

Arts-Based Education

EDUC 801 Summer 1997

**Queen's University,
Faculty of Education**

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Course Description

This course is designed for all teacher educators and no previous arts experience is necessary for participants. Arts-based education will focus on using music, drama, visual arts and music to cut across traditional curriculum boundaries. We will explore a different view of schools in which arts-based environments and activities form the focus for learning not only about the arts, but about the “academic” subjects (math, science, language, social studies).

The course itself will be an arts-based learning experience, created in part by the instructor and to a greater extent by the course participants themselves. Examination of existing arts-based programmes, independent readings, group and individual projects, discussion, written assignments, group and independent arts activities and the building of a resource base will be other elements of the course.

Classwork and independent study and activity will focus on one or more of the following issues: (1) how the arts can induce change in schools, (2) how math, science, social studies, and language can be authentically learned, taught and experienced through arts-based schooling, (3) the role of social learning and community knowledge, (4) the features of successful arts-based learning environments, (5) the factors impeding and encouraging change in school systems, (6) arts advocacy, (7) accountability and assessment, and (8) the child's view of his or her role in learning.

Course Text

There is no single required text. Participants are required to read three of group A and to purchase one of group B. All books are on 24-hour reserve in the Education Library and for sale at the campus bookstore.

Group A (read three)

Edwards, C., Gandini, L., & Forman, G. (1993). *The hundred languages of children: The Reggio Emilia Approach to early childhood education*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex. (This is a collection of writing about this world renowned approach to early childhood education in northern Italy, in which young children are encouraged to express themselves through many “languages” or modes of expression, including words, movement, drawing, painting, sculpture, shadow play, collage, and music.)

Gallas, K. (1994). *The languages of learning: How children talk, write, dance, draw, and sing their understanding of the world*. New York: Teachers College Press. (Karen Gallas offers an approach to understanding how children communicate their knowledge of the world and the ways in which that kind of understanding can transform the educative process. “Children’s narratives are not naturally confined to the spoken or written word... once we begin to understand the many paths that narrative can take through the modalities of talk, song, art, movement, and into the written word, the practice of teaching and the process of learning are mutually transformed.” p. xvii)

Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (Maxine Greene is the founder of the Centre for the Arts, Social Imagination, and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. This collection of essays is provocative, challenging, and sometimes hard going and worth the trouble!!)

Noddings, N. (1992). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education*. New York: Teachers College Press. (Nel Noddings insists that the main aim of education should be a moral one, that of nurturing the growth of competent, caring, and loving persons. To that end she describes in great detail a curriculum organized around centers of care: care for one’s self, for intimate others as well as strangers and distant others, for animals, plants, the earth, and for human instruments and ideas.)

O’Donnell, K. (1994). *Kid culture: Children, adults, and popular culture*. Toronto: Second Storey Press. (This is a controversial analysis of kids’ pop culture: TV, video games, movies, toys, music etc. A must read for those who condemn most of pop culture.)

O’Reilly, M. R. (1993). *The peaceable classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. (Mary Rose O’Reilly argues that teachers must not allow themselves to be co-opted by a material culture that views education as a freeway interchange on the fast track to job success: the central task is to foster a critical encounter with the intellectual and spiritual traditions of humankind and to reclaim the revolutionary power of literature and the arts to change things. “We may forget algebra and second-year Latin, but we remember how to obey orders, suppress our own experience and think like everyone else.” p.67)

Upitis, R. (1990). *This too is music*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. (Whenever anyone chooses to read this for an assignment, he or she always says “Every teacher should read this book!” Rena Upitis shares her stories of freeing children to take control over their arts learnings and experience.)

Your choice of a book connected in any way to the arts.

Group B (buy one)

Fleischman, P. (1989). *I am phoenix: Poems for two voices* (1st ed.). New York: Harper & Row.

Fleischman, P. (1988). *Joyful noise: Poems for two voices* (1st ed.). New York: Harper & Row.

Schafer, R. M. (1992). *A sound education: 100 exercises in listening and sound-making*. Indian River, Ontario, Canada: Arcana Editions.

(We will use, transform, and perform materials and activities from these resources daily throughout the course.)

Course Overview

Part 1 GENERAL ISSUES OF ARTS-BASED LEARNING

- why the arts?
- the arts paradigm of learning
- arts integration, arts infusion, arts-based education
- arts and academic achievement

Part 2 TEACHER AS ARTIST, CHILD AS ARTIST

- activities in the visual arts, drama, music, literature, dance, storytelling and more
- “beginner’s mind”
- teacher transformation
- personal projects
- child’s view of his or her role in learning

Part 3 EXAMPLES OF OTHER ARTS-BASED ENVIRONMENTS

- Learning Through the Arts: A Partnership in Educational Transformation in Toronto

- the Reggio Emilia Approach in Italy
- Friskolen: “A Place to Be” in Denmark

Part 4 PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ARTS-BASED LEARNING

- integration, infusion, specialization
- the Common Curriculum and other Ministry initiatives
- assessment
- resources

Expectations and Assignments

All assignments are of equal value. Due dates will be negotiated once classes begin.

1. Participation in classroom activities and discussions.
2. Engage in a personal project.

Try something you’ve never done before—something that you’d enjoy (and not classify as one of life’s “busywork” assignments).

You could . . .

learn to quilt
 play guitar
 knit
 snorkel
 carve
 dive

make an animation film, stained glass, pottery, a cabin

try watercolours
 wood working
 birding

As you engage in your personal project, keep a log or journal or set of notes, if only haphazardly. From these notes, generate a paper describing what you found—what the experience was like, what you observed, felt, wondered about, liked, disliked, marvelled at—and learned. What did the project tell you about your learning styles? Preferences? Describe how the learning might be labelled and assessed in school-like terms, referring to common practices, general literature, and ministry directives.

3. Create a short proposal for introducing an arts-based learning project in an educational setting which you could use in the near future. Ask for something in the proposal time—money, equipment, supplies or space—and justify your need.

References

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