



Introduction

„Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up”

(Pablo Picasso)

Visual arts represent “art forms that create works which are primarily visual in nature, such as ceramics, drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking, design, crafts, and often modern visual arts (photography, video, and filmmaking) and architecture”. (Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 2012)

Every child possesses many types of intelligences (Howard Gardner, 1999) and needs a wide variety of learning experiences in order to develop them fully. Visual arts activities help students to understand and to express their world in a visual, tangible form. Visual arts techniques bring together different elements of students’ experience from which a whole new experience can develop. Understanding visual imagery enables students to get additional ways of learning and helps them record real or imagined ideas and feelings. Chances to explore and investigate visual elements in their environment enable them to appreciate the nature of things and to focus their natural curiosity for educational purposes. Visual arts education helps them to develop sensory awareness, enhances sensibilities and emphasizes particular ways of exploring, experimenting and inventing. The visual arts curriculum offers a wide range of activities which help students to develop ideas through imagery, providing therefore a necessary balance to the wider curriculum. The enjoyment and confidence which derive from visual arts activities have a positive effect on students’ learning in all the areas of the curriculum.

Debbie Cluff (2005) considers that visual arts contribute to exceeding the students learning bounds and to their creative thinking. Accordingly, their use develops many mechanisms that increase the chances of a deeper understanding of the curricular subjects: Literature, Foreign Languages, Mathematics, Science, Geography, History, etc. Thus, the teacher can incorporate different types of visual arts into his lessons as motivational tools with the role in enhancing his ability to transmit knowledge and the students’ capacity to understand it.

Teachers can develop students’ learning by offering them the chance to establish connections between visual arts content areas and other disciplines across the curriculum. There are a lot of benefits of incorporating visual arts education across the curriculum (Maryland, Fine Arts Education).



Ellen Booth Church writes that incorporating visual arts in the curricular subjects, through instruction and assessment, encourages the growth of some skills, such as reasoning, analysis, synthesis and communication. Teachers can use many different ways of teaching through the visual arts, thus depending on his/her interests and way of teaching and it is the most powerful tool that he/she can give in his/her classroom because it enables the students to accomplish their highest level of learning.

Techniques

One can identify many reasons to justify the importance of integrating visual arts in the teaching of curricular subjects:

- It allows students who are not very good at certain curricular subjects to feel involved in the process of learning, and helps building their self-confidence as they feel great at art and creative.
- It allows students to understand that there are a lot of right answers to a question.
- It allows teachers to discover their students' learning styles.
- It allows students with different learning styles to cooperate during the class, which stimulates them to feel involved in the learning process.
- It allows students to be creative and to feel unique.
- It allows students to communicate ideas and feelings which words cannot describe and to express themselves visually.
- It allows students to build fine motor skills, the same skills the children need to learn how to write letters and words, by encouraging them to use their hands to manipulate clay, weave, finger paint and paint.
- It allows students to express their moods and to work out their frustrations by using colours in their drawings and paintings and by the texture and structure of clay.
- It allows students to observe, predict, experiment and problem-solve by using art materials. Their scientific thinking skills can be developed by appealing to open-ended art activities in which the students have to make choices on how to imagine and realize a sculpture, a picture, a drawing or a collage.
- It allows students to promote language development by talking about their art and by creating stories.
- It allows students to develop social and emotional interaction skills by using discussions with other students and sharing experiences.
- It allows students to develop a strong sense of success and mastery by introducing new art materials, such as painting with feathers.

Principles

One of the most challenging aspects of incorporating visual arts in core curricular subjects is the application of some principles which could allow teachers to approach a differential and personalized education.

- a) The principle of viewing the curriculum as a whole. The curriculum should not consider visual arts as being separate subjects, but integrate them throughout the curriculum, thus, enhancing creativity in every core curricular subject. Integrating visual arts in core curricular subjects encourages the development of some important skills, such as communication, reasoning, synthesis and analysis. Teachers can help students to establish connections between areas and the other subjects across the curriculum. By integrating visual arts education across the curriculum teachers can develop students' thinking skills.
- b) The principle of learning. Students learn in different styles and rhythms, but learning through visual arts develops personal learning styles, creative and critical thinking skills, social and emotional interactional skills, scientific thinking skills, self-esteem, willingness to take risks and ability to work with others etc.
- c) The principle of teaching. Teachers need to find a way to incorporate the visual arts into the classroom as they have to discover and stimulate students' skills and interests. Teaching through the visual arts forces students to involve themselves in the art of creation. For instance, they might make a collage, a sculpture, draw a painting, etc. This approach helps students not only towards reading or discussing concepts, but also experiences them, which emphasizes the importance of acquiring multiple intelligences. In this way, their minds become more open to new ideas and different perspectives.
- d) The principle of assessment. The assessment should lead the students to a correct self-assessment and to a constant development of their performances.

Teachers can use various techniques to teach curricular subjects through visual arts, this depending on the teacher's interests, but truly it is a way to enable students to reach their highest level of learning.

Colour technique includes finger paint, tempera paint, oil pastels, coloured crayons and pens to explore the emotional context of colour through colour mixing activities. Colours can enhance understanding of content and have different significance to different cultures, and may be used to help students understand the actions and motivations of others. Students can use colours to interpret personal meanings of content and create moods and emotions.

Modelling technique is the manipulation of a variety of media, for instance plasticine, modelling clay, playdough and found objects, such as cardboard, paper, to create concrete images of text, content ideas or concepts. Students, especially those who cannot express themselves through words, can demonstrate that they understand by creating models. When using these techniques, students can either work independently or in pairs or in teams to create collaborative three-dimensional representations of texts.

Folding paper technique requires certain skills and abilities in order to create some forms of artistic space by paper or cardboard folding. In this area there are a few techniques that should be known by every teacher and applied during the class, for example, the technique of collage, tangram, origami and decollage. Folding paper techniques gives the paper artistic qualities inspired by observation of natural forms. It requires permanent attention, creative thinking and development of the psychomotor processes.

Simple masks technique involves creating specific masks for different learning situations and requires emotions, patience and attention. Students create and use masks to demonstrate understanding of concept and content. Masks are representational and/or symbolic, rather than the neutral face used in the introductory mask activities. Mask work is ideal for creating an understanding character traits and motivations.

Drawing visualization of text technique helps students see character, setting and events. They use a variety of drawing media to visualize narrative and non-fictional texts. Leigh & Heid (2008) assert that by drawing what they read or hear, students access information through creating visual representations. The drawing visualization of text techniques is an important tool in helping students to fix information into memory. The use of shape and colour when applied to an amount of information can become a device which can help students in retrieving data at a later date.

Collage technique represents an assemblage of different forms which creates a new whole. Collages include photographs, found objects, cut-outs from newspapers and magazines, handmade papers, paper bags, tissue paper portions of other artwork glued on a board, a piece of paper or a canvas. This technique provides an environment for unique visual expression and the act of collecting items develop problem solving skills.

Print technique represents creating, organising and balancing shapes, spaces, pattern and texture. This technique can vary from simple single images to very sophisticated designs. Students can look at and touch a wide variety of natural and manufactured objects which emphasizes shape, pattern,

texture and colour.

Our century tends to develop productive citizens who have the necessary skills to function both in real life and in the workplace. So, education must prepare life-long learners who have the thinking, social and motivational skills needed for success in these two areas.

Thus, integrating visual arts in teaching core curricular subjects has the power to engage students and gives them multiple styles of learning. It can help them stay in school and learn a variety of skills they need for life and for working in a world based on increasing global competitiveness. Education through visual arts develops skills in communication, collaboration, perseverance and concentration, setting and achieving goals; it encourages individual and collective creativity and enhances understanding and respect for others.

Examples of Practices

Visual Art – Mathematics

Age: 4th grade

Geometric Figures Which Have Axes of Symmetry

Aims: Students will be able to

- make symmetrical shapes,
- make congruent shapes,
- record shapes on coloured paper with dots,
- identify axes of symmetry.

Process:

Step 1: To capture the Students' attention the Teacher asks them to fold a piece of coloured paper in half and cut a butterfly wing shape. When they are ready, the Teacher tells the Students to open their folded pieces of paper to see that both sides are equal and that they are a reflection of the other. The teacher sticks the symmetrical figures on the board.

Step 2: Each student receives coloured papers with dots which united represent one of the following geometric figures: a square, a rectangular, a circle, a different type of a triangle, a rhombus, a parallelogram and a different type of a trapezoid. First they have to create the figure by joining the points. Then they have to cut the figures and after that to fold them, but the Teacher does not say how to divide the figure, which means that they can create many different axes of symmetry.

Step 3: The Students join the points, cut the geometrical figures and then fold them in congruent shapes.

Step 4: The Students compare their figures with those of their colleagues and discuss why some figures have congruent forms while others do not. Teacher introduces the term of axis of symmetry.

Step 5: The Teacher gives each Student an activity paper with different geometrical figures and asks them to use a pencil to draw as many axes of symmetry as possible for each figure.

Material required: coloured paper, scissors, activity paper, pencils

Duration: 50 min

Expected outcome:

- express their visual and spatial thinking,
- draw geometrical figures,
- recognize geometric ideas and apply them to problems that arise in the classroom or in everyday life.

Visual Arts and Science

Age: 4th grade

The Rainbow

Aims: Students will be able to:

- learn the colours of a rainbow,
- learn the order of the colours in a rainbow,
- make a rainbow.

Process:

Step 1: The Teacher asks the Students if they have ever seen a rainbow and what they have noticed about it. Also, the Teacher wants to know if the Students think that rainbows are the same. The Students answer the questions and after that the Teacher explains that rainbows may have different sizes but the order of the colours is always the same.

Step 2: The Teacher shows the Students a prism and explains them that it acts the same as water. It bends the light and forms the same colours like the rainbow by using the flashlight to demonstrate.

Step 3: The Teacher explains that people use the phrase ROYGBIV to remember the order of the colours: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo and Violet.

Step 4: The Teacher groups the students into seven teams (each team representing a colour of the rainbow) and gives them a strips of cloth having the colours of the rainbow to plait them.

Step 5: On a cardboard each team places the plait made by them in the order of the rainbow colours and using an arch form (the first team to place the plait is the red team, the second team is the orange team etc.)

Step 6: Students review the colours of the rainbow and read a legend about rainbows.

Material required: prism, flashlight, strips of cloth, cardboard, glue, book of legends

Suggested duration: 50 min

Expected outcomes:

- identify and order the colours of a rainbow,
- build a rainbow,
- develop their skills and abilities to explore and investigate the reality,
- develop their collaboration skills.

Visual Art – Literature

Age: 4th grade

Communicating Own Impressions and Feelings

Aims:

Students will be able to:

- express the content of a literary text through a painting,
- identify descriptive elements in a literary text,
- identify the writer's impressions and feelings,
- show interest and initiative for communicating their the impressions and feelings produced by reading a literary text.
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Process:

Step 1: The Teacher reads a poem about a season of the year and the Students listen carefully.

Step 2: The Teacher asks a few questions connected to the literary text, such as: What season of the year does the poet describe? What visual, auditory and olfactive images can you identify? What adjectives does the write use in order to express the visual, auditory and olfactive images? What colours can be inferred from the lyrics? What impressions and feelings do you think the poet expresses? What impressions and feelings does the poem awake in you?

Step 3: The Teacher asks the Students to illustrate by painting the images rendered by the poet.

Step 4: The Students paint the images rendered by the poet according their own impressions and feelings.

Step 5: The Students exhibit their paintings on the board in front of the class.

Material required: the text of the poem, paper, tempera paint, brushes, board

Suggested duration: 50 min

Expected outcomes:

- make paintings,
- understand the content of the written text,
- express their own impressions and feelings,
- develop their creativity and imagination,
- develop their self-esteem,
- create moods and emotions.

Visual Art – Foreign language

Age: 4th grade

Clothes

Aims:

Students will be able to:

- to learn items of clothing,
- to render short messages,
- to introduce new words into sentences.
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Process:

Step 1: The Teacher invites a girl and a boy in front of the classroom and describes his/her clothes. The Teacher writes the new vocabulary on the whiteboard. Then teacher asks Students if they can add other items of clothing. The Teacher adds new words on the whiteboard.

Step 2: The Teacher repeats the words and the Students repeat in a chorus. Then the Teacher nominates the Students in order to repeat the new vocabulary individually.

Step 3: The Teacher divides the Students in four groups, each one representing a season, gives each group a board on which a boy and a girl are drawn, coloured paper, scissors, glue, pencils. Each group has to draw clothes by using the coloured paper and then they have to stick the items of clothing on the boy and the girl drawn on the board so that they dress them according to the season each group represent.

Step 4: Successively each group presents their collage by mentioning the items of clothing they manufactured.

Material required: board, coloured paper, scissors, glue, pencils

Suggested duration: 50 min

Expected outcomes:

- make collages,
- use the vocabulary of the items of clothing,
- develop their self-esteem,
- create moods and emotions,
- develop visual expression.

Visual Art – History

Age: 4th grade

Rulers, Heroes, Events

Aims:

Students will be able to:

- learn the most important events which took part during Stefan the Great's Reign,
- learn about this ruler's most important traits and why his nickname was Stefan the Great,
- make drawings.

Process:

Step 1: The Teacher introduces the lesson by explaining to the Students that they will learn about Stefan the Great. Then the Teacher asks the Students to present any facts they know about Stefan the Great. The Teacher lists the facts on the board.

Step 2: The Teacher shows images to the Students and tells them about this historical figure (who he was and the most important events that took part during his reign). The Teacher lists the most important things on the board.

Step 3: The Teacher asks the Students to draw individually one of the most important events in Stefan the Great's Reign.

Step 4: The Students choose one event they consider important.

Step 5: The Students show their drawing mentioning the event. Then they order them on the board in the chronologically, thus they revise the new information about this ruler. Then they have to notice if any important event has not been drawn by anybody. If there is any they have to mention it and to place it in the correct order, chronologically speaking.

Material required: white paper, pencils, crayons, board, images

Suggested duration: 50 min

Expected outcomes:

- identify and order the most important events which took part during Stefan the Great's Reign,
- make drawings,
- understand the historical perspective,
- develop their creativity and imagination,
- develop their self-esteem,
- develop their collaboration skills.

Dance – Geography

The Solar System

Aims:

Students will be able to:

- learn about the Sun and the planets,
- accomplish a simple representation of the solar system,
- correctly locate the geographical spatial elements,
- use appropriate language specific to geography.

Process:

Step 1: The Teacher shows the Students a map of the solar system and asks them to observe and analyze the Sun and the nine planets according to size, distance from the Sun, colour and characteristics.

Step 2: Students observe and analyze the solar system.

Step 3: Students use plasticine to shape the solar system trying to use the proper colour and size of each planet: Sun – yellow, Mercury – grey, Venus – yellow, Earth – blue, Mars – red, Jupiter – orange and white bands, Saturn – pale yellow, Uranus – green, Neptune – light blue and Pluto – light brown. Then they arrange the planets according to their distances from the Sun and taking into account the map of the solar system presented by the Teacher.

Material required: a map of the solar system, plasticine, cardboard, pencils

Suggested duration: 50 min

Expected outcomes:

- express their spatial thinking,
- model with plasticine a simple map of the solar system,
- learn to appreciate the art created not only by them, but by others as well.

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