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Interdisciplinary Connections based  
on the work of Elizabeth Murray

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## Description

This unit will be designed for a curriculum design course (or workshop) for art education students at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. The course typically has undergraduate students and a few post-bac students needing to fulfill licensure requirements. The students will create collaborative lessons/unit plans that are inspired by the work of Elizabeth Murray while making interdisciplinary connections.



*Worms Eye*

## Process

Students will begin by exploring the Joy2Learn segment on Elizabeth Murray. They will document (visual, written, etc.) their ideas and process as they explore. Then, students will look for additional information on Elizabeth Murray and explore the Art 21 segment featuring Murray and the related teacher resources.

Next, the students will work as a team to create a giant 'mind map' where they make lists, and connections between all of their ideas. If this process is new to students, they can watch the YouTube video on mind-mapping and view examples before they begin. Typically I like to have students work for 10-15 minutes without talking. Then, break up into groups and discuss further connections. At this point, the students get out all ideas without censoring and can use their notes and documentation to contribute to the collaborative mind map. Through the discussion the groups will begin to pick out areas where they are interested, and begin to solidify ideas. Groups will be split by level (elementary, middle, secondary) and will articulate a direct link to the work of Murray to their proposed unit idea.

Students will explore the interdisciplinary connections supported by their idea and consult with practicing teachers to make solid curricular connections. (Ideally, students would teach the lessons at a local school where the idea fit into the existing curriculum/ this happens at our partnership locations). Once exploring the connections, students will be reminded of the new national core art standards and how they will be used to provide a process for implementing their integrated units. Creating, Performing/Presenting/Producing, Responding, Connecting will be used to provide a framework for the unit and can easily be integrated across subject areas.

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Some ideas may include:

- History and chemistry of pigment/ paints
- Science of composition- exploring the spatial relationships of composition through the work of Rudolph Arnheim and visual perception (shape/color relationships)
- Neuroscience of creativity, exploring the creative process/ connections to Arts Based Research and implementing those in a K-12 classroom setting
- Growing up- memory books, looking for patterns in drawings of children and others
- Family- how can we research and honor family (family tree, portraits of family members, genetics, etc.)
- Based on the quote “everything in the world is food for artmaking” – what is your “food”? What feeds your passions? Create a piece of work (any media, or interpretation) that describes what feeds you.

### **State Standards**

Based on the topics the students choose, the standards addressed will vary. State standards for every level, in the subjects of English/Language Arts, Science and Engineering Technology, History and Social Studies are natural fits for this type of work. The scientific process is also easily connected as it mimics the process used to create a piece of work. The new National Core Arts Standards will be used as a base for the connection of other standards. Dance, Drama, Music and Media Arts are also easily connected to most visual arts units.

## ArtsEdSearch

The ArtsEdSearch provided numerous articles in support of integrated learning experiences. I chose a few that I would use to support the work of the students in the curriculum course. Full references found in the bibliography.

- **Impact of arts integration on voice, choice, and access.**
  - o This article presents results of a study conducted by VSA arts to investigate the relationship between arts involvement and social, cognitive, and artistic development among students with disabilities. The key findings display that voice is enhanced as arts help students express emotion in appropriate ways, choice in their critical ability for decision making and problem solving, and access in that art is flexible in allowing multiple paths to content meeting the needs of all students.
- **Arts integration professional development: Teacher perspective and transfer to instructional practice**
  - o A study of elementary school teachers which aims to examine the benefits of arts integration as professional development. The model was based on the IDEA model and used both qualitative and quantitative methods. The findings indicated that students showed improvement, engagement, collaboration and motivation. While the teachers reported improvements in classroom management, curriculum design, and increased self-efficacy. The researcher also noted that the teachers were more able to address the needs of the school population by implementing the IDEA model.
- **Arts integration as a catalyst for high school renewal**
  - o Based in a rural public high school in Vermont, this case study examines the effects of implementing a career academy of the arts in a traditional college preparatory setting. Students enrolled in specialized courses and an advisory program as consistent with the IVA model. The program faced many setbacks, however, was successful in the increased dedication, creativity, self-initiative and self-direction in the arts as exhibited by the students.

# Bibliography

<http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/elizabeth-murray>

<http://joy2learn.org>

Dorfman, D. (2008). Arts integration as a catalyst for high school renewal. *Studies in Art Education* (50)1, 51-66.

Garett, J. (2010) *Arts integration professional development: teacher perspective and transfer to instructional practice*. Unpublished dissertation, Walden University, Minneapolis, MN

Mason, C. Y., Steedly, K. M., & Thormann, M. S. (2008). Impact of arts integration on voice, choice, and access. *Teacher Education and Special Education: The Journal of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children*, 31(1), 36.