en paz
No estoy alegre
Me siento decaída
No quiero ver a nadie ahorita
Quiero estar sola
Sin nadie a mi lado
No quiero que nadie venga a mi lado
No quiero
No quiero más dolor
Quiero ver alegría
Mi corazón está derrotado de tristeza
La lluvia está cayendo
El sol no sale
Me siento sola
No hay pájaros en el aire
Todo está solo
No me gusta el día
El día está triste

Jovanna Flores

MY DYING SOUL

Here I am dying
all upon my own
with no one to die with
I am so lonesome so lonesome
whispers of sadness
birds made of stone
gray and black feathers
I am all upon my own
my sadness is too deep to cry
for my soul is spared

Emily Birnbaum

Students continued to talk about their experience with the musical group for months after the visit. Many chose poems from that day to include in a class publication.

The overall residency proved to be far more than entertainment, and it illustrates the depth with which the arts engage students in active learning. To each audience, the
group offered specific content as well as an opportunity to connect evolving understandings through the arts to history, culture, and personal interests.

One might ask why it is any better to learn history through the songs of a people than through a history book. Learning through a people’s musical culture provides an interesting array of authentic historical voices that is perhaps more inviting and aesthetically pleasing than a history text. Songs often can evoke feelings or moods more than written text through the musical language added to words. Songs often present an authentic point of view, drawing on the thoughts and experiences of real people in history. As such, song texts often provide firsthand accounts of events in history.

Using art forms such as the Ladino musicians provided can be highly effective in the classroom. Karen Gallas (1994) outlines three ways in which art experiences may be placed at the center of a curriculum: (1) the arts representing a methodology for acquiring knowledge; (2) the arts as subject matter for study, in and of themselves; and (3) the arts as an array of expressive opportunities for communicating with others—what she labels “art as story” (p. 116). In the example of the Ladino musicians, all the experiences Gallas outlines were played out. Jovanna and Emily, the fifth-grade students whose poems you just read, accessed the arts as both a methodology for acquiring knowledge and an expressive outlet. The songs and poems presented them with subject matter for study.

Next, we will look a little deeper at the role of art as a language for learning.

**ARTS AS LANGUAGE**

Art is a language of expression and communication that has always been, and will always remain, a fundamental aspect of the human condition and the perpetuation of cultures. Defining art is a challenging proposition because it can be viewed through so many cultural, theoretical, philosophical, and even geographical perspectives. This does not mean, however, that people have not tried. For our purposes, we will briefly examine how the arts—in their multiple complexities—act as languages of expression for people and cultures throughout the world.

“Art is a mirror of life” and “art imitates life” are common notions of the function of art in experience. The mirror metaphor is of special interest to me. Socrates and Shakespeare (through the voice of Hamlet) both raised the theory that “art is a mirror of reality” (in Danto, 1981). In discussing the two men’s views, Arthur Danto concludes that Hamlet “made a far better use of the metaphor: mirrors and then, by generalization, artworks, rather than giving us back what we already can know without the benefit of them, serve instead as instruments of self-revelation” (p. 9).

What intrigues me about the mirror metaphor is that it incorporates the notion of reflection. If art is a mirror—which I believe it can be—it necessitates reflection. And in that reflection we often see things that are or aren’t there. Our look in the mirror is discriminating. The same is true of our look at life; it is discriminating according to our experiences, culture, gender, environment, and so on. Art enables us to see things that are both there and not there; it provides us with an opportunity to imagine and reflect on our lives.

Bella Lewitzky (1989), a dancer and philosopher, writes: “Art is a language, a form of communication, a philosophy, a perception of truth” (p. 2). Although I might argue
that there are no truths, only complexities (the more we learn, the more we know we have more to learn), I agree that the arts are most definitely a language and that they most certainly communicate. For example, let's think about music. Listening to a popular piece by the Beatles might evoke and communicate very different feelings and images than an Indian raga. Music in Australian traditional Aboriginal communities serves to communicate history, geography, and culture. Catherine Ellis (1985), while doing music research among Aboriginal communities, writes of an Aboriginal man who told her that “the most knowledgeable person in a tribal community was the person knowing many songs” (p. 1). Similarly, when I hear Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture or his Romeo and Juliet, I sense definite feelings and images. However, each piece communicates very different images, stories, and feelings. In listening to the 1812 Overture I can picture canons and artillery. I imagine troops patriotically marching toward battle. In listening to Romeo and Juliet I sense two individuals drawn to each other, longing for each other. I see them trying to get close to one another.

Art Hodes, a jazz pianist who lived well into his nineties, wrote of the blues as a language. Hodes was well known for his playing with Louis Armstrong and Bessie Smith, performing standards—enduring jazz selections. Here Hodes (in Gottlieb, 1996) describes an early experience in his career, before he learned the language, as he puts it, of the blues.

Many times they'd ask me to play. I was kidded plenty. Someone would holler, 'Play the blues, Art,' and when I would play they would laugh. That hurt, but I couldn't blame them. I hadn't as yet learned the idiom. I was entranced by their language but I hadn't learned to speak it yet.

Mickey Hart (1991), one of the drummers from the group The Grateful Dead, describes music as a “reflection of our dreams, our lives, and it represents every fiber of our being. It's an aural soundscape, a language of the deepest emotions; it's what we sound like as people” (p. 7). James Hoffmann (1991) argues that music not only communicates, but is a powerful tool, especially in the hands of performers. “Music, a potent social instrument from earliest times, operates not merely in imitation of society but also in dynamic interaction with it. In comprehending this, a performing musician gains power not only over his or her immediate audience, but through contemporary media, over a broader public as well—for good or ill” (p. 270). One could make a similar argument for other art forms as well.

The arts provide humankind with modes for reflecting on, expressing, and documenting experiences, as well as providing a body of knowledge from which to draw upon. The arts provide a method for expressing ourselves, while at the same time, they serve as a unique document of cultures and history. As a study, the arts offer historical, emotional, cultural, and personal sources of information and documentation. Lewitzky (1989) continues, “Art can, in the hands of great talent, make beauty which reverberates through our lives and carries us into rarified strata. It can shatter our perceptions. It can clarify our anger. It can help us to understand our sorrow. The arts are a mirror for society—critic, teacher and forecaster—and teach the value of individual differences” (p. 2).

Art can stimulate our imagination or reflect our experiences. Through creating a work in art, a person can explore the complexities of an idea or situation more fully than
if they were to read about it or listen to a lecture. As a tool, the arts enable us to cross
boundaries that are usually closed to us, or to join together in ways that are new. As such,
it is not unusual for artists to imagine new ways of being or to invent ways of seeing
something anew.

Creating art or experiencing it is an act of what Lucy Lippard (1990) describes as “a
process of consciousness” (p. 9) reminiscent of Nieto’s characterization of multicultural
education. Maxine Greene (1991) writes of encounters with arts as “shocks of aware-
ness” that may, and should, leave persons “less immersed in the everyday, more impelled
to wonder and to question” (p. 27). She goes on to tell us how it is not uncommon “for
the arts to leave us somehow ill at ease, nor to prod us beyond acquiescence. They may,
now and then, move us into spaces where we can create visions of other ways of being
and ponder what it might signify to realize them” (p. 27).

I readily admit that I love music—and many kinds of music at that. I’ve imagined
living inside a Bob Marley reggae tune or inside a passage of Stravinsky’s Symphony of
Psalms. I can honestly say that I experience a sense of freedom when I listen to or play
a piece of music that allows me to transcend everyday limitations. Music to me is, as
Adrienne Rich (1993) refers to in a discussion of the arts, “a vital way of perceiving and
knowing” (p. 162). As a child I spent many hours writing song after song, from the
poignant to the sublime. Growing up during the 1960s, I wrote songs with lyrics rang-
ing from “We need peace, we need love, all over this world, peace love peace to love” to
the more whimsical notion of “Flower power is in today.” Obviously, neither song made
it to the Top Ten or even a Grammy nomination. However, writing these songs was a
truly powerful and empowering activity. I learned to sit for long periods of time work-
ing in a concentrated manner. I enjoyed the activity of creating. I was encouraged by
supportive peers and adults who listened closely to my finished songs and even found
opportunities for me to show them off in school cafeterias or during assemblies.

The connection to this discussion is that the language of the arts can be very pow-
erful in the life of a child. Art can be a source of empowerment as children explore their
world and personal potential while retaining (and, one hopes, celebrating) a sense of in-
dividualism in relating to their community, be it the classroom, neighborhood, club, or
family. As I have previously written (Goldberg & Phillips, 1992), “For both teachers and
students, the arts can be a form of expression, communication, imagination, observation,
perception, and thought. The arts are integral to the development of cognitive skills
such as listening, thinking, problem solving, matching form to function, and decision
making. They inspire discipline, dedication, and creativity” (p. v).

Working with the arts opens the classroom to surprises and excitement. As Gallas
(1994) writes, “There is an aura of excitement in the classroom engaged in the arts, and
also one of serious intent. . . . What I began to see were the surprises: the ways that chil-
dren could learn to read through their artworks; the potential for communication that
painting offered a nonverbal child; the joy that artistic activity brought to children and
teachers alike” (p. 112). I, too, am continually amazed as children work and create un-
derstandings through the arts. Sometimes they make surprisingly personal statements,
such as when the class bully wrote a poem about his desire to fly freely as butterfly.
Through their artwork, children introduce themselves to us in deep and meaningful
ways that may not ordinarily emerge otherwise.
Perhaps one of the more compelling reasons why the arts, as languages of learning, are fundamental to classroom life is that they give rise to many voices. “They can nurture a sense of belonging, of community; or, they can foster a sense of being apart, of being individual. The arts also provide a vehicle for individuals, communities, and cultures to explore their own world and journey to new ones, thus enriching their understanding of the varied peoples and cultures that exist on our planet” (Goldberg & Phillips, 1992, p. v).

Moreover, the arts can reach across boundaries. In a class where many verbal languages are spoken, the arts can be a uniting language. Although a new student from Peru might not be able to communicate in words with a child who just arrived from Vietnam, she can more than adequately communicate through her drawings and dances. Indeed, using the arts of different cultures as primary sources of learning history introduces children to the “feel” of a culture in addition to the “facts” of a culture.

ARTS AND CULTURE

“I would like us to learn things from other cultures, to sing songs from other cultures. It’s wonderful. It opens up your thinking and everything else. But it should never happen to the detriment of your own” (Miriam Makeba in the book Nelson Mandela: In His Own Words; cited in Asmal et al., 2003, p. 279).

Art cannot be divorced from culture; it grows from individuals interacting or reacting to their world. Piero’s poem at the start of this chapter poignantly illustrates this point. Through Piero’s poem we can see that, as an English language learner, he arrives to not only a new language, but a new world and culture. “For some children the transition is smooth and exciting. For some the transition is filled with a sense of loss in addition to newness” (Goldberg, 2004, p. 2). Much of education involves the telling and creating of stories of our global culture. Stories are told through the spoken word, artwork, music, dance, poetry—all these languages are essential as they transmit culture both within various cultures and to people outside of the culture. It is when we begin to tell other people’s stories that we must take the utmost care and respect so that our actions adequately reflect the complexities of the culture.

When students work creatively through the arts, they often begin to incorporate their culture into their work. So, too, when teachers present works of art to emphasize a point or to examine a particular issue, context must be a consideration. The arts embody culture; sometimes they even enhance it. The arts are languages that communicate; like words, they are a system of symbols that represent ideas, emotions, feelings, and history. When I first taught music, I worked at Hebrew Day School, outside of Boston. A few teachers in the school asked if I could enhance their curriculum on Jewish Eastern Europe in the 1800s. I remember feeling annoyed that I was being asked to enhance their curriculum, yet I couldn’t quite figure out what bothered me. I understand better now.

The music of the Eastern European Jews in the 1800s didn’t simply enhance life at that time; it embodied life. The songs reflect the hardships, the passion, the events of the time. On their own, the songs could easily be a history text—a rich one at that. The writings of Toni Morrison don’t simply enhance life (though they might do that as well); they capture and embody experiences, emotions. The same can be said of Diego Rivera’s
ARTS AND CULTURE AND IDENTITY

The arts can, and often do, play a significant role in cultural and personal identity. My own daughter, to whom this book is dedicated, is of Chinese heritage and was adopted when she was a year old. Our interracial family is constantly engaged in all sorts of activities, and we spend a great deal of time each year at events for families with children from China. My daughter loves to dance, and she has learned some ribbon dancing (as have I!). We have also learned some calligraphy and been introduced to many of China's rich genres of music. These experiences acknowledge her history and offer a way for her to engage directly with Chinese customs and traditions.

Classroom teachers can similarly find ways to integrate the cultures of the children in their classrooms. In this way children can learn about many cultures and individual children will feel that they and their identity is acknowledged. On the other hand, not integrating cultures can indirectly teach children that their cultures are not valued (Goldberg, 2004). There are many openings to integrate the arts of children's cultures in your classroom. You may enlist parents or guardians of your students to help with this endeavor. It might be as simple as teaching the children a song, dance, or having an artwork hung in the classroom that was created by a child's relative.

Keep in mind that you will no doubt have children (like my own) in your class who might be adopted from cultures whose parents might or might not have a strong familiarity with the child's culture of origin. In my own case, I have found there are many community resources available to use. In San Diego we have a Chinese historical museum that offers programs and resources to teachers, schools, and families. We also have community centers for Samoan, Filipino, Mexican, and Native American communities, all of which have had wonderful working relationships with schools. The resources are available; tapping into them is often as easy as an e-mail or phone call.

Since I have brought up the subject of adoption, I believe a few more words about the topic might be helpful. As a teacher, you will have children in your class who are adopted. You will have children living with foster families, children who live in homeless shelters, and, perhaps, children living with relatives or even children of migrant workers who will spend only a few months in the area. Children will come from blended families, and families with two moms or two dads. As you approach involving children's families and guardians, be open to all these kinds of families and all they offer. When asking children to bring a photo from their childhood for a collage project, keep in mind that some might not have photos (or access to them).

A family tree assignment might cause some tension for an older child who struggles with her identity in terms of her "forever" family versus her biological family. Reframing a family tree assignment that identifies important people in one's life might be more appropriate. If you ask a child to learn a song from his mom, remember that he might not be living with his mom. For children living in nontraditional families, which, judging by my own neighborhood, is more the norm, culture and arts are a natural bridge to gaining identity and sharing it with others. As a role model, you will play a significant
role in helping each child identify with the multiple cultures in your classroom and community. What a gift this will be for all of you!

ARTS AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: SPECIAL NEEDS, EXCEPTIONAL, AND GIFTED EDUCATION

Arts are a natural bridge for children with differing abilities, including special needs, gifted and talented, and all kinds of exceptionalities. Every child offers a unique contribution to your class and every child has strengths and needs. Every child in your class wants to be included, and the arts are a wonderful method of inclusion.

In this section I would like to highlight the role arts can play in working with many special kids that you will have in your classroom. I will begin with the value of arts to children with special needs. VSA, or Very Special Arts, is an international nonprofit organization founded in 1974 by Jean Kennedy Smith. It is an organization dedicated to raising awareness and sponsoring programs by which “people with disabilities can learn through, participate in, and enjoy the arts” (information about VSA can be found on its Web site: www.vsarts.org). This organization offers important background and advice concerning the role of arts in enhancing learning for children as well as promoting the notion that creative arts offer a venue for self-expression, communication, and independence for youth and adults with differing abilities.

According to VSAs Web site (June 2010):

VSA programming and initiatives are guided by four essential principles:

• Every young person with a disability deserves access to high quality arts learning experiences.
• All artists in schools and art educators should be prepared to include students with disabilities in their instruction.
• All children, youth, and adults with disabilities should have complete access to cultural facilities and activities.
• All individuals with disabilities who aspire to careers in the arts should have the opportunity to develop appropriate skills.

Inclusion teaches us that all means “all.” Everybody. No exceptions. The arts invite people to leave familiar territory, to explore new answers and seek new questions. The arts offer a means to self-expression, communication, and independence. By learning through the arts, students become lifelong learners, experiencing the joy of discovery and exploration, and the value of each other's ideas.

VSA is committed to driving change, changing perceptions and practice classroom by classroom, community by community, until ultimately all of society has been transformed.

And I like these quotes from an earlier version of the Web site:

For hundreds of years, people with disabilities have fought negative images and stereotypes, and have often been denied equal opportunity within communities worldwide. Now, through the arts, we are breaking new ground. For people with disabilities, the arts represent a world of resources and opportunities, providing an outlet for creative
expression and unlimited possibilities for personal, academic, and professional success. And, because art is an infinite and unconditional field, people with disabilities are free to express themselves without physical, social, or attitudinal barriers.

Marcel Proust wrote: “Only through art can we emerge from ourselves and know what another person sees.” When we see art as the universal language that has the ability to unite all people, we understand the importance it has in the lives of people with disabilities. For a person who cannot speak, a dance performance may clearly communicate even the most complicated message. For a person with a mental disability who cannot communicate effectively through words, a painting rich with color and life may say more than verbal sentences ever could. And, for a person who has limited mobility, a song sung with emotion and spirit may elicit movement toward a state of clarity and joy. By engaging in the arts, people with disabilities are able to greatly contribute to our workplaces and communities, help extinguish old stereotypes regarding disability, and create a global culture truly representative of all people.

As VSA so eloquently states, the arts open fundamentally important and essential avenues of expression and communication for all people, including those with differing abilities. Many classrooms are inclusive classrooms, meaning that children with various abilities and disabilities can be found in a typical classroom. Through the arts, you may be more able to reach a student with special needs in a way you can’t through traditional methods. You might also be able to include children with differing abilities and needs in class projects and plays, as the arts often identify strengths in individual children.

Kaleidoscope Theater is a company based in Providence, Rhode Island, that, since its inception in 1977, has integrated themes of inclusion in its plays. The theater has also included performers with differing abilities in its productions. When the movement toward mainstreaming special needs children in classrooms became the norm in the late 1970s, David Payton, director of the company, was asked to create a performance that would help children better understand the kids coming into classrooms with special needs. He created (wrote the script, and directed) a play titled, “I’m Special, You’re Special.” This play deals with a family with several children, one of whom has Down syndrome and who was about to be mainstreamed into the local school attended by his siblings. It is a wonderful and poignant play, and was accompanied by follow-up topics for discussion led by the actors and the teachers.

In the play, a young actor portrayed the main character with Down syndrome. As part of its work in schools, Kaleidoscope Theater asked for feedback from teachers on the effectiveness of the performances and guided discussions. Teachers, in their feedback to the company, suggested that theater members put into action what they preached and integrate actors with special needs into the performances. David Payton took the suggestion to heart and sought immediately to integrate actors with special needs into the performances. He connected with a young man with Down syndrome who took to the part immediately and acted in the play for the next twenty-five years! One day, early on, when the company was in a van traveling to a performance, the young actors were all talking about plays they would like to act in. The kids were saying, “I’d like to be a king,” “I’d like to be a princess,” and so on. The young actor with Down syndrome asked, “Who can I be?” It was the light bulb moment when David then realized that this young actor needn’t be type-cast and could be in many other plays. It was then that Payton opened
up the company to many children and young adults with special needs and integrated them into many plays and in many roles.

In a version of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, all the dwarfs wear sunglasses. One of the actors playing a dwarf is legally blind. The lights on stage hurt her eyes. In consultation with this young woman and her mom, it was clear that if the actor wore sunglasses the lights wouldn't be a bother. David then had all the dwarfs wear sunglasses. How brilliant! They have done this production several times, and no one has ever inquired, “Why are the dwarfs wearing sunglasses?!” In many of Kaleidoscope’s productions, individuals with differing abilities are featured. Sometimes it is obvious to the audience and sometimes quite hidden and seamless. People who become involved with the theater company know what they are getting into and love it. It is a wonderful model for theater and community involvement.

Children with differing abilities in class might surprise you in unexpected ways. A child with a hearing impairment might love music and choose to take instrumental lessons. A child with a visual disability (like our dwarf above) might perform in your class play. Let children direct how they will participate and leave the options open to them. Some teachers have encouraged their students to create puppet plays about individuals with disabilities. Puppetry can be very effective in providing an opening to understanding ability and disability.

Identified gifted and talented children are to be found in many classrooms. Unidentified gifted and talented children will be in your room as well. Keep an eye open to the talents and gifts of your students and how they might benefit from drawing on these talents and gifts. This could mean that you have a creative storyteller who can lead a group of children on a science adventure, or a virtuoso pianist who can create a piece about a period of history. You can then bring in the theater and music standards and have a mini lesson on performance and creative activity. A talented artist might provide you the opportunity to address the visual arts standards and discuss aesthetics.

ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY

Technology has tremendously increased the potential of arts not only for professional artists, but for art adventurers—those who thrive on creating arts—and especially for students, using photography, computers, video cameras, tape recorders, multimedia, and so on in the classroom as a way to explore and communicate ideas. Classrooms are usually equipped with some forms of technology that can be put to use in creative ways. A tool as simple as the overhead projector can transform an ordinary spelling lesson into a creative shadow puppetry production. A pinhole camera (camera obscura) can offer a magical study of optics and the history of scientific drawing. The use of a tape recorder can add life to a dramatic performance on the subject of oceanography by adding sounds of the ocean or the slide projector or PowerPoint™ presentation can add a visual backdrop to a rap song on the subject of mathematics.

In considering what is available for computers in classrooms, visual arts packages are now quite common. Computer programs and music-writing programs are prevalent as well. The arts and music programs enable individuals to play with colors and sounds and create pieces. CD-ROMs and Web sites focusing on the works of artists, musicians,
poets, sculptors, dancers, and writers are numerous, and are not only fascinating, but can be used in the classroom to teach about particular artists. Many arts museums post educational activities and have developed extensive curriculum materials for classrooms.

**Historical Perspective**

It should be mentioned that technology is not a twentieth-century phenomenon! Technology has been a tool for curious individuals and artists for centuries—well before the harnessing of electricity. For example, the phenomenon associated with the camera obscura—that when light passes through a small hole into a dark, enclosed interior, an inverted image will appear on the wall opposite the hole—can be traced back at least two thousand years to thinkers as remote from each other as Euclid, Alhazen, Roger Bacon, Leonardo DaVinci, and Kepler (Crary, 1990). Many fascinating inventions of the 1800s, such as the kaleidoscope, thaumatrope (wonder-turner), phenakistoscope (deceptive view), and zoetrope, enabled images to be seen either in symmetry (as in the kaleidoscope) or in motion (early animation). The study of technology in and of itself presents a wonderful view into the history (and role) of observation as aesthetic or scientific inquiry. This might be a terrific start to a scientific unit on invention.

**Opening New Venues for Artists and Students**

A fascinating role of technology, which we will briefly examine here, is its role in opening new venues for artists to conceptualize and enact works of art and how that parallels processes related to student learning. Technological tools broaden what is available to artists in terms of the process of working as well as the potential for presenting works. “The ongoing quest for new sounds and new ways to organize them has demanded resources that reach beyond the limits of acoustic instruments and voices,” according to Elliott Schwartz and Daniel Godfrey (1993). They continue: “more than any other development since the turn of the century, electronics have expanded the techniques and materials available to composers, revolutionizing their approach to basic factors such as pitch logic, time, texture, and sound color.”

Technology has provided artists with new tools and strategies for improvising and creating. Much like the traditional paintbrushes, oils, pastels, pencils, inks, or watercolors for visual artists; the piano, guitar, panpipe, and harmonica for composers; or the clay, rock, paper, or twigs for sculptors, technology has provided yet another medium for artists. Interestingly, it provides not only a new medium, but it can provide freedom as well to explore new realms of an established art form. Technology provides expanded ways to think about and work with ideas. It can be important to students’ learning in that in its myriad forms, technology can offer new and expanded tools and strategies to students as they contemplate ideas and knowledge through the arts.

According to Vicki Sharp (1999), arts software such as paint programs can offer significant advantages over traditional techniques. “If the artist makes a mistake, she or he...

---

can easily correct it because there are no real paints or watercolors to spill, drip, or smear. The painter simply clicks on the mouse and instantaneously changes the picture or color, enlarges an image, or moves an object” (p. 225). With such programs, Sharp writes, students can draw shapes (including geometric shapes), create designs, and construct miniature cities. The potential for integration becomes limited only by one's imagination.

I think Sharp has an important point to make here, although I believe it speaks more to the limitations of a classroom than the limitations of the artistic process or the imagination. Many classrooms are not “wet” rooms. Therefore, the challenge of painting can be difficult at best. The computer, with its “mess-free” format, can open up avenues for explorations that a typical classroom might limit. In this sense, the computer can make available arts that might not be available otherwise.

In terms of “mistakes,” the computer certainly enables students to change their work and try different images, colors, or lines with a click of the mouse. In other arts, mistakes may be harder to correct, but remain possible. In painting, for example, as soon as the paints dry, one can easily paint over a mistake. But the larger issue here concerns the notion of a mistake in and of itself. Some of the most important discoveries made by individuals stem from mistakes! Artists thrive on what others might call mistakes. The “mistakes” often give birth to wonderful and new ideas. As such, I ordinarily encourage my students to pay attention to their “mistakes” (as do many of my colleagues) as potential sources for imagining newness and what can be.

**Technology and Literacy**

The use of technology is so integrated at this point with our lives and education we don't even always know we are using it. Even in the realm of writing and poetry, the computer to some has become an essential vehicle in the manipulating of words and in the process of constructing thoughts. The use of the computer helps us “think” in new ways by providing the means to expand techniques of editing, saving, transforming, reviewing, and manipulating. Some would even argue that the definition of *literacy* is changing as a result of the presence of computers and multimedia. The New London Group (1996), an internationally known group of literacy theorists and educators, suggest broadening the definition of *literacy* toward “multiliteracy.” They argue that literacy pedagogy must now account for the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies. This includes competent control of representational forms that are becoming increasingly significant in the overall communications environment such as visual images. . . . (p. 61)

**Multimedia**

In my own experience as a performer, I find myself moving into the realm of multimedia. Recently, I performed *Primary Colors*, a multimedia piece involving live and electronic music composed by William Bradbury with images fixed and transformed in conjunction with the music by Deborah Small. The use of multimedia in this piece transforms a study of the primary colors into an engaging and provocative performance with
images and sounds—each manipulated and composed using multimedia techniques. *Primary Colors* is loosely based on the book of the same name by Alexander Theroux. Bradbury and Small used the writing of Theroux and others quoted in the book as their inspiration and wound up with a fascinating study of the primary colors in art, history, music, poetry, fiction, myth, religions, and everyday life. Working on this piece was not only wonderful from a performer’s viewpoint, but also fascinating and provocative as I began to consider the role of primary colors in ways I never had before.

Composition (with colors and sound) through multimedia has great potential for play or improvisation. As I write about in Chapter 2, play is an essential element of child development and one of the most important structures for learning. The computer is a playground for students and artists alike. Much like musical improvisation, which enables musicians to play with sounds, the computer allows people to play with images and sounds. Furthermore, in the case of games in which characters are invented, the computer can be a vehicle for role-playing or inventing and trying on new characters (Turkle, 1995).

**Turning Technology over to Students**

In the classroom, computers and other technology have unlimited potential and should not be seen as mere “extensions of or replacements for the textbook, the workbook, and the pen and pencil,” according to Evans Clinchy (1997, p. 139). “What they are all too often not being used for is to turn students loose on finding answers to their own questions or discovering interesting questions in some fascinating database and then following them up on their own” (pp. 139–140). Except in rare instances, Clinchy continues,

> We are all too often not turning the technology over to the students to be used for their purposes. We are, therefore, not putting the new power of these machines and software at the service of students and their process of model building and making sense of the world. Since the students—including female students—are rarely intimidated by the machines and are far less frightened of them than most of their teachers (unless they pick up the fear from their teachers), it is they who have the most motivation and can easily acquire the knowhow to make technology work for them. (p. 140)

**Equity and Technology**

A word about equity in education with technology: Clearly some schools are better equipped than others when it comes to technology. Some teachers are better trained, some parents are more or less informed, some children have a computer at home, and some do not. One thing is for sure, technology is a part of our lives and our children's future. Access is a key issue. According to “Falling Through the Net: Defining the Digital Divide” in the 1999 report of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration:

> Overall, we have found that the number of Americans connected to the nation's information infrastructure is soaring. Nevertheless, this year's report finds that a digital divide still exists, and, in many cases, is actually widening over time. Minorities, low-income
persons, the less educated, and children of single-parent households, particularly when they reside in rural areas or central cities, are among the groups that lack access to information resources. (Irving, 1999)

Even the simplest uses of technology broaden the tools and methods open to our students, while at the same time, these uses begin to bridge the gap between the digital divide. In this sense, the use of technology becomes an ethical and moral issue for our students. Our schools can have a significant role in bridging the divide. I am thinking of the potential of introducing videotaping as a tool for capturing oral history or autobiography; photography (digital or otherwise) to study nature and landscape; and the computer as a tool for publishing. These activities integrate technology and the arts in a meaningful way while banking on the natural tendencies of children to connect their lives to the world. Using technology is another way we can break down the notion that the educational process must take place within the “decontextualized confines of a school building” (Clinchy, p. 141). It can bring students to virtual worlds and places on the Web, or out into the community through video or recording projects.

**Students as Tech-Directors**

For some students, technology is a natural. Dramatic performances of historical events or staged readings offer an opportunity to students to be the “tech-director.” This position creates a terrific responsibility for students who can thrive in this area. You will also have students who know how to illustrate or publish on the computer. These students might serve as guides to other students if you create collaborative projects. By enabling your computer-interested students to participate in arts projects this way, you might be setting the stage for them to shine!

**Technology in the Workplace**

A final word about the role of technology and its importance in learning about the arts is due here. In the state of California alone, it is estimated that commercial production industries have grown to earn $20 billion a year and produce jobs for an estimated 500,000 Californians (Artswork, 1997).

The demand in California for individuals with arts-related skills and career orientations has been steadily growing. In addition to a pressing need for artists skilled in the use of digital media and computers, there is a strong demand for producers, writers, directors, animators, lighting and sound specialists, cinematographers, and costume designers, among many arts-related career categories. (Artswork, 1997, p. 13)

Thus, the role of arts and technology is ever-increasing in its importance to industry. Students trained in this area will no doubt have many career options available to them, whether these jobs be in the entertainment industry or industry in general. For our purposes in this book, however, we will remain focused on the role of the technology in aiding the teaching and learning process.

At the end of each chapter I will highlight ways in which technology might be integrated into learning with, through, and about the arts.
WHAT ARTS BRING TO EDUCATION

The arts, as languages and expressions of cultures and peoples throughout the world, provide many concrete opportunities to educators who are dedicated to an equitable education. According to Leonard Davidman and Patricia T. Davidman (1994) (who draw heavily on the conceptions and work of James Banks, Carl Grant and Christine Sleeter, H. Prentice Baptiste Jr., and Mira Baptiste to articulate their goals), multicultural education is understood as a multifaceted, change-oriented process that can be outlined in six interrelated yet distinct goals: (1) providing educational equity; (2) empowering students and their caretakers; (3) valuing cultural pluralism in society; (4) promoting intercultural/interethnic/intergroup understanding and harmony in the classroom, school, and community; (5) developing an expanded multicultural/multiethnic knowledge base for students, teachers, administrators, and support staff; and (6) supporting students, teachers, staff, and administrators who think, plan, and work with a multicultural perspective.

I have created eight principles of the role of arts in an equitable education by combining goals and strategies presented by Davidman and Davidman and incorporating notions of process as described by Nieto. These eight principles follow.

1. The arts expand expressive outlets and provide a range of learning styles available to all children.
2. The arts enable freedom of expression for second language learners.
3. The arts open venues for inclusive education and reaching out to exceptional learners.
4. The arts provide a stage for building self-esteem.
5. The arts encourage collaboration and intergroup harmony.
6. The arts empower students and teachers.
7. The arts deepen teachers’ awareness of children’s abilities and provide alternative methods of assessment.
8. The arts provide authentic cultural voices and add complexity to teaching and learning.

1. The Arts Expand Expressive Outlets and Provide a Range of Learning Styles Available to Children. Integrating the arts as a forum for expression gives students whose learning styles tend toward the visual, kinesthetic, spatial, or auditory more freedom to communicate their understandings. Thus, when a teacher encourages students to work with ideas through the arts, she more fully taps into their varied learning styles and her practice incorporates student-specific pedagogy.

2. The Arts Enable Freedom of Expression for Second Language Learners. In considering the arts as languages of expression, teachers offer bilingual and limited English students more freedom to work with ideas and express their understandings without having to depend solely on the English language. For example, the first grader who cannot yet describe in words the motions of the sun and the earth, but who can demonstrate
his understanding in drawing or movement, is given an opportunity to participate in
learning rather than be hampered by the limitations of a specific language.

3. The Arts Open Venues for Inclusive Education and Reaching Out to Exceptional
Learners. The arts enable children with differing abilities to participate in learning.
The arts provide important outlets for students in communicating and expressing their
understandings of content matter and their own reflections concerning their learning.
The arts provide an alternative outlet for those children unable to communicate through
traditional methods of speaking or writing. The arts can give children with differing abil-
ities the opportunity to be on the same playing field as other students in the classroom.

4. The Arts Provide a Stage for Building Self-Esteem. Over and over again, teachers who
integrate the arts in learning remark on the positive effect the activities have on self-
esteeem. Learning becomes more enjoyable, even magical, as students share their works
and ideas. Increased use of the arts can raise the self-esteem of struggling students, thereby
making them more successful. Teachers also remark on their students' achievements.

5. The Arts Encourage Collaboration and Intergroup Harmony. Working together on art
projects can lead to a marked increase in productive teamwork. According to Betsey
Mendenhall, a fifth-grade teacher in southern California, “the cooperation that comes out
of learning through the arts is great.” Often, the arts enable shy students to come out of
their shell. They also offer children with differing abilities another venue to not only work
with ideas but cooperate with others in the class. The arts allow for greater educational
equity, as more students have opportunities to work with and share knowledge. The arts
offer opportunities for individuals to work cooperatively with each other, thereby fur-
thering intercultural, interethic, and intergroup understanding and harmony.

6. The Arts Empower Students and Teachers. The arts are empowering. When sharing
art projects with each other, students gain a sense of themselves and their peers as
unique individuals with interesting ideas and skills. They also begin to respect and
admire others' efforts as they communicate imaginative and original work through the
arts. Such experiences potentially enable students to gain confidence as self-directed
learners supported in taking responsibility for their own educational growth. The disci-
pline and dedication required in creating artworks provides students with skills for
working independently and interdependently to accomplish tasks as well as tackle
complex ideas.

7. The Arts Deepen Teachers' Awareness of Children's Abilities and Provide Alternative
Methods of Assessment. When observing students engaged in art work, teachers gain
a fuller picture of the whole child. For example, the child who often acts as the class
bully might surprise the teacher by writing a sensitive love poem to his mother. The
child whom the teacher thinks is distracted might draw a picture in science showing that
in fact she is completely tuned into the curriculum. In these examples, not only does the
teacher see the children in multiple ways but she also has a broader source of informa-
tion to assess her students' understandings.
8. The Arts Provide Authentic Cultural Voices and Add Complexity to Teaching and Learning. The arts broaden the tools available to students as they study and seek to understand cultures different from their own. Using the artwork of a culture as a core element of a curriculum introduces students to the voices, images, feelings, and ideas of a people in a way that lends authenticity. It broadens a study while at the same time introducing students to a wider range of experiences documented by individuals through means other than “objective” reporting. Because the arts lend themselves to self-expression, by including the arts in, say, the history curriculum, they bring life to people and events studied; it offers dramatic documentation of the struggles, achievements, celebrations, and complexities of living together in our diverse global community.

METHODOLOGY FOR LEARNING

Artists see things in new and often complex ways. When an artist creates, she or he is working with an idea or knowledge base. The work of an artist involves translating an idea into a form such as painting, music, dance, and so on. In education, a test of learning is the ability to translate a notion, concept, or idea from something given to something owned and utilized. For example, in having students read a chapter in a social studies book, the true test of understanding is not their ability to retell the chapter on an essay test. The test of understanding lies in the student's ability to make that information his own—to work with it, to transform it, to be able to apply it.

The work of an artist gives us further insight into teaching and learning. This work involves deep concentration, an exercise of the imagination, and often problem solving. Some artists actually articulate aspects of their work in relation to a methodology for teaching and learning. Arnold Schoenberg, a twentieth-century classical composer, writes in the introduction to his book Theory of Harmony (1978), “This book I have learned from my students. In my teaching I never sought merely ‘to tell the pupil what I know.'” Schoenberg's chief aim was to engage the students in a search—a search he equated with that of music itself. “I hope my pupils will commit themselves to searching!” he writes. “Because they will know that one searches for the sake of searching. That finding, which is indeed the goal, can easily put an end to striving” (p. 1). Pablo Picasso, on the other hand, in an interview on the activity of painting, exclaims, “Do not seek—find!” He declares that “to search means nothing in painting. To find is the thing” (qtd. in Goldwater & Treves, 1972, p. 416).

Both make important points as we relate their ideas to the classroom. The core activity of working with or through the arts, either as a creator or as a participant/observer, puts one on a path of engagement. Whether the path leads toward a discovery or whether the search is valuable in and of itself is debatable. For our purposes, we can reconcile the seemingly conflicting opinions of Schoenberg and Picasso by recognizing that both men turn to the arts as a spring of awareness and an opportunity for action.

In the next section, I will outline the three ways in which I believe the arts can be used as an effective methodology for learning in an integrated curriculum. (1) A student may learn with the arts; that is, explore subject matter with the aid of an artwork. (2) A student may explore subject matter through the arts by creating works of art that express
his or her reflections concerning specific subject matter. (3) A student may learn about the arts as a subject in and of itself.

**Learning with the Arts**

Learning with the arts occurs when they are introduced as a way to study about a particular subject. The Spanish Civilization class at my university learned about Ladino culture with the arts. By using the songs and poetry of the Spanish Jews as a basis for class sessions, the students were able to learn about this group of people and their experiences.

Learning with the arts may involve various artistic forms. In studying mathematical sets a teacher may introduce her students to the paintings of Georges Seurat, a French impressionist who created paintings with lots and lots of points. To introduce parallel lines she may introduce her students to paintings by Mondrian, an artist who used parallel lines in many of his works. A science teacher may introduce her students to different drums when they are studying sound waves and vibrations. In each case, the students learn with the aid of an art form that informs the subject area.

Learning with the arts might be an effective method to teach a unit on the civil rights movement to a middle school social studies class. The traditional school textbook describes certain key events and dates that put the civil rights movement in a historical context. Most likely, the text includes speeches by Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy. The teacher may use the text, but in addition, she may introduce children to the songs of the civil rights movement. In the school library she finds the book *Sing for Freedom: The Civil Rights Movement Through Songs* (Carawan & Carawan, 1990), which is perfect for the study; the school library also has recordings of many of the songs included in the book. The teacher plays a number of the songs in class, and the students examine the words and listen to the melodies. The songs provide a text in and of itself, bringing yet another perspective to the civil rights movement. Children are introduced to the voices (literally) of the era in a way that is not only informative but engaging. They are learning with art—in this case, the songs of the civil rights movement.

**Learning through the Arts**

Learning through the arts is a method that encourages students to grapple with and express their understandings of subject matter through an art form. Let’s return to our middle school social studies class for an example. The students have now read about the civil rights movement in their textbook and listened to many songs from that time. There has been a certain amount of class discussion, but the teacher is not sure the students have a grasp on the events and importance of the movement. She devises a way—through the arts—for her students to work with the knowledge. She invents a number of characters who could have been living at that time, each with a different perspective, and asks her students to form small groups and create a mini-drama depicting the meeting of the characters. Now the students not only have a way to work with the material, but they have a form through which to express their understandings. They are learning through the arts and expressing their understandings in a vibrant, creative form.
Learning through the arts can be used at any grade level—and probably should be. There are many examples throughout this book, from as simple as having children act out the lifecycle of a flower or butterfly to more complicated exercises such as understanding DNA through recreating it in dance/movement. At the college level, I have found many ways to teach concepts of arts integration through the arts. I have also taught educational philosophy through engaging students in creating scripts whereby writers and thinkers from different time periods meet each other. Here is one such example: After asking my students to read and study parts of Piaget’s *The Child’s Conception of the World* and Plato’s telling of Socrates’ *Meno*, I had them write a mini-drama in which Piaget and Socrates meet each other. Piaget believes that knowledge is constructed through experience. Socrates, on the other hand, believes that all knowledge is innate, that we are born with knowledge from our past lives already in our bodies and a good teacher can pull the information from us by asking clever questions. With a few guidelines, students are off creating their dramas. The following script came out of one of my classes.

**Setting:** Boston Common, 1990s

**Characters:** Socrates and Piaget

**Plot:** Socrates and Piaget happen to meet on Boston Common by the swan boats—big boats that look like swans powered by a person in the back who pedals (much like the pedaling on a bicycle) as it moves across the pond. One cannot see the person’s legs as s/he powers the boat. Anyone and everyone who has grown up in Boston has ridden the swan boats; they are quite a tourist attraction as well.

**Socrates:** Is it possible that you are Piaget?!

**Piaget:** Well, yes—and who are you?

**Socrates:** Well, who do you think I am?

**Piaget:** I have heard of you, Socrates, but I have never experienced any of your theories of knowledge.

**Socrates:** You see that boy over there? See him sitting under that tree? What do you think he’s thinking?

**Piaget:** Well, let’s ask him. We’ll ask him questions; I know how you and I feel about questioning people, and I myself truly find asking questions exhilarating.

(The two men walk to the boy’s side, sitting with him under the tree.)

**Piaget:** Excuse me, young man, can you tell me of what you are thinking?

**Boy:** Well, nothin’ really.

**Socrates:** As you sit here, what is it that you are doing?

**Boy:** I’m watching the swan boats.

**Piaget:** How do those things work, do you think?

**Boy:** I don’t know, with the wind I guess.

**Piaget:** Oh, so you think the wind makes the swan boats move?

**Boy:** Yup.
SOCRATES: So, boy, when there's no wind the swan boat doesn't move?
BOY: Oh no, they still move.
SOCRATES: But what makes them move if there is no wind?
BOY: I think that person in the boat?
SOCRATES: And what does that person do?
BOY: Maybe he moves something in the boat and that makes it go?
SOCRATES: What could that something be?
PIAGET: Socrates, he doesn't know!
SOCRATES: Yes, I know he knows; I must ask more questions.
SOCRATES: Son, have you ever been on a bicycle?
BOY: Oh! I get it. The boat moves when the person in the back pedals like I do on my bike.
SOCRATES: Yes, that's exactly right! I was sure you knew how it worked.
SOCRATES: See, Piaget, this young man did know how the boat moved. He knew it all along.
PIAGET: Well, Socrates, I truly believe this young man still believes in his first conviction. He was obviously influenced by your mentioning the bicycle and was led by your idea.
SOCRATES: I really feel that this young fellow is aware of his knowledge now that I have asked him these questions.
BOY: Yeah, I know how that boat moves. I always knew the wind made birds move.

After hearing what usually prove to be delightful and insightful mini-dramas, such as this one, I have a sense my students are not only reading the material but are working with it and devising creative metaphors to express their understandings. In this particular case, the students are groping with the nature of knowledge and comparing the notion of knowledge as innate (from souls past)—as Socrates describes in the dialogue of the Meno—and constructivism—as Piaget describes in The Child's Conception of the World, which we were also examining in class.

It is interesting that in addition to applying their understandings, these students took a stand as to which theory they felt was more convincing. They cleverly took the position of Piaget (constructivism) and showed that even though a child might answer something in the way the questioner would like to hear, it is not necessarily what he or she truly believes. This is evident in the final line of the drama, “Yeah, I know how that boat moves. I always knew the wind made birds move.” Another clever twist of dialogue is evident in line three. Rather than answering Piaget's question, Socrates asks a question instead. Here, it is clear that my students were demonstrating their understanding of Socratic questioning.

Learning through the arts can take on many forms in addition to drama. The students writing poetry for the science lesson in the beginning of this chapter were learning about ecology through the arts. Another science class might draw from nature as a way to examine and construct an understanding of the phenomena details of a seashell. Second language learners might write poetry. Second graders might create a dance to
express their understanding of the metamorphosis of pupae to butterflies. In all these cases, learners are actively engaged in imaginative and creative thinking as they learn through the arts and construct meaning.

**Learning about the Arts**

Throughout the ensuing chapters I will show how learning with and learning through the arts can lead to a desire to learn about the arts. For example, in Chapter 4 I discuss how second language learners become engaged in working with words and language through writing poetry. By learning literacy skills through writing their own poetry, children (in a fourth-grade classroom) became interested in poetry itself. After writing poetry almost all students began taking poetry books from the library on their weekly trips to choose reading material. The exercise of learning language skills through the arts led to a genuine interest in reading and interpreting poetry. Because the students were engaged in writing poetry, they had an experiential basis with which to approach poetry as an art form. They became poets, or acted as poets as a way to learn. So their interest in writing poetry evolved into something larger. They began reading and appreciating others’ poetry, and sharing what they had read with their friends. As poets themselves, they also developed insights in critiquing poetry. On their own they were engaged in learning about poetry!

The same argument may be made for any of the art forms that are employed for the teaching and learning of subject matter. Learning with the arts may also lead to learning about the arts. After reviewing paintings to study parallel lines and sets, students often are more drawn into (no pun intended) the realm of painting, relating their knowledge of lines to Frida Kahlo, Georgia O’Keeffe, or Andy Warhol. Perhaps they might even be inspired to create their own paintings, having understood something about lines from their mathematical/art study. There is no doubt that learning with and through the arts can provide a foundation for studying about the arts. It can also provide an incentive for students in creating their own artworks.

**SUMMARY**

The arts serve as a methodology or strategy for learning—expanding traditional teaching methods into a fascinating and imaginative forum for exploration of subject matter. Using the arts as a teaching tool in the classroom broadens their function from the more traditional model of teaching about the arts and provides opportunities for students to transform understanding and apply their ideas in a creative form. Using art forms for working with ideas fulfills many of the goals for achieving a multicultural education and provides avenues toward its strategies. As a language of expression, art gives rise to many voices in the classroom and opens many paths for all students to work with knowledge.

The three ways in which the arts can be effectively used in the classroom are: learning with, learning through, and learning about the arts. In utilizing all three ways, teachers expand the role of the arts in classroom experience. However, this does not necessitate special artistic expertise on the part of the teacher. Rather, the teacher is presenting a method that broadens the acceptable modes of expression in the classroom while offering her students opportunities to engage in reflective, creative, and critical thinking.
QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. In what ways have the arts been important in your own education?
2. In what ways are the arts important in your life? Do you think that the arts shape your thinking in any way?
3. Can you recall any instances when an experience with the arts caused you to consider something in a new way? What was the art form and experience, and how did it cause you to consider something in a new way?
4. Can you recall a specific instance or instances when you learned something in school with or through the arts? Briefly retell the experience(s).
5. What experiences have you had with arts and technology?
6. What are your state’s standards for arts education? Go online and find out!

EXPLORATIONS TO TRY

1. With a partner, listen to three songs by different groups. The groups can be as different as Black Eyed Peas, Justin Timberlake, Aretha Franklin, Dave Mathews, Nora Jones, the Beatles, Sting, and so on. What does each song tell you about life? About the songwriter? About culture? About history or an event? About yourself?
2. Write a short essay expressing your philosophy of education. What are the roles of the teacher and learner in education? What is important in education? Facts? Knowledge? Searching? Finding? After you have completed your philosophy, discuss it with a partner. How does your partner’s philosophy differ from yours? In what ways are your philosophies similar?
3. Think about knowledge. How would you define it? Write a poem, draw a picture, or create a sculpture, dance, rap, or piece of music that describes your thinking about knowledge. To get started, see if you can find any artworks that deal with the same subject matter. For example, the musical group Tower of Power has recorded a song titled “A Little Knowledge Is a Dangerous Thing.”
4. Log onto the Internet! Search for sites related to arts and special education. Make note of sites that can be resources to you as you begin to create lesson plans that integrate the arts.

REFERENCES


