

Perceptions of Art Education Amongst Elementary School Educators

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Introduction

Art Education and the use of visual and performing arts in today's elementary school classrooms can be pushed aside, as core curriculum and requirements are a priority in daily instruction. Being an elementary school teacher, I have seen art education and artistic practices begin to slowly disappear from the classroom. This is due to many factors, such as lack of budget, lack of professional development for teachers, and a focus around standardized testing, to name a few. Being a teacher who values art education and the academic and social benefits it can provide, I am curious about how other K-5 teachers personally feel about art education and what their perceptions are regarding artistic strategies integrated within regular instruction.



Materials and Methods

Five current elementary school educators from one school site was a part of this study. Participants were selected using snowball sampling. This study interviewed general education teachers that teach and have taught grades Kindergarten through fourth grade. This study contained a semi-structured interview with ten base questions. The interview questions provided me with personalized knowledge about each teacher's educational background, their personal teaching experiences, and their opinions on visual and performing arts.

Results

Through my interviews, I have determined that current elementary school teachers do not have the support and guidance around the arts. Teachers are applying art practices in their own classrooms and lesson plans by conducting their own research around the arts. Additionally, visual and performing arts lessons seems to be fueled by each teacher's own personal interests and passions. As for professional development opportunities, teachers seems to be unsure of outside supports centered around the arts. Websites such as Pinterest and other teacher-ran blogs are where teachers are finding their inspiration and support. By providing new teaching techniques and strategies using art, students' needs for their own learning can be better met. Additionally, findings and experiences within this study and other studies, also suggested that educators that are willing to go beyond traditional strategies of instruction and assessment to integrate the arts will lead their students towards academic rewards, as well as growth socially (Grant & Reif, 2010). As for funding, schools are providing some funding for the arts, but most of the school funding is provided by the PTA. It seems to be the new norm is to use PTA funding for necessary art materials, rather than using the funding for other classroom materials. Overall, teachers are doing the best they can to keep the arts alive but are unsure of how and where to get the additional supports they need to keep visual and performing arts in daily instruction.

Further Information

For further information regarding this study, please email: eschweers@callutheran.edu

Conclusions

This research has the potential to contribute to current literature and studies by highlighting the realities, experiences, and unanswered questions regarding visual and performing arts within K-5 classrooms. By uncovering and understanding the feelings of current and preservice educators, we can determine what support and services are of need in today's education field. Through my studies and findings in literature, seems that art education implementation is in the need of clearly developed expectations (Buck et al, 2016). My hopes for this case study are to bring awareness to the lack of support and professional development provided for current teachers and to help contribute with bringing back the arts into regular educational instruction in K-5 classrooms.



Literature Cited

Buck, R., & Snook, B. (2016). Teaching the arts across the curriculum: meanings, policy and practice. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 17(29–32), 1–21.

Reif, N., & Grant, L. (2010). Culturally responsive classrooms through art integration. *Journal of Praxis in Multicultural Education*, 5(1), 100–115. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.callutheran.edu/10.9741/2161-2978.1035>