

# Arts Integration User Guide for New Jersey Educators and Practitioners



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## Introduction

Educators, whatever their role and wherever they work, have similar purposes. They want their students to be clever and competent in the content they are studying. They want them to be creative in how they approach knowledge and what they do with it. They want their students to persevere especially when learning gets difficult, and they want students to find joy in learning so they are attracted to study rather than avoiding it.

For those who take these goals seriously, teaching is a very difficult task. Traditionally, each discipline was taught separately and learning was often a repetitive, tedious and dull process of content mastery thought to be too hard to be accessible to large parts of the student population.

For generations, good educators have found that one solution to this problem rests with the integration of the Arts into the content of the class. They have been able to demonstrate difficult concepts in unique ways and help their students do the same. Recently, new projects have been sponsored by federal and state government, as well as local districts, that help teachers learn to enrich student study. Some examples of new efforts include: Integrated STEM and its companion, STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, ARTS, and Math); the intentional use of the Arts to achieve Title I goals; and New Jersey Student Learning Standards that embrace live performances, video and other art forms as text. Given all the activity around the arts and arts integration, it is not surprising that researchers and neuroscientists have provided new validation and data for the merit of arts integration techniques.

The purpose of this User Guide is to provide a contemporary vision of how arts integration can improve teacher practice and school culture, and deepen the learning process for students in the 21st century. Through a discussion on defining qualities and proven practices, this guide can also act as a framework for implementing arts integration within diverse educational contexts and communicate adaptable guidelines so all districts can benefit from integrating arts across their curricula.

Along with creating this User Guide, stakeholders from across New Jersey are working together to also:

- Align state initiatives pursuing arts integration,
- Develop best practices for professional learning
- Impact policy for a cultural shift around arts integration attitudes, and
- Create shared spaces, both digital and physical, for arts integration to thrive.

These objectives will be accomplished through developing an understanding of what art integration is, its purpose to 21st century education contexts, how pedagogy is impacted by the process, and how educators can use best practices to maximize effectiveness.

It is also important to note that arts integration is not a movement meant to replace traditional arts education. Art for art's sake is necessary to the evolution of each artistic discipline, while also allowing students a place to discover their creative being. Arts Integration practices are most effective when a school has certified arts teachers on staff and they can become a key partner in the realization of arts integration initiatives with other content faculty.



## What is Arts Integration?

For the purposes of this Guide, we are using the following definition:

**“Arts integration is a teaching strategy in which the arts are integrated with the non-arts curriculum to deepen students’ understanding of both” (Isenberg and Jalongo, 2010, Werner and Freeman, 2001).**

Many more definitions exist, but it seems that the common thread is the process of combining diverse disciplines with the arts for the purpose of accomplishing unique learning objectives.



## Why Arts Integration?

Researchers have long established why the arts are important to our schools and students. As a result of studies over the last several years, we are now able to examine more robustly the unique impact of arts integration. The impact falls into four broad categories: **1) student academic and social emotional learning; 2) teacher efficacy and satisfaction; 3) improved classroom and school climate; and 4) improved parent and community connections.** Studies exist on various indicators that support each of these impact categories. A preliminary bibliography of resource links can be found in the appendix.

# What Criteria Are Necessary for Arts Integration?

Through an examination of national, state and local research and the harvesting of individual programs' promising practices, we have determined six essential elements for successful and rigorous arts integration efforts:

- I. Secure Leadership Approval and Support
- II. Establish an Arts Integration Leadership Team
- III. Balance Arts Standards with Other Content Standards
- IV. Provide Ongoing, Job-embedded Professional Learning
- V. Document and Assess Impact
- VI. Ensure Sustainability



## I. Secure Leadership Approval and Support

It has proven to be essential to have approval and support by the Superintendent and/or School Board as well as the school principal in order to have a successful arts integration initiative. A commitment of resources of time and money are critical for the following:

- Additional supplies
- Dedicated student instructional time to work across subject disciplines
- Engagement of community and cultural organizations
- Professional learning opportunities
- Teacher co-planning time

Checklist	To Do	In Progress	In Practice
A. Principal Sign off			
B. Superintendent Sign off			
C. Board Sign off			

## II. Establish an Arts Integration Leadership Team

Once a school or district has the commitment of leadership, a team should be established that will work to ensure an appropriate design and implementation of the arts integration work. The team should include representation from different administrative and grade levels and diverse content areas. Collaboration among leaders and teachers of all disciplines is critical to the success of this endeavor.

### A. Identify Team Leadership Participants

Checklist	To Do	In Progress	In Practice
Site-Specific administrators (e.g. principal, vice principal, and/or supervisor)			
Curriculum Supervisors (e.g. arts and/or other disciplines)			
Arts Educators (e.g. Dance, Media Arts, Music, Theatre, Visual Arts)			
Grade level and other content area teachers			
Community partners (e.g. arts organizations, higher education, foundations)			
Students			
Parents			

### B. Establish an Arts Integration Vision and Action Plan

A key to sustainable arts integration is the creation of an action plan. This plan should include an overall vision, short and long term goals, strategies, and benchmarks. The plan should align with the school's and/or district's strategic plans. Some elements to consider while developing the plan include the roles of teachers and school leaders, development of pedagogy and curriculum, scheduling, and professional learning.

Checklist	To Do	In Progress	In Practice
Write a vision statement for arts integration			
Define roles of teachers and school leaders			
Develop pedagogy and curriculum			
Develop schedule for arts integration planning and co-teaching			
Design professional learning opportunities			

### C. Serve as Ambassadors to Internal and External Stakeholders

Team members should communicate the efforts and accomplishments of the arts integration work to members of the school board, the superintendent, other school personnel, and the larger community.

Checklist	To Do	In Progress	In Practice
Serve as Ambassadors to Internal and External Stakeholders			

### D. Establish Metrics and Monitor Rigor of Implementation

Team members are responsible for the establishment of a documentation and assessment protocol. Members are also responsible for monitoring the implementation of the arts integration plan.

Checklist	To Do	In Progress	In Practice
Establish Metrics and Monitor Rigor of Implementation			

## E. Resource Development

Team members are responsible for recruiting new teacher participants and securing funding.

Checklist	To Do	In Progress	In Practice
Resource Development			

## F. Curriculum development

Team members develop lesson plans and curriculum, including cross-discipline planning, that can be shared with all educators. The curriculum should balance arts standards with other subject standards.

Checklist	To Do	In Progress	In Practice
Curriculum Development			

## G. Professional Learning

Team members develop targeted arts integration professional learning opportunities for all educators.

Checklist	To Do	In Progress	In Practice
Professional Learning			

## H. Showcase Arts Integration

Team members should celebrate and showcase the arts integration outcomes to a variety of audiences to build support.

Checklist	To Do	In Progress	In Practice
Showcase Arts Integration			

## I. Implementation and Process Reflection

Team members should continually reflect on the implementation of arts integration activities.

Checklist	To Do	In Progress	In Practice
Implementation and Process Reflection			

## III. Balance Arts Standards with Other Content Standards

Quality and rigorous arts integration practices intentionally establish an equitable balance between arts standards and other content standards. Arts and other content standards should be taught and assessed equally.

Checklist	To Do	In Progress	In Practice
Lesson/unit plans indicate arts standards and other subject standards			
Each discipline in project is defined with discipline-specific goals			
Integration is intentional and articulated throughout the planning, implementation and assessment process			

## IV. Provide Ongoing, Job-embedded Professional Learning

Integrated learning requires a great deal of professional learning due to the interdisciplinary and collaborative processes at work. Teachers must be supported and guided through the process of arts integration even if they have prior arts education knowledge. Educators themselves must evolve throughout implementation,

ultimately embodying the roles of researcher, scientist, artist, designer, co-creator, and advocate for and purveyor of collaborative teaching and learning.

Checklist	To Do	In Progress	In Practice
Training/modeling in co-teaching			
Ongoing professional learning			
On-site and off-site opportunities			
Integrated in individual Professional Improvement Plans			
Integrated into schoolwide Professional Development Plan			
Teacher input into process			
Pre-service teachers are placed in settings where Arts Integration is in practice.			
Teachers present and lead internally and externally			

## V. Document and Assess Impact

Documentation for the purpose of assessment is critical in today's educational context, and those who wish to engage in arts integration should not suspend the need for accountability. Assessment is central to understanding whether the students understand core learning objectives. Additionally, metrics for student academic and social emotional learning, teacher efficacy, and classroom culture change should be considered.

Checklist	To Do	In Progress	In Practice
Student Content Mastery			
Student Academic Achievement			
Student Socio-Emotional Growth			
Teacher Efficacy and Satisfaction			
Classroom and School Climate			
Parent and Community Connections			

## VI. Ensure Sustainability

This work requires a commitment to reviewing assessment metrics, synthesizing promising practices, and revising pedagogies and implementation strategies that help schools and districts engage in arts integration. The arts integration practices are dynamic and iterative and should be designed to be assimilated into the culture of the school and district.

Checklist	To Do	In Progress	In Practice
Board approved policies that support Arts Integration			
Standardized, documented practices for Arts Integration			
Board approved job descriptions that support Arts Integration efforts			
Schoolwide Professional Development Plan to support Arts Integration			
Budget process and budget support Arts Integration			
Essential equipment and materials are available			
Adequate facilities and space			
Hiring process selects for strong Arts Integration candidates			
Well-articulated Arts Integration Plan			