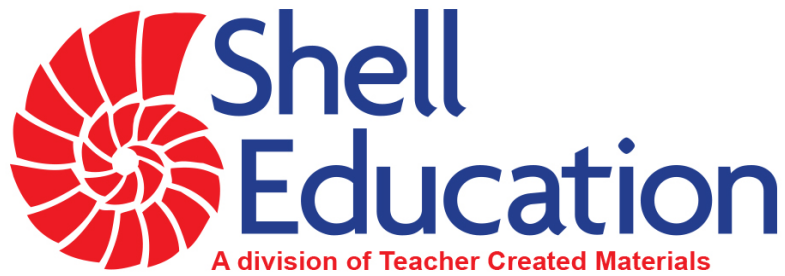


Sample Pages from



Thanks for checking us out. Please call us at 800-858-7339 with questions or feedback or to order this product. You can also order this product online at www.tcmpub.com/shell-education.

For correlations to state standards, please visit
www.tcmpub.com/teachers/correlations

To Create a World ⁱⁿ which
Children ^{love} to Learn!

800-858-7339 • www.tcmpub.com/shell-education

— SECOND EDITION —

INTEGRATING THE ARTS

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Lisa Donovan
Louise Pascale



Table of Contents

Foreword	5
Acknowledgments	7
Preface	9
Introduction	11
Chapter 1: Anchoring Curriculum in Storytelling	25
Chapter 2: The Power of Dramatic Inquiry	45
Chapter 3: Exploring the Language of Poetry	65
Chapter 4: Making Musical Connections.....	95
Chapter 5: Visual Art: Accessing Content through Image	117
Chapter 6: Creative Movement as a Learning Process	137
Chapter 7: Planning and Assessment	159
References Cited	178
Appendix A: <i>Tar Beach</i> Unit Outline	194
Appendix B: <i>Tar Beach</i> Unit Planning Chart	198
Appendix C: Unit Planning Chart.....	200
Appendix D: Recommended Resources	201

Preface

The first edition of this book, published in 2012, was generated by the enthusiasm and excitement teachers expressed having initiated arts integration into their curriculum. Educators often recognize and are eager to make changes so that learning is more accessible and more meaningful for every student. The challenge, however, is often not whether to make those changes but how to make them happen during an already filled-to-the-brim schedule. The discussion in this book explores how to make those changes happen.

This new edition is inspired by the many teachers with whom we have met and worked. Their voices and creative ideas are woven throughout this book. We envision the arts and arts integration becoming a mainstay of teaching and learning, thus stimulating innovation, curiosity, critical thinking, and new ways of being in the world (Diaz and McKenna 2017, 20).

Over the course of many years, after teaching about arts integration to teachers from across the country, we soon began to recognize the power the arts have for transforming not only the way students learn but how teachers think about teaching. They enthusiastically reported that their students, even those previously considered most challenging, were more engaged and excited about learning than ever before.

The book begins with investigations of six art forms: storytelling, drama, poetry, music, visual arts, and creative movement. In these chapters, we present basic information about the specific elements of each art form and investigate assumptions and perceptions. Following that, there are specific examples and ideas for integrating the arts in the curriculum for grades K–12, as well as suggestions for how arts integration can reinforce culturally responsive teaching and social-emotional learning. The ideas in this book also can be successfully adapted for learning in virtual and hybrid environments. Throughout these chapters, *In the Classroom* sections feature the voices of teachers who have successfully integrated the arts into their classrooms. The final chapter shows you the nuts and bolts of creating a unit of study using arts integration and a discussion of assessment.

We are pleased to offer you this newly revised edition of *Integrating the Arts Across the Curriculum*. A lot has happened in education and in the world since the first edition of this book was published, and it is important to recognize those changes. You may be wondering what's different in this new edition. We've taken time to update the resources



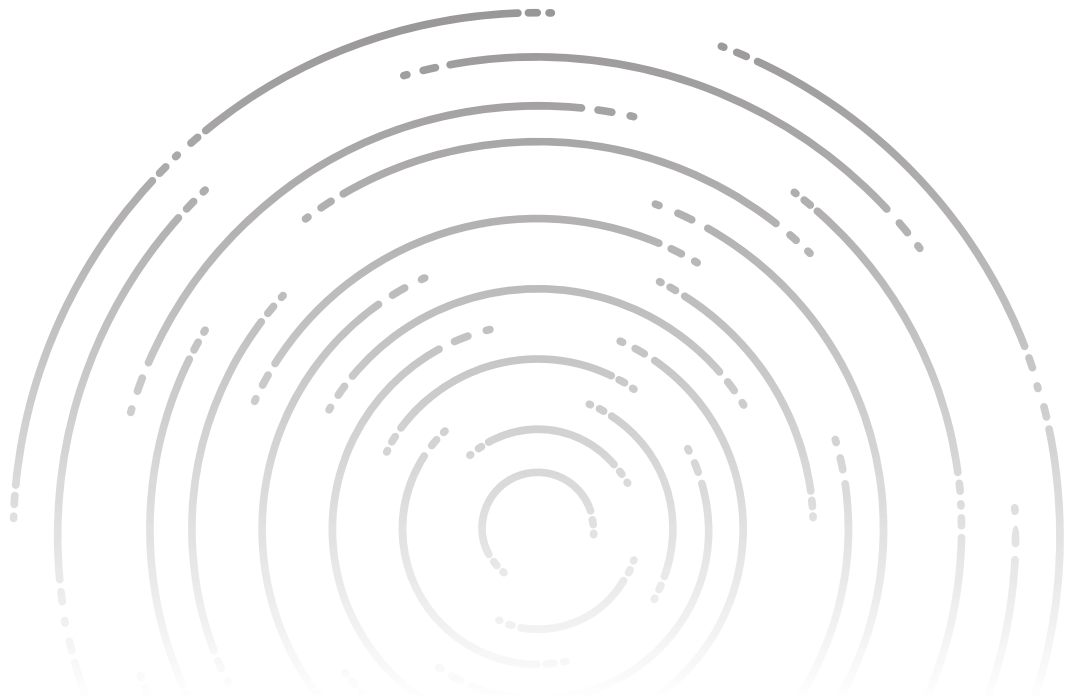
and highlights of diverse voices in the field. In this revised text, we have addressed the following:

- the role the arts can play in the social-emotional health of students
- the need for culturally responsive teaching approaches
- the links between arts integration and Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

In addition, we offer the following:

- fresh ideas for strategies and rich examples from the field
- a new lens on assessment, with assessment options that meet the needs of all students
- an updated set of references and recommended resources

We hope you are as excited and inspired by this new edition as we are!



Visual Art: Accessing Content through Image

What Is Visual Art?

Visual Arts “include the traditional fine arts such as drawing, painting, printmaking, photography, and sculpture; media arts including film, graphic communications, animation, and emerging technologies; architectural, environmental, and industrial arts such as urban, interior, product, and landscape design; folk arts; and works of art such as ceramics, fibers, jewelry, works in wood, paper, and other materials” (National Art Education Association n.d.).

Communication through human mark-making is a universal and ancient activity that has deep diverse roots, influences, and meaning in many cultures (Schaefer-Simmern 2003). We experience the world through images—seeing and reading images and making marks before we read words. We create images to make sense

of our world. Visual art reflects the world we live in. Art can help us understand our own lives, cultures, and experiences, as well as the experiences of others. We can understand history and historic cultures by the art left behind. Art not only reflects but also shapes our cultural narrative over time. Artists have raised questions, commented, and investigated new ideas through images. Artist and activist Favianna Rodriguez notes that art is a universal language that fosters emotional connection: “Art is uniquely able to speak to our understanding of the world by delivering potent, powerful and empathetic content. People engage with art in a very different way than they engage with a policy paper or a news article or even a protest” (Brooks 2017).

F. Robert Sabol writes “We continuously are inundated with innumerable visual images and messages on television, computers, digital communications devices, and in the printed media. Neuroscience has shown that a significant portion of the human brain is devoted to understanding visual stimulation and to decoding visual messages we receive through our sense of vision” (2011).

.....

“Being intentional about the images you use in class is an easy thing to do, but it has a profound impact on classroom culture. When students see themselves reflected in the lesson, they are more invested in what they are learning.”

—Lidia Aguirre (2020, para. 8)

.....

Why Does Visual Art Matter?

Art is part of our everyday world, influencing and inspiring us. How can we create more opportunities where we are taught to create, observe, and analyze our visual culture?

“Art,’ a high school student told me, ‘has the ability to affect people in ways nothing else can. For me, I’ve found art as a way to express what I’m feeling without even knowing it at the time. Art helps me understand my own life.”

—Kathryn Fishman-Weaver (2019)

The visual arts are a natural fit in the classroom as an integrated approach to many non-art subjects.

Drawing can improve our ability to focus and notice details in ways that enhance curiosity and observation skills (Bensusen 2020). Reading is enhanced by the creation of mental images. We see students who are stumped about what to write; yet when they engage with images, their writing becomes filled with ideas and rich details. Science is dependent on observation. In mathematics, visualizing patterns is key. The use of images in the classroom creates a

way to translate, communicate, and draw from the world. As you think about your next lesson, why not begin with looking (Vivian Poey, pers. comm.)?

Students learn by making art and by observing the work of others. Invite students to create and respond to works of art, and to draw ideas from their experiences, encounters, and observations in the world. In this chapter we will explore a variety of ways for students to engage with developing knowledge and skills about visual art, as well as how to describe their artistic choices and decipher choices in the work of others, and discover ways to express themselves and consider the functions of art in our visual culture.



Growing data show that visual arts improve academic achievement. The arts level the classroom playing field through their inherent differentiation and universality. The arts, and in this case the visual arts, offer a nontext, visual entry into content and provide student participants (and teachers) multiple ways to show evidence of learning. “Teaching Literacy Through Art,” a study conducted by the Guggenheim Museum, found that visual arts education enhanced literacy skills (Korn 2012). “The study found that students in the program performed better in six categories of literacy and critical thinking skills—including

thorough description, hypothesizing, and reasoning—than did students who were not in the program” (Kennedy 2006). In *Studio Thinking 2: The Real Benefits of Arts Education*,

Standards

Visual Arts in the College and Career Readiness Standards

Visual literacy is an integral part of the standards. With the addition of teaching standards for Digital Arts Media and the option of many schools to offer remote delivery models, it has become critical that all students also be technologically proficient. By responding to text in visual representations, students make logical inferences from text, determine central ideas or themes, and interpret words and phrases (particularly figurative meanings). Students also integrate and evaluate content presented in visual formats and text. Through visual art, students can show their understanding of complex literary and informational texts. When critiquing their own visual work or the work of others, students can express their ideas clearly and persuasively, build on others' ideas, present supporting evidence, and evaluate information presented visually.

Hetland et al. (2013) further expanded on the eight “studio habits of mind” developed by students taking arts classes: develop craft, engage and persist, envision, express, observe, reflect, stretch and explore, and understand the art world. Clearly students can benefit by working with visual art in the classroom, learning skills and knowledge in both visual arts and the curricular content they’re exploring.

Studies suggest that integrating art across the curriculum can help with comprehension and engagement (Mathieson 2015) and long-term retention (Rinne, Gregory, and Yarmolinskaya 2011). Integrating visual art that reflects students in your classroom is one way to foster appreciation of our similarities and differences across cultures and traditions.

Observation and Interpretation of Visual Images

Every curricular theme has a visual aspect to it. Students can draw from the visual world to enhance what they are studying in the school curriculum. Visuals are open-ended in ways words are not and can prompt students to notice and make meaning. There is a lot of information embedded in an image, and this can add to and deepen classroom investigations. Working with images in this way will inevitably enhance writing. If you think about it, description is a visual thing. When students work with visuals, their writing will have access to rich details and characteristics of the image (Robert Shreefter, pers. comm.).

Observation is central to working with visual art. Begin with visual narrative and then move into language narrative. Create images and ask students to add words. This allows students to draw on their own observations. Observation is contextual by nature, so situating the image in the context of the curriculum being studied makes a difference (Robert Shreefter, pers. comm.).

Production of Visual Images

When students are allowed to select from a variety of materials and use the elements of art to convey meaning, making art can be a form of active learning and a way to synthesize ideas, as well as a form of assessment as they “show what they know.” Provide students with opportunities to explore a range of art materials and processes to create their own images. Offer direct experiences with paint, clay, drawing tools, photographs, textured papers, and other media. As students make choices about how they use materials to communicate, they use higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis and evaluation. Students think about how best to work with materials at hand to visually represent an idea.

Students can work with the elements of visual art—line, form, shape, color, texture, and pattern—to make meaning and construct ideas. They need to make choices about colors or lines, for example, and then explain their choices (Vivian Poey, pers. comm.). As students



create, they draw information from a range of sources and use the elements of art to express their ideas about that information. The elements of art are tools with which students construct meaning. Students learn about the elements as they create.

Visual representation is applicable to every content area. Students can use clay to construct vessels built from geometric shapes, learn about perimeter through sculpture, and tie visual art to math goals by making abstract concepts concrete. Students' comprehension and descriptive writing

are enhanced when they create storyboards to show the progression of a fairy tale they are creating. Moving between image and text as students represent their understanding of significant moments in a story can enrich descriptive details as students draw ideas from their paintings. Students are called to use their imaginations to create new ideas, use materials in a two- or three-dimensional space to communicate those ideas, and show they have met developmental benchmarks and curricular standards.

Visual art experiences allow students to use art as their own language. Because there are no formulaic rules, as there are in writing, visual art allows students who do not draw well or who do not yet have knowledge of the elements of art to participate. The trick for the teacher is to ease students into using their imaginations, to allow them to understand that trial and error is a natural part of the process and that art is a mode of expression defined by each individual.

How is what is in their heads different from the visual art they create? Often there is a “happy accident” or a difference between what was planned and how it came out. Art can be exciting, because students do not know what they are going to get; it is new. In visual art, it is the making itself that is key (Robert Shreefter, pers. comm.). The creative process allows students to work from the same instructions but present their learning through different interpretations. In this way, students learn from one another and bring forward their own unique translations while demonstrating their content learning.

Introductory Activity: Storyboarding

Here is an introductory lesson to get students thinking visually. Students create a series of images based on curricular content. Tell them they will create a storyboard to share ideas about a concept. This could include a sequential story (beginning, middle, end), the description of a scientific process (chemical reaction, the path of the circulatory system, growth of a seed into a plant), or the factors that led to a historical moment. Working from images allows students to first work metaphorically, and their writing will be more richly descriptive as a result.

- 1. Planning sketch:** Decide how many panels students will need to create a visual narrative. Fold and then unfold large newsprint paper so the folds create square or rectangular sections for individual sketches. Ask students to use the newsprint panels as a place to develop ideas and sketch rough thumbnail images in pencil that will be fully developed in the final storyboard. Explain to students that the planning process is different from implementing final ideas. They are not replicating content twice. Rather, they are identifying and developing ideas on newsprint, and then they will manifest the fully developed ideas in the final storyboard. Ask students in their planning phase to experiment with layout so they are thinking about how they are using the space in each panel.
- 2. Storyboard:** Once students have created thumbnail sketches or drafts of their storyboards, they can use those plans to create their final ideas. At this point they can add words to the images. This prompts students to move between image and text, which draws out new ideas. Give students choices about how they want to

depict their visual narrative; not all students are comfortable drawing. Tell them they can take photographs, use images from online sources or magazines, paint abstract shapes, or use found materials to create a collage. The focus should be on conveying a sequence of ideas, not the exact medium.

- 3. Sharing:** Ask students to share their storyboards, discussing what they created, what they learned in the process, the choices they made, and how they are investigating the curricular concept.
- 4. Feedback:** Ask the rest of the class to talk about what they see in the storyboards. Ask: “What do you find interesting? What made you think? How are they are similar to or different from choices you made in your own storyboard?” (Robert Shreefter, pers. comm.).

The sequencing of visual images is an organizing and idea-generating strategy for more structured writing activities as well. Teacher Stacy Winterfeld notes, “I have learned . . . that struggling writers may benefit from creating storyboards prior to writing their ideas down on paper. By first creating and viewing images, they then may be more successful in developing the words and sentences needed to describe what they want to say. . . . By sketching out their ideas, we are allowing our students a much higher chance of success and creativity with their writing, while also allowing them to potentially dig much deeper and think much more critically than they may otherwise have been doing” (pers.comm.).

Visual Art Strategies

There are many ways to introduce visual art into your curriculum. Here are a few flexible, easy-to-implement strategies.

Visual Essay

Assign or allow students to choose a curricular concept and provide time for them to find related images from a variety of sources: internet, magazines, discarded books, and so on. Then have students choose and sequence the images to tell a story. Students can add language or writing to their presentation of images. Have students create an exhibit of their visual works, create books, or present their images in blogs or websites. Encourage them to look analytically at each image, questioning what is noticeable and what is not. Have students present their visual essays to the group to view, discuss, and describe what is there or what is suggested.

Observational Drawing

Observational drawing is a heightened way of observing. Have students closely observe items related to a curricular area of study, such as leaves, rocks, or flowers (science); tessellations or Mandelbrot sets (mathematics); or historical artifacts or art (social studies). Ask them to draw what they see. The focus should be less on getting a beautiful drawing and more on close observation, as long as students are representing details they observe. Working visually cultivates the development of deep observation skills and an interest in noticing detail. This attention to detail can then translate into students' writing.

“When you draw, you learn to see the world completely differently. Sketches allow you to notice closely and document details. You realize that the world is not made out of lines, that white is not white—it’s purple or green and it changes when the light hits. Asking students to document their learning visually can allow students to focus in on details, and discover based on their own observations”
(Vivian Poey, pers. comm.).

Collage

Provide students with a variety of collage materials (textured material, colored paper, origami paper, found objects such as leaves) and have students construct visual representations of curricular concepts. Encourage students to experiment with different ways to put the materials together, considering color, shape, textures, and meaning. Have students observe what others have done, which will spark new ideas for their own work. Hold a discussion of one another's work, and have students respond in oral language or writing. Invite students to explore the layering and/or juxtaposition of artistic elements and to compose their collage applying the principles of design (see page 165).

Mixed Media

Invite students to work with a range of media, such as clay, paint, colored pencils, and technologies, to produce visual work based



Collage created by Dana Schildkraut based on a science lesson about genetics.

on curricular content. These materials can provide students with new ways to create a visual response to content, represent their understanding of an idea, or investigate a concept as an exploration. With the use of accessible video and sound recordings, students can create their own stories, reach more people, and feel part of a global community. The use of technology supports inclusion of students of all abilities and provides a wealth of new tools that support all students showing what they know (Creagan-Quinquis and Thormann 2017).

Visual Arts across the Curriculum

Like all the arts, visual art is flexible enough to be used across the curriculum. Between testing and worksheets, you may worry that there is not time for this kind of in-depth work. Yet there are ways to structure your classroom to integrate visual art to deepen learning. Show visual images to students to provide context or provoke discussion about a unit. Ask students to express their understanding in a visual response. Have students keep visual journals with sketches, cut-out images, and photographs to demonstrate their ideas and stimulate writing. You will find that for many students, working visually enhances their writing with more descriptive language. Hubbard argues, “Children’s drawings are viable tools for problem solving. Through them children make sense of the world and impart their visions. Teachers who channel children narrowly toward verbal solutions may be denying them the opportunity to share the full power of their images” (1987, 60).

Visual Art in Mathematics

Incorporating visual imagery into your math lessons can help make mathematical concepts tangible. For example, kindergarten and first-grade students can work on number concepts by drawing addition and subtraction story problems or creating them through sculpture. Cut sponges or potatoes into geometric shapes and have students dip them into paint and stamp repeating patterns such as AB, ABAB, or ABCABC. This helps make an abstract math concept concrete and can illustrate student learning (Susan Fisher, pers. comm.).

Have students explore the idea of symmetry by creating tessellations, designs in which a shape is repeated to form a pattern. Students can use pen and ink on paper or use collage, in which they must paste shapes together on the picture plane in symmetrical balance. This activity requires students to plan and measure carefully and solve practical mathematical problems (Kerrie Bellisario, pers. comm.). Check out a library book on folding origami and have students create origami animals to investigate angles and fractions. A lotus fold, for instance, the basis for most origami, is folded in half, then quarters, and then eighths.

A complex activity can address multiple standards at once. Have students create a self-portrait soft-sculpture puppet. Have students create their own rulers, use them to measure in the initial planning stages, and use a protractor to find the circumference of a circle, which becomes the pattern for the puppet's head. Then have students determine the radius of the circle and weigh stuffing on a scale. Have students document their thinking and creative process in a work portfolio. Display the puppets along with students' written explanations of the mathematical concepts. In addition to providing a hands-on and engaging entry into the study of mathematics, this lesson allows for meaningful dialogue with students about their own abilities and how math concepts are used in their lives (Dr. Maureen Creegan-Quinquis, pers. comm.).

Visual Art in Science

Observation is key to scientific understanding. Use visual art to focus and expand student observations. Have students observe and draw scientific processes. For example, have them plant seeds and document in images what they notice at each stage of growth, as well as what they imagine will happen next. To kick off a study of light, have students paint the sky at different times of the day, observing and documenting what they see with paint.

Begin a unit of study with deep observation (Poey, pers. comm.). Focus on observation by asking students to create a drawing of an object, and then use a viewfinder (a square cut out of paper) to zoom in on their subject. Have students draw or paint the smaller, detailed view, noticing finer details, color, and value. Then have them zoom in even more and transform what they see into abstract shapes, as if they were looking through a microscope. Finally, have students create a science newsletter featuring these drawings and students' writings about the progression of their observations (Kerrie Bellisario, pers. comm.).



Watercolor Tools, S. Fisher, Adjunct Faculty, Lesley University

This focus on deepening observation skills can be transferred to different areas of science. Have students keep a nature journal, first sketching what they see in the environment, then describing their observations with words. Middle school students can use a visual journal to track their discoveries during dissection labs.

Visual art integration also involves opening students' eyes to the fact that visual art has always been a part of the other disciplines. Painting involves understanding the

chemistry of pigments and chemicals to achieve colors; photography involves the chemical components of developing a picture; and drawing and painting involve preparing raw materials as well as measurement, perspective, and patterning (Susan Fisher, pers. comm.). Have students use real-world science in visual art to explore scientific concepts.

The materials used to create visual art can provide hands-on experiences with scientific principles. Watercolors are clean and easy to work with to explore cause and effect. Just put a dollop of watercolor from a tube on a plate and let it dry—this will give you enough paint to use for two lessons. Allow students to experiment with laying down crayon color and painting watercolor over it (wax resist). Have students sprinkle salt onto wet watercolors, where it will crystallize and create patterns. Have students observe and document these changes and processes closely and then use students' experiences as an introduction to the scientific principles involved. These experiments also can enhance learning in visual art. When students are allowed to play with materials, they discover new possibilities and then use this information when creating compositions (Susan Fisher, pers. comm.).

Visual art also can be a synthesizing activity and a form of assessment in science. Have students create a photomontage of scientific processes such as decay or states of matter. Have them apply their research of habitat by creating pop-up books that illustrate the flora and fauna that exist in different geographic zones. Visual representations of understanding can serve as a great assessment tool to show what students have learned in their research.

Visual Art in Social Studies

Observing art (photographs, films, painting, collage, sculpture, drawings, carvings, and so on) from many cultures can serve as a jumping-off point for discussions about an era, a

movement, a historic event, or the portrayal of a culture. Viewing multiple modes of work by diverse groups of artists can be a great way to set the stage for work in the classroom. These artists can inspire and serve as examples of people who create, but their work also provides ways into writing and research. Mural artist Judy Baca, for example, works with historical traditions in mural-making, drawing from the community for inspiration. Installation artist Fred Wilson creates museum installations that question who is represented and who is not. Collage artist



Mural image by Alex Edgerly.

Romare Bearden documents the areas where he lived and worked, capturing African American culture in the 1930s. Viewing a wide range of artists' work can spark student projects that allow them to engage in similar explorations through visual mediums.

Free resources, such as government photo archives, provide a wealth of visual information. For example, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Farm Security Administration (FSA) put unemployed artists to work during the Great Depression to document every facet of American life. They created one of the largest photo collections in the world, which is available online for free through the Library of Congress website.

Students can create visual works based on their own lived experiences as well. Have students create neighborhood maps, including where they live and three different places of interest. Then, have students map out their paths to get from one place to another. Students should use different lines, textures, and colors to represent different areas of their maps.



In the Classroom

Visual art can help students make personal connections to curriculum. Former fifth-grade educator Berta Berriz, who taught English learners in Boston used an arts-based approach to biography/autobiography writing that attempts to build a direct bridge from the biography of a character from early U.S. history to students' lives. Each student created a book illustrating a significant moment in the life of a historical figure. The art provided language for representing this moment. These turning points reflected students' feelings about their own diverse experiences and journeys. For example, one student chose Squanto's experience learning English, which was parallel to his own learning of a new language. Another student chose Sacajawea's entry into another culture, which mirrored the student's own journey. Students selected one event in their character's life to depict in a pop-up book. Deepening their knowledge of one event supported students in constructing time lines—a string of events in a life. Students placed their biography time lines on a larger time line of U.S. history. They paired up with Time Line Buddies for discussion throughout the writing process. The teacher reflected on how students worked collaboratively: "One student quickly became our tree expert, teaching

others; another was an expert at drawing the figure; and yet another [became an expert] at some of the engineering skills necessary for making 3D work and conceptualizing one scene in three rows of the book. Concepts such as foreground, mid-ground, background as well as scale and grounding elements, etc., were considered. Text-illustration congruence was also discussed. Some of the students' moments were really a period in a figure's life. How could a student choose only one moment—and which moment would be most crucial to represent? Our biographer of Squanto asked the class for help. Should he have Squanto sitting at a desk learning English? Or should Squanto, now having learned English, be addressing his people? After much consideration, Squanto was to be placed on the deck of the ship to represent his leaving London to return to America. This solution not only pinpointed this moment but it spoke to his time in England, his need to return to America, and symbolized the great journey he had taken. This and other discussions became the key aspect in having students collaborate, learn about each other's figures, and piece together strategies for both easy and very complex issues of representation and use of symbols" (Donovan, Shreefter, and Adams 2005).

Visual Art in Language Arts

Visual arts can support emerging writers. Working in the visual arts allows students to create and decode another type of language—metaphors that reflect their ideas and understanding. Students can create images that stand for ideas that are symbolic, and they can discover what happens when they move from image to text. Coming up with an image first is often easier than writing cold (Robert Shreefter, pers. comm.). Conversely, when students are asked to write first and then translate the ideas from their writing into visual images, they are analyzing text, problem solving, and making critical decisions as they decide what images to use (Kerrie Bellisario, pers. comm.).

Begin by asking students to maintain visual journals in which they keep observational sketches. Shreefter says that when students begin to think using both languages (visual and written), they benefit in both areas. He notes, "The creation of art allows students to create their own language for expressing who they are and what they know. They can use classroom texts along with their own languages and experiences for writing and art making" (Robert Shreefter, pers. comm.). Have students create visual essays on any topic of study or have them create books to visually document their personal ideas about curricular content or their lives.

In the book *In the Middle*, Nancie Atwell, a pioneer of responsive teaching in literacy, describes the adverse effects of taking a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching (1998). Atwell states, “Student participants in the intermediate grades begin to seek reassurances that what they do is acceptable to others. They become aware of audience—of others’ opinions and realize that what they’ve done will be judged” (1998, 148). This is why it becomes critical to create safe spaces in which educators can implement inclusive visual arts integration strategies that help ease the anxiety (Willcox 2017).

In the Classroom

Educator Kerrie Bellisario worked with her high school students to explore using media to create new ideas during Banned Books Week. One of her students isolated one hundred words from *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee to remix into a new image.



Art created by Neel Badlani

In the Classroom

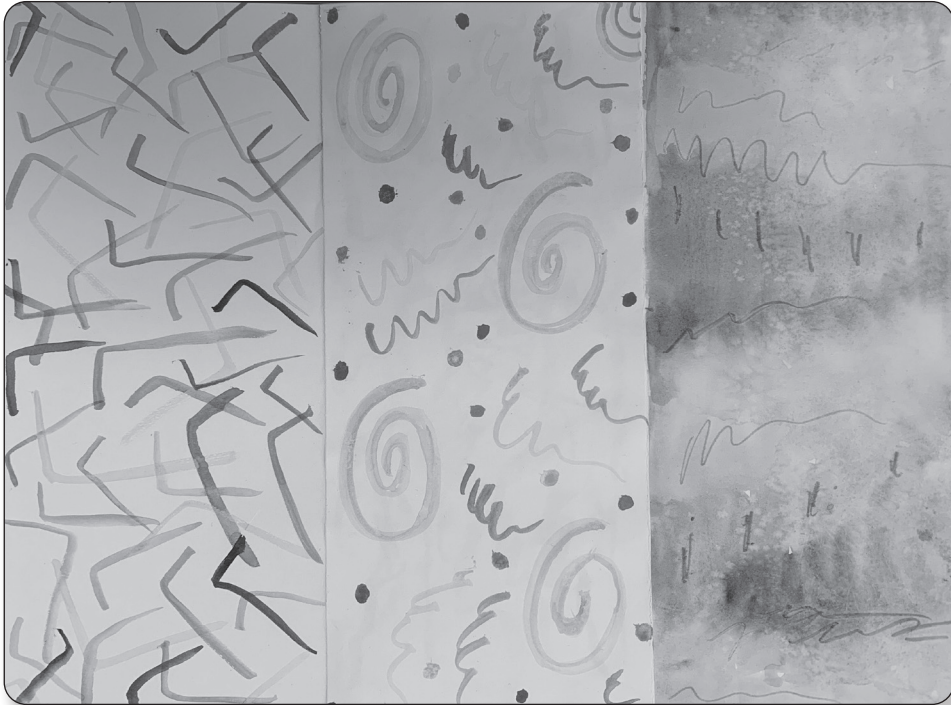
Dr. Maureen Creegan-Quinquis uses a process-based art-integration approach to teach writing that builds on the work of Susan Sheridan. Sheridan suggests that teachers can use blind contour drawing as an entry point into writing, which can be particularly useful for English language learners (Sheridan 1997, 5). The blind contour technique asks students to draw without looking, critiquing, or erasing the drawing, preventing students from being paralyzed with self-consciousness and preventing too much self-critiquing as they draw. In this technique the drawing is not analyzed as it is created, which facilitates a smoother translation from what the student observes to what is put on the paper.

Creegan-Quinquis asks students to draw a natural artifact, such as a leaf, in pencil without looking at what they are drawing until it is finished. As students draw the leaf without looking at the lines they are making, focusing fully on the leaf as they draw, they are asked to think about how they would describe the marks they have made. Is the line smooth? Is the edge of the leaf wiry? Students are asked to note the type of lines that emerge. When they are finished drawing, they write words that describe the lines they have made. In doing this, they are cataloguing visual information. Students then work in pairs or small groups to compare and discuss their word choices. They begin with words they feel they can use for an entry into writing and then work with each other to expand the vocabulary. These new vocabulary words and descriptors can become seeds for poetry, stories, or other writings.

The watercolor triptych strategy is another way to connect visual arts to several curriculum areas and social-emotional learning (SEL). The strategy allows students to explore color, watercolor techniques, and emotions, which supports SEL, language arts, science, and math. Begin by teaching different watercolor techniques (find “Watercolor Techniques for Kids” on YouTube for examples of techniques). Give students time to experiment and explore to discover how to use the brush and different amounts of water and paint. Students can use craypas and crayons (using the side of the crayon) if watercolors are not available. After students experiment, discuss the ways color can connect to emotions and feelings. The students then fold their paper into thirds and create a three-part emotion painting. This project creates a perfect opportunity to write stories or poetry about one or more of the emotions depicted on their triptych.

Watercolor Emotion Triptych

(Left to right—confused, happy, sad)



S. Fisher, Adjunct Faculty, Lesley University

Concluding Thoughts

Encouraging students to explore ideas through the making of images allows them to tap into thoughts, feelings, and responses that may be elusive in written or spoken word on the first try. King and Ippolito argue that “linguistic knowledge cannot completely explain or describe what we know, and trying to verbalize our thoughts and feelings frequently obstructs the self-discovery process” (2001, 71). Drawing and creating images allow students to explore their ideas in new forms. Karen Gallas reflects on the use of drawing as a way to understand



insects in her classroom: “Knowing wasn’t just telling something back as we had received it. Knowing meant transformation and change. . . . For both children and teacher, the arts offer opportunities for reflection upon the content and the process of learning and they foster a deeper level of communication about what knowledge is and who is truly in control of the learning process” (1991, 50). Allowing students to move between “languages” of text and image provides new ways for students to explore, relate to, and express ideas.

The fact that each student produces something different through their own interpretation of the content is important. Part of the art-making process involves looking closely at one another’s work and appreciating the choices. It allows everyone in the classroom to appreciate the work rather than evaluating based on a hierarchical idea of the right answer. “When we use our own experience . . . I learn about you, you learn about me or about the students in the first row. The other way we always assume the teacher has the answer and that we have to find out what it is. One of the things about art-making and about appreciation of other art is just that. We become appreciators rather than people who know or don’t know. We become people who are excited about learning about and from each other, even if we don’t agree. Which is a lot different from not knowing the answers” (Robert Shreefter, pers. comm.). This is a different kind of learning where students have more control of knowledge and how they work with it.

Reflection

1. Where might the use of illustration heighten observation skills in your curriculum?
2. What artist exemplars might serve as catalysts to deepen a curricular topic?
3. When students work with different materials (paint, clay, oil sticks, found objects), how does the way they express their ideas change?