

Arts Learning Final Synthesis and Reflection Essay

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March 16, 2014

Though this class was very trying at times, the cumulative policies about art integration interwoven between case studies and arts institutions, both state and national, serves to illustrate the dependence and gratification/need/love/interdependence we as a nation have in the arts. It is inescapable. And very relevant to understanding how arts administrators need to view arts integration moving forward. I always have the idea that knowing and learning about the past can help influence the present and future, especially in education. Appreciating what has been done and how to include or exclude concepts for the future are building blocks for the betterment of education on any level. The strong sentiment that policy has over the nation's curriculum is a testament to how we as arts administrators need to view these ideas.

Attending the Leadership Path Conference in Portland on March 7th was very enlightening as to the progress of arts policy of the last thirty or forty years. Robert Lynch sort of moderated a brief, but somehow illustrated, timeline of arts policy in America, and also, his role in it. How it has grown from small, localized education, to a broader, more integrated part of the school system today, and the trials it went through along the way. What made even more connections throughout his narrative was the continual reference to congress and the government having to vote or appeal for these policies to be instilled in schools. While the reading within this class did explain many of these ideas and in depth, actually hearing it from a well-seasoned arts administrator somehow rooted more firmly the idea that policy and implementation are merging actions and are in a push/pull kind of relationship. I think this conference really helped to integrate the idea of the government's relationship with the policies, and now, having familiarity with Mr. Lynch's experiences through his mini autobiography, being able to think of them as a whole instead of separate entities will help my experience with handling arts integration in the future.

The extent that policies have on the nation's curriculum try to be all encompassing, and try to be rewarding for all that fall under the policy itself. Part of what I believe to be the problem is forced curriculum as part of a larger policy that does not necessarily address students' needs, but because the government mandates it, must be taught strictly through the narrowing confines of the policy. While placing a standard and/or limitations creates a bar for students and teachers, thus making it easier, presumably, for obtaining results based on the standards of teaching, it does not capture the impact nor diversify the field for arts learning. This has indeed been a bane for artists and art teachers' nation-wide. I have a friend in Northern Michigan claiming this exact issue for her and her students. Being in a small town, she has students with needs that aren't necessarily addressed by the curriculum, and although she has ideas that could potentially follow the curriculum and yet still integrate it in a different way, she is bound by state policy to adhere to the mandated curricula. Solutions and/or additional aids have helped facilitate a broader range of arts integration in schools by focusing on out of school time, which includes many opportunities to visit local institutions of festivals for a share of art-related

experiences. I think this an excellent opportunity for students to receive a more focused arts learning experience with the local community.

I found the case study by Stephan Crane and his stage play to be an interesting arts learning model. I am drawn to the learning dynamics within the play and what can be taken away both visually and mentally. More specifically, I am interested in the relationship between how hands-on arts experiences, even in other subject areas, can effect the learning environment for a more robust and fun atmosphere for students. Not to say that more traditional methods aren't effective; my ideas would be to incorporate this type of learning into the everyday curriculum to help reinforce both. Also, being an athlete, I am acutely aware that a more hands on approach and team building exercises are capable of much for students, such as group dynamics, social interaction, and vocalizing issues and topics.

On a similar note, following the individual assignments with the group helped to further my understanding of the concepts raised within that weeks readings; especially because my background has a very primitive view of arts integration and arts policies, the group discussions I found to be quite helpful. I think this kind of learning is vital to the administrative staff of any organization as well in that facilitating knowledge between each of the members combines grouped knowledge to best serve the organization. Sometimes managers can get one track minded and it is important to understand other board members' perspectives in tough, or even light, decisions. All in all, I enjoyed the learning experience of this course; it was different form other courses I have taken and as much as I feel somewhat daunted still by policies and governmental objectives, the class has keyed me into some core functionalities of arts administration that I may have missed otherwise.