Connection, Correlation or Syntegration?

Three models for integrating music across the curriculum

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Introduction

- *So little time: So much to teach!*
- *Crowded curriculum often leads to integration*
- *Can provide children with holistic and meaningful learning experiences*
- *OR can provide children with meaningless disjointed activities*
Introduction

• Exploding knowledge base
• Integration used to make the change from learning facts to:
  - Understanding and applying concepts
  - Developing generic skills for living and working:
    • Research
    • Analysis and synthesis
    • Evaluation
    • Problem solving
    • Team work
    • Leadership
    • Critical thinking
To integrate or not?

• Some practitioners and researchers are ardently *for* integration
  - Holistic and authentic learning
    • Jensen, 2001; Donmoyer, 1995; Wilkinson, 2000

• Others are just as wholeheartedly *against* integration:
  - Dilution of important outcomes
  - Nothing taught well
    • Best, 1995; Eisner, 2002; Smith, 1995.
To integrate or not?

- For teachers, integration can mean:
  - Developing learning experiences based on a theme; OR
  - Using the same song and artwork in two different subjects; OR
  - Colour in stencil about a Science experiment; OR
  - Create a multimedia project exploring a theme of children’s choice
To integrate or not?

- Definition: Examine its opposite
  - Non-integration:
    - Children move from one subject to another, making no links or connections between the two,
    - Learning skills, knowledge and understandings of each subject with closed doors of that subject
    - Pack up books, move onto another, unrelated subject
    - Curriculum becomes moulded into boxes of learning
• In response:
  - Some try to move away from this:
    • Plan integrated program that lose all integrity within the individual subjects
    • Superficial activities loosely based on a theme
    • Little depth
    • Few meaningful outcomes in any subject
To integrate or not?

- Both approaches rarely:
  - Give children holistic and authentic learning experiences
  - Use children’s preferred intelligences
  - Give them the opportunity for:
    - In-depth understanding
    - Development of generic skills
    - Ability to generalise and apply what they have learned
To integrate or not?

• Needs to be a balance:
  - Children achieve discrete indicators and outcomes in each subject and/or art form
  BUT
  - Are also engaged in authentic learning
  - Meaningful, holistic context
  - Developing generic skills as well
Three models of Integration

- Subject areas or art forms work together to achieve outcomes
- Each is valid in itself when used by a creative and resourceful teacher
- Promotes children’s understanding and application of their learning
- Can be used alongside other models of integration within the context of a program
Three models of Integration

- **Service Integration**
  - One subject services / helps learning in another subject

- **Symmetric correlations**
  - Two subjects using the same material to achieve their own discrete outcomes

- **Syntegration**
  - Subjects are working together synergistically to explore a theme, concept or focus question, while achieving their own outcomes as well as generic outcomes
Service Connections

- Concepts and outcomes are learned and reinforced in one subject by using material or resources from another subject, with no outcomes from the servicing subject.
Examples of Service Connections:
- Singing *Botany Bay* to reinforce learning about British colonisation of Australia
- Viewing a Balinese dance video to assist learning about the culture of Bali
- Presenting a choral reading of a poem in a literacy lesson
- Drawing the life-cycle of the butterfly to document what children have learned Science
- Counting songs when learning to count in Maths
- Making up a rap to remember *Recount* steps in Literacy
Examples of Service Connections:

- Theme: RED
- Sing *The Little Red Caboose*
- Colour in stencils of red balloons
- Dramatise the story of *Little Red Riding Hood*
- Dance to music, with red scarves

- May help reinforce concept of the colour RED
- Few, if any, arts outcomes achieved
- Should not be viewed as valid arts lessons
- However, with a little more thought, these could be the basis of valid arts experiences
Symmetric Correlations

- Centre around common or shared resources, material, or ideas used within two subjects / art forms and achieve authentic outcomes in BOTH subjects or art forms
Symmetric Correlations

- Symmetric correlations view achieving outcomes in both subjects as equally important
- One subject does not service the other
- Eg. Singing *Botany Bay* in a music lesson and learning about structure (verses and chorus), as well as dynamics (loud and soft)
  AND
- Listening to or singing the song in a Social Studies lesson and using it to explore the feelings, experiences and reasons for convicts coming to Australia;
Symmetric Correlations

Learning a Balinese dance in a dance lesson and exploring ways of using hand gestures, movements and space to create a similar dance of their own

AND

Viewing a video of Balinese dance as part of an exploration of Balinese culture in Social Studies
Symmetric Correlations

- Exploring different ways of presenting a choral reading of a poem in a drama lesson to develop the use of vocal expression

AND

- Reading the poem through together, analysing the poem for its literary value
Symmetric Correlations

- Drawing a caterpillar, cocoon and butterfly from real life or photos, focusing on line, cross hatching and positive/negative space in a visual arts lesson

AND

- Using these drawings to create a display about the life cycle of a butterfly with written annotations to reinforce and present what they have learned in a Science lesson.
Symmetric Correlations

Through Symmetric Correlation:
- Teachers can begin to break down the barriers between the subjects
- Recognise that learning can occur effectively and discrete outcomes can be achieved within EACH subject using common materials or resources
- Children are being given the opportunity to learn using a variety of intelligences and so enhance their learning
• Synergy:
  - The sum of the whole is greater than the sum of the individual parts
  - In this context:
    SYNERGY occurs when the outcomes achieved through syntegration are greater than those achieved if each subject or art form was taught by itself, or connected or correlated with other subjects or art forms.
Syntegration:

- Occurs when teachers plan purposefully to use broad themes or concepts that move across subjects
- The theme is explored in a meaningful way by and within different subjects
- Each subject’s indicators and outcomes remain discrete
- Integrity of each subject is maintained
Syntegration

- **Syntegration:**

  ALSO:
  - Achieves generic outcomes that transcend those in each subject, e.g.
    - Observation
    - Research
    - Problem solving
    - Team work
    - Higher level learning
    - Critical thinking
    - Children apply, compare, analyse, synthesise, evaluate ideas and concepts across subjects or art forms.
Following instructions, problem solving, discussing, analysing, making decisions, application, managing tasks, organisation, team work, negotiation, cooperation, critical thinking, research, synthesising, evaluating, comparing.

**Generic skills**

- Arts
- Maths
- Science and Technology
- Physical Education
- Social Studies

**Theme, idea, concept, focus question**
Syntegration

- Children see their learning as authentic and meaningful
- Learning is relevant to their lives, interests, intelligences, learning styles, needs and abilities
- Draws from multi-faceted sources
- Breaks down barriers between different subject
- Encourages children to extend their thinking
- Provides them with authentic, real-life experiences that are holistic and not segregated
• Planning for syntegration:
  - Ensure outcomes are authentic and have integrity within each relevant subject
  - Ensure that artificial relationships are not created between subjects or art forms
  - Ensure that discrete knowledge, skills and understandings of each subject are not blurred for the sake of the theme
Planning for syntegration:
- Theme or concept should be explored using the many facets or windows of different subjects
- Ensures a deeper, more holistic understanding of the theme or concept is achieved
- Learning experiences are selected on the basis of promoting and enhancing children's learning and NOT just because the activities include other subjects
Example of syntegration: Theme - Impressionism

- Learning about the cultural context of Impressionism through appreciating art, music, dance, media and drama artworks created in this style (Arts)
- Group research and analyses of the historical events surrounding and producing Impressionist works (SS)
- Writing an Impressionistic poem or narrative text that explains and illustrates their understanding of Impressionism from a variety of viewpoints and illustrate with photos/scanned images (Eng, Media)
- Curate a school Impressionism exhibition to show what they have learned about the topic
- Includes development of team work, leadership, analysing, cooperative, listening and problem-solving skills
Conclusion

- When implementing SYNTEGRATED programs, teachers should ask:
  - Are these learning experiences enhancing and extending children’s understandings of the theme, concept or focus question?
  - Are these learning experiences achieving authentic outcomes in each of the relevant subjects or art forms?
  - Are children developing generic skills through involvement in this unit?
Thank you!