

## **e-ARTinED Background Report on Using the Arts to Promote Social Inclusion within Children's Primary School Education**

### **Introduction**

Our society is characterized by people of different cultures and speaking different languages who live together and bring different and sometimes unknown cultural traditions and values to the communities where they live.

Knowledge and respect of the others are basic attitudes for living in dignity and in peace in a pluralistic world.

A variety of political and economic agendas aim at removing social barriers and evaluating the contribution that culture, art and heritage can give to create a more inclusive society based on 'culture citizenship' (Andrew & Gattinger, 2005).

Social inclusion entails enabling full participation in community life, part of which is engagement with the arts and diversity of cultural expression. Social inclusion entails 'an inclusive environment where individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds participate in and contribute towards the socio-economic development of society.' (Chavez and Weisinger, 2008)

### **Intercultural education at school**

It is necessary to provide a response to an increased intolerance towards school children of migrant origins and help students from ethnic minorities who have problems of early school leaving, language barriers and lack of intercultural dialogue.

It is also important to provide teachers with adequate training activities for gaining the skills to allow an equitable interaction of diverse cultures in the class thus to generate dialogue, tolerance and mutual respect.

Comparing languages and their cultural implications, using non-verbal communication and artistic activities to teach fundamental subjects such as history, geography, natural science and languages can contribute to develop the intercultural perspective in education and a better school environment.

Piaget defined play as a natural and inherent characteristic of individuals across cultures, asserting that children respond spontaneously to game-like activities (de Menlendez & V. Osterbag, 1997).

### **ART as a form of educational, social and cultural inclusion at school**

A growing number of teachers, educators, parents, local authorities and national education policy makers are aware that through the use of the arts in the classroom it is possible to teach any subject, to provide a learning environment where group collaboration and inclusion can thrive, the joy of learning is enhanced and teachers experience effective co-learning with the students.

The e-ARTinED Repository includes examples of valuable initiatives promoting tolerance and multiculturalism in school environment. One of these is the MUS-E programme created by the famous violinist Yehudi Menuhin.

Yehudi Menuhin extended Kodály's concept and adapted it to the realities of multiculturalism. The cornerstone of this programme is to consider the arts as a part of general education which all must access.

**Main principles of the MUS-E programme:**

- Art makes a decisive contribution to the intellectual, aesthetic and social development of a person.
- Art develops the personal ability to overcome difficulties and transcend them, drawing additional strengths from them.
- The practice of art is a source of access to knowledge; rooted in experience, it boosts the pleasure of discovery, curiosity, interest and access to other types of knowledge.
- Art in general, and singing and dancing in particular, reconnects body and spirit, while reconnecting emotions and mind.
- Artistic expression generates new relationships with ourselves and the outside world.
- Discovering traditions from their region of origin helps children rediscover their own cultural heritage, sometimes forgotten in migratory situations.
- Art creates links between an individual and different cultures. Artistic creation contributes to shaping a common culture and reinforces the feeling of belonging.
- Art is a tool for developing self-respect and respect for others.
- Art can contribute to the development of social dynamics

**Art changes lives for the better:**

- Closing the achievement gap
- Making learning fun
- A strategy that is easy to implement – (all social levels) (Rabkin & Redmont, 2005)
- Increased concentration
- Better communication and cooperation
- Higher comprehension
- Increased self-esteem
- Improvement of school achievements
- The arts make students want to learn.

“Arts integration reflect the belief that there are many kinds of intelligence and a number of ways of learning” (Unesco Arts Education and Creativity, 2006)

*When we learn to recognize...“the infinite extent of our relations” we can trace the strands of mutually supportive life and discover there the glittering jewels of our global neighbors”*  
Daisaku Ikeda (1996)

**Practical Examples** are available in the longer text of the report “ARTinED Background Report On Using the Arts to Promote Social Inclusion within Children’s Primary School Education”