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# A Case Study for a Broadened Definition of Arts Integration in Instructional Methods

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Running Head: Impact of Arts Integration

A Case Study for a Broadened Definition of Arts Integration in Instructional Methods

Maria Rosario-Regan

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of  
Doctor of Education  
In  
Leadership for Learning  
Educational Leadership  
In the  
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### DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband, Andre, whose patience, kindness, understanding and endless support through this lengthy project sustained me through the many challenges. Thank you for talking me off the ledge several times. I also dedicate this dissertation to my sons, Jebrai and Jelani, because earning this title can never outdo the title of “Mom”. It is my hope that this endeavor serves as my ultimate example that it takes passion, vision, sacrifice, and perseverance to accomplish your goals. I love you both more than words can express – you make me proud!

## ABSTRACT

Arts integration is a research-based strategy that has revealed positive outcomes in student achievement (Catteral,1999). In this study student achievement is described as students acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, and learning behaviors that will prepare them to lead successful lives. Studies have discovered that arts integration, an interdisciplinary method of connecting two disciplines supports to transform the learning environment. Students' attitudes towards learning particularly for students of disadvantaged backgrounds has fostered self-efficacy, student engagement, attendance, motivation to learn, and improving school culture and climate (Stevenson & Deasy, 2005; Walker, Tabone, & Weltsek, 2011).

The purpose of the qualitative study was to examine the impact of arts integration as an instructional strategy on fourth-grade students at two elementary schools awarded a federal grant funded through the Arts Educational Model Development and Dissemination (AEMDD) project. The grant was supported by ArtsNow a nationally recognized leader of arts integration. ArtsNow designed and delivered the arts integration professional learning.

The study also sought to investigate teachers' perception of arts integration and the transfer of teacher professional learning to student achievement. The qualitative data surveyed teachers' perception on the benefits of the professional learning impacting teacher practice resulting in student achievement, interviews to document experiences

with arts integration and classroom observation to record the transfer of art integrated strategies to classroom practice.

Results suggest that arts integration enhances the learning experience for students and teachers. Teachers credit the use of arts integration for increased student self-efficacy, motivation and critical thinking skills. Teachers also recognize arts integration as building their repertoire of instructional strategies. The finding suggests arts integration may lead to improved student learning.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### **Statement of the Problem**

In 1983, the national report, *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) served as a denunciation of the American education system and launched a massive reform movement for decades to come, setting the stage for federal education policies far into the future. That report has shaped policy decisions that have influenced education and increased the focus on accountability in public education, leading to an increased awareness of the pedagogy that increases academic achievement (1983).

*A Nation at Risk* paved the way for No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The No Child left behind Act of 2001 focused its efforts on increased accountability for the performance of students who struggle with learning, while creating unprecedented opportunities to improve the academic performance of these learners (Rabkin & Redmond, 2004). In 2015, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaced NCLB, and arts education supporters were relieved as ESSA reinforces states' commitment to support arts education programs in public education. ESSA embraces art in its description of a "well-rounded education" (Zubrzycki, 2015).

NCLB resulted in school districts seeking research-based methods to raise achievement levels with materials and programs based on sound research.

Interventions claim to improve student achievement, and educators are faced with the challenge of deciding if the evidence is reliable and if the intervention is truly effective. Arts integration has gained educational esteem as a credible research-based approach to teaching (Rabkin & Redmond, 2004).

Arts integration has surfaced and generated interest because of its impact on student achievement, particularly with students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds (Catterall, Dumais, & Hampden-Thompson, 2012). A recent study funded by the National Endowment for the Arts revealed that students from low-socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds with high-arts educational experiences considerably outperformed peers from low-arts, low-SES backgrounds. This resulted in closing (and in some cases eliminating) the gap that often appears between low-SES students and their more advantaged peers (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011).

A series of studies have been reported on the influence of arts integration with an emphasis on test scores. A five-year study in Oklahoma schools measuring the effectiveness of arts integration demonstrated that students' standardized test performance met or considerably exceeded state and district averages (Barry, 2010). Oklahoma schools are comprised largely of minorities and economically disadvantaged students, further supporting the notion that arts integration positively affects economically disadvantaged students with regards to academic achievement (2010).

Similarly, a longitudinal study for the Arts for Academic Achievement (AAA) program in Minnesota resulted in higher scores for third grade students after teachers implemented the integration of the arts in reading. The scores of economically

disadvantaged students and English Language Learners were superior to the other students (Ingram & Riedel, 2003).

The North Carolina A+ schools are composed of primarily disadvantaged and minority students. A comprehensive review was conducted of the North Carolina A+ arts integrated reform program for a period of over three years to determine the impact of arts integrated instruction on achievement scores. The study revealed significant gains in reading and math scores (Noblit, 2009).

An investigation of an arts integration program led Rabkin and Redmond (2004) to the following conclusion: “Arts integration can be a powerful lever for positive change, particularly in low-income schools and with disadvantaged learners, and it has distinct advantages over more conventional arts education” (p. 132).

In multiple studies, it was discovered that art-integrated methods (incorporates both academic and art in an interdisciplinary method of teaching bringing connections between both disciplines) help to transform the learning environment and students’ attitudes towards learning, particularly for students of disadvantaged backgrounds, by fostering self-efficacy, student engagement, attendance, motivation to learn, and improving school culture and climate (Stevenson & Deasy, 2005; Walker, Tabone, & Weltsek, 2011). As student engagement is fostered, student’s attitudes towards school and towards themselves improve. Students’ self-efficacy is encouraged, and they are eager to try new things (Ritter, 1999; Stronge, 2002). As expressed by Eisner (2002), the arts allow people to “invent and reinvent themselves” (Eisner, 2002). Student engagement is enhanced as teachers employ diverse instructional strategies to meet the

learning styles of all learners, as a tool to broaden the learning experience while embracing authentic, experiential, hands-on and inquiry-based learning (Jensen, 2001; Stronge, 2002). As teachers broaden their expertise with art integration, their repertoire of engaging instructional strategies increases (Stronge, 2002).

While the study concentrated on the impact of arts integration on student learning, emphasis was also placed on the association of teacher professional learning in arts integration and its transfer to instructional practice that render improved student outcomes.

According to Tomlinson (2000), teachers who execute a range of strategies with fidelity extend learning as they capture an array of student interest, learning styles, backgrounds, and diverse needs. Likewise, Stronge (2007) conveyed that a teacher's adeptness is determined by their repertoire of instructional strategies. These discoveries advocate the use of multiple teaching strategies that engage students in multiple ways while accomplishing the goal of student achievement- changing students' attitudes and learning behaviors that will prepare them for success (Spinath, 2012).

### **Research Questions**

The research addressed the following questions:

1. How does art integration influence student achievement? – Student achievement described as students acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, and learning behaviors that will prepare them to lead successful lives.
2. How has the professional learning in arts integration-built teacher capacity to affect student achievement?

3. What is teacher perception of the ArtsNow professional learning experience?
4. What practices have teachers found to be effective when integrating the arts?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the qualitative study was to examine the impact of arts integration, as an instructional strategy, on fourth-grade students at two elementary schools awarded a federal grant funded through the Arts Educational Model Development and Dissemination (AEMDD) project. The AEMDD project, Learning and Achieving through the Arts, encompasses three interrelated strands: (1) standards-based, instruction in the arts, (2) extended professional development and coaching support for non-arts classroom teachers to grow as art educators, and (3) activities that encourage whole schools to embrace the arts strategy. Students participate in a variety of art disciplines that are aligned with and support school curriculums. The grant was awarded to both schools from January 2015 until the spring of 2018 (three years).

The study sought to assess the impact of arts integration on student achievement, described as students acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, and learning behaviors that will prepare them to lead successful lives. Additionally, the study explored teachers' perspective of the ArtsNow professional learning sessions, and its transfer to classroom practice and influence on student outcomes. Scholarship discoveries maintain a link between the arts and the following benefits:

1. Student achievement (Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 1999; Catterall & Waldorf, 1999; Deasy, 2002; Hornbacher, Lipscomb, & Scripp, 2008).

2. Promotes higher order thinking (Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 1999; Christensen, 2008; Efland, 2002; Psilos, 2002).
3. Increased student engagement (Baker, 2013; Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Duma & Silverstein, 2014).
4. Self-efficacy (Bandura, 1990; Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Rabkin & Redmond, 2004; Williams & Williams, 2010).

Qualitative research is a way of unfolding an event in its setting, and is valuable for investigating multifaceted, new or relatively unexplored areas. Qualitative data provides a rich, detailed picture about participants' actions and what causes said actions. Qualitative research is the narrative behind the data and compliments the experience of the research participant, offering essential insight into the context and phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). The purpose of the study is to learn from participants and their interpretation of the experience (Atieno, 2009). "Qualitative methods can be used to obtain intricate details about the phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through conventional methods" (Creswell, 2002).

The qualitative approach, which attempts to illustrate the meaning of a lived experience for participants, was suitable for this study (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2002). This method allowed the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of teachers' perspectives concerning the arts integration learning experience and the professional learning sessions.

**Local Context.** In 2012, a Metropolitan Atlanta School District sought to increase school choice with a proposed *Academies initiative* to create incubators of science, technology, engineering, math, and fine arts in several elementary schools with the goal of inspiring students to pursue those fields in high school and beyond. Additionally, the inception of the academies aimed to close the achievement gap between Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools by targeting schools farthest away from performance.

The two schools participating in this study were supported by ArtsNow, a nationally recognized leader of arts integration. ArtsNow has successfully designed and delivered high-quality professional learning for over a decade in Title I at-risk schools, spanning 16 school systems across Georgia. ArtsNow was contracted by the school district to provide teachers at the two, art academies professional development in arts integration.

The researcher is an administrator at one of the academies as was able to participate along with the teachers in a foundational ArtsNow training. All attendees were provided with a five-day arts integration Foundational Seminar; hands-on, customized professional learning workshops in which teachers experience first-hand arts integrated lessons led by ArtsNow teaching consultants. Additionally, ArtsNow delivers monthly high-quality professional learning sessions to teachers in the development of lesson plans and activities.

In 2015, ArtsNow applied and was approved for a grant that would allow for

continued support to the academies. The grant was awarded by the U.S. Department of Education in 2015, and would be funded until the spring of 2018. ArtsNow continues to support teachers at both schools with arts integration professional learning, including hands-on workshops in which ArtsNow consultants work directly in the classroom, providing educators with opportunities to observe and reflect upon classroom practice; teacher workshops in which ArtsNow consultants train educators directly; and collaborative planning in which ArtsNow consultants work with teams of educators to assist them with unit development, and increasing competency of Fine Arts Standards. The amount awarded by the grant for covering the cost of professional learning, creation of units by teachers, travel cost by teachers, and materials, was \$464,528.

The researcher decided to collect data for the 2014 –2015 school year and the 2015-2016 school year, to analyze the data before the AEMDD grant and one year after the implementation of the grant. School A had a population of 879 students for the 2014-2015 school year, and is located in a metro-Atlanta suburb in the state of Georgia. School A is a Title 1 school with over 80% of its population receiving free or reduced lunch as established by student's socioeconomic status. Over 20% of students are English Language Learners (ELL), and over 10% of students are Students with Disabilities (SWD).

School B, with a population of 576 students for the 2014-2015 school year, is also located in a Metro-Atlanta suburb. School B is a Title 1 school with over 60% of students receiving free or reduced meals. Over 20% of students are English Language Learners (ELL), and over 10% of students are Students with Disabilities (SWD).

Table 1

*Demographics for School A and School B for the 2014-2015 School Year*

Demographics	School A	School B
Hispanic	569	236
American Indian	0	0
Asian	1	6
Black	39	50
White	246	255
Multi-Racial	24	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>879</b>	<b>576</b>
Free Lunch	711	315
Reduced Lunch	26	36
Percentage	84%	61%
ELL	387	126
SWD	124	62

Table 2 displays the demographic itemization of fourth grade students during the 2014-2015 school year, and 2015-2016 school year for School A and School B.

Table 2

*Ethnic Demography of 4th grade students in School A and School B (2014-2015 and 2015- 2016 School Year)*

<b>Demographic</b>	<b>School A</b>				<b>School B</b>			
	<b>2014-2015</b>		<b>2015- 2016</b>		<b>2014-2015</b>		<b>2015- 2016</b>	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Hispanic	44	32	51	42	24	13	26	25
American Indian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Asian	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Black	1	5	3	5	6	2	3	10
White	13	27	18	27	21	18	20	19
Multi-Racial	1	1	0	3	6	1	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>56</b>

The study examined the impact of integrating all art modalities as an instructional strategy on student achievement of fourth grade students, described as shifting students' attitudes and learning behaviors that will prepare them for success at both elementary schools. The study sought to assess and express teachers' perspective of arts integration, and the ArtsNow professional learning sessions and its transfer to classroom practice.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Arts integration is described as an approach to teaching where students are encouraged to construct an understanding of their world in an active, engaging process. Arts integration provides students with multiple ways of making learning accessible (Silverstein & Layne, 2010).

The tenets of art integration are analogous to the constructivist learning theory.

The precept of constructivism is that individuals do not find knowledge; instead, they construct it, requiring the learner to actively engage and foster deep understanding.

Constructivist learning, as described, resembles art learning and arts education lends itself very naturally to the constructivist approach (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002).

"Constructivism is not a theory about teaching...it is a theory about knowledge and learning... the theory defines knowledge as temporary, developmental, socially and culturally mediated, and thus, non-objective" (Brooks & Brooks, 1993 p.8).

The constructivist leaning theory resulted from the work of psychologist John Piaget who credits children learning through play and experiences (Ormrod, 2003).

Constructivism is also strongly influenced by psychologist Lev Vygotsky and his notion that learning is a social activity (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90). However, the force behind constructivism is the work of John Dewey.

John Dewey is considered the forefather of the progressive education crusade, rejecting the notion of repetitive, rote memorization as the learning experience (Semel & Sadovich, 1995). Dewey recommended a scheme of "directed living," students engaging in real world, practical courses in which they would validate their understanding through creativity and collaboration (1995, p.23). In addition, Dewey asserts urgency in the link between learning and authentic experience (Field, 2001). Dewey posits that the learner should encounter or experience what is actually being studied, rather than just considering what may be done to or with it (Dewey, 1938).

Analogous to Dewey, Silverstein and Layne (2010) denote the approach of arts integration as grounded in the belief that learning is actively built, experiential, evolving, collaborative, problem solving, and reflective. These theories are related to

other current research about the nature of learning with the Constructivist learning theory (Silver & Layne, 2010; Dewey, 1938; Field, 2001). Additionally, Jones and Workman (2016) insist that arts integration provides students with multiple ways of learning while leveraging other subjects such as science, language arts, math, and social studies (2016).

According to Silverstein and Layne (2010), Arts Edge by the Kennedy Arts Center constructivist practices that align with arts integration include:

- Providing active hands-on learning with authentic problems for students to solve divergent ways.
- Arranging opportunities for students to learn from each other to enrich their understanding.
- Engaging students in reflection about what they learned, how they learned it, and what it means to them.
- Using student assessment of their own and peers' work as part of the learning experience.
- Providing opportunities for students to revise and improve their work and share it with others (pp.2-6).

Constructivism and arts integration allows students to create their own understanding in an approach rooted in active learning, higher order thinking, and real world authentic learning (Morford, 2007). Furthermore, a teacher employing constructivist practices engenders a classroom that is student centered, encourages peer interaction, and motivates students to take ownership of their own learning (Marlowe

& Page, 2005).

The constructivist approach to instruction is a movement in education that can positively alter teacher's instructional methods and reshape student learning (Richardson, 2003). Brooks and Brooks (1993) describe five leading teaching principles originated from constructivism: (1) posing problems of emerging relevance to learners; (2) structuring learning around "Big ideas" or primary concepts; (3) seeking and valuing students' points of view; (4) adapting curriculum to address students' suppositions; and (5) assessing student learning in the context of the teaching (p. 72).

Constructivist instructional practice is advantageous to students as it affords learners the ability to apply and refine skills (Richardson, 2003). The constructivist teaching approach is student-centered, whereas student participation is privileged empowering students with academic freedom (Schuh, 2003). Constructivist theory is described as a collaborative learning method in which the exposure and creation of visual imagery is imperative for learners to discern new ideas and generate understanding (Jensen, 2001). As documented through several studies (Jensen, 2001; Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 1999; Fiske, 1999), arts integration is comparable to the principles of the constructivist theory. In the constructivist approach, lessons are active and encourage students to (a) generate (b) demonstrate, and (c) exhibit work. Arts integrated lessons contain all these themes and activities (Brooks & Brooks, 2000).

The arts meet the criteria for authentic work, deep learning, high level of student engagement, making connections between content areas, experiential and reflective learning (Rakin & Redmond, 2004). Fowler (2003) declares, "schools reflect

society and society reflects schools” (p.65). Art integration provides students with the ability to make sense of the world in a manner that is meaningful to their experience. Art integration is an impressionable reform to school improvement ((Brown, 2007).

Moreover, constructivism is grounded on the truth being relative and reliant on one’s perspective. Constructivism acknowledges the importance of the “subjective human creation of meaning but doesn’t reject outright some notion of objectivity” (Miller & Crabtree, 1999, p. 10). Additionally, constructivism fosters social construction of reality (Searle, 1995) and allows the participant to tell their stories allowing the researcher to gain a better understanding of their perspective (Robottom & Hart, 1993).

### **Review of Relevant Terms**

*Student Academic Achievement:* student achievement is considered a multifaceted construct that encompasses diverse realms of learning. The arena of student achievement is wide-ranging and covers students acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, and learning behaviors that will prepare them to lead successful lives (Spinath, 2012).

*Arts:* The four arts disciplines with articulated national standards: art, music, drama, and dance (Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, 1994).

*Arts-Infusion:* using the arts throughout the curriculum and teaching through the arts (Artist as Educator, 2008).

*Arts Integration (AI):* a “method to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate understanding through an arts modality. Students engage in a creative

process that connects an art form and subject area and meets in-depth objectives in both” (Artists as Educators, 2008, p. 5).

*Arts Modality*: the practice of using drama, music, dance/movement, visual arts, or literary arts. The modalities include an assortment of practices or procedures, for instance: drama-improvisation, tableau; music-genres and styles, songwriting; dance-movement and sequence, improvisation; visual arts-collage, mural, and sculptures (Artist as Educator, 2008).

*Curriculum*: The explicit resources and materials with which students will interact that shape learning for the purposes of achieving identified educational outcomes (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2002).

*Differentiation*: Adjustments to the content, process, and product of instruction to accommodate student differences in readiness, gender, culture, home environment, learning style, intelligence preferences, and interest (Tomlinson, 2005).

*Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*: President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into legislation on December 10, 2015, replacing No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). ESSA supports schools that consistently exhibit low performance. However, ESSA allow states and school districts the flexibility to determine what support and interventions will be implemented (US Department of Education, 2015).

*No Child Left Behind*: Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (2001).

*Socioeconomic status*: social standing or class of an individual or group measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation (American

Psychological Association, 2012).

*Professional Learning*: Practice of improving and increasing competences of staff through training opportunities in their place of employment amidst outside organizations, or observing colleagues performance while refining their own practices (Dantonio, 2001).

*Title I School*: Title I, Part A (Title I) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended (ESEA) allocates categorical financial support to local educational agencies (LEAs), and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards (US Department of Education, 2015).

### **Organization of Study**

Educators are faced with meeting the diverse learning needs of students, pressing teachers to broaden their repertoire of teaching strategies to foster individual student strengths while cultivating the whole child. A balanced curriculum should involve academic subjects coupled with content that develops the whole child. Ensuring high student engagement, combined with deep thinking and cognition, helps students in gaining a better understanding and optimizing learning of all content areas (Rothstein, Wilder, & Jacobsen, 2007).

A teacher's effectiveness is grounded in their repertoire of research based, deliberate strategies (Silver, Strong, & Perini, 2007). Art integration research has generally discovered a positive association between arts integrated strategies and student achievement, highlighting the need for teachers to explore arts integrated

curriculums to close the achievement gap (Ingram & Seashore, 2003). The purpose of the qualitative study is to examine the impact of arts integration as an instructional strategy on students while seeking to understand teachers' perspectives of the professional learning sessions, and how well it transfers into classroom practice.

In chapter 2, the review of literature contains research on the impact of arts integration on student learning, student achievement described as students acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, and learning behaviors that results in heightened student engagement and student self-efficacy. Additionally, the review of literature delivers findings on professional learning models and teacher practice adding to teacher's self-efficacy.

In Chapter 3, the appropriateness of the research design is discussed and outlined. The methodology section provides an explicit description of the research context including participants, with an in-depth look at each school's population inclusive of specific demographics make-up and socioeconomic-status of the school composition. Additionally, the instrumentation selected, its reliability and validity, and how the instrument relates to the identified research questions are discussed.

In chapter 4, findings articulate an analysis of the data found through the procedures outlined. The data was organized by each data collection tool and analyzed in the scope of each research question along with cross-validation of the significance of results.

In chapter 5, a summary was provided with an overview and verification of major

findings. Additionally, implications for practice was offered including recommendations with suggestions on any new concerns that have become apparent based on the result of the study (Creswell, 2004).

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Introduction**

A plethora of research studies has been conducted on the impact of arts integration on student achievement (Burton, Horowitz & Abeles, 1999; Freeman, Seashore, & Werner, 2003; Nelson, 2001), and this research aims to contribute to the literature. The literature review acknowledges the diversity of arts integration research, and the need for research in ongoing quality professional learning of arts integration. Researchers also reported multiple effects of arts integration, inclusive of increased self-efficacy, motivation, and critical thinking skills in students (Barry, 2010; Bellisario & Donovan, 2012) and increased enthusiasm and repertoire of instruction strategies in teachers (Burnaford, 2009).

The current review of the literature addresses multiple areas of arts-integrated teaching and learning, the historical context of arts integration and the impact of arts integration on student achievement. The definition of arts integration is explored, while also examining the numerous art integration models, and provide information about the professional learning model used by ArtsNow as part of the Arts in Education Model Development and Dissemination (AEMDD) grant. The grant supports the enhancement, expansion, documentation, evaluation, and dissemination of innovative, cohesive models that demonstrate effectiveness in:

- Integrating into and strengthening arts in the core elementary and middle school curricula;
- Strengthening arts instruction in those grades; and
- Improving students' academic performance, including their skills in creating, performing, and responding to the arts (US Department of Education, 2017).

The study also examined the influence of professional learning on teachers' instruction, and the impact of arts integration on student achievement: enhanced thinking, student engagement, and increased (teacher or student) self-efficacy. In this chapter, the theoretical framework for the overall project drawing from the works of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Dewey is discussed (Dewey, 1916; Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1972).

### **Historical Context**

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) was inspired by the *Nation at Risk* manuscript that shaped policy in public education. NCLB focused its efforts on increased accountability for the performance of students who struggle with learning while simultaneously creating unprecedented opportunities to improve their academic performance. Consequentially, NCLB resulted in increased pressure on administrators to get the most for their staff dollars, and an increased emphasis was placed on students' reading and math performance while marginalizing arts and musicianship (Chapman, 2004).

As the nation aspired to increase students' performance in reading and math, subjects such as science, social studies, and the arts were abandoned. One of shortfalls of NCLB was that it only focused on the inequity of education through testing and disaggregation of scores by sociocultural groups, while neglecting the importance of a

“well-rounded” education (Allen, 2011). In favor of a well-rounded education, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan remarked, “A well-educated student, in other words, is exposed to a well-rounded curriculum. It is the making of connections, conveyed by a rich core curriculum, which ultimately empowers students to develop convictions and reach their full academic and social potential” (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, p. 2).

In 2009, the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) compared the curriculum of nine countries that regularly surpass the United States academically and discovered countries like Finland, Korea, and Canada expose students to rich content in the visual arts, history, music, science, and geography (PISA, 2009). A non-profit organization that supports a well-rounded education released *Why We're Behind: What Top Nations Teach Their Students But We Don't*, a document that focuses on the link between well-rounded education and student achievement. Diane Ravitch Antonia states in the forward, “While American students are spending endless hours preparing to take tests of their basic reading and math skills, their peers in high-performing nations are reading poetry and novels, conducting experiments in chemistry and physics, making music, and studying important historical issues. We are the only leading industrialized nation that considers the mastery of basic skills to be the goal of K–12 education” (Common Core, 2009, p. vi).

A report by the National Endowment for the Arts (2012) discloses that at-risk students exposed to the arts are more inclined to have better job opportunities and engage

in making a difference in the civic life of the community. The report (2012) noted other positive results related to high levels of arts exposure for youth of low socioeconomic status. The study utilizes four separate longitudinal studies that follow children, teenagers, and young adults, vastly exposed to the arts in and out of school. The coursework encompassed music, dance, theater, or the visual arts; out-of-school arts lessons; participation and leadership in arts organizations; and activities such as band or theater. The National Endowment for the Arts report focuses on the latent outcomes of arts exposure on youth of low socioeconomic status. While most art-related advantages in the report pertain to at-risk youth, a few findings imply acquaintance with the arts as an asset for advantaged youth in the area of civic engagement (Catterall, Dumais, & Hampden-Thompson, 2012).

Furthermore, the report discloses that for nearly every indicator studied, a student from a low-socioeconomic (SES) background with a high-arts educational experience considerably outperformed peers from a low-arts, low-SES background, which essentially closes (and in some cases eliminates) the gap that often appears between low-SES students and their more advantaged peers. Additional key finding in this report discovered low-SES students who participated in rich arts engagement in high school were 10% more inclined to complete a high school calculus course than low-SES students with minimal arts experience (33% versus 23%). Similarly, low-SES students with high levels of arts exposure were 15% more likely to register in a four-year college than low-SES students negligibly involved with art activities (41% versus 26%). In the case of involvement in extracurricular activities in high school, high-arts, low-SES

students are more probable to participate in extracurricular activities than low-SES students with insignificant interaction with arts activities (Catterall, Dumais, & Hampden-Thompson, 2012).

Arts integration has surfaced and generated interest on its impact on student achievement while alleviating budget constraints (Smith, 2009). Art integration is regarded as an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates the arts into other subjects, ensuring the arts are preserved in the curriculum while meeting the goals of increased test performance accountability (Peterson, 2007). Studies by Rabkin and Redmond (2006) show that employing the arts in academic classrooms is associated with improved test scores in math and English. Particularly, students living in poverty benefit from the integrated approach (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006).

According to Eisner and Day (2004), “A renewed interest in arts education has been stimulated in large measure by public concern over the quality of American schools and the performance of our students” (p. 775). In a similar assertion, Fowler (1996) states, “By relating the arts to, and making them part of the basic curriculum, they become the motivating energy of learning” (p. 129). The arts are seen as an effective measure to address the public’s concern over the quality of American schools (Cawelti & Goldberg, 1997; Fowler, 1996; Smith, 2009). In agreement, Rabkin and Redmond (2006) proclaim the study of the arts can have a positive impact on student achievement, resulting in increases in academic achievement. Arts integration is a teaching approach that can make subject matter, ideas, and concepts easier to understand.

Educators have utilized the arts as a tool to clarify and connect disciplines and enhance skills in various subjects. Courses can be made tangible for students by way of an art demonstration. One purpose of the arts is to activate students' multisensory acuties (Krug & Cohen-Evron, 2000).

For example, an elementary school teacher selected the Faith Ringgold's painting and book *Tar Beach* to increase student's reading and writing abilities. This interdisciplinary method links visual art with reading through a shared inquiry recognized across disciplines. This tactic stresses to students to seek knowledge across the curriculum while deducing to gain a deeper understanding. Students were able to build background and delve more deeply into the meaning of the art, sanctioning an easy transfer to the text. In another example, a high school teacher uses the arts to describe the varying historic insights of the sun and the earth's movement. The teacher presented students with a succession of artworks, which illuminated diverse outlooks toward the sun: "throne," (circa. 1350 BCE), reign of Tutankhamen; "October," (circa. 1350), Limbourg Brothers; and Martin Heade, (1819-1904), "Sunrise" and "Sunset." Using the arts to build connections and find a common denominator allows students the use of higher-order thinking and strengthens their understanding of the subject matter (Krug & Cohen-Evron, 2000).

Education reform continuously makes an effort to solve school problems; however, school remediation attention ought to focus on a framework that generates concrete understanding of what students are learning (Cole, 1995). The aforementioned can be accomplished through interdisciplinary methods (Lake, 1994). For example, *The*

*Effect of Early Music Training on Child Cognitive Development* study integrated music and science as students were expected to make simple string and box instruments, while discovering the longer strings make lower sounds and shortened or shorter strings ring higher. Through arts integration, students gain a deeper understanding of concepts, since they are expected to analyze subjects while infusing the many art lenses (Bilhartz, Bruhn, & Olson, 1999). Numerous art integration studies in education confirmed the effectiveness of arts integration in influencing student achievement (Catterall, Dumais, & Hampden-Thompson, 2012; Uptis & Smithrim, 2003; Walker, McFadden, Tabone, & Finkelstein, 2011). Arts integration engages students in content learning while incorporating the arts and fostering opportunities for deep understanding (Russell-Bowie, 2009). Learning is meaningful and allows students to “create and express themselves through their choice of the arts makes learning personal and relevant” (Barber, 2015 pg. 1).

### **Defining Arts Integration**

Arts integration is considered a complex concept without a conventional definition. Lisa LaJevic (2013) regards arts integration as an impactful teaching method that fuses art with another discipline in an effort to ascertain comprehensiveness in teaching and learning. According to Rabkin (2004), arts integration is “the arts for learning’s sake” (p. 8). He continues:

At its best, arts integration makes the arts an interdisciplinary partner with other subjects. Students receive rigorous instruction in the arts and thoughtful integrated curriculum that makes deep structural connections between the arts and other subjects. It enables students to learn both deeply. The practice of making art, and its performance or exhibition, becomes an essential part of pedagogy and

assessment, but not just in art or music class. These activities become part of the routine of studying history, science, reading and writing, and math” (p. 8-9).

Similarly, The Kennedy Center defines arts integration as an “approach to teaching” (Silverstein & Layne, 2010) in which students are involved in the creative process and show evidence of understanding through an art form. Richard Deasy (2003) in *Creating Quality Integrated and Interdisciplinary Art Programs* described art integration as “the effort to build a set of relationships between arts and learning in the other skill and subjects of the curriculum” (p. 2).

The *Chicago Guide for Teaching and Learning in the Arts* defines arts integration as instruction that combines the competencies from music, visual arts, dance, and theater with an academic subject. Art Integration is efficacious when both competencies are privileged, and learning goals are deliberately planned as such (Chicago Public Art, 2009). Given that an arts discipline and the academic subject are linked during a lesson, determining clear learning objectives for both disciplines will yield the best results. An integrated lesson will combine objectives for both disciplines while considering the theme students will focus on (2009). For example, a fifth-grade class at McKinley Park School presented an arts integrated lesson with social studies as the academic disciplines and visual arts, dance, and cultural awareness as the art domains. The theme is the Aztec Empire, a state standard for fifth grade students. In this unit, the students were expected to construct a 20' x 30' clay model of the city of Tenochtitlan, as it existed in 1519. The design included a detailed design of the Aztec farming system, inclusive of the canals and the Chiampa's. In addition, the students learned and performed a folklore dance. This arts

integrated project linked art with the core curriculum and deepened students understanding of the Aztec Empire's agriculture and construction techniques.

Davis (2008) described arts integration as a framework where arts are "interwoven" with content, "included as equal partners with the objective of improving teaching and learning within subjects and across the general curriculum" (p. 14). Blending the arts indicates the merger of arts into the general curriculum results in enriched activities (2008). The attractiveness of arts integration as an approach to teaching has increased with its reputation of making content accessible to students through reinforcement of curricula connections and shared creative engagement (Cornett, 2007).

### **Benefits of Arts Integration**

Arts Integration is inclusive of the whole child, allowing students to deeply engage in the learning experience while using a variety of learning modalities inclusive of visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile, supporting all types of learners. Involving students with these learning opportunities fosters their ability to demonstrate understanding regardless of their learning style (Lynch, 2007).

The arts make learning attainable to all students as they comprehend the association between the art and content areas generating richer learning experiences. Students are afforded the ability to make connections between academic content areas and the arts, resulting in content that is fluid for transfer of knowledge and increased retention of information (April, 2005). Likewise, research has shown that what students

learn in the arts may help them master other subjects, such as reading, math or social studies (Cattarral, 2002).

The compendium of studies in *Critical Links* coupled with numerous studies on art integration confirm the relationship with learning by means of and through the arts to a wide-range of benefits including academic achievement and social aptitudes. The studies have resulted in demonstrably positive outcomes that support arts integration and suggest gains that include student engagement, enhanced thinking skills, deeper student engagement, and self-efficacy (Rupert, 2006). The benefits discussed are by no means exhaustive typology of the possible benefits of arts integration that scholars have discovered in research.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The elemental hypothesis of this study is that learning is accomplished through experiences coupled with existing knowledge as theorized by the research of Dewey (1916, 1969) and Vygotsky (1978, 1986), fused with Piaget's (1972) work in developmental psychology and the extensive approach of constructivism. The basic precept of constructivism is that “knowledge is emergent, developmental, non-objective, viable, constructed explanations humans make while creating meaning of cultural, social communities, and discourse” (Fosnot, 2005, p.47). Students learn by doing rather than observing while transporting prior knowledge into learning to appraise and amend their understanding.

Jean Piaget (1972) was the first to theorize that learning is an evolving cognitive process where an individual's knowledge is not restricted to a compendium of remote

pieces of information, instead it is fabricated from amassed experiences generating an operational perspective of the environment (Ormrod, 2003).

The Russian scientist Vygotsky (1986) broadened Piaget's developmental theory of cognitive capacities of the individual that involves multifaceted processes of social interactions through discourse with teachers and peers. Vygotsky stressed that students construct knowledge from their experiences and reflective thinking. Vygotsky endorsed the theory of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) which suggested that students construct knowledge with peer collaboration and direction from the teacher, to bridge tasks that can be performed independently with those that need support.

Vygotsky also contributed to the universal perception of cognitive growth and theorized that instruction greatly influences children's mental development. Additionally, Vygotsky acknowledged that deep intelligent thinking occurs through the use of culture's "signs" and "symbols". For instance, images related to math and science in conjunction to the arts and music are regularly used in the elementary setting to aid in complex thinking and intellectual development. This notion contributes to Vygotsky's cognitive framework that "Meaning" is fabricated amidst symbols, signs, and language, which allows children to demonstrate learning through numerous art domains (Vygotsky, 1986).

Dewey's (1859 – 1952) beliefs paralleled Piaget and Vygotsky's. Dewey theorized that the capacity for a person to learn was reliant on many things, one being the environment. Dewey precluded the idea of repetition and rote memorization. As an alternative he proposed students engage in learning that affords them creativity and collaboration opportunities resulting in deep thinking and rich articulation of

understanding. Dewey (1938), in *Education and Experience* rejected the notion of instructional focus on repetitive, rote memorization and recommended a scheme of "directed living" which is synonymous with students engaging in real world, practical courses allowing learners to validate their understanding through creativity and collaboration, granting students the opportunities to think for themselves and articulate their thoughts. In addition, Dewey asserts an urgency in the link between learning and authentic experience. Dewey posits that the learner should encounter what is actually being studied, rather than just considering what may be done to or with it (Dewey, 1938).

Dewey was a proponent of integrated curriculum, which was evidenced in his speech at Harvard University where he advised that curriculums should be arranged so that "the interdependence of knowledge and the relationship between knowledge and human purpose would be made clear" (Burnaford, 2007). In summary, Dewey was confident on the impact of "interrelation of subjects with one another" as it advances the education of the "whole child" (2007). Dewey's concept directly connects to arts integration.

Exemplars of constructivism can be found in the works of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Dewey. The precept that knowledge is derived from experiences through mental symbols while creating associations to define meaning is one of the similarities with constructivism and Piaget's theory. Likewise, complementary to Vygotsky's concepts, constructivism asserts that knowledge is created through interactions with the real world in social settings. Also, resembling Dewey's hypothesis, in constructivism learning is

derived from authentic opportunities that engender learning (Ormrod, 2003; Barros, 2005; Fosnot, 2005; Morford, 2007).

Analogous to the aforementioned learning theories, Silverstein and Layne (2010) denote that arts integration is an approach grounded in the belief that learning is actively built, experiential, evolving, collaborative, problem solving oriented, and reflective. There are various parallels between these theories and the constructivist learning theory.

"Constructivism is not a theory about teaching... it is a theory about knowledge and learning... the theory defines knowledge as temporary, developmental, socially and culturally mediated, and thus, non-objective" (Brooks & Brooks, 1993 p.15).

The tenets of art integration are analogous to the constructivist learning theory. The precept of constructivism is that individuals do not find knowledge; instead, they construct it, requiring the learner to actively engage and foster deep understanding. Constructivist learning, as described, resembles art learning, and arts education lends itself very naturally to the constructivist approach (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002).

Additionally, Silverstein and Layne insist that arts integration provide students with multiple ways of learning while leveraging other subjects such as science, language arts, math, and social studies. The following section describes arts integration models and further explain the model used in this research (Silverstein & Layne, 2010).

### **Implementation of Arts Integration Model**

When a school or district formally makes the decision to transition to an art integrated instructional model, the implementation requires ongoing embedded professional learning comprised of coaching and modeling, to aid staff in the changeover.

Ongoing professional learning is vital to the success of an arts integrated program, as it allows teachers the opportunity to collaborate, generate lessons, and reflect on the practices. There are several models and approaches that guarantee valuable professional learning to build teacher capacity in art-integrated strategies (Biscoe & Wilson, 2015). In a three-year study, Arts for Academic Achievement (AAA) conducted by Freeman, Seashore, and Werner (2003), several art integration implementation models were noted in the literature: *The Residency Model*, *The Elaborated Model*, *The Capacity Building Model*, *Co-Teaching Model* and *Concept Across the Curriculum Model*.

*The Residency Model* provides students with a broader arts experience by soliciting the assistance of one or more artists. The artist involves students in an art form but does not reinforce academic curriculum objectives. *The Elaborated Model* affords teachers the ability to select a skill that will purposefully link to non-arts skill. The artist assumes the role of the lead teacher, while the teacher offers support during the experience. *The Capacity Building Model* coaches teachers on how to use different art modalities in their instructional practice. The artist takes the position of instructor while the teacher builds capacity on the process and art forms. Additionally, teachers collaborate with artists and/or colleagues on how to integrate the arts into the curriculum. *The Co-Teaching Model* consists of pairing the teacher and the artist, which results in the integrating of an art domain with a non-art academic subject. Instruction may privilege the art form in some instances while in other instances the non-art subject is privileged. *The Concept Across the Curriculum Model* entails pairing several teachers and artist around a common concept of their choosing. The teacher and artist collaborate and

create lessons but instruct students separately on the common concept. The unit concepts were reinforced through art and non-art subjects (OECD, 2012).

For example, in a Chicago Public School embracing arts integration with the concept across the curriculum model, a teacher and teaching artist collaborate and prepare to engage students in a lesson to deepen student's understanding of a text. The teacher reads aloud a culturally relevant novel from the curriculum, subsequently the teaching artist, using an improvisation technique, allow students to gain a better understanding of the text. Each week the teacher and teaching artist collaborate and monitor students understanding of the text allowing students to develop their skills in the context of the literature (Chicago Public Art, 2009).

For this study, the "capacity building" model was supported and implemented at the treatment schools by the ArtsNow professionally learning partner. The capacity building model can noticeably alter teaching practice and initiate pedagogical dialogue among educators. The capacity-building model promotes job-embedded professional learning that influences change amid regular discussions, strategic goals, and collaboration on instruction. The model allows a school to tailor the implementation and professional learning to influence school improvement and affect student growth (Fazekas & Burns, 2012 p.2)

The goal of the "capacity building model" is to coach teachers on utilizing an art form in their own teaching. The artist's role is to instruct teachers, while the teacher participates with the intention of learning the process of the art form. The literature asserts that the goal of the "capacity building" model is to train teachers and build self-

efficacy of arts-integrated strategies, while increasing repertoire of instructional strategies and facilitating the teaching of non-art disciplines (Fazekas & Burns, 2012).

According to Eisner (2002), academic teachers who learn arts-based instruction become more creative and artistic. In a collection of seven arts integration studies reported by Fiske (1999), it was discovered that enabling teachers with new and innovative instructional strategies transformed learning environments while improving student performance. In a study, Catterall, Chapleau, and Iwanga (1999) noted a trend in achievement differences when student's involvement in the arts increased over time. For example, the performance of 10th grade students scoring above average on standardized assessments demonstrated a significant difference. Low art-involved art students scored 47.5% of the standardized test above average distribution while highly art-involved students scored 65.7%, an 18%-point difference. Comparably, the data for 12th grade students revealed 39.3% of low-art students scored above average and high-art students score 57.5%, an 18.1% difference (Catterall, Chapleau, & Iwanga, 1999).

In another study, the researchers (Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 2000) investigated whether learning in the arts influences non-art subjects. More specifically, this study explored the connection between arts learning and creative thinking, and academic self-thought and school climate. Several assessments were used to measure creativity, and possible signs of arts-based academic transfer to 2,407 fourth, fifth, seventh and eighth grade students at 12 different schools. Based on the findings, students in the top-tier of arts experience, in and out of school, scored higher on teacher ratings on expression, risk-

taking, creativity-imagination, and cooperative learning, and these attributes transferred to academic learning.

### **Professional Learning and Transfer to Teacher Practice**

Many studies document that the most significant school-based determinant affecting student learning is the teacher (Ingersoll, 2003; Jepsen & Rivkin, 2002; Rivkin, Hanusheck, & Kain, 2005). Werner and Hefferen (2005) also postulate that teacher practice is linked to the impact arts integration has on student performance. Teacher participation in professional learning is the most effective method to impact student achievement and is directly linked to successful implementation of new learning.

Deductions about teachers' professional learning, suggest that efficient training connected to student growth encompasses a commitment from the teacher to learn through collaboration with peers, and self-reflection on classroom practice (Scripp, Burnaford, Vazquez, Paradis, & Sienkiewicz, 2013). Effective professional learning results in heightened teacher efficacy, increased teacher vitality, resultant in reduced student misbehaviors all of which transmits to deeper learning for students (Garett, 2010). A recent study surveyed the benefits of professional learning in arts integration for elementary school teachers involved in the Intensive Development in Education through the Arts (IDEA) model, and discovered that teacher practices were influenced by participation in the professional learning. The professional learning sessions assisted teachers in creating effective art integrated lessons that ultimately improved their instructional practice, assessment methods, and self-efficacy, resulting in improved academic achievement, engagement, and motivation in students. Teachers reported

increased engagement in students that substantially aimed to provoke increased academic achievement. Consequently, this discovery promotes the demand for training teachers in arts integration. This research supports mounting evidence confirming teacher training and teacher-artist collaboration are effective techniques of teaching across the curriculum for students and teachers (Garret,2010).

Moreover, studies have revealed that professional learning can alter teacher practice and result in student achievement advances (Fullan, 1990; Joyce & Showers, 1988). Consequently, a study was conducted to investigate the difference between five types of professional learning, immersion, examining practice, curriculum implementation, curriculum development, and collaborative work to determine their relationship on student achievement in science and mathematics. The sample included 94 science teachers and 104 math teachers of eighth grade students located in 46 schools, throughout a state that suffers from the highest poverty rate in the nation. The teachers participated in a wide range of professional learning workshops in math and science for 10 days during the summer, and five additional follow-up sessions throughout the school year. Student achievement was measured using eighth grade state science and mathematics mean achievement test data. The results of the study contribute to the growing body of evidence that quality professional learning enhances teacher practice and influences student achievement. The conclusions also suggest that teachers must be willing to transfer new skills to their instructional practice (Huffman, Thomas, & Lawrenz, 2003).

The aforementioned literature supports that teachers' instructional practice changed when they implemented arts-based instructional strategies (Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 1999; Eisner, 2002). According to Burton (2002), teachers participating in a school-wide arts integration reform are more enthusiastic, flexible, and innovative in their teaching. Similarly, Wahlstrom (2003) maintains that teacher instructional planning and practice improved as emphasis was placed on the academic process versus the finished product. Research speculates that student achievement is dependent on teacher practice; therefore, an efficacious arts integration program is contingent on well-constructed teacher instruction. Wahlstrom (2003) conducted a longitudinal study involving six elementary schools in Minneapolis participating in a district-wide Art in Academic Achievement (AAA) project, and investigated the impact of art-integration by community-based artists into everyday instruction. The methodology applied in the study was classroom observations over the course of a year. The researcher noted that the AAA project certainly had a significant impact on teachers that blended the arts with the regular curriculum. The researcher discovered and acknowledged an upgrade in teachers' art and non-art instruction. The regular on-site observations and interviews demonstrated a transformation in teaching and learning in the classroom is that participated in the AAA project.

The Four-Year A+ Program began as a pilot with 25 schools in a North Carolina school district and spread throughout the entire district. Its emphasis was on classifying and detailing methods in which the arts can stimulate universal school reform. The study revealed that comprehensive school-wide professional learning was subtly

acknowledged. Teachers reformed their instructional practices, which lead to learning opportunities as they allowed students to demonstrate their understanding in a myriad of modalities. In addition, teachers created robust and educationally substantiated assessments (Nelson, 2001).

Similarly, in another study conducted with Minneapolis Public Schools in conjunction with the Arts for Academic Achievement, involved a model with interaction between the classroom teachers, artists, and art organizations. The teachers received regular training and development from artists. After four years, the research revealed that the teachers' instructional approach changed. Teachers began to utilize pragmatic, child-centered instruction while increasing the teacher's repertoire of teaching strategies. The approach was equally beneficial to both teachers and students (Freeman, Seashore, & Werner, 2003). Ongoing professional learning is vital to the success of an arts-integrated program as it allows teachers the opportunity to collaborate, generate lessons, and reflect about practices (Biscoe & Wilson, 2015). It is evident that professional learning is the key element to a successful arts integration program that results in student achievement.

### **Arts Integration on Student Achievement**

As Fiske (1999) indicates, "Evidence of learning in one domain supports and stimulates learning in others, which supports a complex web of influence... and provides compelling evidence that *students' achievement is heightened in an environment with high quality arts education offerings* and a school climate supportive of active and productive learning" (p. viii).

Research supports arts integration as providing evidence of increased achievement in standardized assessment scores. A study (Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, Arts Education Partnership. Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning, 1999), disclosed students participating in art-integrated strategies scored significantly higher on creativity measures than students that did not participate in art-integrated lessons. Similarly, the Chicago Arts Partnership in Education (CAPE) program conducted a study analyzing the effects of an art-integrated curriculum on the reading assessment scores of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, which revealed sixth grade CAPE students achieved higher results than non-CAPE students (Catterall & Waldorf, 1999). These results did not transcribe to other grade levels involved in the study.

Arts integration has demonstrated favorable results for a diverse group of students. In a recent study involving low-socioeconomic status (SES) students, participating in music-integrated curriculum demonstrated a notable increase in fluency scores (Hornbacher, Lipscomb, & Scripp, 2008). Furthermore, multiple studies revealed that students exposed to art integration initiated, and in some cases, enhanced higher order thinking skills (Deasy, 2002; Fiske 1999). Research has proven that increased exposure to art-integrated instruction, leads to increased test scores among disadvantaged students (Fiske, 1999). A review conducted by the National Educational Longitudinal Survey concluded that students highly involved in the arts, achieved superior reading proficiency results when compared to peers with minimal involvement in the arts (Deasy, 2002). The reading progress and proficiency of low-SES eighth grade students who were highly involved in theater was tracked. The data revealed that students involved in theater

out-performed students not involved in theater. Additionally, over the course of grade eight to grade 12, the reading gap gradually intensified between involved and non-involved theater students, recording a significant difference,  $p < .058$ , by grade 12 (Catterall, Chapleau, & Iwanaga, 1999).

Moreover, findings have revealed that students regularly exposed to art-integrated strategies attained higher test scores particularly in English Language Learners (ESL) (Ingram & Reidel, 2003). Additionally, art experience was found to be advantageous to at-risk learners. The interdisciplinary method of arts integration has facilitated “higher-order thinking” competencies, for instance, the ability to make associations of a myriad of elements that encourage critical thinking skills and the ability to explore concepts creatively. Uptis and Smithrin (2003) conducted a study in a district-wide initiative in Canada that selected to implement the Learning through the Arts (LTTA) program over the course of three years. The sample involved over 6,000 students, parent, teachers, and principals. Data was gathered at the inception of the program and after three years of involvement in LTTA, to measure the effects on student achievement. At the end of the three years, students in grade six scored considerably higher on math computation tests than students in control schools ( $p < .05$ ). The standard deviation of the LTTA group of students and the average of the control group had a difference of 11 percentile points in support of students involved in the LTTA program for three years (Uptis & Smithrin, 2003).

Rabkin and Redmond (2006) noted that art integration expands necessary intelligent thought such as “careful observation of the world, mental representation of

what is observed or imagined, abstraction from complexity, pattern recognition and development, symbolic and metaphoric representation, and qualitative judgment” (p. 62). Arts integration allows students to grasp the relationship between subjects and maximize their thinking capacity.

Several studies have not revealed evidence supporting arts integration affecting student achievement. A meta-analysis of remedial readers participating in arts intensive instruction in grades pre-school to five revealed deficient data for a positive relationship between arts integration and increased reading scores (Burger & Winner, 2000). Similarly, the effects of drama integration were analyzed in a meta-analysis using 80 studies on the influence of drama integration on reading achievement on standardized assessment. A significant relationship was not found between drama integration and vocabulary (Podllozny, 2000).

Deasy and Catterall (2002) also challenged the association between the arts and learning, claiming that the association is correlational rather than causal. Deasy and Catterall express concern that “casual readers may come to believe that a small dose of the arts is all that is needed to improve students’ thinking skills, social skills, school retention, and academic self-concept” (Deasy & Catterall, 2002). Despite adversarial studies maintaining the lack of evidence in arts integration influencing student achievement, a number of studies have revealed that arts integration promotes thinking abilities, student engagement, and self-efficacy.

**Arts Integration Beyond Test Scores**

A study conducted to demonstrate how arts integration supports student learning, discovered improved student motivation and student's ability to assess their own learning. The study conducted by DeMoss and Morris (2002) focused on thirty students to determine if there was a difference in student's cognitive processes when engaging in arts-integrated instruction compared to traditional instruction. The lessons were taught by veteran teaching artists associated with veteran Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE) schools.

The veteran teachers selected two similar units of study they would teach. One unit would incorporate art and the other would use traditional teaching. The students were expected to write responses about their knowledge of the topic, importance of the topic and how they felt about the topic. Researchers examined the responses to assess the influence of art-integrated units in comparison to traditional non-art units. The researchers also conducted classroom observations to investigate and experience an art integrated lesson and to document student behaviors during the observation.

The researchers collected student interviews, open-ended questions, and classroom observations. Researchers discovered a difference when students received arts-integrated instruction in comparison to traditional instruction. The study revealed student's ability to assess and regulate their learning improved and their intrinsic motivation increased when students were exposed to arts integrated practices in comparison to student's receiving traditional instructional practices. This research

reinforces the probable reasons why arts support academic achievement. The results postulate that arts integration can benefit student learning (DeMoss & Morris, 2002).

In another study, an action research sought to determine if visual arts in reading circles enhanced literacy learning for bilingual students. The study consisted of six to seven Kindergarten through fifth- grade bilingual students all Hispanic descent. Students were served by the teacher-researcher for thirty to forty minutes twice per week from January through mid-May. The teacher used visual arts during reading circles and expected aesthetic responses during discussions. Student responses were directly related to art experience, connecting general background experiences to the literature, and overall comprehension of text while making connections through the arts.

The teacher-researcher collected data including students' responses during oral discussions, dialogue journals, and students' drawings, paintings, and clay sculptures. The teacher-researcher audio-taped and examined transcriptions of the students' book discussions for seventeen read-aloud sessions during the literature circles and coded and categorized the data for noticeable themes.

The study discovered visual art activities during reading circle, maintained students interest and students demonstrated a high level of engagement. The researcher also observed students' ability to draw from past experiences and make deep connections with the content. The visual arts allowed the teacher to support literacy instruction with visual arts and allowed students to express their understanding of the

story. The findings propose that the inclusion of visual arts in reading supports ELL students in the development of English language Arts skills (Carge, 2004).

In a study with The Kennedy Center's CETA (Changing Education Through the Arts) program, a professional learning partnership intended to support teachers' utilizing art integrated practices in their classrooms, compared the outcomes of three evaluations conducted over the first decade of the program's employment. The purpose of the study was to determine the effectiveness of the program on building teachers' capacities of instructional approach and its impact on students.

The first evaluation gathered annual response surveys from seven teachers participating in the professional learning sessions and six teachers that did not participate. The second survey evaluated content delivery to determine program effectiveness. The third evaluation used a mix of data sources to analyze the effectiveness of the CETA program relative to its goals and objectives. The study included 101 teachers and 1478 students from three model schools and 1296 students from comparison schools. Data collections comprised of observations, professional learning sessions, focus groups, annual surveys of teachers, school coordinators, and administrators.

The study discovered that the CETA program's professional learning sessions were successful in facilitating teachers to integrate the arts into classroom instruction. Teachers developed a strong support for arts integration because of its ability to broaden the learning experience for all learning styles and the various methods for students to express their understanding. The study also found that the positive impact on teachers

translated to student learning enhanced engagement and a positive school climate (Duma & Silverstein, 2014).

### **Arts Integration and Critical Thinking**

The interdisciplinary style of arts integration facilitates an environment inclusive of superior problem solving and in-depth repeating understanding and thinking skills. Art integration acts as a vehicle enabling learners to understand and make connections with complex concepts (Psilos, 2002).

Furthermore, research strongly espouses art integration as an agent in increasing analytical thinking and making complex content accessible and meaningful to students (Christensen, 2008; Sandell, 2011). In Massachusetts, an arts-integrated school ranked first place in the state on tests quantifying critical thinking skills (Oddleifson, 1995). Additionally, an elementary and middle school study of two thousand participants disclosed a “significant relationship” between art integration and higher order thinking skills (Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 1999). Efland (2002) posits that merging knowledge of multiple subject areas with the arts implores learning opportunities that yield deep understanding while stimulating mental competencies. He goes on to state “since the interpretation of a work of art frequently draws upon knowledge from varying domains, studies of artwork can lie at the core of an integrated conception of general education” (Efland, 2002).

Deducing and inferring meaning from images is critical in the development of learning and promotes the development of visual literacy, where student obtain meaning from visual images to interpret, understand, and gain skills such as critical thinking,

communication, and learning (Crawford, 2009). Teaching social studies with images involves students explicitly deducing and inferring images resulting in “critical thinking” (Sandell, 2011). Relevant research endorses the influence of arts integration on critical thinking for all grade levels. In a study conducted by Burton, Horowitz and Abeles (1999), researchers explored the influence of transferring arts learning to non-art subject areas. The participants in the research include 2,407 fourth, fifth, seventh, and eighth grade students at 12 schools. The findings revealed that children exposed at a high level to the arts scored higher on creativity and expression assessments, whereas students with limited to no exposure in the arts underperformed in creativity and expression. The study suggests there are a number of cognitive connections that have impact on learning in the arts and other subjects (Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 1999).

In another study that corroborates art integration advancing critical thinking skills, the Chicago Arts Partnership in Education (CAPE) rendered that students standardized scores improved, but the most notable achievement was students “learning content more deeply, not just memorizing facts” (Kosky & Curtis, 2008). The research noted the increased test scores and the growth in critical thinking skills, primarily in at-risk students (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006). Using visual arts as a tool to stimulate critical thinking and make complex learning accessible to students is an “extremely powerful” process in student learning (Dickinson, 2002).

### **Arts Integration and Student Engagement**

Student engagement has evolved into the chief precept linked to numerous educational outcomes, which include student achievement, attendance, behavior, and

high school dropout rates (Jimerson, Renshaw, Stewart, Hart, & O'Malley, 2009). The school environment can be altered to avoid damaging results through effective interventions that support student engagement (Reschly, Appleton, & Christenson, 2007).

An esteemed research group published a paper, at the University of Chicago, on students involved in “authentic intellectual work” and revealed more engagement in schoolwork and increased achievement on standardized assessment in comparison to students receiving repetitive, skill-based instruction. Authentic work was defined as meaningful, disciplined inquiry and application of knowledge to real-world situations (Newman, Byrk, & Nagaoka, 2001). April (2005) renders that arts integration satisfies the requirements for authentic work. He notes with conviction, “Making art requires students to develop deep understanding in order to represent ideas to others through the arts” (p. 25).

Art Integration was described by educators as increasing student engagement efforts (Catterall, Dumais, & Hampden-Thompson, 2012; Uptis & Smithrim, 2003; Walker, McFadden, Tabone, & Finkelstein, 2011). In agreement, Duma and Silverstein (2014) propose that during an art-integrated lesson, students were more engaged socially and academically in the learning experience (Duma & Silverstein, 2014). Student engagement is also the predictor of student learning (Appleton, Christansen, & Furlong, 2008; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Boykin and Noguera (2011) champion student engagement as the “beacon” and “bellwether” for enhanced student (p. 59).

Teachers have conveyed that arts integration primarily encouraged engagement in unmotivated and at-risk learners. Students appeared focused and displayed enthusiasm and a willingness to participate in art-integrated activities (Baker, 2013). The arts have proven to be effective, and positively affect student engagement levels.

In a study conducted to determine the role of arts at a high school, art engagement resulted in high school student retention. Of the 40 students surveyed during the research, 22 maintained that they contemplated dropping out but remained in school because of the arts. The study determined that a substantial amount of students classified as at-risk of dropping out, credited the involvement in the arts for remaining in school (Barry, Taylor, Walls & Wood, 1990).

Adding to the body of research and baring a connection between the arts and student engagement resulting in achievement, researchers examined the influence of San Diego's Teaching Artist Project (TAP) on the attendance, speaking and listening skills of English Language Learners as measured by state standardized assessment. Researchers discovered higher attendance rates on days that art lessons were scheduled and teachers noted that students displayed heightened levels of engagement during the art-integrated lessons. Previous research has revealed a positive association between arts integrated lesson and student engagement (Brouillette, Childress-Evans, Hinga, & Farkas, 2014).

Research submits that student engagement is the most prominent factor in student achievement. When students connect emotionally and bring all their assets to the learning experience, it results in cognitive advantages (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Eisner, 2003; Jensen, 2008). Arts integration encompasses the use of many areas of the brain that

leverage increased long-term memory, evidencing that the arts is the impetus for engagement (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006; Respress & Lufti, 2006).

### **Art Integration and Student Self-efficacy**

Amongst the positive outcomes of art integration on student learning, increased student self-efficacy has also resulted when an art-integrated curriculum is implemented. If a student experiences success in completing assignments or set tasks, they are more inclined to complete the task (Jacobs, Lanza, Osgood, Eccles, & Wigfield, 2002).

Zimmerman (2000) states, “Experiences in art integration facilitates self-efficacy and heightened self-esteem that impacts student academic performance” (p. 87). Self-efficacy regulates human behaviors such as “self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and the use of instructional strategies” (Bandura, 1990 p.45). Self-efficacy has been described as the confidence to perform a required action with the desired outcome (Boykin & Noguera, 2011).

Self-efficacy has concrete significance regarding academic results that are supported by research (Williams & Williams, 2010). For example, research indicates that self-efficacy attitudes are related to the types of choices that students make (2010). Betz and Hackett (1983) studied the relationship between students’ mathematics self-efficacy and college major choices; findings revealed that students with higher mathematics self-efficacy chose science majors (1983). Self-efficacy in reading has also resulted in improved reading comprehension (Schunk, 2003).

Integrated arts education is intended to increase learning while connecting content-building association between students’ personal experiences, a mind-engaging

process, and a requisite to construct meaning from the world. Art integration necessitates thoughtful engagement and learning in the art form coupled with the content area (Rabkin & Redmond, 2004).

A qualitative study investigating how the arts support learning and academic achievement discovered that the arts make learning accessible to students in all content areas, resulting in elevated levels of confidence that transfers to content area capabilities (Nelson, Colby, & McIlrath, 2001). The study consisted of a mixed population of inner city middle school youth. The study explored if drama lessons benefited struggling students in a middle school with high discipline rates. The data gathered unveiled a substantial change in behavior during the lessons. Students who otherwise had discipline infractions in other classes demonstrated a high level of engagement and control during the drama lesson, which induced confidence. While the study concentrated on the link of arts education to school attendance and dropout prevention, the study also examined the effects of art classes on self-efficacy. The research disclosed a link between arts and heightened levels of confidence prompting school achievement and dropout prevention (Ramey, 2005).

### **Art Integration and Disadvantaged Students**

A collection of studies called the Champions of Change: The impact of the Arts on Learning (Fiske, 1999) suggests a positive connection between arts integration and enhanced student learning for students of low-socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds. Fiske (1999) noted that low-income students exposed to arts integration exceeded peers on established measures of academic achievement facilitating the closing of the achievement

gap. Cattarell (1998), in an analysis of the U.S. Department of Education NELS:88 database, discovered persuasive data denoting that students regularly exposed to arts outperformed “art poor” students seldom exposed to the arts. Similar findings were discovered in a study involving afterschool programs for low-income students (Heath & Roach, 1999), which revealed that afterschool art programs had considerably more positive effects on low-income youth than sports, academic, or community involvement programs. Youth in afterschool arts programs surpassed their peers in afterschool non-arts programs in a vast range of variables.

The Chicago Arts Partnership in Education (CAPE), an innovative arts-integrated curricula partnership with Chicago schools enriches the aforementioned studies. An analysis of standardized reading scores for students in high-poverty schools disclosed a substantial increase in student performance in comparison to schools that did not integrate art into the curriculum (Catterall & Waldorf, 1999).

A study conducted at Ramsey International Fine Arts Magnet public school in Minneapolis, with an enrollment of 968 students receiving an art integrated music curriculum and nearly 65% of the students classified as SES analyzed the impact of music integration. The study analyzed Learning through Music (LTM), a program implemented at Ramsey, to determine the impact of music integration into the curriculum. A case study was conducted to measure the influence of music on sight word fluency and automaticity. A pre-test was administered in the form of a cold read and the art intervention used was rhythmic beats, rhythmic sticks, and taiko drums. The post-test

revealed an impressive increase in sight word fluency (Hornbacher, Lipscomb & Scripp, 2008).

### **Summarizing the Literature**

It is evident through the review of multiple research cited that arts integration promotes student engagement, motivation and improves cognitive skills such as improved long-term memory resulting in critical thinking skills impacting student success (Jensen, 2003; Hornbacher, Lipscomb & Scripp, 2008; Respress & Lufti, 2006). When arts integration is executed with devotion, it reinforces teaching and learning (Lipscomb & Scripp, 2008). An assortment of qualitative measures was used to examine teacher perception of arts integration, professional learning sessions, and its transmittal to classroom practice. The literature also pursued teacher self-efficacy as result of utilizing arts integration strategies.

Arts integration affords a profound reflective learning of concepts in ways that traditional teaching methods do not. Reading and communicating through art domains requires critical thinking and nurtures a myriad of learning styles engendering deep learning (Efland, 2002). As conveyed in the literature, arts integration engages and fosters the development of the whole child. Students are completely involved intellectually, emotionally, and physically, promoting success in children's access to the curriculum (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Williams & Williams, 2010; Bandura, 1990; Upitis & Smithrim, 2003; Walker, McFadden, Tabone, & Finkelstein, 2011).

These practices allow students to use their hands, bodies, and voices in significant ways, supporting the learning of all types of learners and learning modalities, and permitting every student the opportunity to succeed. Arts integration affords learning that is meaningful, engendering students to express their understanding of content in multiple ways (Lynch, 2007).

In Chapter 3, the appropriateness of the research design is discussed. The methodology section provides an explicit description of both school settings and participants, with an in-depth look at each school's population, inclusive of specific demographics make-up and socioeconomic-status of the school composition. Additionally, Chapter 3 delves into the instrumentation selected, its reliability, and validity while also certifying relevance to research questions.

## CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

### **Introduction**

Art integration studies have customarily fixated on the impact the arts have on student learning. However, a subset of studies has concentrated on teachers' perceptions of arts integration, professional learning, and its transfer to classroom practice (Barry, 2010; Bellisario & Donovan, 2012; Bowen, Greene, & Krisida, 2014).

Research has established a strong connection between teacher's perception and beliefs, and classroom practice (Bryan & Atwater, 2002; Savasci-Acikalın, 2009). Classroom instruction is recognized as the most crucial element of student learning; hence, the need to explore teacher's perspective about curriculums since instruction is a predictor of student performance (Kuck & Cepni, 2015). For that reason, it is essential that teachers participate in "well-designed professional learning of critical academic skills" (Sousa, 2006) that can transfer to classroom instruction, fostering deep thinking and learning. Therefore, it is critical that professional learning sessions are "high quality" to support the learning of all students (American Federation of Teachers, 2008). Consequently, this research study explores teachers' perspectives on the impact of arts integration on student achievement, the professional learning experience, and its transfer to classroom practice through surveys, interviews, and observations.

This section offers an outline of the methodology applied within this study, an account of the qualitative instruments implemented, the research questions informing this study, and a justification for using a qualitative design.

Lastly, this section provides the procedures for selecting and gaining access to participants, along with the processes taken to guarantee ethical protection. The role of the researcher involved data collection. Furthermore, data collection and data collection procedures in conjunction with the devices used to confront validity and dependability of instruments are described in this section.

In phase one of the study, the researcher collected data on teachers' perspectives of the professional learning experience through a Likert-type survey. Additionally, data collection occurred through observations of art-integrated lessons, to determine the level of acquired knowledge and transfer of skills and strategies to classroom practice. In phase two, the researcher interviewed teachers on the effectiveness of the professional learning model, and transfer of strategies to classroom practice. The purpose of this study is to afford teachers and policy makers a broad understanding of teachers' perception regarding arts integration. Furthermore, this study determined the impact of professional learning on teacher practice to classroom instruction. The findings will be valuable in discerning the impact of arts integration on student achievement and the influence professional learning has on classroom practice.

**Research Questions**

- 1) How does art integration influence student achievement? Student achievement described as students acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, and learning behaviors that will prepare them to lead successful lives.
- 2) How has the professional learning in arts integration-built teacher capacity to affect student achievement?
- 3) What is teacher perception of the ArtsNow professional learning experience?
- 4) What practices have the teachers found to be effective when integrating the arts?

**Research Design**

The qualitative method (Hatch, 2002) is most fitting for discerning teachers' perception. Through this design, three types of data were collected: (a) surveys, (b) interviews, and (c) observations. The qualitative study examined the impact of arts integration on student achievement described as students acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, and learning behaviors that will prepare them to lead successful lives (Spinath, 2012), and teacher's perspective of the art integration professional learning sessions and its transfer to classroom practice. Utilizing a qualitative method allowed the researcher to investigate and ascertain patterns and themes of the established phenomena (Creswell, 2009). The use of data triangulation to interpret the results allowed the researcher to gain further transparency toward teachers' experience and beliefs with arts integration. Triangulation facilitated the discovery of findings that directly respond to the inquiry of this study. The purpose of triangulation is "to obtain different but

complementary data on the same topic” (Morse, 1991, p. 122) in an effort to better understand the research problem.

The primary advantage of triangulation rests in the ability to find agreement and authentication of results through a variety of data sources (Boyd, 2001). Triangulation scrutinizes and compares data, conveying a superior examining of key findings (2001). Examining evidence of interviews, observations, and surveys functioned to “build a coherent justification of themes” (Creswell, 2003).

The qualitative data derived from observations of art-integrated lessons, interviews to determine teacher perspectives on the transfer of the art-integrated instructional strategies to classroom practice, and a Likert-type survey to discern teacher self-efficacy with art-integrated strategies. Qualitative analysis uses opulently descriptive words to express, "how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (Merriam, 2009). The qualitative inquiry afforded teachers the opportunity to have a voice, which is unusual in the present literature (Alder, 2002).

"Qualitative research is the systematic inquiry into social phenomena in natural settings. These phenomena can include, but are not limited to, how people experience aspects of their lives, how individuals and/or groups behave, how organizations function, and how interactions shape relationships. In qualitative research, the researcher is the main data collection instrument. The researcher examines why events occur, what happens, and what those events mean to the participants studied." (Corbin & Strauss, 2007, p. 195)

Moreover, employment of a qualitative method allowed the researcher to accommodate and afford information from several data sources. Analyzing multiple

qualitative data sources will lessen the dangers of plausible bias, and cultivates flexibility in the research process (Fidel, 2008). For instance, observations validate teachers' belief of self-efficacy with arts integration, certifying the efficaciousness of arts integration.

To that end, the researcher decided on a qualitative case study approach affording the researcher to explore the phenomena within its context using multiple data sources. The qualitative case study approach guaranteed the phenomena was investigated using multiple data sources through a variety of lenses exposing numerous facets of the phenomena (Stake 1995). Yin (1984) describes a case study approach as an empirical analysis that “investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (Yin, 1984, p. 23).

### **Setting**

The schools selected for the study (School A and School B) are both fine arts integration academies in a sub-metro diverse public school district in Georgia. The researcher collected comprehensive demographic data from both schools. In the fall of 2012, both schools were designated Fine Arts Academies, and the school district has funded ongoing professional learning of all staff including administrators, by the ArtsNow organization. Both schools are located in the same district and are comprised of Pre-Kindergarten through fifth grade. However, the county decided that the art-integrated curriculum be specific to students in Kindergarten through fifth grade.

Teachers have participated in ongoing professional learning trainings since the inception of the academies. Student enrollment in the academies consists of resident students with registration extended to students interested in transferring to the academies. However, enrollment was granted based on space availability. The school communities have embraced arts integration with regular attendance and participation at the professional learning sessions and devotedly integrating art into the curriculum.

### **Population**

Participants in this research represented teaching staff at two schools consisting of teachers spanning across grade levels kindergarten through fifth grade, inclusive of regular classroom teachers, Early Intervention Program (EIP) teachers, special education teachers, and fine arts teachers. The participants were identified as fourth grade teachers at both schools participating in the study and effectively integrate the arts in the curriculum as an instructional tool for teaching. The intentional sampling allowed the researcher to gain insight on teachers' proficiency and experience in implementing art integration offering an abundance of knowledge. Table 3 offers an overview of the staff's years of teaching experience, and the level of educational degrees they hold.

Table 3

*Teacher Credentials*

<b>School A</b>			<b>School B</b>		
<b>Certification</b>			<b>Certification</b>		
Years of Experience	1-5 years	15	Years of Experience	1-5 years	13
	6-10 years	20		6-10 years	10
	11-15 years	12		11-15 years	11
	16-20 years	13		16-20 years	4
	21-25 years	6		21-25 years	6
	26+ years	6		26+ years	7
Degrees Held	T-4 Bachelors	25	Degrees Held	T-4 Bachelors	23
	T-5 Masters	16		T-5 Masters	18
	T-6 Specialist	28		T-6 Specialist	9
	T-7 Doctorate	1		T-7 Doctorate	1

To gain an all-encompassing understanding of both schools participating in the study, Table 4 displays a total grade-level distribution (Pre-K through Grade 5) for School A in the 2014-2015 and 2015–2016 school years.

Table 4

*School A Grade Level Distribution*

<b>Total Population of School A by Grade Level for the 2014-2015 School Year</b>								
Grade Level	Pre-K	Kindergarten	1 <sup>st</sup> grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	4 <sup>th</sup> grade	5 <sup>th</sup> grade	<b>Total</b>
Total	40	153	146	150	138	120	112	819

  

<b>Total Population of School A by Grade Level for the 2015-2016 School Year</b>								
Grade Level	Pre-K	Kindergarten	1 <sup>st</sup> grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	4 <sup>th</sup> grade	5 <sup>th</sup> grade	<b>Total</b>
Total	44	145	162	139	150	116	123	879

Table 5 describes a comprehensive view of the demographic breakdown (Hispanic, American Indian, Asian, Black, White, and Multi-Racial) with actual calculations and percentage distribution for the 2014-2015 and 2015–2016 school years in School A.

Table 5

*Demographic Distribution*

<b>Ethnicity and Free and Reduced Demography of School A (School -wide for the 2014-2015 and 2015- 2016 School Year</b>				
Demographic	2014-2015		2015-2016	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Hispanic	538	63%	569	65%
American Indian	0	0	0	0%
Asian	3	0.34%	1	0.11%
Black	40	5%	39	4%
White	266	30%	246	28%
Multi-Racial	12	1.40%	24	3%
Total	859		879	
Free Lunch	672	78%	711	81%
Reduced Lunch	34	4%	26	3%

Table 6 displays the grade level breakdown for School B and Table 7 demonstrates the ethnicity, and free reduced population of students in School B.

Table 6

*School B Grade Level Distribution*

<b>Total Population of School B by Grade Level for the 2014-2015 School Year</b>							
Grade Level	Kindergarten	1 <sup>st</sup> grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	4 <sup>th</sup> grade	5 <sup>th</sup> grade	Total
Total	86	102	91	110	92	83	563

  

<b>Total Population of School B by Grade Level for the 2015-2016 School Year</b>							
Grade Level	Kindergarten	1 <sup>st</sup> grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	4 <sup>th</sup> grade	5 <sup>th</sup> grade	Total
Total	97	92	97	91	106	93	576

Table 7 describes a comprehensive view of the demographic breakdown (Hispanic, American Indian, Asian, Black, White, and Multi-Racial) with calculations and percentage distribution for the 2014-2015 and 2015–2016 school years in School B.

Table 7

*Demographic Distribution*

<i>Ethnic and Free and Reduced Demography of School B (School-wide for the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016) School Year</i>				
Demographic	2014-2015		2015-2016	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Hispanic American	204	37%	236	41%
Indian	0	0%	0	0%
Asian	7	1%	6	1.00%
Black	52	9%	50	9%
White	272	48%	255	44%
Multi-Racial	28	5%	29	5%
Total	563		576	
Free Lunch	263	47%	315	55%
Reduced Lunch	52	9%	36	6%

**Access**

Access to the sites for this study was possible as the researcher is an employee of the district and at one of the schools. However, obtaining access to the data necessitates permission from the districts Department of Research (Appendix A). The principals at each site received a courtesy email by the researcher explaining the purpose of the study, and request permission for teacher participation in interviews and observations. The researcher offered a jean pass to participants (allowing participants to wear jeans to work on a day of their choosing) as an incentive and compensation for volunteering their time in the study. The researcher and participants selected a mutually convenient date and time to conduct the observations and interviews. Participants signed an

informed consent form (Appendix B), and an interview release form (Appendix C) to ascertain their understanding of the implications of the study.

### **Value of Methodology**

Using qualitative method and collecting multiple data sources allowed the researcher to entrust more than one data source (Creswell, 2009). Conversely, Merriam (2009) postulated that qualitative inquiry uses elaborately expressive words to convey, "how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 13). The qualitative analysis affords teachers the opportunity to have a voice and share their perspective (Alder, 2002).

Moreover, qualitative data allowed the researcher to interpret the data in an inductive manner, building on "perceptive acuity and relational capabilities of the inquirer" (Greene, 2007). Using a qualitative method is a concrete instrument for collecting data to answer the research questions comprehensively. This approach provided the researcher the freedom to utilize a variety of data sources to seek multiple perspectives. Additionally, by utilizing the qualitative method and collecting multiple data sources, the researcher cultivated a well-defined depiction of teachers' perception of arts integration, its transfer to classroom practice, and the impact on students.

### **Qualitative Instrumentation**

Qualitative data collection concentrated on teachers' perception of the ArtsNow professional learning experience through teacher surveys, interviews, and transmission of art-integrated strategies amidst observation of lessons.

**Survey**

The ArtsNow organization designed a Likert-type survey to discern teacher self-efficacy with art-integrated instructional strategies, and to gain valuable feedback on the professional learning approach. The survey measured teachers' attitudes on the influence of professional learning on student achievement. The developed survey items were intended to gauge the level to which participants perceived they had progressed after a minimum of one curricular year of professional learning through the ArtsNow model. The researcher aimed to study changes over a period and study trends of attitudes toward a phenomenon (Babbie, 1998). The survey provided questions related to teachers' increased knowledge and skill of art-integrated strategies, and the perception of their ability to implement the instructional strategy effectively while increasing student learning.

**Instruments Reliability and Validity**

The director, colleagues, and consultants of ArtsNow produced the Likert-type survey with questions that measured teacher's perspectives on the professional learning sessions and self-efficacy in art-integrated strategies. Professionals and content experts of ArtsNow reviewed and closely examined the survey questions, establishing content validity. Content validity is "established by professional or professionals selecting appropriate content for the questions" (Creswell, 2003, p. 32). Furthermore, to establish construct validity, the researcher linked survey questions to one of the research questions. In addition, reliability for the survey was resolved through internal consistency reliability (Trochim, 2006).

### **Data Collection Procedures and Analysis**

The researcher submitted a proposal to Kennesaw University of Georgia Institutional review board (IRB) to conduct a research study and gain permission to proceed with the study (Appendix D). Additionally, the researcher submitted an application for permission to conduct research in the local school system's Board of Education for approval.

The Likert-type survey (Appendix E) was developed by the ArtsNow consultants to determine teacher perspective of the professional learning model, and whether it increased teacher capacity and efficacy with art integrated lesson. The survey questions pertain to the effectiveness and influence of the professional learning sessions on classroom instruction. The response questions asked teachers to rate their level of agreement with each statement on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 5 being "Strongly Agree"). The researcher collected survey results and disaggregate data results at the conclusion of the first five months of the monthly professional learning sessions at both participating schools.

Each survey item assumed a numeric score to analyze the data. For instance, the scale score was consistent with the point value system, 5=Strongly Agree, 4=agree, 3=unsure, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagrees. In an effort to make scoring easier, "a good rule to follow is that the more positive the response, or the higher or more advanced the categories of information, the higher the assigned number" (Creswell, 2003). Although the response has been abridged to numerical data, it is still regarded as

a “highly descriptive and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviation, and accompanying narrative” (Mills, 2003 p.3) intervention.

### **Observations**

Observations, a form of data collection, provided the opportunity to record and study teacher and student behaviors, to examine the phenomena with empirical evidence (Flick, 2006), forming a broad sample across grade levels to further inform the study. Teachers from multiple grade levels and departments participated at a convenient time. The observations took place on-site at each elementary school while teachers facilitate an arts-integrated lesson.

The researcher assumed the role of non-participant observer and took descriptive field notes, recording essential information about the lesson. For example, the observer can comprise data about the location, activities and reaction, interaction of participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In addition to the field notes, the observer rated each teacher with a rubric aligned to the characteristics of an arts-integrated lesson. “This rubric (Appendix F) combines the arts integration elements and the tenets of arts integration through a lens that explores content, process, and product (Pink, 2005).

The lesson was analyzed on the intensity to which content, process, and product are conveyed during instruction on a scale from 1-4: Level 1-Beginning, Level 2-Developing, Level 3-Accomplished, Level 4-Exemplary. The rubric provides a clear description of each category measured relative to specific features of an arts-integrated lesson. Table 7 describes the organization of data after each observation.

Table 8

*Sample Observation Rating Scale*

<b>Observation Rating Score</b>			
<b>School</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Scale Score</b>
<b>A</b>	1	2	12
<b>B</b>	K	6	9
<b>A</b>	3	3	8
<b>B</b>	5	4	10

*Source:* Fictitious data

**Interviews**

The researcher contacted the principal and teachers to organize a fitting time to conduct the interviews. Each teacher signed a consent form (Appendix B) and a release of interview data form (Appendix C) after agreeing to participate in the interview. These documents allowed the researcher to gather data through audio recordings and later transcribed.

Moreover, the researcher conducted interviews to allow teachers an opportunity to express their perspectives and experience with the ArtsNow professional learning sessions. The interviews were conducted face-to-face using open-ended questions to achieve a high level of participation and allow the researcher to ask additional investigative questions (Creswall, 2007). The researcher strove to maintain an informal and conversational tone with open – ended questions to foster pensive responses. Interviews provided more evidence on the transfer of instructional

strategies acquired at the professional learning sessions to classroom practice.

The researcher created questions grounded on the elements of effective instruction and characteristics of an art-integrated school (Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). A sample of the questions is listed below; the complete list of questions can be found in (Appendix G).

- Has implementing art integration changed the learning environment in your classroom?
- Do you perceive that art integration has shaped your instruction?
- What has been the most beneficial facet of the professional learning sessions?
- How has art integration influenced classroom activities and assessment instruments?
- How do you perceive art integration has changed your students' levels of achievement?

### **Data Management**

The researcher assumed sole responsibility in collecting data after receiving IRB approval and authorization from the county and Kennesaw University. Prior to beginning the interview process, the purpose of the study was explained to teacher participants with an understanding that participation is strictly voluntary with no adversative consequences for choosing not to participate in the study. To ensure privacy, the researcher only used pseudonyms when reporting results.

The researcher secured all paper and digital data at all times. Completed

surveys, observation field notes, and interview notes were stored in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher's personal residence. In an effort to protect the data, secure digital data was saved on the researcher's password protected computer. To reduce the chance of losing irreplaceable data, all digital data was backed-up using a portable flash drive, along with paper copies.

### **Qualitative Reliability and Validity**

The reliability of the observation and interview data was established through member-checks. The results of the interpretations were returned to the participants to "confirm and validate the content that has been observed or explanations of interviews" (Zohrabi, 2013). Therefore, the accuracy of the data is accepted and supported as credible (2013). The method of triangulation was employed to converge data and ensure further reliability. Converging data can confirm findings and promote validity and reliability of the collected qualitative data (Creswell, 2003). In triangulation, information from a variety of sources corroborating evidence from multiple data collection is obtained (2003).

**Qualitative Procedures and Data Analysis.** Once the IRB granted approval, the researcher organized a meeting with teachers to explain and familiarize them with the purpose of the study, and to obtain consent to participate. Scheduling of interviews and observations begins after consent is provided by each teacher participating in the study. A date and time, that is mutually convenient for the researcher and the teacher was scheduled via email for the interview and observation. Prior to the interview, teachers were provided with questions. The face-to face interviews was recorded for "accurate record of conversation" (Creswell, 2003). The teachers were provided with the

questions prior to the interview. Observations functioned to examine teacher's instructional practice of arts integration strategies. Teachers were observed while conducting an arts integration lesson of their choice. Each observation varied in length depending on the duration of the lesson. According to Flick (2006, p. 219), it is evident that the longer a researcher observes, the better the reliability of the acquired data. The researcher made note of the lesson's start and end time. The researcher took reflective notes.

The qualitative data was organized by interviews and observations (Creswell, 2003), and transcribed and analyzed using the software program, NVivo to further analyze text by coding. Coding afforded the researcher to "segment and label text to form description and broad themes" (Creswell, 2003 p.4).

### **Delimitations**

A delimiting choice by the researcher was to constrict the capacity of this study by limiting the investigation to art integration instructional practice, and teacher perception at two elementary schools in the same district. Additionally, the study only deliberates on the perspectives of 4<sup>th</sup> grade teachers at two Title 1 schools. The study did not measure students' perspective of arts integration to determine students' perspective of the instructional strategy. Educational policy is frequently shaped without the perspective of those it affects the most: the students.

### **Limitations**

The researcher provided accurate data and results affording other scholars the ability to evaluate findings to their own setting (Nestling, 2008). Like all research, this

study has limitations; the following limitations are noted for this study. The findings were limited to a similar student population. The study is limited to two elementary schools in one school district in northeast Georgia. Additionally, administrative support may have varied from one school to the other. Lastly, the role of the researchers as an administrator at one of the participating schools must be considered. The researcher remained particularly cognizant of biases that could unintentionally manipulate interpretations of the findings. As Noddings (2010) notes, “the unconscious influence may be greater than any conscious choice” (p.147).

### **Ethical Considerations**

Throughout this study, major considerations to address regarding ethical consideration are the confidentiality and the appropriate implementation of the IRB process from the University and the District. The construct of this research guards the privacy of each student and teacher data being utilized. The first phase in protecting the data of students is requesting assessment data without revealing the identity of students. The teacher’s privacy was protected, as pseudonyms were used. All teachers’ interviews were audio recorded. The audio recording process was also an ethical consideration (Finnegan, 1992). The researcher made teachers aware, through the consent form that the audio recording is for transcription purposes only. Audio recording allowed the researcher to give their full attention to the teachers without the concern of taking notes.

### **Summary**

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative method and provided ample

justification for the adoption of the research design. This chapter provided detailed procedure for managing this study along with explicit information about the research design, construct of the study, validity and reliability of instruments, data analysis, and ethical considerations. Empirical data was collected through interviews, classroom observations, and surveys. The goal of this research is to determine teacher's perspective about the professional learning sessions and the impact it had on student achievement. In Chapter 4, a detailed view of the teacher's perspectives on the professional learning through surveys and interviews is provided. Additionally, observations provided insight on the transfer of instructional strategies to classroom practice. Findings from each data source was reported, and each research question was addressed with discussions of the relevant data. An analysis and summary will also be presented.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine the impact of arts integration on student learning, obtain teachers' perspectives on the arts integration professional learning experience, and its transfer to instructional pedagogy, while also exploring teachers' perspective of art-integrated strategies. Teacher perspectives of the training was expressed through survey data; coded for strongly disagree, disagree, slightly disagree, slightly agree, agree, and strongly agree, for findings on teachers' perception of the ArtsNow professional learning experience.

Interview data was collected to capture teachers' perspective on the influence of arts integration on student achievement, described as students acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, and learning behaviors that will prepare them to lead successful lives (Spinath, 2012), and the impact and transfer of the professional learning sessions to classroom instruction. Interview data was collected through face-to-face interviews and written responses to guiding questions. Interviews were transcribed, and then coded for themes and sub-themes. Observation data were collected through on-site classroom observations of teachers conducting an arts-integrated lesson to assess practices teachers found to be effective when integrating the arts. Observation data was combined with a rubric and field notes.

The rubric measures art integration lessons with the following coherent set of criteria; content, process, and product, and four levels of performance; beginning (1), developing (2), accomplished (3) and exemplary (4).

Findings from all data sources were triangulated to corroborate the interpretations of teachers' perspectives of the arts integration professional learning, its transfer to classroom practice, and teachers' opinions and beliefs of self-efficacy in the art-integrated strategies.

### **Teacher Participants**

Teacher participants represented classroom teachers in 4<sup>th</sup> grade from two elementary schools collaborating with ArtsNow, an Atlanta based non-profit organization, to deliver the art integration professional learning sessions. Teacher participant demographics data was presented in Table 9 by school location, years of experience as an educator, and years at an art-integrated (AI) school.

Table 9

#### *Teacher Experience*

Teacher	School	Years of experience	Years of AI Experience
1	School A	8	4
2	School A	25	6
3	School A	17	6
4	School A	5	4
5	School A	22	6
6	School A	15	6
7	School B	6	6
8	School B	8	6
9	School B	7	5
10	School B	14	6

**Art Consultants/Educators**

ArtsNow is a strategic partner that offers professional learning in arts integration, and has collaborated with both schools participating in this study to offer professional learning that is customized to meet the needs of the district and each individual school. ArtsNow is comprised of a team of nationally recognized artists and educators who provide instruction and coaching to teachers about integrating the arts into their daily lessons. Participating artists presented workshops on how to integrate their respective art specialty into content areas. Mellissa Dillmar Joy demonstrated how to use dance movement to recognize math and reading patterns. Susie Spear Purcell facilitated the use of tableaus to describe historical events in social studies. Shannon Green explained how to use the work of Willy Kandinsky to explore geometric shapes and polygons with students. Lastly, Darlene Guida presented how to use music to explore fractions in the organization of sound.

**Data Collection**

Upon IRB approval, the researcher scheduled a meeting with fourth grade teachers to provide each potential participant with procedures, a description, and the purpose of the study, along with a consent form (Appendix B). After receiving each signed consent form, I contacted each participant via email to schedule the time, date, and location for the individual interviews and observations.

**Interview Data.** Face-to-face interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the teacher participants. Interview questions were emailed to each teacher prior to the scheduled interview. The interview sessions were audio recorded to ensure descriptive

validity and accuracy of the transcription. All responses were transcribed relative to each interview question, and analysis software was utilized to code and look for themes, emerging patterns, and ideas with the responses to each interview question. The software NVivo was used for coding. NVivo allowed the researcher to import all interview responses and closely analyze and code the responses through pattern-based coding, and examine closely teachers' perspectives about the professional learning sessions, arts integration, and its influence on teacher efficacy and student achievement. Word frequency query was also applied to determine what words occurred most often in each question. Lastly, teacher participants validated transcriptions of interviews through member checking.

**Observation Data.** The researcher contacted each teacher participant via email to schedule the observation. The observations were scheduled at the convenience of the 10 teacher participants who agreed to be observed. The researcher participated in the Foundational Arts training with the staff at both schools, and has participated in all subsequent arts integration trainings and professional learning sessions since 2012. The researcher acted as a passive observer for the purpose of identifying effective art-integrated practices as measured by the rubric consistent with the outlined criteria of an arts integrated lesson. Raw field notes were recorded and organized into a research protocol in preparation for data analysis.

Teachers were observed for evidence of the strategies teachers found to be most effective when integrating the arts. A rubric with a point value performance level was assigned for analysis: beginning (1), developing (2), accomplished (3), and exemplary

(4), with content, process, and product as the criteria. The observation rubric also proved to be adept for observing the transfer of arts integration strategies to classroom practice.

**Survey Data.** The Likert-type survey was issued to all teachers via email across the professional learning sessions during the 2014-2015 school year and the 2015-2016 school year. All teachers who attended the professional learning sessions responded to the surveys that consisted of 11 positively stated items.

### **Data Findings**

The fundamental importance of the qualitative method is the “superiority as thoughtful studies of lived experiences” generating firm understanding of human behavior amidst conversation, dialogue, and learning towards a collective learning of the phenomena (Greene, 2007 p.52). The interviews offered data with detailed information about teacher perception and opinions of the professional learning sessions, and arts integration as a strategy. Observation data provided information on teachers’ art-integrated instructional practices. The observations were presented with the use of a rubric adding a numerical value to the observation data. Additionally, the survey data assessed teachers’ view of the professional learning sessions and were analyzed and reported.

### **Interview Findings**

Interview data addressing teacher perception of the ArtsNow professional learning experience and building of teacher capacity with arts integration were collected through face-to-face interviews (Appendix C). The interview data is reported through a

blended model. The interview summaries are described in depth after discussing the themes that emerged with each interview question.

A theme that emerged from the interview responses was *High Student Engagement* and a sub-theme of *Increased Student Creativity*. Ninety percent of the teachers responded that their classroom environment has changed, and the students are a lot more engaged, creative, and more inclined to step out of their comfort zone. Student engagement is vital in the development of understanding, and arts integration fosters classrooms that engage students to feel connected to the content, allowing for multiple methods of expression. Student creativity is equally essential. As noted by Dr. Kitchen (2014), industries are no longer interested in grades students acquired in college, instead they are seeking employees that are “creative with critical thinking skills as well as collaboration skills” the valued attributes of the twenty-first century workplace.

“It has. My kids are more engaged when we use art integration and they become more comfortable with each other and themselves.” (Teacher 1)

“It definitely changed my learning environment. It has increased retention, and decreased student misbehaviors. Students have a different means of expressing themselves.” (Teacher 2)

“My kids are much more engaged when we use arts integration and they become more comfortable with each other and themselves. They have to step outside their comfort zone, and we build and feel a sense of community.” (Teacher 3)

“I delve deeper into the content and the art concept, allowing me increased knowledge of art and content standards.” (Teacher 4)

“Probably the biggest way it has changed the learning environment is that the students interact more with one another and with the content. As a teacher, I have been willing to take risks with arts integration.” (Teacher 5)

“It has changed it. The students tend to be more engaged and get excited when they know we are doing some sort of application in the arts or an art-integrated lesson that allows them to explore through the arts.” (Teacher 6)

“Well, for one, students are excited when we are doing an art integration lesson, and they are super focused. They collaborate and share ideas with one another, even students that normally misbehave, get involved.” (Teacher 8)

“The environment has changed for the better, for sure. I take risks and tell my students that I am often not comfortable with music, but I will take a chance. I guess, because they see me overcome my fear and take risks, they do as well. This risk taking also translates to other areas.” (Teacher 9)

*Risk Taking* was a theme that emerged from interview responses. The teachers reported an increase in risk-taking from students and themselves. Arts integration creates space for risk-taking, affording students to “become better problem solvers, more creative, and better critical thinkers” (Thornton, 2015).

A sub-theme that surfaced was Increased *Teaching Capacity*; teachers believed that arts integration has increased their repertoire of instructional strategies. All interviewed teachers reported a positive experience with art-integration and credited arts integration with increased risk-taking with teaching and student learning. Teachers also valued the ability to conduct art-integrated lessons with the support of the ArtsNow professionals. Additionally, several teachers experienced the improved capacity of teaching strategies because of the professional learning sessions.

“My experience with arts integration has been great; I am already by nature artistically inclined and a creative person at heart. It is exciting for me to be given permission to integrate arts into lessons.” (Teacher 1)

“I have learned multiple techniques to integrate the arts into the curriculum.”  
(Teacher 2)

“I felt art integration fit more naturally in science and social studies. Yet, I felt limited in reading and language arts and maybe it is because of the demands of our population here at this school”. (Teacher 3)

“At the beginning of implementation, I have to admit I was not thrilled with the idea of arts integration, primarily because I was afraid of the unknown. However, my perception has shifted. The reason why my perception has changed is because of a particular shadow lesson I did with my students last year. The lesson was video recorded by an art professional since the students were presenting. I was overwhelmed with pride as I watched the presentations. My students understood how a shadow is created and they were able to provide so much information about shadows. In the past, students have struggled with this concept, but because I integrated an art domain and they were successful in learning and understanding the concept of shadows.” (Teacher 5)

“I have enjoyed it very much because it has allowed me to identify other ways that children learn and has improved my strategies as a classroom teacher. It has allowed me to identify ways that students learn, and I am able to customize my teaching.” (Teacher 6)

“I truly enjoy art-integrated lessons with the students and I enjoy looking at the art and academic standard and determining how to integrate the two to deliver and create meaningful lessons.” (Teacher 7)

“My experience has been invaluable because of all the professional learning opportunities with ArtsNow. I mostly enjoyed watching my students present content with an art form, and the whole time I am thinking ‘I wish I had learned with arts integration.’” (Teacher 10)

Another theme that appeared in this interview response was *Distinct Teaching Modalities* and a sub-theme of *Effortless Connection to Content*. Teachers reported an increase in using distinct teaching modalities allowing for added differentiation techniques in lesson. Teachers also expressed that regular delivery of art-integrated lessons makes the connections they made between academic content and art content an unforced conveyance.

Art education is connected to teachers' improved capacity to use differentiated instruction, the practice of modifying and adapting instruction, materials, content, projects, and assessments to meet the educational needs of varied learners and to reach marginalized students (Barry, 2010; Burton et al., 2000; Nelson, 2001; Oreck, 2004). The teachers unanimously responded that art integration has shaped their instruction in several modes; expanded knowledge, gained insight on student learning styles, and taking risks with instructional practices.

“Yes, it has shaped my instruction. It has expanded my knowledge and the way that I think about my lessons and how I can connect the concept that I have to teach with art areas. I have experienced many ‘aha’ moments when I integrate.” (Teacher 1)

“Yes, in so many ways. If I am teaching something that I am unfamiliar with, and I think the students will struggle with the concept, I look to integrate the arts like music or drama. Prior to arts integration I probably would not have done so.” (Teacher 2)

“I have grown more mindful of the diverse ways that students learn and their learning style and multiple intelligences.” “It has allowed me to see students in a different light.” (Teacher 3)

“I am constantly looking for ways to integrate what I am teaching, but it is time consuming.” (Teacher 4)

“Yes, it encouraged me to take more risk and given me the permission to integrate art into the content, without feeling a sense of guilt that the content was being lost because of the art component.” (Teacher 5)

“Yes, because I am aware of the different art modalities that I can use to make learning easier for students. I recognize not all students will get excited about the visual art or music, but if I use a variety of art modalities, it will lend itself to all learning styles in the classroom. More kinesthetic reaches more students.” (Teacher 6)

“It has, it has helped me as a teacher to step outside my comfort zone and it encouraged students to step outside of their comfort zone.” (Teacher 7)

“I have grown a great deal as an educator as a result of teaching arts integration, because now I not only see the connection between the arts and content areas, but I see the connection of many content areas.” (Teacher 8)

“Yes. My instruction has changed. I definitely feel more comfortable with all the art domains and have the ability to see how content standards link with the art standards.” (Teacher 9)

“Absolutely, I recognize that I am a better teacher because I integrate arts into the content area I teach and participate in regular professional learning sessions. I am not only learning about art integration, I am also gaining strategies that I use in all my teaching.” (Teacher 10)

A theme that materialized more than once during the interviews was *High Student Engagement*. Teachers considered arts integration as a catalyst to increased student engagement. Teachers maintained that typically students that displayed low levels of engagement tuned in at high level of engagement during art-integrated lessons. Teachers, education specialists, and leading organizations regard art integration as an approach to teaching that allows students to play an active role in learning, resulting in increased student engagement (Baker, 2013; Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Duma & Silverstein, 2014). Most teachers responded that students displayed a high level of engagement during art-integrated lessons.

“Very high, probably the highest it [the level of engagement] ever is. Primarily students that are not typically engaged in a lesson are very engaged. When you can bring something into your lesson that they are somewhat familiar with, and it allows them to draw an even bigger connection- this is why the engagement is so high. All students flourish with at least one art domain and that allows an instant connection. Students are more relaxed and open to the content area being introduced.” (Teacher 1)

“Typically, they are more on task, and more engaged. When I tell them that we are using an art, they are more eager to participate. It allows students an opportunity to show off and I can see another side of students that I was not familiar with existed.” (Teacher 2)

“They are typically engaged in an arts integration activity. I have found that at times although the students are highly engaged they have missed the content portion of the lesson and spend more time on the art standard.” (Teacher 3)

“Their engagement level has increased. They seem excited about art integration and I have observed when they make a connection and their faces light up.” (Teacher 4)

“Students are much more involved, they display a high level of engagement. More movement, and hands on lessons. I will be honest, before arts-integration, I had a silent classroom.” (Teacher 5)

“In general, it is a higher level of engagement.” (Teacher 6)

“Completely engaged, and it is wonderful, yet it saddens me because I wish I could do more with the arts integration seeing how highly engaged my students are during a lesson.” (Teacher 7)

“This is how engaged my students are- I have several behavior issues in my class this year and have noticed during art integrated lessons they usually participate with no behavior issues. Unfortunately, I don’t integrate every day because it is time consuming.” (Teacher 8)

All, I mean all students are engaged and highly involved. I enjoy watching their excitement and collaboration.” (Teacher 9)

The students are so engaged, and it pains me that I am not able to teach like this more often. I have to prepare them for the end of year assessment, the Georgia Milestone.” (Teacher 10)

A theme that arose around assessment was *Comfortable with Art Formative Assessment*. Teachers reported feeling comfortable with art integrated formative assessments. However, most teachers did not understand how to assess students with a summative assessment in the art domains. There is an absence of high-quality assessment tools related to student learning in the arts (Herpin, Quinn, & Li, 2012). Teachers revealed during the interview that they were not very comfortable with art integrated assessment use. Several teachers were comfortable using formative

assessment but were concerned with students' ability to transfer learning to standardized assessment. Formative assessments during art-integrated lessons provide authentic feedback from teachers, providing students with a resource to progress in their own learning. Frequent use of formative interactive assessment affords teachers to identify learning needs and alter teaching accordingly. Teachers using multiple formative assessment techniques are equipped to meet varied student needs (Hanover Research, 2014).

“I have found that students can show their understanding when allowed to present it with an art rather than paper/ pencil. If they can put it to a song, dance about it- then they have demonstrated understanding, but where I have problem is how to transfer that learning to standardized assessment and make sure that it lines up with what students will be exposed to on standardized tests. (Teacher 1)

“I only feel comfortable using informal formative assessment for an art-integrated lesson.” (Teacher 2)

“I like to use formative assessments when I am assessing an art integration lesson. I have not used any summative assessment because I want to make certain students are prepared for the Ga Milestone. Arts integration is a way to get students to a solid understanding, but it does not match what they are expected to do on standardized tests.” (Teacher 3)

“The activities are more hands on and movement based. Regarding assessment, I find the assessment instrument to be difficult for me- however, an informal assessment or informal formative assessment I can see being easier to conduct.” (Teacher 5)

“The arts have driven me to prepare diverse activities. I feel comfortable with formative assessment in art integration; however, I still find it difficult to conduct summative assessments through an art-integrated lesson. Arts integration has allowed me to develop creative ways to assess. I tend to develop and use more rubrics with art lessons and I noticed that I pay more attention to the process rather than only the product.” (Teacher 6)

“I do more assessments where the students have to demonstrate what they know instead of a paper and pencil assessment. We do a lot more kinesthetic opportunities with assessment and anything that helps them cross the mid-line

will help them remember.” (Teacher 7)

The activities have more movement and less seat time, students show off their creative sides. It is interesting to watch how they think when an art form is thrown in the equation.” (Teacher 8)

“My classroom activities are fun and engaging when I am integrating a lesson, because the combination of the arts and content area makes it fun. I find that when I assess students in an art lesson, I use a rubric.” (Teacher 9)

“I have a difficult time with assessments in the area of mathematics. Not sure how to incorporate an assessment of a math and art lesson.” (Teacher 10)

A theme that transpired was *Improved Critical Thinking* and the sub-theme *Increased Student Focus*. Teachers reported that students have multiple ways to express their thinking, and that allows them to think critically about distinct concepts. Teachers also commented that the high level of engagement has resulted in deeper focus during instruction. Huye (2015) views coincide in that art integration increases critical thinking. He contends that when students are immersed in art integration, they express high-level thinking, connecting content to real-world issues (2015).

Increased student focus is merely cognitive engagement. “In this sense, cognitive engagement refers to the quality of students’ engagement whereas sheer effort refers to the quantity of their engagement in the class” (Pintrich, 2003, p. 105). Cognitive engagement pertains to students’ impression about their work, and the quality of the engagement (Metallidou & Viachou, 2007).

Teachers recognized that if they were consistent with arts integration, student achievement might be higher; however, 90% of teachers believed students’ critical thinking improved and they displayed more focus during art-integrated lessons.

“Their level of recall on information taught, I think has increased. Does it transfer to standardized test- not sure?” (Teacher 1)

“I was not diligent with art integration, but had I been, I believe it could have drastically changed student level of achievement. Art integration allows for critical thinking especially in their expression and their overall performance at the end of the task” (Teacher 2)

“Some students benefit from this approach, but not all. And I find that it is not necessarily my ELL students. I feel that the middle class, English speaking students do better with arts integration” (Teacher 3)

“One would hope that their scores have been improved, but I think there are factors that have impeded us from increasing student achievement levels, one is student’s language barrier, and we also became a ‘Focus School’ and we introduced SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Operational Protocol) as an instructional practice and these two entities became a focus for our school.” (Teacher 4)

“I do not think we saw a change in our students’ level of achievement, but I think we are and have been building critical thinking skills and allowing content to become easier to understand for students, in some respect.” (Teacher 5)

“I think there are factors that have impeded us from increasing student achievement levels, one is student’s language barrier, and we also became a ‘Focus School’ and we introduced SIOP as an instructional practice and these two entities became a focus for our school.” (Teacher 6)

“I do not think it has changed student’s level of achievement, that much at this point. Do I think it could? Absolutely. But factors like time and standardized assessment have prohibited us to truly focus on the arts.” (Teacher 7)

“Test scores have improved slightly, but not drastically. However, I have noticed students are verbal, and are willing to take risks that would not have otherwise.” (Teacher 8)

“I would love to see these students in the future. Our standardized test scores are not where we would like, but we notice the difference in our students. They are more creative, and their motivation has increased.” (Teacher 9)

“Tests are not the only measure of student achievement, I see other benefits. We have a drama club and the students that participate go through personality changes. They start believing that they can do just about anything, because they are now performers. They take that self-confidence to the classroom and begin to do better in class because they believe in themselves.” (Teacher 10)

*Elevated Participation* was a theme that arose and a sub-theme of *Improved Enthusiasm*. Teachers testified that all students were eager to participate in art-integrated lessons. Students who generally were not enthusiastic about school and were less inclined to participate exhibited participatory behaviors. Several teachers shared that students expressed enthusiasm and participated during art-integrated lessons. According to Grumet (2004), “In integration programs, students reveal enthusiasm and hidden capacities, and express ideas, feelings, and new dimensions of their intelligence” (p.89).

Participation and enthusiasm translates to motivation. Motivation invigorates, guides and supports learning behavior reflected in student investment in the learning process through cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement in school activities (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Maehr & Meyer, 2004; Reeve, 2006). Motivation is not a characteristic all learners bring to school; therefore, it is vital that instructional practices support occurrences that increase their attention and focus, and promotes meaningful learning experiences (Schweinle, Turner, & Meyer, 2006).

“Love participating in the art/ high level of engagement.” (Teacher 1)

“There is always some art form students can connect to as long as they are interested. Participation is high as long as it is an art they are attracted to. Usually if it is a dance-integrated lesson, I am sure to talk to students about my level of discomfort with it and that makes them want to try.” (Teacher 2)

“They get excited to use arts integration. Especially since in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade we are so focused on preparing them to pass the test, that when they participate in an arts-integrated lesson, they get very excited.” (Teacher 3)

“If students are in an activity, too long, it leads to boredom and behavior issues ensue. Art integration lends itself to a lot of movement, and it is conducive to learning. It also helps with classroom management.” (Teacher 4)

“A lot more engaged and willing to do the lesson with so much enthusiasm.” (Teacher 5)

“Participation is always high and students writing is more creative. Providing students with choice also allows for differentiation and adds to their engagement.” (Teacher 6)

“Many of my students do not want to speak, they are afraid being ELL’ makes them more apprehensive to be vocal. With the drama and the singing, when they see me act silly and fearless [they] in turn act silly and fearless. I always have a few students that are willing to dance in the fire and take risks and that motivates other students to get involved.” (Teacher 7)

“They are interested in the lesson and have a strong desire to demonstrate what they can do.” (Teacher 8)

“At times some students feel shy about participating, but the arts build such a sense of community that their peers don’t leave these kids behind and urge them to participate. They hold each other accountable.” (Teacher 9)

Yes, they all participate, but best of all, they are learning in a fun and engaging manner. I have observed students get so involved in their work that they lose track of time and do not want the lesson to stop. That to me is a high level of engagement. (Teacher 10)

Two additional themes that materialized and were prevalent in the interview responses were *Increased Self-Efficacy* and *Self-Esteem*. Teachers noted a transformation in students’ attitudes about their abilities to understand academic content. This attitude translates to all content areas and student clubs at the school. Art integration has been recognized as generally boosting children’s self-esteem by providing opportunities to creatively express what they are thinking and feeling. Students develop more confidence and become comfortable with performing, public speaking,

and taking risks. These social and emotional constructs foster student learning (Curva & Associates, 2005; Dallas Arts Partners, 2004; Horowitz, 2004).

Boykin and Noguera (2011) describe self-efficacy as confidence that one can achieve a task in a current situation. Several teachers declared students' heightened confidence during art-integrated lessons. There is considerable evidence (Guthrie, McRae, & Klauda, 2007; Mucherah & Yoder, 2008; Schunk, 2003) that self-efficacy predicts long-term academic ramifications. Arts integration offers students opportunities to feel engaged and successful. Arts integration engenders peer collaboration and success that builds students' self-confidence (Smith, 2001).

“They are more excited to come to school to learn and this is definitely an added bonus. So much learning goes into the art domain; it really develops the whole child. It gives them an outlet and they are learning academics and arts. (Teacher 1)

“Often use it as a participation tool, a way for students to display to others their understanding of what they have learned. And it increases the entire class level of engagement.” (Teacher 2)

“It helps them feel more comfortable, it builds a trusting community as they get positive praise from one another.” (Teacher 3)

“To me there are different types of learners; art integration lends itself to all learners. It feeds students' brain.” (Teacher 4)

“Students are learning, but I am not sure they can apply it on class assessment.” (Teacher 5)

“The students have a hook and allows the content to be ‘Velcroed’, it allows for different attack strategy.” (Teacher 6)

“More engaged, they are actively participating and have more of an opinion with what they want to do with it. Whereas, when I am teaching in a traditional manner, the students are less inclined to have or formulate opinions on what they

are learning. More buy-in from the students and they take more ownership of their learning.” (Teacher 7)

“It helps build students’ self-esteem and confidence with learning.” (Teacher 8)

“They learn about each other in so ways. They develop their social and emotional learning and that adds to their learning development.” (Teacher 9)

“They are learning the standards and presenting their knowledge in multiple ways, but now we have to figure out how to transfer that learning to standardized assessment.” (Teacher 10)

*Fear of the Unknown* was another theme that arose. Teachers were less inclined to create and deliver lessons on art domains they were not knowledgeable about or have a sense of familiarity with. Music was the most prevalent art domain teachers were reluctant to integrate in their lessons. Teachers’ educational experiences and life experiences are diverse; therefore, understanding of arts integration will vary extensively. Arts integration can be difficult for teachers to endorse if they do not feel like competent artists (Rabkin & Redmond, 2004).

An educator’s efficacy with the arts directly influences how they teach students. Teachers’ fear of art can thwart a student’s full potential. According to Eisner (2005), this is referred to as the “null curriculum-the learning that children miss out on when educators lack the subject knowledge, skills, and self-confidence to deliver art experiences” (p.10).

“I find if I shy away from certain domains, it primarily because I do not have the background knowledge.” (Teacher 1)

“Drama is definitely difficult to integrate.” (Teacher 2)

“I think music is the easiest for me. And most teachers feel the visual art are the easiest, but not me.” (Teacher 3)

“Music is my most difficult domain to integrate, primarily because I am not sure how to relate it into the content area.” (Teacher 5)

“Music is the most difficult. I shy away from music.” (Teacher 6)

“Visual arts is my most difficult domain for sure.” (Teacher 7)

“Drama does not come easy to me, I wish it would.” (Teacher 8)

“I love all the art domains, although I have a difficult time planning art-integrated lessons simply due to time.” (Teacher 9)

“I find that I have the hardest time integrating math with all art domains.” (Teacher 10)

An interesting theme that emerged was *Planning Time* and a sub-theme of *State Mandated Assessment*. Teachers unwaveringly contested the need for planning time along with the professional learning sessions. The teachers adamantly shared that the lack of art-integrated lessons was partly because of the lack of planning time to consult with peers and art specialist. Teachers felt strongly that time for planning needs to be allocated after each professional learning session to unpack the newly learned material and create lessons. Teachers need deliberate planning time to structure how students will learn the integrated standards. Jackson and Davis (2000) conveyed that organizing time and preparing in advance for instruction is a vital aspect of effective teaching.

Teachers also lamented that arts integration is perceived as insignificant when expected to prepare students for standardized assessments. In a survey conducted to determine teacher attitudes towards arts integration, it was revealed that teachers did not frequently integrate arts into the curriculum. This was partly due to the continued pressure of preparing students for standardized test (Oreck, 2004).

The changes in the redesigning of ESSA will alleviate some of the pressures teachers are experiencing with standardized assessments. The law will end the fascination with testing in schools that started with NCLB. While the impact of these changes will take time to materialize in classrooms, it will “incentivize different behaviors among teachers and change how schools function” (O’Brian, 2016 p.2). Under ESSA, states must use more than academic success in their accountability system through indicators such as attendance, teacher and student engagement, school climate, and advance coursework (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

“Teach us how to create lessons with our respective grade level standards in mind. I still have difficulty finding ways to merge what I am teaching with the arts to ensure it is an art-integrated lesson. I want lessons specific to 5<sup>th</sup> grade standards that go over many disciplines. Teachers are not the art experts and tend to shy away from arts integration because they have trouble fusing the arts with the content.” (Teacher 1)

“Additional professional learning on how to assess art-integrated lessons is necessary and if ArtsNow would carefully look at the ELA units developed by the county and marry the units into art integration, additional professional learning could revolve around that.” (Teacher 2)

“I would like to learn higher levels of integration. This year we have the new ELA units and I would love to know how to integrate the ELA units into the arts. I want to ensure I can truly integrate.” (Teacher 3)

“I think arts-integration planning. We need more planning. We are the site specialist on site and we never are consulted. Planning time to consult. Allow the specialist teachers (art and music) teachers to be the consultants and teach some of the arts workshops. PLC on art integration.” (Teacher 4)

“More practice of the actual integration and how to assess students. I want the ability to make art-integration more meaningful.” (Teacher 5)

“I really would like differentiation with the art integration. How can I differentiate with the arts? Rubric creation/ time to build the rubrics.” (Teacher 6)

“Balance the time so I am able to create more lessons. Let us create lesson during the sessions that are aligned to our standards.” (Teacher 7)

I want to learn more about the ability to tailor instruction for each student when you are integrating since customization of the learning process is so important for learning.” (Teacher 8)

“I would benefit from coaching sessions, on how to perfect the integration of content and the arts. Also, time to plan art lessons with the assistance of the artist would come in handy.” Because we need more time.” (Teacher 9)

“I would enjoy additional training in how to integrate math into art domains because I have such a difficult time finding the connections with the arts.” (Teacher 10)

*Demonstration Lessons* was a theme that arose when asking teachers about the most beneficial facet of the professional learning sessions. The teachers most valued the demonstration lessons where an art specialist would teach an art-integrated lesson, while the teachers observe their very own students in an art-integrated lesson. In order to create effective and appropriate arts integration professional learning opportunities, it is necessary to understand teacher attitudes (Johnson, 2014). Demonstration lessons enhance the professional learning experience, providing teachers with practices to immediately implement in their classrooms. Furthermore, demonstration lessons expand the learning into new content, and facilitate teachers to explore additional opportunities for arts integration.

“Having sessions here at the school.” (Teacher 1)

“Participating in the lesson allows us to take what we have learned back to the classroom.” (Teacher 2)

“I think the small group settings, the opportunity to ask questions during and after each session. In addition, allowing us to be honest during all lessons. They really listen to us and give us a voice. PL sessions have been tailored to what we want.” (Teacher 3)

“Learning the methodology of how to merge and immersion of the two concepts. And gaining ideas on how to further the content. More collaboration between the classroom teacher and the artist in the building.” (Teacher 4)

“The different activities that the art integrated professionals have delivered during the session.” (Teacher 5)

“The times the artists have modeled. It offers scaffolding for the teachers. Differentiation.... providing staff with art integrated resources.” (Teacher 6)

“I enjoy the sessions, so meaningful. I have always come away and left the sessions with strategies or resources that I was able to use immediately. Love the demo lesson.” (Teacher 7)

“I have enjoyed collaborating with my peers during these sessions, and the demo lessons.” Teacher 8)

“They always have a new strategy for us to integrate and I usually incorporate it immediately into my instructional practice.” (Teacher 9)

“The demo lessons are by far the best part of the training. I am able to see my students participate in a lesson that I would shy away from and see them shine. They have wowed me several times.” (Teacher 10)

A theme and sub-theme surfaced concerning the effects of arts integration on at-risk students *Art Exposure and Making Content Accessible*. The teachers expressed the importance of exposing to the arts at-risk students who would otherwise not be exposed. Teachers passionately believed the arts fostered the “whole child” by building background, boost motivation, and allowing multiple ways of expression. Additionally, teachers believed art integration facilitated connections of difficult content, making it accessible to students, and consequently empowering students to reach their full academic potential. A report by the National Endowment for the Arts (2012) discloses that at-risk students exposed to the arts are more inclined to have better job

opportunities, and are more engaged in making a difference in the civic life of the community. Additionally, the arts make academic content accessible to students, allowing them to build connections. The report (2012) noted other positive results related to a high level of arts exposure for youth of low socioeconomic status.

“I find it difficult at times to build background with our at-risk students but with the arts I connect with them from the beginning. For example, building background, instead of asking students-What do you know about conjunctions...you can begin with an art piece and ask students what do you see? So in essence, you are building background, while hooking them to the concept with the arts along with the academic standards.” (Teacher 1)

“Alleviate some stress that at-risk students may have with speaking, writing, reading. It helps others; teachers and students perceive students differently because all of a sudden they are experts because they can make up a dance or song of what they are learning.” (Teacher 2)

“Boost motivation, not every student is a strong reader, nor writer. And often times teachers deliver content very traditionally, yet students need content delivered in a variety of formats. It really gives all learners a chance and provides longtime retrieval.” (Teacher 3)

“I think it exposes them to the art and gives them an outlet and possibly opens them to experiences that they may not have had otherwise. Being involved in the school’s drama club, I have discovered that some of the student actors have been ‘diamonds in the rough’. Something that is good for them and possibly sets them on a career path. The arts build confidence in students that transfers to academic confidence.” (Teacher 4)

“It provides students with exposure to the arts, and it builds self-confidence. As teachers we take risk, intern students take risk.” (Teacher 5)

“If you hit the right modality for that child not only can you connect content but build interest in so many other areas. As well as exposure to the arts. Decreases drop out/ connection with school and motivated to graduate.” (Teacher 6)

“It gives them an outlet because at-risk students are lonely, scared and angry. Arts integration gives them a constructive way to channel those feelings and work through those feelings. You are keeping them hooked in school. Less drop out. They feel validated; if students cannot be validated academically, then at least with the arts they have more of a sense of belonging.” (Teacher 7)

“This population of students will probably never be exposed to the arts, like going to the museum, or a play, so it is up to us to expose them.” (Teacher 8)

“At- risk students benefit from good teaching. These students tend to struggle, and arts integration is just that- good teaching.” (Teacher 9)

“Arts-integration benefits all students, not only at-risk students. It can benefit all students to learn the connection between different content areas. This type of teaching and learning prepares them for the future.” (Teacher 10)

**Interview Findings Summary.** The interview data conveyed a positive perspective by all teachers in their description of the ArtsNow professional learning sessions. Most teachers indicated that the training sessions built their repertoire of instructional strategies, and they accounted the training for pedagogical growth. Teachers credited art integration and the professional learning experience with recognizing student-learning styles in an organic manner. Teachers revealed that when they conducted art-integrated lessons, learning became accessible to all students. Teachers disclosed the professional learning experience as making learning more entertaining, hands-on, and engaging. Moreover, teachers specified the collaboration with the artist and fellow teacher peers, along with the demo lessons, were the most useful facets of the professional learning sessions.

Teachers referenced arts integration as shaping their instructional strategies, as they created lessons to ensure a true merger of the art and content standards they expanded their knowledge base. Teachers positively declared that through arts integration, they were able to see their students in a new light. Furthermore, teachers professed that arts integration benefited students’ self-efficacy and heightened

motivation, engagement, and peer collaboration, such that students gained each other's trust.

Despite teachers crediting the arts as important for student learning, they admitted feeling limited in how often they integrated the arts into the curriculum because of lack of time to plan and continued pressure to prepare students for standardized assessments. Additionally, some teachers reported a lack of confidence in creating art-integrated lessons partly due to absence of adequate practice with incorporating the arts into the curriculum.

Lastly, teachers viewed all facets of the training to be beneficial but thought training in assessment creation and usage would be valuable. Most teachers acknowledged their inability to assess students during an arts-integrated lesson. Moreover, teachers felt strongly that planning time to create lessons is vital, mainly because several teachers admitted integrating a lesson takes time and teachers are less compelled to integrate lessons with insufficient planning time, which they believed only deprives students of an integrated education.

### **Observation Findings**

Assessing an arts-integrated lesson occurs through surveying the arts and content learning criteria. The following rubric (Figure 1) includes tenets of arts integration through a lens that examines content, process, and product. It is intended to be a framework that is changeable based on the lessons' goals and objectives.

<b>Arts Integration Rubric</b>			
	<b>Content</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Product</b>
<b>4</b> Exemplary	Student work <b>clearly</b> demonstrates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understanding of the academic standard(s) through accurate representation</li> <li>• understanding of the arts standard(s) through accurate representation</li> </ul>	Student work <b>clearly</b> demonstrates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• growth in use of inquiry and higher order thinking skills</li> <li>• risk-taking</li> <li>• they are individually reflective of growth through the arts integration process</li> <li>• community building through collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congruence between the arts and content goals for the project</li> <li>• Increased awareness of relevance and purpose of the arts integration process</li> </ul>
<b>3</b> Accomplished	Student work <b>mostly</b> demonstrates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understanding of academic standard(s) through accurate representation</li> <li>• understanding of the arts standard(s) through accurate representation</li> </ul>	Student work <b>mostly</b> demonstrates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• growth in use of inquiry and higher order thinking skills</li> <li>• risk-taking</li> <li>• individual reflection of growth through the arts integration process</li> <li>• community building through collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some congruence between the arts and content goals for the project</li> <li>• Mostly demonstrates increased awareness of relevance and purpose of the arts integration process</li> </ul>
<b>2</b> Developing	Student work demonstrates <b>minimal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understanding of academic standard(s) through somewhat accurate representation</li> <li>• understanding of the arts standard(s) through somewhat accurate representation</li> </ul>	Student work demonstrates <b>minimal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• growth in use of inquiry and higher order thinking skills</li> <li>• risk-taking</li> <li>• individual reflection of growth through the arts integration process</li> <li>• community building through collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimal congruence between the arts and content goals for the project</li> <li>• Minimal awareness of relevance and purpose of the arts integration</li> </ul>
<b>1</b> Beginning	Student work <b>does not</b> demonstrate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understanding of the academic standards and/or are not able to accurately represent understanding</li> <li>• an understanding of the arts standards and/or is not able to accurately represent understanding</li> </ul>	Student work <b>does not</b> demonstrate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use of inquiry and/or higher order thinking skills</li> <li>• risk-taking</li> <li>• individual reflection of growth through the arts integration process</li> <li>• community building through collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student work does not reflect art and content goals</li> <li>• Students do not self assess and/or demonstrate any awareness of relevance of the arts integration process</li> </ul>

Figure 1 Arts Integration Solutions-artsintegration.com (2011)

Data examinations of art integration practices that teachers found to be effective were obtained through observation. Ten teachers representing two sites volunteered to be observed. Teachers were rated with a rubric that yielded a scale score where 12 was the highest score a teacher can obtain. The Table 10 displays observation data findings

and includes school site, teachers' years of experience, their scale score for the observed arts-integrated lesson, and the art and content subjects merged in the lesson.

Table 10

*Observation Rating Score*

<b>School</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>AI Experience</b>	<b>Scale Score</b>	<b>Subject(s)</b>
School A	2	6	4	S.S/ Language Arts/ Drama
School A	6	6	5	Science/ Visual Arts
School A	3	6	5	Math/ Visual Arts
School A	4	4	5	Reading/Drama
School B	10	6	7	Reading/S. S/ Visual Arts
School A	1	4	8	Math/ Drama
School A	5	6	8	Math/ Visual Arts
School B	7	6	10	S.S/ Music
School B	8	6	12	Reading/S.S./ Drama
School B	9	5	12	Science/ Drama

The observed lessons involved a variety of content areas, coupled with an assortment of art domains. Lessons incorporated social studies or science with music, visual arts, and drama as art forms. Lessons also included math, reading, and Language Arts with drama and visual arts. Data was collected using field notes and contained evidence of organized classrooms that contained reading areas with well-stocked libraries. The demographics of the students at both schools, and the researchers access to in-depth data on the students, reveals that all classrooms had a diverse student

population such as students with learning disabilities and English Language Learners (ELL). The lessons were appropriate and accessible for all student groups.

**Observation Summary Findings.** All 10 observed teachers displayed a high level of confidence with art strategies; however, overall, School A teachers scored lower than School B teachers. Analysis of the scale scores estimated an average of 7.6, and four teachers in School A scored below average on their observation scale score, whereas three teachers in School B scored above average, and two teachers scored perfect scores on the observation rubric. School A teachers largely neglected to teach the art standard in totality, producing an art-enhanced lesson instead of a truly art-integrated lesson, yielding a scale score of two for most teachers in the content category.

The art-integrated rubric considered student work in the areas of content, process, and product. Despite teacher confidence with the art-integrated lessons, only five teachers scored a level 3-*accomplished*, or level 4-*exemplary* in the content category according to the rubric. The remaining five teachers' student work minimally demonstrated an understanding of the academic standards through somewhat accurate representation, and understanding of the arts standards through accurate representation. This resulted in six teachers scoring a level 2-*developing* in the process category, where student work minimally demonstrated growth in use of inquiry and higher order thinking skills; risk taking; individual reflection of growth through the arts integration process; community building through collaboration. The scores for the product category were similar to the content scores; five teachers scored a level 3-*accomplished* or level-4 *exemplary*, and the remaining five scored a level 2-*developing* or 1-*beginning*. Teachers

at both schools have a minimum of four years of art integration experience. Similar to interview data, several teachers observed did not show evidence of integrating art into the curriculum effectively, partly due to insufficient planning time of integrated lessons and continued pressure to prepare students for standardized assessments.

### **Survey Findings**

To assess their self-efficacy with arts integration, their perception of the ArtsNow professional learning sessions, and to determine transfer to classroom pedagogy, 57 teachers (School A) and 49 teachers (School B) were surveyed. Each of the 11 survey items were positively stated, and analyzed by an assigned point value for each response; “Strongly Agree”=6, “Agree”=5, “Slightly Agree”=4, “Slightly Disagree”=3, “Disagree”=2, “Strongly Disagree”=1. The responses, reduced to numerical data allowed the survey data to be triangulated with the interview and observation data for a final analysis. A high prevalence of the survey indicates that teachers report a high level of self-efficacy, and had an agreeable perception of the ArtsNow professional learning sessions.

Table 11

*Aggregated Survey Statistics- School A*

Survey Item	N Statistics	Average	Std. Deviation	Standard Error	Variance Code	Mean Code
1	57	5.175	0.5619905	0.2809953	0.31583	Agree
2	57	5.325	0.5619905	0.2809953	0.31583	Agree
3	57	5.575	0.4272002	0.2136001	0.1825	Strongly Agree
4	57	5.275	0.5678908	0.2839454	0.3225	Agree
5	57	5.15	0.7047458	0.3523729	0.49667	Agree
6	57	5.225	0.5315073	0.2657536	0.2825	Agree
7	57	5.55	0.4041452	0.2020726	0.16333	Strongly Agree
8	57	5.175	0.5123475	0.2561738	0.2625	Agree
9	57	5.275	0.6020797	0.3010399	0.3625	Agree
10	57	5.225	0.6551081	0.3275541	0.42917	Agree

Table 12

*Aggregated Survey Statistics- School B*

Survey Item	N Statistics	Average	Std. Deviation	Standard Error	Variance Code	Mean Code
1	49	5.4	0.637704216	0.318852108	0.40667	Agree
2	49	5.35	0.591607978	0.295803989	0.35	Agree
3	49	5.575	0.442530602	0.221265301	0.19583	Strongly Agree
4	49	5.35	0.714142843	0.357071421	0.51	Agree
5	49	5.175	1.017758976	0.508879488	1.03583	Agree
6	49	5.275	0.613052472	0.306526236	0.37583	Agree
7	49	5.725	0.309569594	0.154784797	0.09583	Strongly Agree
8	49	5.325	0.665206735	0.332603367	0.4425	Agree
9	49	5.275	0.708872344	0.354436172	0.5025	Agree
10	49	5.3	0.778888096	0.389444048	0.60667	Agree
11	49	5.2	0.668331255	0.334165628	0.44667	Agree

Mean data was used to determine teachers' overall common view of the art-integrated professional learning sessions. Additionally, the mean was used since the survey responses were relatively evenly spread with no exceptionally high or low

responses. Mean scores were selected to evaluate the mean difference with each survey question, and to draw out extreme outliers and general conclusions.

Mean scores for the survey indicated “Strongly Agree” on the following items for both School A and B:

*Survey Item 3:* The facilitator(s) were knowledgeable and effective. School A and School B rated the survey item similar (M=5.5).

*Survey Item 7:* Sessions and materials were well organized. School A rated this item (M=5.5) and School B rated this item (M=5.7).

Mean scores indicated “Agree” in response to the following survey items:

*Survey Item 1:* The content was relevant to the GPS for my grade level/subject area. School A rated this item (M=5.1) and school B (M=5.17).

*Survey Item 2:* This content extended my knowledge/skills in Arts-integration. School A rated this item (M=5.325) and School B rated this item (M=5.35).

*Survey Item 4:* The facilitators helped me understand how to implement my learning. School A rated this item (M=5.275) and School B rated this item (M=5.35).

*Survey Item 5:* I was encouraged to actively participate in this workshop. School A rated this item (M=5.15) and School B rated this item (M=5.175).

*Survey Item 6:* The activities I learned have motivated me to use more arts integration. School A rated this item (M=5.225) and School B rated this item (M=5.275).

*Survey Item 8:* I feel ready to build on these ideas to create my own lessons and units. School A rated this item (M=5.175) and School B rated this item (M=5.325).

*Survey Item 9:* I would recommend this workshop to my colleagues. School A rated this item (M=5.275) and School B rated this item (M=5.275).

*Survey Item 10:* This workshop was an excellent use of professional development time. School A rated this item (M=5.225) and School B rated this item (M=5.3).

*Survey Item 11:* Please rate (from 1-6) the extent to which the contents of this workshop will positively influence your classroom practice. School A rated this item (M=5.2) and School B rated this item (M=5.2).

**Survey Findings Summary.** Survey data revealed teachers' self-efficacy in arts integration indicated a high level of motivation with implementing the arts into the curriculum and confidence with creating their own art-integrated lessons. Although individuals at each level indicated "Strongly Agree" on particular survey items, the combined mean scores did not indicate "Strongly Agree" as the average response of the survey.

## **Data Analysis**

### ***Research Question 1***

How does arts integration influence student achievement?

Responses were coded for themes on how arts integration has influenced student achievement and analyzed as *High Student Engagement* and *Increased Critical Thinking*. *High Student Engagement* was a theme that emerged. Student engagement is considered the 'bellwether' to student learning, the "the precursor to academic outcomes", the beacon of greater opportunities to learn for all students" (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). A noticeable amount of research (Borman & Overman, 2004;

Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004; Wenglinsky, 2004) has professed that engagement is linked to favorable learning outcomes.

The tenets of arts integration have the framework to capture student's attention and increase engagement. According to Boykin and Noguera (2011), "evidence also suggest that engagement level and instructional quality may be reciprocally related.

Teacher noted students were eager to learn, and actively engaged during the art integrated lesson.

"Students are eager about an arts integrated lesson and they are more relaxed and open to the content being introduced. From the beginning of the lesson you are hooking students with an art domain." (Teacher 1)

"Student are more on task and more engaged during an arts integrated lesson. When I tell them we are using art, they are eager to participate." (Teacher 2)

"Students are typically engaged in the arts integration activity." They get excited about arts integration and are eager to demonstrate what they can do." (Teacher 3)

"Since arts integration lends itself to increased movement during a lesson student are more focused. Student engagement level is high, when they recognize the connection between the arts and the content area their faces light up." (Teacher 4)

"Students are much more involved during an art integrated lesson because of the movement and hands on experience. Students that tend to be shy get engaged and participate." (Teacher 5)

"In general, students exhibit a higher level of engagement during an art integrated lesson. Students show their creative side and it touches their style of learning." (Teacher 6)

"I have observed students get so involved in their work that they lose track of time and do not want the lesson to stop. That to me is a high level of engagement." (Teacher 10)

Another theme that emerged was *Increased Critical Thinking*. The interdisciplinary method of arts integration has facilitated "higher-order thinking"

competencies, for instance the ability to make associations of a myriad of elements encourages critical thinking skills and the ability to explore concepts creatively. Arts integration affords profound reflective learning of concepts in ways traditional teaching methods do not. Reading and communicating through art domains requires critical thinking and nurtures a myriad of learning styles engendering deep learning (Efland, 2002). As conveyed in the literature arts integration engages and fosters the development of the whole child.

“Art integration develops the whole child.” (Teacher 1)

“Arts integration allows for critical thinking primarily with how they present the information they learned.” (Teacher 2)

“If I can connect the art and content well, I see students light bulbs go on.” (Teacher 3)

“It builds perseverance and students are more willing to not give up when they are struggling.” (Teacher 4)

“Students take more ownership of their learning.” (Teacher 7)

“They are learning the standards and presenting their knowledge in multiple ways.” (Teacher 10)

### *Analysis Summary*

Teachers recognized that arts integration influenced the learning environment with increased student engagement, and critical thinking as well as retention of the material taught and improved confidence. Moreover, teachers reported arts integration allowed them to present lessons that resulted in students expressing their understanding in multiple methods while teachers marveled at student’s accomplishments.

***Research Question 2 Interviews***

How has the professional learning in arts integration built teacher capacity to influence student achievement? This research question was answered through open-ended response interview questions. Interview questions inquired about classroom environment, teacher instruction, student level of engagement, student learning and achievement, impact on at-risk students since the implementing of arts integration as well as beneficial facets of the professional learning sessions and preference on additional training sessions. Responses were coded for themes on how the professional learning had built teacher capacity to influence student achievement, and was analyzed as follows; Improved Teacher Practice, High Student Engagement, Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners, Increased Critical Thinking, and A Need for Planning. The responses on the themes were as such:

*Improved Teacher Practice* was a theme that emerged, as teachers perceived their instructional practices had improved because of art integration. The literature alleges that teachers who implement arts-integrated strategies attain more enthusiasm, and develop higher order thinking (Snyder, 2004; Jacobs, 2000). According to Eisner (2002), “teachers who learn art integrated instruction become more artistic and creative (2002). An interdisciplinary teaching experience provides profound learning for teachers and students. Teachers in schools that implement arts integration as a school-wide approach are more creative, innovative and use instructional strategies that engage students (Burton, 1999).

“I have gained more knowledge of different art domains where I’m making connections with content areas and the art to deliver to my students.” (Teacher 1)

“I have grown more mindful of the diverse ways that students learn and their learning style.” (Teacher 3)

“Art integration has encouraged me to take more risk.” (Teacher 5)

“Arts integration has made me aware of the different art modalities that I can use to make learning easier.” (Teacher 6)

“Arts integration has helped me step out of my comfort zone and resulted in my students doing the same.” (Teacher 7)

“I not only see the connection between the arts and content areas, but I see the connection of many content areas.” (Teacher 8)

“I recognize that I am a better teacher.” (Teacher 10)

*Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners* was a theme that surfaced. Classrooms have a myriad of learners and arts integration engages diverse student learners. As Fiske (1999) expressed, the arts challenges diverse learning styles, it provides a bridge between the art and academic content for all learners, making content accessible and meaningful. Arts integration has the capacity to broaden understanding in numerous ways by providing students with opportunities to blend imagination with experience, while allowing unique means of expression (Rabkin & Redmond, 2004).

“Students are able to show understanding in multiple ways. My ELL students are encouraged to talk and build their language acquisition skills.” (Teacher 1)

“Increases at-risk learners retention of materials. It allows for students to show-off what they can do other than on paper.” (Teacher 2)

“It helps students feel more comfortable with one another and builds a trusting learning community while elevating each other’s self-esteem.” (Teacher 3)

“Boost student motivation, because content is being delivered in a variety of formats, it gives all learners a chance to gain understanding and provides long time retrieval.” (Teacher 4)

“Arts-integration benefits all students, not only at-risk students. It can benefit all students to learn the connection between different content areas. This type of teaching and learning prepares them for the future.” (Teacher 10)

An additional theme that materialized was *A Need for Planning*. Teachers maintained the necessity of planning time, after the professional learning sessions, to plan art-integrated lessons. Some teachers noted that time to plan with the art specialist, was also essential. Wahlstrom (2003) maintains that teacher instructional planning and practice improved as emphasis was placed on the academic process versus the finished product. Research speculates that student achievement is dependent on teacher practice; therefore, an efficacious arts integration program is contingent on well-constructed teacher instruction.

“Time to break down arts and content standards to plan effective art- integrated lessons. The lack of planning time limits me from teaching art integrated lessons.” (Teacher 1)

“Planning time to connect the new ELA units the county developed and integrate those topics with the arts.” (Teacher 3)

“Planning time to consult with the school art specialist (art and music) teacher. (Teacher 4)

“I want the opportunity to make arts integration more meaningful, by allowing more planning time of lessons during the professional learning sessions.” (Teacher 6)

“Time to plan art lessons with the assistance of the artist would come in handy. Because we need more time.” (Teacher 9)

### *Analysis Summary*

Interview data revealed teacher perspectives on arts integration and the professional learning experience. A description of the interviews included five themes;

*Improved Teacher Practice, Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners, and A Need for Planning.* Teachers attributed the training sessions with affording them an increased collection of instructional strategies and granting them permission to have fun with instruction. Teachers also recognized that arts integration influenced the learning environment by increasing student engagement, retention of the material taught, and improved confidence. Moreover, teachers reported arts integration allowed them to present lessons that resulted in students expressing their understanding through multiple methods, while teachers marveled at students' accomplishments.

### ***Research Question 3-Surveys***

The Likert-type survey addressed Research Question 3, "What is teacher perception of the ArtsNow professional development experience?" The survey was used to determine teachers' perception of the ArtsNow professional learning sessions and teacher's confidence in integrating the arts. All survey items were analyzed using a point value for each response "Strongly Agree" =6, "Agree"=5, "Slightly Agree"=4, "Slightly Disagree"=3, "Disagree"=2, "Strongly Disagree"=1. Teachers at both schools perceived that the facilitators at the professional learning sessions were knowledgeable and effective (M=5.5). Teachers at both schools also expressed a high level of agreement in how well organized the professional learning sessions were conducted. The average of the remaining survey questions was rated by teachers at both schools as "Agree". Through the survey, teachers communicated that the professional learning sessions were relevant to the Georgia performance standard and pertinent to each grade level and content: School A rated this item (M=5.1) and School B rated it (M=5.17).

Teachers conveyed that the content delivered at the professional learning sessions extended their knowledge and skills in arts-integration: School A rated this item (M=5.325) and School B rated this item (M=5.35). The level of agreement for item 4, School A rated this item (M=5.25) and School B (M=5.35), indicates the teachers believed the facilitators assisted in how to implement what was learned in the sessions to classroom practice. The teacher also expressed that they were regularly encouraged to actively participate in the workshops. Teachers reported having a heightened sense of motivation to use more arts integration after the activities introduced at the learning sessions: School A rated this item (M=5.225) and School B rated this item (M=5.275). Teachers also believed they were prepared to build on what they have learned to create their own lessons and units: School A rated this item (M=5.175) and School B rated this item (M=5.3). Teachers responded that they would recommend the workshops to their colleagues: School A rated this item (M=5.275) and School B rated this item (M=5.275). Lastly, teachers felt that the workshops were an excellent use of professional learning time: School A rated this item (M=5.225) and School B rated this item (M=5.3). Moreover, when asked to rate the extent to which the contents of the workshops positively influence classroom practice, teachers overall rated in agreement: School A rated this item (M=5.2) and School B rated this item (M=5.2).

### ***Analysis Summary***

Teachers strongly agreed that the professional learning sessions were well organized with adequate materials and the facilitators were exceptionally knowledgeable and effective in the delivery of the content in the sessions. The teachers agreed they

would recommend the training sessions to colleagues. Teachers also thought the sessions extended their knowledge in arts integration, resulting in transfer and application to classroom practice. Moreover, teachers agreed that the training sessions have inspired them to use art-integrated lessons and has built their confidence in planning lessons and units. Responses also indicate teachers considered the content to be relevant to the Georgia Performance Standards for their respective grade level and content area.

#### ***Research Question 4-Observations***

What practices have the teachers found to be effective when integrating the arts?

Teachers were observed for evidence of arts-integrated practices influenced by the training sessions they have found to be effective when integrating the arts into the curriculum. Observation data involved narrative and rubric guided data. Teachers were observed for evidence of student work in arts integration in the areas of content, process, and product. Point values were assigned for analysis; *Exemplary*= 4, *Accomplished*= 3, *Developing*=2, and *Beginning*=1.

Mean scores for observation data in each category (content, process, and product) yielded the following results. When analyzing the mean rating for each category for all 10 observations, the score for *content* resulted in 2.7 out of 4. The *content* considered the evidence of student work and if it demonstrated an understanding of academic standard(s) through accurate representation; understanding of art standard(s) through accurate representation. The *process* category produced a mean score of 2.4 out of 4. The *process* category considered evidence of student work and if it

demonstrated growth in use of inquiry and higher order thinking skills; reflective of growth through the arts integration process; community building through collaboration. Finally, the *product* category produced a mean of 2.4 out of 4. The *product* category measured evidence of student work demonstrating congruency in the arts and content goals for the project; increased awareness of relevance and purpose of the arts integration process. Aggregated observation data according to each teacher's observation is displayed in Table 12.

Table 13

*Observation Rating by Category Results*

Teacher	Category Results			Integrated Content
	Content	Process	Product	
<i>Teacher 1</i>	3	2	3	Math/ Drama
<i>Teacher 2</i>	2	1	1	S.S/ Language Arts/ Drama
<i>Teacher 3</i>	2	2	1	Math/ Visual Arts
<i>Teacher 4</i>	2	1	1	Reading/Drama
<i>Teacher 5</i>	3	2	3	Math/ Visual Arts
<i>Teacher 6</i>	2	2	1	Science/ Visual Arts
<i>Teacher 7</i>	3	3	4	S.S/ Music
<i>Teacher 8</i>	4	4	4	Reading/S.S./ Drama
<i>Teacher 9</i>	4	4	4	Science/ Drama
<i>Teacher 10</i>	2	3	2	Reading/S. S/ Visual Arts

*Analysis Summary*

Observation data on the 10 participants conveyed useful information for triangulation purposes with other sources. Participants with varied levels of experience were rated with overall scores between 4 and 12. The teachers in School B obtained the highest scores: Teacher 10 scored a scale score of 10, Teacher 7 scored a scale score of

10, and Teacher 8 and Teacher 9 scored a scale score of 12 each. The scale scores in School A were lower: Teacher 2 scored the lowest scale score of 4, and Teachers 3, 6, and 4 scored a 5. The highest scores in school A was by Teacher 1 and Teacher 5 with a scale score of 8. Teachers in School A had the lowest scale scores and their interview data revealed a limited use of true arts integration. Teachers in School A admitted their lack of intentional practice in teaching arts integration lessons because of the demands and pressures of preparing students for standardized assessments. Teachers have a significant impact on student achievement outcomes and consistent instructional practice continues to be a priority, yet a challenge (Goe & Stickler, 2008). Furthermore, drawing conclusions and building upon students' knowledge remained consistent as an instructional practice the researcher observed during the observations, which offered varied opportunities for students to learn and enrich their understanding.

### **Conclusions**

The teachers described the trainings as impactful in extending their knowledge and skills with arts integration and increasing their repertoire of instructional strategies resulting in meeting the learning needs of diverse learners (Ingram & Riedel, 2003). Additionally, teachers recognized the need for continuous training to sustain the climate of arts integration while also developing their skills. Teachers also recognized the trainings as facilitating enjoyable learning for the students, and added satisfaction with increased self-efficacy (Mason, Steedly, & Thormann, 2008).

However, despite teachers' positive beliefs with arts integration and the professional learning sessions, teacher specific actions are necessary to obtain optimal

results. Teachers in School A admitted to not integrating the arts as often, primarily due to time constraints on the outlined county curriculum maps, and the pressure brought on by preparing students for standardized assessments. Teachers in School B described similar conflicts; however, the teachers in School B mentioned having to meet weekly expectations of art-integrated lessons as an administrative expectation. It was evident in the teachers observed that their varied abilities in teaching arts integration correlated to how often they integrated lessons. The more frequent a teacher planned and taught an art-integrated lesson, the better skilled the teacher became at integrating arts into lessons. Furthermore, the researcher discovered teacher's administrative level of support varied somewhat at each school however, both schools received an equal amount of professional learning and was similarly supported by ArtsNow representatives.

Additionally, teachers at both schools felt that they did not have a complete understanding of the art state standards, and this may contribute to limited art-integrated lessons and a low level of self-efficacy with creating art-integrated lessons. Teachers' sense of inadequacy with the arts may be attributed to their inability of making natural associations between art and content standards. Teachers openly expressed a lack of certainty with effectively integrating art and content standards. Although the interview data acknowledges professional training as positively influencing teacher instructional practice, they also denoted the necessity of more training that allows for planning time to create art-integrated lessons and exercising all art modalities.

### **Additional Findings**

In the state of Georgia, students are assessed with the Georgia Milestone

standardized criterion referenced test. For the purposes of this study students' scores did not express a significant difference in the instructional method used with arts integration.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

### **Introduction**

As noted at the beginning of the study, *A Nation at Risk* has driven reform policy decisions that have resulted in increased accountability. The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESSA), issued in March 2012 has shifted to an emphasis on improving student learning for all student groups. ESSA has challenged educators across the nation to focus on providing authentic opportunities to improve educational quality and equity (US Department of Education, 2015).

Student achievement is described in this study as wide ranging and covers students acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes and learning behaviors that will prepare them to lead successful lives. Research has linked and supported arts integration as a creative, engaging, and meaningful instructional catalyst that guarantees to influence student achievement (Deasy & Stevenson, 2005; Ingram & Riedel, 2003; Uptis & Smithrin, 2003).

While research has connected arts integration to manipulating student achievement, limited research has been conducted on the transfer of professional learning of arts integration to classroom practice. The purpose of this study was to collect data from multiple sources (i.e. interviews, surveys, and observations) to describe teacher beliefs of art integration, the professional learning sessions, and its [arts integration] transfer to classroom practice, resulting in increased student achievement. Student achievement is described in this study as students acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes and learning behaviors that will prepare them to lead successful lives. For this

study, the researcher collected data from 10 teachers currently teaching fourth grade with years of experience spanning from three to 15 years. This qualitative study was guided by four research questions designed to gain insight into the purpose of the study:

1. How has the professional learning in arts integration-built teacher capacity to affect student achievement? Student achievement is described in this study as students acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes and learning behaviors that will prepare them to lead successful lives.
2. What practices have teachers found to be effective when integrating the arts?
3. What is teacher perception of the ArtsNow professional learning experience?

The data was collected from multiple sources including interviews, observations, and survey findings. The data from the two elementary schools implementing arts integration as a school-wide initiative was amassed and unpacked into themes and patterns for analysis and interpretation. The themes and patterns revealed during data collection are the basis of the conceptual framework-the constructivist theory. The constructivist theory has pedagogical practices in arts integration. Both constructivist theory and arts integration encourage students to construct knowledge instead of acquiring knowledge. Additionally, both methods of teaching share the following instructional practices:

- Drawing on student's prior knowledge.
- Providing active hands-on learning with authentic problems for students to solve in divergent ways.

- Providing opportunities for students to learn from each other to enrich their understandings.
- Engaging students in routine reflection about what they learned, how they learned it, and what it means to them.
- Using assessment of their own and peers' work as part of learning experience.
- Providing opportunities for students to revise and improve their work and share it with others. (Silverstein & Layne, 2010).

### **ArtsNow Experience**

All teachers included in the study at both schools participated in an initial foundational two and a half day professional learning training. ArtsNow promotes their foundational professional learning as:

“A two and half day professional learning opportunity that allows educators to explore arts-integrated instructional strategies aligned to the Common Core and Fine Arts Standards. These strategies promote 21st century skills, critical and creative thinking, student achievement, and academic growth. Educators leave equipped to bring creativity, innovation, and arts integration into the classroom across all content areas. Workshop participants receive research-based information and ideas to improve instructional design and delivery and are exposed to arts integration as a best practice in teaching and learning” (ArtsNow, 2017).

The researcher attended the Foundational professional learning session with teachers from both schools. Initially teachers were skeptical about arts integration because of fear of the unknown or not feeling artistically inclined to create and deliver art-integrated lessons; however, at the conclusion of the two and half-day training, teachers were motivated to integrate art into their lessons.

ArtsNow has delivered ongoing professional learning since 2012 to all teachers at both schools participating in this study. The sessions included hands-on workshops in which ArtsNow art consultants worked directly in the classroom, conducting demo lessons, providing educators with opportunities to observe and reflect upon classroom practice. Additionally, ArtsNow consultants worked alongside a team of teachers and collaboratively planned unit development, increasing teacher's competency with art standards and creating lessons.

In an effort to sustain arts integration, ArtsNow collaborated regularly with both schools and delivered monthly on-site professional learning sessions while addressing and customizing the needs of each school. Each session was highly engaging and inspired teachers to implement lessons with their students. Lastly, teachers were regularly provided with handouts and resources to assist in facilitating art-integrated strategies as presented in the workshops.

### **Research Question 1**

The first question was the following: How has the professional learning sessions in arts integration-built teacher capacity to affect student achievement?

All 10 teachers interviewed voiced a positive experience with the professional learning sessions. The teachers praised the training sessions for increasing their repertoire of differentiated strategies and facilitating their attentiveness to diverse student learning styles. Teacher 10 shared, "I am also gaining strategies that I use in all my teaching."

Student's diverse backgrounds and prior experiences affect how they view the world around them and express themselves. Arts integration provides different methods that meet an extensive array of learning styles. As Teacher 6 mentioned, "I use a variety of art modalities, and it lends itself to all learning styles in the classroom. "Arts integration delivers a variety of devices for differentiated instruction that provides diverse methods of learning, and reaches a variety of learning styles, initiating and enhancing valuable learning opportunities. Teacher 3 shared, "I have grown more mindful of diverse ways that students learn and their learning style/multiple intelligences." Additionally, the exposure to distinct art forms fosters social and emotional competencies (The President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, 2011, p. 15). Furthermore, Teacher 3 communicated, "Arts integrations encourages them to step out of their comfort zone, and they become more comfortable with themselves and their peers."

Moreover, teachers regarded the art integration trainings influential in transforming their pedagogy; their roles as teachers changed from sole distributors of knowledge to facilitators of student learning (Subedi, 2005). Teachers also reported a willingness to take risk and try different teaching methods. Teacher 5 remarked, "Art integration encouraged me to take more risk and gave me permission to integrate art into the content".

Furthermore, the teachers attributed the trainings to shifting classroom environment towards increased student engagement while addressing a variety of learning styles (Cornett, 2007; Chen, 2005). In numerous studies (Barry, 2010; Burton,

2000; Nelson, 2001; Oreck, 2004), teachers grew cognizant of student diversity and established the arts as a tool to increase student motivation. Burton, Horowitz, and Abeles (1999) disclosed that teachers are more inclined to use art integration in their teaching to meet the needs of students' diverse learning styles.

Learning in the arts engages a multitude of learners. As Fiske (1999) stated, "The arts challenge all students—including the hard-to-reach, the gifted, delayed learners, and others who may be, for a variety of reasons, at risk for academic failure". The arts make learning accessible to all learners, allowing all students the ability to succeed (Eisner, 2002). Teacher 7 agrees with this notion, "Arts integration builds their confidence." Consistent with this belief, Teacher 4 expressed, "The arts build confidence, and that confidence transfers to their academics." Art instruction involves diverse meaningful learning that meets the differentiated needs and learning style of all students.

Teachers also noted greater teacher enjoyment and satisfaction when teaching an arts-integrated lesson, resulting in increased engagement in their teaching practice. Teacher 3 merrily shared, "Arts integration gives me permission to have fun while teaching." According to Eisner (2002), teachers who participate in arts teaching make a shift to instruction that is more creative and authentic. Moreover, teachers involved in arts-integration school reform efforts are more passionate, adaptable, and innovative, and amend instruction to a student-centered classroom (Mardirosian & Fox, 2003).

**Research Question 2**

The second research question was the following: What practices have teachers found to be effective when integrating the arts?

During the observations, the researcher noticed, and teachers confirmed during interviews, that collaborative learning, and building and drawing on student's prior knowledge were practices they designated as effective when integrating the arts.

Teachers emphasized collaboration in all the lessons observed: students worked in pairs or small groups to discuss concepts or find solutions to problems. The researcher also observed several lessons using the arts to solicit prior knowledge. The researcher observed Teacher 2 incorporating tableaux a drama strategy to build on student learning and to assess students understanding of the content. Students were expected to use their bodies to make still images representing an event in the American Revolution. A group of students had to work collaboratively and decide how to express a scene with their bodies making the scene accessible to other students.

During the interview Teacher 5 revealed, "Students interact with one another more and support each other in a community environment." The researcher observed most teachers promoting a collaborative environment in the lessons. Teacher 3, assigned roles to each person during the lesson to ensure all students worked collaboratively. Arts integration builds a positive class community through the practice of collaboration and increased tolerance of their peers. The researcher observed collaborative lessons where groups of students worked together through the process and created the product together. Collaboration is considered a constructivist approach to learning as purported

by Piaget and Vygotsky, and the conceptual framework embraced by this study. The constructivist approach considers learning as an interactive process, as participants develop and acquire knowledge through activity and social interaction (Marshall, 2007). Collaboration encourages learning by merging co-construction of knowledge that often encompasses absorbing partner's perspective (Wentzel & Watkins, 2011). Collaborative learning has been identified as the conduit for preparing students for the future beyond school. Collaborative learning aids in the effort to prepare students to interact in a professional environment. The collaborative learning experience gives learners the opportunity to become critical thinkers with the exchange of ideas within small groups (Laal & Ghodsi, 2011). As stated by Rabkin and Redmond (2004), "The arts integration approach promotes important skills for the 21st century that are not captured by typical standardized tests in reading and math. Some of these process abilities include collaborative critical thinking, creativity, and problem solving" (p.36).

Drawing and building on student's prior knowledge was another practice teachers found to be effective when integrating the arts. "I use arts to draw out knowledge" (Teacher 7). Across several data sources, teachers expressed using the arts often to introduce a concept, to draw on students' knowledge to build from existing knowledge. The researcher observed Teacher 5 ask students to study a work of art from the High Museum – folk collection and write three details you notice about the piece of art to build knowledge about main idea. Students were able to identify the main idea and topic of the painting and take that skill to writing the main idea of a paragraph.

As expressed by Abler (2011), learning progresses mostly from prior knowledge, and only secondarily from the resources teachers present to students. Burnaford (2001) conveyed that an integrated curriculum necessitates building associations in countless directions based on the student's prior knowledge. Furthermore, Burnaford (2001) communicates, "Integration deepens instruction by bringing skills, media, subjects, methods, means of expression, people, concepts, and means of representation to the service of learning." What's more, drawing on students' background knowledge and experiences can be an authentic way to make the content more accessible while making connections. Connecting content affords learners the ability to activate students' prior knowledge (McDonald & Fischer, 2006). Prior knowledge is deemed an influential element in student achievement (described in this study as students acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes and learning behaviors that will prepare them to lead successful lives) and art integration shapes the building of knowledge by connecting subject area and students' prior knowledge.

Teacher 1 expressed, "Connect with them at the beginning. For example, building background, instead of asking students-what do you know about conjunctions...you can begin with an arts piece and ask what do they see? So, in essence, you are building background and hooking them to a concept while teaching art coupled with an academic concept."

### **Research Question 3**

The third question was the following: What is teacher perception of the ArtsNow professional learning experience?

Professional development, also called professional learning or continuing education, is a major tool for improving student learning. When collective bargaining is used to address teaching and learning issues, students and educators both benefit. Teaching is an ever changing, evolving profession, and teachers must stay informed and continue to grow professionally.

Professional learning experience for teachers is considerably the most important component in school reform efforts; therefore, it is vital the professional learning experience be of the utmost quality to facilitate shifts in teacher instruction and deepen student learning (Plecki & Castaneda, 2009). Teachers at both schools commended the professional learning sessions as effective and well organized by knowledgeable consultants. Teachers also regarded the trainings as extending their knowledge of arts integration and building their capacity and motivation in using art integration in their classroom. Teachers were also satisfied that the trainings were aligned with the Georgia standards for their respective grade levels. Educators support highly effective professional learning that is directly aligned to standards and student-learning goals (Kinnucan-Welsch, Rosemary, & Grogan, 2006).

Although the surveys were positive, an additional theme emerged during the interview sessions that was expressed by teachers and deserves attention. Teachers candidly expressed experiencing stress due to the time requirements needed to plan and prepare art-integrated lessons, feeling overwhelmed with numerous school initiatives. Additionally, the teachers revealed the inability to integrate arts into their lessons

consistently resulting in a lack of self-confidence with finding natural connections between the arts and the content areas.

The main concern teachers noted was the time needed to effectively plan and implement an art-integrated lesson, yet there is an immense pressure from school leaders to focus on standardized assessment.

Teacher 7 honestly shared, “I feel frustrated often, because I would really enjoy integrating the arts more into the curriculum, but the level of accountability expected to ensure students pass standardized assessment limits my ability to integrate art into the curriculum.” The testing obsession is resulting in a disappearing art curriculum. In agreement, Walker (2011) states, “Across the nation, the testing obsession has nudged aside the arts.” Several teachers candidly expressed during interviews that the burden of preparing students for high-stakes tests contributed to deleterious outcomes in art-integrated teaching.

Moreover, the data suggests that teachers perceived the professional learning sessions as beneficial; however, insufficient time was allocated for teachers to plan art-integrated lessons during the sessions. Teachers communicated during interviews that dedicating planning time, immediately following the training sessions, would be advantageous and may result in increased art-integrated lessons. It is vital that teachers have the opportunity to absorb their newly acquired knowledge and plan on applications in their classroom. It is essential that educators are granted time to assimilate the newly acquired knowledge, after professional learning sessions. Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) concur with this notion in their statement that “All professional learning plan

should include policies that allow participants time for planning, creating, and reflecting on what they have learned about the teaching process” (p.8). Horowitz (2004) also discloses that a lack of planning time can hinder the work of the teacher–teaching artist partners considered a lack of “sufficient time” to plan as a challenge. Teacher 3 said, “Professional learning sessions need to be balanced and allow time for teachers to plan during the sessions.” This will add to the fluidity of the teacher’s capacity in creating art-integrated lessons.

#### **Research Question 4**

The fourth question was the following: How does arts integration influence student achievement?

The interviews, and observations revealed benefits to student critical thinking skills, student engagement, and meeting the needs of diverse learners.

Several interviewed teachers stated that through connections with arts integration, students gained a comprehensive understanding of concepts. Teacher 1 shared, “When you can bring something into your lesson that they are somewhat familiar with, and it allows them to draw an even bigger connection”. Teachers mentioned that they noticed integrative efforts encouraged critical thinking as students put more thought into their responses, allowing them to communicate their understanding in multiple methods. Teacher 5 voiced, “Arts integration has built our students’ critical thinking skills while making content easier to understand.” Research supports arts integration, provoking critical thinking skills. Burnaford (2001) upholds this view and reports that art integration supports the curriculum and strengthens critical thinking.

Moreover, all 10 interviewed teachers lauded arts integration as increasing student engagement. Teacher 4 said, “All students are highly engaged during an art-integrated lesson, even students that are often not engaged ‘tune in’ during art instruction.” Researchers have undeniably promoted student engagement as an indicator that increases the probability of high school completion (Reschly, Appleton, & Christenson, 2007). Teacher 1 stated, “They are more excited about coming to school to learn and that is definitely an added bonus.” For these reasons arts integration is regarded as an instructional instrument with positive outcomes.

Teachers also revealed arts integration improved student engagement by making learning both enjoyable and meaningful, allowing students to process the content more deeply. Teacher 8 said, “Students are more likely to retain content for a longer period than otherwise, be the case with traditional instructional strategies.” Research by Jensen (2008) corroborates this notion as he asserts, “Instruction in the art engages attention, allows students to express emotions and supports learning across the curriculum.” Student engagement is the new ‘buzz’ word and resonates with stakeholders of education since it has been well supported in improving learning. Student engagement is characterized as impressionable in influencing engagement and motivation (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008). Student engagement is an intervention that deserves attention as a predictor to academic success and increases the probability of high school completion (Christenson, Sinclair, Lehr, & Godber, 2001). Despite school leader’s efforts to sustain the culture of arts integration at both schools, high-stakes testing, and

pressure to cover all the content standards did not run counter to the arts integration initiative.

### **Limitations**

The researcher recommends that the findings be deduced sensibly since they are limited by numerous factors. The study was limited to two elementary schools in the suburbs of Georgia within the same district, and both are Title 1 schools, where 40% or more of the student population are considered economically disadvantaged. The study only included the scores of fourth grade students in two traditional public school settings in 2015 and 2016. Lastly, this study is limited in its study period; a longitudinal study would offer a more comprehensive view of the impact the professional learning sessions have on teacher practice that directly influences student achievement.

**Researcher Comments.** The researcher is also an administrator at one of the research schools and has been since the implementation of arts integration. The researcher holds a strong desire to make learning meaningful through arts integration. The researcher also believes that arts integration is an esteemed approach to teaching and can be the catalyst in transforming students into highly engaged innovative thinkers who formulate seamless connections between the arts and academic content. The researcher selected a qualitative method to get a true perspective on teachers' opinions.

Another advantage the researcher recognized with a qualitative method was the ability to use multiple tools to collect data that provides a comprehensive and broad perspective of the overall research problem (Greene, 2007).

The teachers were willing to participate in interview sessions and observations resulting in a positive process for the researcher. The ability to conduct face-to-face interviews allowed the researcher the opportunity to further the knowledge of the study regarding teachers' experience and perception with art integration practices and implementation challenges. The interview sessions captured verbal and non-verbal cues while also capturing the emotions and behaviors of each participant. The candid responses and desire to share their positive and undesirable experiences about art integration added to the validity of the arts integration phenomena.

The participants opened their classroom to the researcher for observation purposes; the observations afforded the researcher the opportunity to monitor all participants in their authentic setting, allowing the researcher to check the effectiveness of art-integrated activities and participants' interaction with one another. The observations added to the validity of interviews and complemented information provided in interviews. The researcher appreciated the opportunity by both schools and the school district for permitting the execution of this study.

The positive working relationship between the researcher and the teacher participants resulted in a seamless, productive process. The teachers were agreeable when asked to be interviewed and observed. The teachers responded candidly about their experience with arts integration, and the training sessions. The researcher made a conscientious effort to set aside any biases and opinion about arts integration.

If the researcher had the opportunity to modify the art integration professional learning sessions, she would advocate for reducing the professional learning sessions to

every other month with the ability for teachers to increase time to plan and work alongside the artist. Allowing the artist and the teacher to collaborate, create, and deliver art-integrated lessons together, alleviates the burden of the classroom teacher having to acquire knowledge of the art and content standards.

### **Relationship of Findings to Future Practice in Local Context**

This study focused on the impact and transfer of the arts integration professional learning sessions on student achievement. Through interviews and surveys, teacher participants described their experience with arts integration professional learning. Teachers were also observed on the effectiveness and transfer of arts-integrated strategies to classroom practice, and their self-efficacy with integrating the arts.

Complementing prior research, this study links the relationship between teachers professional learning and teacher classroom practice of arts integration to measured increase in student performance (Tucker & Stronge, 2005). As teachers increase their collection of classroom instructional practice, they too improve their effectiveness and address the multiple differentiated student learning styles.

The research discovered that art integration had an impact on student achievement as an approach that influenced student engagement, self-confidence, promoted critical thinking, and encouraged students to take risks. Additionally, arts integration offered a differentiated approach to teaching and learning, to meet the needs of all learners by responding to their interest and learning preference.

Through arts integration, teachers promote student engagement as students connect an academic content to an art form to meet objectives in both (Tomlinson,

2004). An art-integrated content will be advantageous to learners by providing comprehensive learning while provoking critical and analytical thinking in the pursuit to improve test scores. As for English Language Learners the arts improve language development by offering non-verbal approaches for communication and understanding and by providing a platform for students to create mental images (Wilcox, M.J., Murphy, K.M., Bacon, C.K., and Thomas, S. (2001).

The teachers in this study recognized the influence art integration had on student learning, however, they were honest in emphasizing the limitations in implementing the arts into the curriculum. Teachers noted the following limitations; teacher pressure on meeting the expectations of standardized tests resulting in arts integration being treated as a frill, and the stress of teaching all standards and preparing students for the next grade level.

Teachers suggested viable solutions for the professional learning sessions: to plan extensively with teaching artist in creating art-integrated lessons and hosting artist in the school regularly to plan and conduct lessons with teachers, and utilizing the school's specialty music and art teachers effectively, to support teachers in the implementation process. The researcher discovered special areas where teachers were not consulted in the implementation efforts.

### **Recommendations for Implementation**

While surveys were conducted by the ArtsNow organization throughout the implementation of their professional learning sessions, conducting interviews or focus groups throughout the implementation of the school-wide initiative could have allowed

for adjustments throughout the process, and potentially increased the fidelity of arts integration. Another vital component that was absent when ensuring that teachers were applying newly acquired knowledge in the classroom was fidelity checks; guaranteeing teachers were consistently and accurately applying art-integrated strategies and providing teachers with regular feedback. When teachers are provided with regular feedback, it motivates them to pursue high levels of performance (Wiggins, 2012). Ongoing regular feedback could have increased fidelity of implementation and addressed shortfalls while ensuring intentionality and accountability. Although fidelity of implementation seems practical, there are challenges associated with lack of high levels of fidelity. In the case of this study, teachers feeling the burden of high-stakes testing, and stress to cover all content standards was a challenge at both schools participating in this study.

### **Recommendation for Future Research**

A longitudinal study that considers the long-term effects of arts integration beyond high school and college is a recommended future study. A longitudinal study would generate information on the life effects of arts integration, to determine if arts have benefited educational experience and informed career preferences. Similarly, a longitudinal study on understanding the necessary elements of arts and arts-integrated learning that will facilitate college and career readiness is necessary.

This study involved only staff from two elementary schools in the same district that are supported by the ArtsNow organization. In an effort to determine the best arts integration model, a study should be conducted to determine the impact of the diverse

arts-integration implementation models on students' achievement. Another helpful study would be to examine teacher retention rates at an arts-integrated school in comparison to traditional schools. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2007), teachers who have remained in the profession felt supported by principals for their creativity, unlike the sentiments of teachers who have left the profession.

Furthermore, while the study sought the perspective of teachers, allowing for a comprehensive insight into the phenomena, the perception of parents and students could prove beneficial. Parent and student interviews could have served to develop an arts integration framework of strategies that they perceived to be effective. Lastly, considering that new art forms have evolved, and now include media arts, hip-hop and spoken word, limited research exists on the impact of these art forms on students.

### **Recommendation for Policy Makers**

It is necessary for policy makers to recognize the pressures placed on educators to prepare students for standardized assessments, which leads to classrooms that “teach lessons that are tailored for assessments not with the goal of inspiring critical thinking” (Starr, 2012). As one teacher shared during the interview “I feel frustrated often, because I would really enjoy integrating the arts more into the curriculum, but the level of accountability expected to ensure students pass standardized assessment limits my ability to integrate art into the curriculum”.

Moreover, Kim (2010) conveyed, “Teaching to the test discourages purposeful creativity development and stifles children’s creativity in schools.” The measurement of

teachers and school's effectiveness should not rely on the results of high-stakes testing. The strategies offered with arts integration respond to the demands and expectations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Using art integration will renovate antiquated teaching practices and contribute to the expansion of instructional strategies required to build the next generation's proficiencies, to contain critical thinking, creativity and innovation (2010).

Moreover, policy makers need to recognize that we have not been able to prevent a significant number of students from dropping out. According to the latest data available from the US Department of Education (2012) fewer than seven in 10 students graduate from high school on time. Exposure to the arts learning plays a critical role in enhancing student's capacity for critical thinking, creativity, imagination and innovation (Ruppert, 2009). This study discovered the benefits arts learning can make in positively altering students' attitudes-increased self-efficacy, motivation, heightened engagement, and less absenteeism. These behaviors according to Ruppert, (2009) are a catalyst to better grades, less likelihood of dropping out and positive attitudes toward school. Art learning plays a fundamental role in affording students the "complete education they need to succeed" (pg.3).

### **Recommendations for ArtsNow**

While all the art forms were addressed in the professional learning sessions, during the interviews, teachers expressed they were more inclined to use art forms they felt comfortable using. Future learning sessions should consider seeking out the support and guidance of special area teachers, to support teachers in decreasing their apprehension with other art forms. Another vital recommendation for ArtsNow is to

empower teachers by allowing them to tailor the professional learning sessions.

Teachers should drive their own growth and development, to shift the professional learning paradigm and allow educators to have a voice in their advancement, and this begins with making changes to the survey questions, as they were all positively stated questions, not allowing for necessary transparency.

According to the teacher interviews, the demo lessons delivered by the artist had the greatest impact with the implementation process of arts integration. The demo lessons can be described as an artist integrating an art lesson to a grade level, while teachers act as observers and learners during the lesson. Teachers admitted that after demo lesson sessions, they were highly motivated to implement the lessons in their class within the next few days.

Additionally, capitalizing on the expertise of members of the schools teaching staff by promoting teacher led conferences empowers teachers. As Isaac (2017) shared, "Teacher-led professional development fosters accountability, collegiality, professionalism, and pride. Teachers feel appreciated and respected for their contributions and knowledge, and they become confident and more competent in their own teaching practice." As noted during the interview sessions several teachers were confident with their level of expertise with a particular art form.

### **Recommendation for School Leaders that Adopt Arts Integration**

A fundamental suggestion for school leaders in creating a rich art-learning environment and creating a commitment to arts learning is establishing and articulating a clear goal, aligned with high quality arts integration for all students. The school leaders at

both schools participating in the study did not articulate a clear vision for the arts nor was arts integration in their school improvement plan efforts as a strategy to increase student achievement, sending a message to the school community that art is unnecessary in the school improvement efforts.

Additionally, school leaders must establish a commitment to the arts by developing job descriptions for new hires that emphasize to candidates the need of being familiar with arts coursework or having experience with teaching the arts. It is also necessary to identify and allocate a budget that is aligned with the school's goal of the arts and seek out grants that provide financial support to sustain arts integration school-wide. Once a budget is established, art needs to be visible and an essential part of what defines the school. Student's creativity and artistic capacities need to be highlighted and celebrated.

Lastly, engage and involve local community artists or businesses in building and sustaining a rich arts culture. "Forming partnerships with the local arts community can help infuse the school with rich, comprehensive programs—not simply add-on experiences that can come and go with the availability of resources" (Arts Education Partnership, 2011 p.54). Efforts should be made to engage parents since they are enamored to see their children perform, and are willing to provide support that can preserve the arts. Parents can be used in multiple ways such as researching and writing grants, volunteering, or raising funds to maintain the goal and vision of the arts.

**Conclusion**

This research sought to determine the impact of arts integration on student achievement, and to obtain teachers' perspectives of the professional learning sessions and its transfer to instructional pedagogy. The objective of the ArtsNow organization was to build teacher capacity in arts integration. The teachers reported that the arts integration approach was beneficial to students, however the pressures of preparing students for high-stakes testing and the amount of standards content limited the time for arts integration lessons. The results of this study support the numerous benefits to arts integration. The advantages include academic, social, and emotional gains as well as the arts engage students to take ownership of their learning, and prepares students for the rapidly, ever changing world. The results also reported the benefits to teachers when teaching the arts. The advantages include enthusiasm with teaching, taking risk with content and increased repertoire of instructional strategies.

Additionally, the results of this study urges administrators and teachers to continue their efforts in guaranteeing that arts integration remains a valued and essential component of student learning. This study supports the many benefits of arts integration. The arts contribute to heightened student engagement and motivation. Students exhibit increased self-efficacy when exposed to arts learning, and according to the American Society of Horticultural Science (2011), "Self-efficacy influences academic motivation, learning, and achievement." Art integration can guarantee students are prepared for future jobs that require students to think interchangeably between multiple subjects and see their connections. McLeod (2017) purported, "In schools we usually silo content.

We rarely give students the opportunity to live in the interdisciplinary spaces and to live in cross-thinking areas where they can see the connections across disciplines.” Art integration can function as the conduit for deep learning experiences that afford students an opportunity to foster creativity rooted in core content. In today’s classrooms, teachers have shifted from presenting identical instruction to all students, to offering alternatives based on diverse learning styles and capabilities. This “differentiated” teaching model accommodates the individual needs of students rather than the class as a whole.

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APPENDICES

### **Appendix A: Approval Letter**

Cherokee County School System Request For Permission To Conduct Data Collection Activities Within The System

Re: Your follow up submission of 4/13/2017, Study #17-516: The Impact of Arts Integration on Student Achievement

Dear Ms. Rosario-Regan:

Your application has been reviewed by IRB members. Your study is eligible for expedited review under the FDA and DHHS (OHRP) designation of category 7 - Individual or group characteristics or behavior.

This is to confirm that your application has been approved. The protocol approved is: De-identified Georgia Milestones results of the 2015 and 2016 administration of 4th grade students and teacher surveys, classroom observation of art integrated lessons, as well as taped teacher interviews to examine the impact of arts integration as an instructional strategy on student achievement at Hasty Elementary and Oak Grove Elementary. The consent procedure described is in effect.

NOTE: All surveys, recruitment flyers/emails, and consent forms must include the IRB study number noted above, prominently displayed on the first page of all materials.

You are granted permission to conduct your study as described in your application effective immediately. The IRB calls your attention to the following obligations as Principal Investigator of this study.

1. The study is subject to continuing review on or before 4/27/2018. At least two weeks prior to that time, go to <http://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/progress-report-form.php> to submit a progress report. Progress reports not received in a timely manner will result in expiration and closure of the study.
2. Any proposed changes to the approved study must be reported and approved prior to implementation. This is accomplished through submission of a progress report along with revised consent forms and survey instruments.
3. All records relating to conducted research, including signed consent documents, must be retained for at least three years following completion of the research. You are responsible for ensuring that all records are accessible for inspection by

authorized representatives as needed. Should you leave or end your professional relationship with KSU for any reason, you are responsible for providing the IRB with information regarding the housing of research records and who will maintain control over the records during this period.

4. Unanticipated problems or adverse events relating to the research must be reported promptly to the IRB. See <http://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/reporting-unanticipated-problems.php> for definitions and reporting guidance.

5. A final progress report should be provided to the IRB at the closure of the study.

Contact the IRB at [irb@kennesaw.edu](mailto:irb@kennesaw.edu) or at (470) 578-2268 if you have any questions or require further information.

Sincerely,

Christine Ziegler, Ph.D.  
KSU Institutional Review Board Chair and Director

## Appendix B: Letter of Consent

### Study #17-516

You are being invited to participate in a research study to describe your arts integration professional learning experience and the transfer of arts integration strategies to classroom practice in turn influencing student achievement. You were selected for the study because you are currently a teacher at a school integrating arts into the curriculum and have been participating in the professional learning trainings for one or more years.

This study will explore teachers experience and perspective of the ArtsNow professional learning trainings along with teachers' use of the strategies in classroom practice. If you agreed to be part of this doctoral study, you will be asked to complete the following research procedures with an eight week.

1. Attend an orientation meeting for review of study rights and responsibilities (20-30 minutes)
2. Completed like Likert-type survey (2 minutes)
3. Schedule a classroom observation of the use of arts integration (30-45 minutes)
4. Participate in an interview (20 minutes) Interviews will be audio – recorded.

Your participation is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate or reject participation will be respected. Even if you join the study and later decide to end involvement, it will be without any consequences. There are no perceived risk involved for you and participating in the study. If you choose to participate, you will be provided with two “jeans” dress down passes to use at your discretion as a form of compensation for participation in this study.

The data collected in this study will evaluate the impact of arts integration on student achievement and provide data on the effectiveness of ArtsNow professional learning training and it is transmission to classroom practice.

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. Upon your agreement to participate, you will be assigned a code; showing confidentiality, with no personal identifiers. None of your information will be used beyond the research project.

You may contact the following with questions regarding your participation in the study;  
Maria Rosario-Regan, [maria.rosario-regan@cherokee.k12.ga.us](mailto:maria.rosario-regan@cherokee.k12.ga.us) or 770-721-6555  
Susan Padgett-Harrison, Director of Ed.S and Ed.D programs and Research Chair,  
[spadget1@kennesaw.edu](mailto:spadget1@kennesaw.edu)

#### THIS PAGE MAY BE REMOVED AND KEPT BY EACH PARTICIPANT

Research at Kennesaw State University that involves human participants is carried out under the oversight of an Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding these activities should be addressed to the Institutional Review Board, Kennesaw State University, 585 Cobb Avenue, KH3403, Kennesaw, GA 30144-5591, (470) 578-2268.

Kennesaw University's approval number for this study \_\_\_\_\_

The researcher will provide you with a copy of this form and a report of the study findings.

Thank you,  
Maria Rosario-Regan



Statement of Consent:

- I have read the above information. I have received answers to my questions. I am 18 years old or older and I consent to participate in this study.
- I have read the above information and do not consent to participate in this study.

## Appendix C: Consent for Interview Participation

### Consent for Interview Participation

Study #17-516

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by **Maria Rosario-Regan** from Kennesaw University. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about the impact of arts integration on student achievement and the effectiveness of the professional learning trainings. I will be one of several teachers being interviewed for this research.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, no one on my campus will be told.
2. I understand that most interviewees in will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
3. Participation involves being interviewed by the researcher from Kennesaw University. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio tape of the interview and subsequent dialogue will be make. If I don't want to be taped, I will not be able to participate in the study.
4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.
5. Faculty and administrators from my campus will neither be present at the interview nor have access to raw notes or transcripts. This precaution will prevent my individual comments from having any negative repercussions.
6. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Studies Involving Human Subjects: Behavioral Sciences Committee at Kennesaw University. For research problems or questions regarding subjects, the Institutional Review Board may be contacted through Susan Padgett-Harrison Ed.S and Ed.D Director and Chair of this study
7. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
8. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

---

My Signature

---

Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
My Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of

the Investigator For further information, please contact:

Maria Rosario-Regan  
Maria.rosarioregan@choro  
kee.k12.ga.us

### **Appendix D: ArtsNow Professional Learning Survey**

#### ArtsNow Professional Learning Experience Survey

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

This instrument is designed to measure your feelings, beliefs and behaviors concerning the professional learning sessions. It is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers. Please answer the questions as honestly as possible. Using the scale below, indicate your level of agreement or disagreement in the space, which is next to each statement.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Slightly Disagree</b>	<b>Slight Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

\_\_\_\_\_ The content was relevant to the GPS for my grade level/subject area

\_\_\_\_\_ This content extended my knowledge/skills in Arts- integration

\_\_\_\_\_ The facilitator(s) were knowledgeable and effective

\_\_\_\_\_ The facilitators helped me understand how to implement my learning

\_\_\_\_\_ I was encouraged to actively participate in this workshop

\_\_\_\_\_ The activities I learned have motivated me to use more arts integration

\_\_\_\_\_ Sessions and materials were well-organized

\_\_\_\_\_ I feel ready to build on these ideas to create my own lessons and units

\_\_\_\_\_ I would recommend this workshop to my colleagues

\_\_\_\_\_ This workshop was an excellent use of professional time

## Appendix E: Observation Rubric

Arts Integration Rubric			
	Content	Process	Product
<b>4</b> Exemplary	Student work <b>clearly</b> demonstrates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understanding of the academic standard(s) through accurate representation</li> <li>• understanding of the arts standard(s) through accurate representation</li> </ul>	Student work <b>clearly</b> demonstrates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• growth in use of inquiry and higher order thinking skills</li> <li>• risk-taking</li> <li>• they are individually reflective of growth through the arts integration process</li> <li>• community building through collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congruence between the arts and content goals for the project</li> <li>• Increased awareness of relevance and purpose of the arts integration process</li> </ul>
<b>3</b> Accomplished	Student work <b>mostly</b> demonstrates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understanding of academic standard(s) through accurate representation</li> <li>• understanding of the arts standard(s) through accurate representation</li> </ul>	Student work <b>mostly</b> demonstrates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• growth in use of inquiry and higher order thinking skills</li> <li>• risk-taking</li> <li>• individual reflection of growth through the arts integration process</li> <li>• community building through collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some congruence between the arts and content goals for the project</li> <li>• Mostly demonstrates increased awareness of relevance and purpose of the arts integration process</li> </ul>
<b>2</b> Developing	Student work demonstrates <b>minimal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understanding of academic standard(s) through somewhat accurate representation</li> <li>• understanding of the arts standard(s) through somewhat accurate representation</li> </ul>	Student work demonstrates <b>minimal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• growth in use of inquiry and higher order thinking skills</li> <li>• risk-taking</li> <li>• individual reflection of growth through the arts integration process</li> <li>• community building through collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimal congruence between the arts and content goals for the project</li> <li>• Minimal awareness of relevance and purpose of the arts integration</li> </ul>
<b>1</b> Beginning	Student work <b>does not</b> demonstrate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understanding of the academic standards and/or are not able to accurately represent understanding</li> <li>• an understanding of the arts standards and/or is not able to accurately represent understanding</li> </ul>	Student work <b>does not</b> demonstrate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use of inquiry and/or higher order thinking skills</li> <li>• risk-taking</li> <li>• individual reflection of growth through the arts integration process</li> <li>• community building through collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student work does not reflect art and content goals</li> <li>• Students do not self assess and/or demonstrate any awareness of relevance of the arts integration process</li> </ul>

## **Appendix F: Interview Questions**

Study #17-516

1. Has implementing art integration changed the learning environment in your classroom?
2. Describe your experience with teaching art integration.
3. Do you perceive that art integration has shaped your instruction?
4. In your experience what was student's level of engagement during art-integrated lessons?
5. How has art integration influenced classroom activities and assessment instruments?
6. How do you perceive art integration has changed your students' levels of achievement?
7. How do you believe art integration has influenced your students' levels of engagement and participation?
8. How has art integration influenced your students' learning?
9. What art domain is difficult to integrate?
10. What additional professional learning would you request in arts integration?
11. What has been most beneficial facet of the professional learning sessions?
12. What is the effect of arts integration on at-risk students?

