

The Arts

Accomplished teachers understand the intrinsic value of the arts and their usefulness in gaining insight into other disciplines. Dance, music, theater, and the visual arts individually and collectively contribute to the stimulation of imagination and cognitive growth while providing vehicles for creative expression. Teachers understand that the arts represent a unique human endeavor that enriches students' artistic heritages, tastes, and creativity, while nurturing divergent thinking and an appreciation for various forms of expression. They know that teaching about and through the arts helps students develop knowledge and skill sets that can challenge, expand, and enhance their lives; teachers include the arts in their classrooms for the aesthetic, intellectual, and perceptual value they offer. By including the arts on their own, with the help of subject-area specialists, or through available community resources, middle childhood generalists foster a thoughtful and interactive learning environment. They know that involvement in the arts will develop their students' thought processes, deepen their understanding of other academic areas, and promote their understanding of different cultures.

Accomplished teachers are willing to take risks to create environments that nurture their students' individual expression of, and experimentation with, the arts. Teachers may share their personal artistic perspectives with students as they provide them with the opportunities, resources, and encouragement they need to explore their emerging tastes. Teachers recognize the value of the arts in bringing pleasure, enthusiasm, and heightened motivation to their students. They help students develop skills in the arts for their inherent creative value and as a means of communicating

about interests and issues important to them. They guide students in forming an appreciation of aesthetic values and the social and global uses of the arts by drawing attention to similarities and differences in major ideas and themes. For example, to enhance a comparative literature unit on *Cinderella* stories from various cultures, an accomplished teacher might ask students to develop and perform a play to demonstrate a version of the tale they have written themselves. Teachers understand that the arts can offer a helpful way of assessing students' academic skills and abilities.

Accomplished teachers help students extend their study of other subject areas in creative and critical manners. They relate content to the arts and have students engage in various learning modalities by interpreting subject matter using alternative forms of expression. For example, teachers may provide students with opportunities to create visual poetry from typographical word arrangements or perform a kinesthetic representation or pantomime of plant growth from seed to maturity. To emphasize their students' understanding of other content area concepts, teachers might examine the relationship between mathematics and music by comparing metric beats with fractions or the similarities of pattern development in tessellations and the architectural wall renderings of the Alhambra in Granada, Spain. Accomplished teachers know that creating, critiquing, and evaluating in and through the arts help students interconnect the world they live in with more clarity. They also know that these experiences bridge the transfer of knowledge and understanding from one content area to the other through the integration that is facilitated by the arts and their connections to the global community that surrounds them.