

**Curriculum integration is currently one of the most important issues in American public education. Intuitively, parents and teachers know that students who study music perform better in school and in life. Supported by more than thirty years of research, the integration of music into the classroom has many benefits that not only provide and extend meaning but also promote learning in all areas of the curriculum. Arts integration, and specifically music integration, teaches many types of literacy while developing intuition, sensitivity, reasoning, imagination, and dexterity. As a result, students may perceive and think in new ways. Learning in the arts "nurtures active engagement, disciplined and sustained attention, persistence, and risk-taking." [1]**

**The study of, and participation in, music is important in its own right, but music study can impact other areas of children's development as it:**

- **Is a significant part of life**
- **Can be used as a learning/problem-solving vehicle**
- **Unites affective, cognitive, and psychomotor domains**
- **Increases creativity, sensitivity, and self-discipline**
- **Provides aesthetic enjoyment**
- **Promotes brain development**



### **Music and the arts teach life skills**

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**The movement toward integration and an interdisciplinary curriculum has been advanced by research on the brain and learning. Howard Gardner suggested in his book, *Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, that all aspects of intelligence are necessary for complete human development and that education in the arts is an absolute necessity. His research and similar findings challenge the traditional models of curriculum.**



[Howard Gardner on Multiple Intelligences](#)



[Beyond Wit and Grit: Rethinking the Keys to Success](#)



## 8 Intelligences – Theory of Multiple Intelligences Explained

### **Issues in Implementing Music Integration**

Integrating music into the classroom can be challenging. Classroom teachers can be reluctant to incorporate music and arts integration for the following reasons:

- Teachers often lack knowledge about music
- Integration attempts can result in shallow and meaningless content

Many teachers have not had music study prior to their college educations. Unfamiliarity with the medium can bring about hesitancy in teaching a subject that is new to the teacher. This text will assist all teachers in acquiring the essential skills to effectively incorporate music into the elementary classroom. In the most basic sense, however, classroom teachers should work to acquire knowledge and skills in some of the following areas:

- Basic music elements and concepts used to create and think about music
- Different music styles, forms, and genres
- A variety of approaches or teaching strategies



Experience and music study bring familiarity

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A common fear associated with interdisciplinary learning is that the information will be shallow and unrelated to the disciplines involved because of the mixture of methods and concepts. Integration requires more knowledge and skill, greater planning, and better mastery of materials than does the planning of lessons in a single discipline. Two major problems may surface in attempts at integration:

- First: Knowledge may lack focus and substance—the “potpourri.”
- Second: Teachers in separate knowledge areas may struggle for supremacy and control—the “polarity” problem

As in all teaching, educators can avoid these problems if they carefully design the integration plan and if they use both discipline-specific and interdisciplinary techniques to carry out the plan. An understanding of the disciplines and the knowledge and methods used within the disciplines is

important. Integration of content and processes should take place only when there are obvious connections between the disciplines.

The fundamental rationale for broadening the scope of topics and activities to include music in all education, elementary and secondary, is this: A comprehensive general curriculum is incomplete without music because music is central to personal and shared experience. [ 2 ]

## **Three Approaches to Music Integration**

The main goal or purpose of an integrated curriculum is to find relationships among fragmented learning experiences, i.e. combining curricular goals in music with the other curricular areas. There are many models for integrating curricular areas, however, the key to all approaches is that true integration respects the uniqueness and integrity of each of the disciplines it combines. The three most common approaches used in integrating music into the elementary classroom are:

- Connection
- Correlation
- Immersion



Connection

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Connection (or connecting) is the most popular, most used, and—depending upon its implementation—least meaningful way of linking disciplines. Materials or concepts from one discipline are used to help teach or reinforce a concept in another curricular area. This procedure is often used in a thematic approach when music is linked to another academic area using a similar topic. The theme becomes the organizer for the curriculum and random samplings of knowledge and skill—the "potpourri" approach—drives the development of curriculum design.

Although connections can be a powerful teaching and learning tool, making connections in this manner is not considered integrated or interdisciplinary learning. Music becomes only the conduit for learning the linked subject and modest or no attempt is made to study music. Examples of implementing this type of integration approach include:

- Students draw pictures while listening to a piece of music

- Students sing a song naming the Presidents of the United States

This procedure, however, is important as a beginning exercise for teachers looking for ways to bring music into other disciplines in the elementary classroom. This first step should be replaced with more in-depth integration as soon as possible.



Correlation

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The second approach, correlation (or correlating) occurs when two or more disciplines share activities and materials. In this approach, two or more teachers agree to use the same materials or teach the same topics at the same time. Links are established between knowledge and skills in two or more disciplines. Correlation is attempted only when these links can be made. When activities are correlated, students will notice relationships between disciplines. Instead of being theme-oriented, correlated activities are material-oriented as common elements between the two subjects form the foundation for the lesson or unit.



Immersion

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The third stage, immersion, occurs when a broad theme is chosen that encompasses many (or all) disciplines — a multidisciplinary approach. This type of curriculum is the most difficult of the integrated curricula to create because it requires the complete cooperation of a large group of teachers and is driven by student interests. Within this program, each content area explores a central idea in a meaningful way, maintaining the integrity of each intelligence or discipline.

The key ingredient to successful immersion is an examination of a topic through more than one discipline, a higher-level thinking experience. The immersion program should lead students to discover connections that will help them.

- Value independent thinking
- Learn to ask the right questions to find connections

- Establish thought patterns that guide them to seek relationships across the curriculum
- Develop sequential understandings in separate areas of knowledge and skills

Students learn to integrate new information independently with what they have been taught. In this curriculum, students grow both in affective and cognitive learning. [ 3 ]

## **Three Approaches to Music Integration (Continued)**

Music is most easily integrated with other art forms. Each of the arts has elements that are expressed in different ways, yet these elements have commonalities that can be compared and contrasted. The arts are deeply connected as they:

- Challenge people to grow aesthetically
- Express the emotions, mind, and spirit
- Communicate beyond what humans can express with words or numbers

When combining the arts, teachers need to be sensitive to the commonalities between the arts and to the things that make each unique or different.



All forms of arts have common intents

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Rock Art

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Art forms (dance, theatre, painting, literature, etc.) have common rationales and intentions. As a result, the following activities are found in every art form:

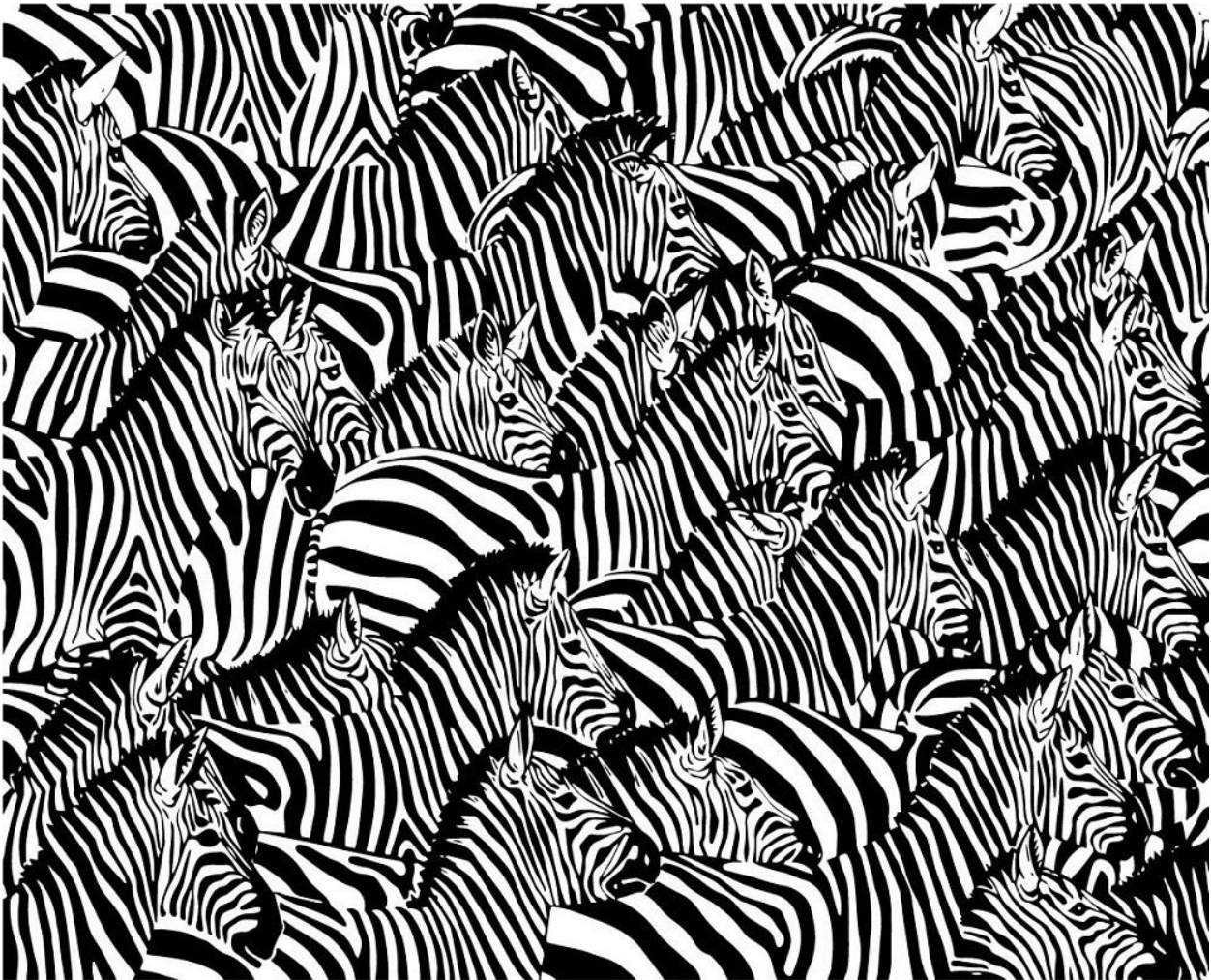
- Creation
- Evaluation
- Perception
- Response
- Skills Development
- Understanding

Although each art form is unique, common links can be found among the arts in the aesthetic principles of:

- Tension and release

- Repetition and contrast
- Pattern
- Motive
- Theme and variation
- Balance
- Background and foreground
- Density

To teach the principle of motive, for example, the teacher could emphasize motive as it is found in different art forms.



A recurring theme in a work by the artist MC. Escher

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Recurring musical motive from Beethoven's Symphony No. 5

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[Infusion: Arts in Education: Using arts to learn](#)

All art forms, including music, are comprised of sub-concepts that may be broken down or separated into discrete qualities. Activities or lessons created to teach the sub-concepts will be more effective if designed using a multi-sensory approach to heighten students' awareness and understanding. These can include activities that focus on listening, moving, playing instruments, singing, composition, improvisation, and reading. A multi-sensory approach will enable the teacher to reinforce the sub-concept through activities and lessons that highlight visual, aural, kinesthetic, and affective modalities and help students develop, transfer, and retain knowledge as they gain personal meaning from effective learning experiences.