

Sustainable Arts Integration:

A Reflection on Teacher Preparation and Community Collaboration

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Abstract

The article presents a reflection on how to sustain innovative arts integration through community teacher preparation collaborations. It specifically examines a small teacher education program working with a community organization in north Georgia in the United States. The reflection highlights a collaborative strategy connecting the arts and environmental sustainability, complete with examples of successful lessons and other resources that can be used for training and professional development of pre-service and in-service teachers. A new perspective emerges suggesting that community collaboration and open education can sustain arts integration.

Keywords: Arts Integration, Community, Teacher Education, Open Educational Resources

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Research in arts has demonstrated its positive impact on K-12 students and their development. The arts are a part of humanity and have evolved over time through a variety of world civilizations. The arts tell the stories of humanity; the arts reflect students' own cultures and upbringings. Arts connect home, school, parents, and the community. The arts have the potential to shape teaching and learning in the 21st century classroom. Knowing the many benefits that the arts bring to the K-12 classroom, integrating the arts into K-12 teaching and learning becomes a logical choice to provide K-12 learners with the best learning experiences. Although we may know the many benefits of arts, we are left to ponder what arts integration truly is and what it entails for teacher education, classroom teaching and learning practices, and community.

Literature Review

Arts integration is a pedagogical framework with the potential to transform the landscape of teacher education as well as teaching and learning (Dowell & Goering, 2018). Arts integration is associated with 21st century skills of creativity, critical thinking, and communication (Moss, Benus, & Tucker, 2018; Spielberg, 2015; Wiley, 2017). In teaching and learning, arts integration emphasizes the process and the product, which helps students develop linguistically, academically, physically, cognitively, and emotionally (Biscoe & Wilson, 2015; Wiley, 2017; Ooms, Wu, Kokemuller, Montgomery, & Rule, 2018). Arts integration focuses on children's well-being and a whole-child approach in education (Dowell & Goering, 2018). In the midst of changes in schools, arts integration is identified as a resilient strategy for school reform (Noblit, Corbett, Wilson, & McKinney, 2009) and desirable outcomes that need to be encouraged in

teacher preparation and teacher professional development (Badger, 2019; Dowell & Goering, 2018; Skorton & Bear, 2018). In that sense, arts integration is not only needed, but essential in K-12 education.

In retrospective, Dewey (1996) and Eisner (2004) discussed the importance of arts and its role in child development and K-12 education. More recently, literature calls for leadership and professional development for effective arts integration in the classroom (Arts Education Partnership, 2017; Wolff, Best, & Railey, 2018). In the meantime, collaboration is pointed out as a key strategy for success for art integration (Maneen, 2016). Through collaboration, arts integration transforms teaching and learning for innovation and equitable learning (Badger, 2019; Brown, Garnett, Velazquez-Martin, & Mellor, 2018; Kisida, Goodwin, & Bowen, 2020).

However, literature continues to show the slow progress and lack of professional development on arts integration in teacher education (Badger, 2019; Ballard, 2010). Due to time constraints, teachers are not actively engaged in arts-integration curricula activities nor do they value arts integration as a teaching and learning approach due to arts expertise limitations (Hayes & Clarke, 2018; Koch & Chevon, 2017). Watered-down arts-integration practices in schools diminished the true meaning and value of arts integration. In addition, lack of funding and support from the administration adds to the slow-motion and isolated practices of arts integration in teacher preparation and in schools (LaJevic, 2013; Spielberg, 2015).

While pre-service and in-service teachers have limited professional development opportunities, the few arts integration professional development opportunities available fail to sustain arts-integration resources and practices in the classroom, which results in teachers' down playing and slowing arts integration practices in teaching and learning (Badger, 2019; Hayes &

Clark, 2018; Wiley, 2017). Consequently, teachers are not well prepared or supported to be successful in integrating arts in their own classroom (Badger, 2019).

Background

Informed by the challenges of arts integration in teacher preparation and schools, this reflection examines the journey of a small teacher education program engaging preservice teachers in arts-integration resources and professional development from a sustainable community collaboration perspective. The small teacher education program is located in North Georgia in the United States. One instructor researcher of the teacher education program and one community researcher reflected on arts integration and their collaboration journey. Their collaboration in arts resource and activity creation contributes to the sustainable development of arts integration in the teacher preparation and the community.

In the teacher education program curriculum, there is a 3-credit hour course on music art, and physical education. The instructor researcher and community researcher engaged in the development of a conceptual framework by redesigning the course about five years ago. The community researcher received arts-integration training from the program and is in charge of the community sustainable art program for local schools, teaching arts-integration activities in area schools. In this reflection, they shared their own engagement and efforts in developing sustainable arts-integration resources and training through community collaboration, such as instructional experiences, arts-integration resources and creative arts programs. In this reflection, the importance of arts integration in teaching and learning is evident in that the earth won't be the earth without the "art" in the word "earth" and teacher preparation is not complete without arts-integration training and professional development through community collaboration (Arts Education Partnership, 2017).

Arts Integration in Schools

Arts integration presents a wide variety of challenges in schools because teaching happens across subject areas, grade levels, school cultures, and school systems. Arts integration in the County where the teacher education program is embedded encompasses many differences and challenges. Some schools in the setting do not have regular arts education, not to mention arts integration. Students in these schools tend to be behind in art skills such as gluing and cutting. They tend to have less confidence in creating art projects, which leads to more discomfort in open-ended arts integration projects. Teachers in the area schools struggled more teaching arts integration lessons. Students who are unskilled in artistic skills often have to use more time and more materials as they learn how to create arts. This costs teachers even more out of pocket money to purchase arts supplies. These teachers are not alone. The literature consistently points out that challenges such as lack of confidence in teaching arts integrated lessons, the shortness of instructional time, and the added burden of extra costs for arts integration materials are widely experienced among teachers (Hayes & Clarke, 2018; Koch & Chevon, 2017).

In addition to the challenges above, not all teachers see the value of arts integration. Some teachers think that students should receive arts instruction from teachers who are more knowledgeable about the arts or they think students should receive arts integration from arts professionals only (Hayes & Clark, 2018). When working with students in the area schools served by the teacher education program, the community researcher, through her own teaching of arts-integration lessons, found it important to allow more time, offer detailed instructions, provide posted instructions for later reference, and create choices in colors, shapes, etc. for more self-expression. In contrast, for students who experience regularly scheduled art classes with

regular activities involving the use of arts materials and techniques, the community researcher encourages more advanced methods. Their arts-integration activities include more choices when creating new projects, which involves more challenging goals and techniques, such as those included in the News Paper Butterfly and Plastic Wreath lessons she created.

As the community researcher focused on improving sustainability and recycling practices in the schools, she learned that arts-integration activities informed by the concept of reuse helped promote creative ideas and eco-friendly behaviors. By incorporating arts activities specifically connected to the concept of reuse, arts integration helps shift the mindsets of students and teachers from seeing recyclables as trash to seeing them as arts materials. Examples, such as changing a plastic bag into a bracelet, a T-shirt into a bottle, or a plastic eating utensil into a toy, leads to sustainability discussions, such as, how recycling centers replace mining bauxite ore from rainforests with recycling aluminum cans or how recycled plastic bottles can be used to make carpet.

This type of discussion connects artistic and physical items to abstract and complex ideas. These connections can be effectively and systematically applied in the content of the lessons that form an arts-integrated curriculum (Biscoe & Wilson, 2015). Learning about the arts in nature and the community can blend culture and sustainability practices. This type of learning transforms an individual's conceptual thinking into everyday behaviors. These behaviors can lead to more sustainably produced art that is more accessible to students and teachers in low-income areas, where traditional resources are scarce. When the arts are integrated into students' learning experiences, the content of lessons from teachers can be better remembered (Rosen-O'Leary & Thompson, 2019).

Challenges: Arts Integration in Schools and Teacher Preparation

Teacher's perceptions about the challenges were the most difficult hurdle for the community researcher to tackle when introducing arts integration into everyday classrooms. There are four common teacher misconceptions about arts integration as follows: (a). it is expensive and time-consuming; (b). it requires significant artistic competencies from the teacher; (c). it won't help educate students in subjects required for state standards; (d). arts integration is not tested beginning, during or at the end of the year (Hayes & Clark, 2018; Koch & Chevon, 2017). Through collaboration with the instructor researcher, the community researcher introduced her visual arts lessons and training to in-service teachers, which added professional development opportunities in arts integration to area school in-service teachers.

To further address the misconception that arts integration is expensive, the community researcher focused on reused materials for arts integration. Reused materials cost only a fraction of what new art materials would cost, such as cardboard and cloth. Incorporating reused materials in arts-integration lessons serves as an effective way to involve families by asking students to collect arts materials from their household or recycling bins before a lesson. This was especially beneficial when working with students and families to create arts resources during the COVID-19 pandemic when schools switched to digital learning and students were home bound. In many traditional classrooms, art projects, art activities, and art supplies such as colored paper, yarn, pom-poms, etc. are needed to complete the works of art. When students had access to reused arts materials at home, they were able to complete their projects at home with minimal materials, such as the use of shoe boxes, twist ties, old bedsheets. This is especially beneficial for students who need more time than their peers to complete their integrated projects. The reuse strategy helps decrease the amount of time needed for arts integration in the classroom. It also

helps to eliminate the teacher misconception on time constraints for arts integration (Koch & Thompson, 2017).

By having students collect and re-use household items that would otherwise be thrown away as trash, learning becomes more practical, concrete, economical, and meaningful; the arts process makes it easier to grasp abstract concepts. In many countries, being more aware of waste is a standard used in science education (Georgia Standards, 2025; National Curriculum, n.d.; Next Generation Science Standards, n.d.). Not only does the incorporation of realia in the science arts-integration lesson support conceptual understanding, but it can be connected to the Georgia Standards of Excellence science content standards on sustainability. Incorporating waste materials into art helps address arts-integration resource challenges faced by school teachers. Through reuse, less new arts materials need to be purchased. Teachers, students, and parents can help gather many of the arts-integration materials from their own homes as well. Sharing this knowledge should greatly help teacher education solving the arts-integration resource challenges by demonstrating that art material resources are only limited to one's creativity.

The Need for Sustainable Arts Integration

When Common Core was introduced to schools, funding and budget-cutting motivates schools to look for creative ways to offer arts learning opportunities (Gregory, 2017; Ruppert, 2006; Warner, 2022). Along the journey to include the creative arts in K-12 education, arts integration emerged as a distinctive approach. Programs such as STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math), and STREAM (Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Arts, and Math) started to form. Moreover, arts in schools shifted further from a stand-alone arts education approach to arts-enhanced and arts-integrated approaches as more states adopted Common Core standards.

The need and shift from arts education to arts integration in schools has challenged the availability of arts resources, expertise, and frameworks for teacher preparation. Few instructors are comfortable with the framework with many teacher educators not having confidence in teaching from an integrated perspective. In higher education, it is not hard to find artistic professionals who are well-trained in distinct arts disciplines, such as visual arts, music, drama or dance, but to find individuals who can teach multiple arts areas and use the arts-integration framework is hard. Having encountered by this reality, the instructor researcher started an arts-integration conceptual framework in a small teacher education program. Although new to the arts-integration framework, she was trained in pedagogy, instructional methods, and curricula. Her arts-integration journey started with redesigning a three-hour exploratory music art, and physical education course for teacher preparation.

The first task was to create learning materials for teaching arts integration in the teacher education program. At the beginning, there were no readily available learning materials on arts integration in higher education, not to mention in teacher preparation. The instructor researcher started with the idea of grant writing to fund arts integration for the teacher education program. In 2016, a grant was awarded to the instructor researcher to create learning materials on arts integration. Campus resources, such as those provided by the librarians and information technology expertise contributed to the first version of the free and online accessible arts-integration textbook. It was intended for course participants and the instructor researcher to use at the small teacher education program in North Georgia.

Designing the activities was the next step. The instructor researcher moved from an arts-only perspective to an arts integration perspective in the design process. In designing arts integration activity ideas, the instructor researcher did an enormous amount of research on how

arts integration could be defined, how lesson plans could be written, and what integration activities and examples could be created. Arts professionals were consulted to consolidate the arts-integration design framework, activities, ideas, and examples for the course, which resulted in enriched learning experiences through arts integration. Although much effort and progress was made to implement arts integration in the teacher education program, challenges remained, such as a scarcity of arts materials and the conclusion of the grant support to sustain arts integration in in-service teaching. To overcome this, the instructor researcher looked to community resources. The community researcher joined this effort and filled the gap. Teacher preparation in higher education was expanded to include arts-integration professional development and support for existing school teachers

Through this collaboration, the theoretical foundation and framework for arts integration was enriched. The literature reviewed provided many examples of how the arts produced positive results in terms of human learning experiences, mental health, and cognitive development in critical thinking, creativity, and overall well-being (The Kennedy Center, 2025; The Walden University, 2025). Across cultures, the arts have been used to enhance resilience through crises (Seligman, Ernst, Gillhamc, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009). These arts benefits are critically needed for future employment and the healthy development of individuals. Noblit, Corbett, Wilson, and McKinney (2009) identified arts integration as one of the key strategies for school identity and resilience building. These dimensions of the arts were factored into the arts-integration textbook for the instructor researcher. During the pandemic lockdown, the researchers of this reflection supported the community efforts to use the arts and arts integration as a resilience strategy by providing online arts-integration activities for home-bound students. Arts integration went beyond just providing learning experiences at the time of crisis, to enhance the welfare and

resilience of families and their extended communities (Noblit, Corbett, Wilson, & McKinney, 2009).

Teacher Preparation Community Collaboration

The community researcher of this reflection works as the Recycling and Education Coordinator for the local waste authority. She developed programs that connected arts and sustainability issues through integrated lessons to local school classrooms, also providing professional development for preservice teachers in the teacher education program. Through these efforts and programs, she taught over 10,000 students. Before this role, she was a student in the teacher education program completing her bachelor's degree in early childhood education. She is a Georgia-certified teacher with an endorsement in English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

By the time she completed her degree, she had taught hands-on arts-integration lessons and activities in three different school systems for over one thousand hours. Through her work, she experienced students with varying levels of artistic skill sets and teachers with different comfort levels in arts integration in every-day teaching. Through teacher education and community collaboration, she created arts-integrated lessons as training resources and professional development materials openly accessible for teachers to use in the classroom.

The first lesson she developed connected sculpture, the concept of reuse, and a popular movie for the age bracket. This lesson can be used for students from pre-kindergarten to fifth grade with differentiations based on Georgia content standards. In this lesson, students combine easily found objects that were often considered trash, such as plastic spoons and popsicle sticks, with traditional art supplies, such as air-dry clay, pipe cleaners, glue, and string. It guides students through using reused materials to create characters similar to "Forky" from *Toy Story 4*.

In the film, the character “Forky” is created from trash by another character found in a classroom trash bin. He looks like a sculpture made from gum, popsicle sticks, a spork, googly eyes, and crayons.

After playing a short clip from the movie that shows the character pulling pieces of discarded materials from a trash can in the classroom to create the original character of Forky, students are able to experiment with clay, strings, and glue to make shapes and lines to create a three-dimensional sculpture project. The teacher helps guide students through this process demonstrating ways to manipulate the clay and ways to glue strings onto a flat surface to create mouth and eyebrow shapes. The final piece resembles the character from the movie with each student’s personal expression displayed in the details of coloring choices, mouth and eyebrow shapes, and the application/direction of the “feet” using popsicle sticks.

In this lesson, as the students let their sculptures dry, the teacher takes students to a different classroom area and transitions learning from the sculpting activity to a class discussion on sustainability. The class and teacher could discuss the differences between when an item is thrown away into a trash bin and disposed of in a landfill versus when the item is recycled and processed into new materials. Then the teacher uses realia such as recycled paper shreds and recycled paper products to show the students how items go through the process of recycling. Connecting what the students did during their activity: creating toys and sculptures out of waste “a reuse” to what recycling centers do when they “recycle.” Each process involves using items seen as “trash” to create something new and useful. Connecting the artistic sculpture made from reused materials to the process of recycling helps students grasp the complex concept of recycling, even at a young age (Casey, Mireles, Vilorio, & Garza, 2018). Students are able to

understand the value of recycling and to experience the joy reuse through the arts for themselves as well as to see the impact of recycling in their community.

A second lesson the community researcher created can be used for students in grades six through twelve. This lesson investigates sustainability concepts related to textile waste, reuse, and plastic film recycling. Students bring in an old T-shirt they do not wear anymore and are provided with scissors and a sharpie. One major benefit of this lesson is that teachers can recreate it with minimal materials. Teacher begins by telling students about the massive impact of textile waste in landfills. The local recycling center is unique in that it recycles carpet, a substance ubiquitous in students' daily lives. The teacher then discusses the great impact clothing has on environment, when it is thrown away instead of being recycled or reused, then asks students what they can do with old clothes. This discussion could lead to commending these uses and explaining that they are going to work on another way to reuse T-shirts by upcycling them. The teacher can explain that like recycling, upcycling helps turn old objects that have lost their usefulness or desirability into something new.

In the lesson above, the community researcher teaches students the basic cuts needed to turn the T-shirt into a reusable shopping bag. Students learn artistic skills that are related to fabric, such as cutting straight lines, tying knots, and shape-making, which could be further applied to pattern making. After the students cut the basic shape, they can determine which side of the fabric they want to display and whether they want fringe, concepts that may need to be explained. When students are done with the process, they compare the differences in how the bags look; they can also use leftover fabric to make additional embellishments such as bows or three-dimensional flowers. Some students may be challenged even further to create necklaces

and hair bands from leftover fabric extending learning experiences even further if there is time within the class period.

The community researcher ends the lesson by talking about plastic film waste, litter, and the lifespan of landfills. The students discuss whether they use plastic bags in the grocery store and whether they take them back for recycling. The community researcher passes around objects made from recycled plastic bags to show what they could be instead. She mentions how the plastic survives forever in the local landfills or breaks into tiny pieces becoming marine plastic, if it is littered. Students then discuss whether they would rather use reusable bags like the ones they made in class or recycled plastic bags.

These are only a couple of lesson examples the community researcher developed and used to train pre-service teachers and in-service teachers in arts integration and sustainability. Used in the education program and area schools, such arts-integration activities help students gain first-hand experience with the concept of reuse and connect reuse to the idea and process of recycling. These activities help students practice arts skills and learn ways they can use those skills with low-value material, such as old T-shirts or waste, to enrich their lives and practice self-expression. These lessons integrate environmental issues with the arts through the reuse of everyday objects, and students get to keep and use the art they have created. A study published in the *Journal for Learning through the Arts* found that students who were not engaged or had behavioral problems were “wide awake” and paid more attention to the arts integrated lessons (Graham & Brouillette, 2016).

When the community researcher taught the lessons, her students shared how they were proud of their creations and why they made certain artistic decisions, such as: "I glued the string like this to give my toy angry eyebrows", or "I tied up my handles with bows from my friend's

shirt to make the colors pop", etc. As a result of these lessons, students begin to think of other ways to reuse objects, items they can recycle, or sustainable behaviors they can start, such as reusing shopping bags when shopping with their parents. Using sustainable materials allows students to readily access artistic materials, and further explore the arts outside the school setting, including students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

When the community researcher taught these lessons in service schools, the classroom teachers were invited to observe and participate in the lesson activities. That allowed the community researcher to model arts-integrated lessons for in-service teachers. Modeling and coaching are the most powerful influences on arts integration. Once teachers go to see how these lessons work first-hand, they were more likely to plan and teach arts-integrated lessons themselves (Schlaack & Steele, 2018).

In collaboration with the instructor researcher, the community researcher provides lesson activities, ideas, and resources for pre-service teachers in the small teacher education program. In order to combat arts-integration resource challenges, the training focuses on sustainability and the concept of reuse. The pre-service teachers in the program are taught through activities designed for the local schools. This focus on affordable arts material addresses a paramount concern for first-time arts-integration teachers in service schools.

Providing pre-service teachers with arts-integration activity experiences in the teacher education program helps to combat the teachers' own fear of inadequate artistic skills. Each academic semester, the community researcher gives a training session to pre-service teachers in the higher education classroom. This is followed with additional support training in their school classroom. Many pre-service teachers expressed reluctance at the beginning of the training session and concern about their arts projects not looking "right" or "good." However, by the end

of the training session, they discovered that they were able to create an art project with guidance within 20 minutes. Pre-service teachers examined the differences in each of their art projects and reflected on the arts and its creative process as an expression of learning. After discussing their fears during their training, pre-service teachers became more confident with arts integration. Based on course reflections, this increased comfort provided pre-service teachers in the teacher education program with the motivation to use and design integration activities in their teaching after graduation.

Through program-community collaboration, the researchers were able to provide pre-service teachers with arts-integrated coaching within the local community context. This can lead to a mutually beneficial relationship for pre-service teachers, community organizations, and local schools. The impact of arts-integration collaboration was studied by Ludwig and Song (2015). Their study examined the impact of coaching and professional development on arts integration. Ludwig and Song (2015) found positive results on pre-kindergarten and kindergarten mathematics achievement when the arts were integrated into the classroom.

In a program-community collaboration model, community resources provide sustainable support and motivation for arts integration in both the teacher education program and the service schools. Each year, through the local waste authority, the community researcher announces a Billboard Design Contest. Students in local schools submit drawing designs related to recycling to enter into the contest. The winning design is displayed on two actual billboards in the community. This program provides support for teachers to motivate students to create an art project, apply their artistic skills for a specific goal, and connect the arts with educational goals and school programs. The program also advances the waste authority in its goals and mission of improving the recycling rate and behaviors in the community. Arts-integration opportunities

embedded in programs like the Billboard Design Contest helps students learn and sustain recycling behaviors better (Rosen-O’Leary & Thompson, 2019).

During the program-community collaboration, the community researcher also serves as the executive director for the Keep City County Beautiful. This is a non-profit community organization dedicated to empowering citizens to take greater responsibility for their environment through litter prevention, beautification, and sustainability. Each year, the organization offers grants to teachers and students for outdoor beautification projects on National Planting Day. Students and teachers work hard together to plan gardening spaces. These grants encourage teachers to engage students in studying the arts, color, composition of gardens, and the science of plants, wildlife, and pollinators without spending out-of-pocket money. Community support for teachers, such as this program, greatly adds to the shrinking financial resources available at the schools.

One of the focuses of this collaboration was making art from reused materials. During the COVID-19 pandemic, reuse as an art form was creatively employed by teachers in arts-integration activities since students were able to find necessary art resources within their home. With arts activities incorporating materials typically found in household trash bins, parents could easily plan for the reuse activity by being provided with a list of items to collect around the house. The community researcher taught one virtual arts-integration activity with the use of an old plastic Easter egg, a two-liter bottle, and small toys. The students created an “I Spy” bottle to which they could add rice, felt stickers, and small toys. After making the bottle, the child would create a list to paste on the outside. This reuse activity helped students learn reuse and list-making procedures using material readily available at home. With some creative decoration, an

interactive three-dimensional art piece was created. This object can be shared and used repeatedly.

Another activity incorporates reused art, music, sign language, and educational lyrics. Parents and children work together to create their own shakers using old plastic Easter eggs (or water bottles, if the students didn't have eggs at home), rice or beans, and tape. The parents and children can sing songs and create accompanying rhythm using their shakers connecting recycling and sustainability to American Sign Language movements that convey the lyrics. Movements help students learn content knowledge. Graham and Brouillette (2016) studied arts-integrated teaching that connected movements to educational content and found it helped with vocabulary learning by making content knowledge more tangible (Graham & Brouillette, 2016).

These reuse activity ideas encapsulate the main benefits of arts integration in teaching and learning. Students tend to find activities connecting to the arts more engaging and fun (Biscoe & Wilson, 2015). Through active engagement, students learn and internalize content better. Arts integration links content to students' personal lives and aids comprehension (Casey, Mireles, Vilorio, & Garza, 2018). At a time, such as COVID-19 pandemic, when students' learning routines were disrupted, it is critical to create a fun and relaxing learning environment; arts integration helps educators succeed in creating that environment for effective and meaningful learning.

For the community researcher, online resources and social media resources were useful in creating arts-integrated lessons and activities with a focus on upcycling arts, sustainability teaching, nature and gardening, and recycling tips. These sources were used for professional development for in-service teachers. Through providing professional development on arts integration in schools and associated lesson development, the community researcher encountered

a high demand on arts-integration resources with high interests from teachers and parents wanting to use arts to teach new content, especially during the pandemic. For example, parents and students created plastic bottle terrariums to learn taxonomy, plant growth, and the water cycle while using the design, structure, and organization of art elements for artistic self-expression within the bottle.

Final Thoughts

As college teacher education programs and K-12 schools continue to experience funding shortages, arts integration faces challenges, despite its potential, and demonstrated need of pre-service and classroom teachers. History has shown trends that the arts are always the first to be cut and the last to be added. Schools need well-trained teachers to deliver arts-integrated education in K-12, while pre-service teachers currently don't have adequate training and professional development in arts integration. Pre-service teachers may have a couple of arts-related courses in their teacher education program, but few or no arts integration training.

In this reflection, the teacher education program has a three-hour course space focused on arts integration in the elementary education. The lack in resources and program credit hour space limits the attempts to develop shared open arts-integration resources. As a "less for more" strategy is used to sustain arts integration in pre-service teacher education training and in-service professional development. The lack of resources demands creativity in arts integration. This reflection shares a local effort completed with ideas on how to sustain arts integration through collaborations between teacher preparation programs and community organizations.

The sustainable practices discussed above help to respond to the question: how does collective creativity make teacher preparation better? Needless to say, collective creativity requires Common Good thinking (Hussein, 2024). In this reflection, the researchers spent many

hours on the creation of learning activities, resources, and learning materials to sustain arts integration in the program. Although those materials are open and accessible for public use, teachers will especially find them to be useful. The effort resulted in active community engagement and a lively arts-integration learning environment in the classroom with active engagement in the community. As a result of the program-community collaboration, deeply gratifying results emerged: sustainable development of arts integration for a teacher education program and area schools in the community.

By collaborating with the instructor and community researchers, school teachers experienced arts integration in their classroom without losing their planning or instructional time. When teachers see arts integration modeled and working effectively with their students, they develop more confidence and efficacy in arts integration. With a higher self-efficacy level, teachers are more likely to engage in designing and using arts-integration practices in their classrooms independently (Schlaack & Steele, 2018). For pre-service teachers, they also benefit from the collaboration with local community organizations to sustain arts integration. The collaboration better prepares preservice teachers to implement arts integration in the classroom after graduation.

By connecting teacher preparation, schools, teachers, and community organizations, whose missions are aligned with the arts and education, many arts-integration barriers can be conquered. In the collaborative example shared in this reflection, teachers have community resources to fund arts integration as well as arts-integration practices and ideas modeled in their classrooms. This type of collaboration is “less for more,” productive, and impactful for the betterment of the community. Having local community collaborations and support allows pre-service and in-service teachers to be more comfortable with arts integration, especially for pre-

service teachers transitioning from training to teaching. Arts integration through community collaboration helps not only to sustain arts integration, but also contributes to positive change among students and the community offering a sustainable model for learning and life.

Future Directions: Sustainable Arts Integration Development

This reflection shared experiences and new practices to provide examples of how to build sustainable resources for arts integration in teacher preparation. Since arts-integration training and professional development tends to be lacking in many such programs and K-12 education, it is imperative that pre-service teachers and in-service teachers receive such training opportunities and professional development to fully realize the promises of arts integration in the classroom.

Arts integration through community collaboration as highlighted in this reflection sheds light on how eco-friendly practices can sustain arts integration training and professional development. The focus on the art that is made of materials that are reused after its initial purpose or upcycled can aid in creating a sustainable arts-integration program within school systems, especially those with less funds and access to traditional arts materials (Reader, 2020; Teruya, 2019).

To ensure successful arts integration in K-12 education, teacher preparation in higher education needs to strengthen arts-integration training. Arts are at the core of learning. They help develop 21st century skills with learning outcomes that include curiosity, imagination, creativity, and evaluation skills (Silverstein, 2020). Yet, arts integration has not obtained enough emphasis in teacher preparation programs and school systems. By addressing the perceived challenges voiced by pre-service and in-service teachers in this reflection, the researchers hope that higher education, teacher education, and community programs can expand upon such collaborations and contribute to sustainable resources for teaching and learning in the 21st century classroom.

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