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Meaningful Connections in a Comprehensive Approach to the Music Curriculum

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Abstract and Keywords

A comprehensive music curriculum is characterized by breadth and depth of musical experience. Curricular breadth involves planning for students' participation in a wide range of musical engagements (singing, playing, composing, improvising, listening, moving, evaluating); exposure to a broad repertoire of works, styles, and genres; and emphasis on the ways that music is organized and constructed through its distinctive elements and forms. Depth of musical understanding comes from pursuing a well-chosen sample of these engagements, music, and elements with regularity and intensity. Through a curriculum that offers both breadth and depth, students become aware of the vast possibilities for lifelong involvement which music affords, and gain the keen satisfaction of knowing some music well. This article begins by addressing key concepts that support a principled foundation for interdisciplinary work in music, and next clarifies distinctions among common terms used to refer to curricular schemes for organizing a connected curriculum. Principles that can be used to guide curricular decisions are provided. The article then explores interdisciplinary work in music from the perspective of (1) the teacher, (2) the learner, (3) the overall curriculum, and (4) approaches and models for generating and organizing interdisciplinary experiences. Whenever possible, it supplements its North American perspective (the US and Canada) with select examples that reflect a more international scope.

Keywords: interdisciplinary work, music education, curriculum development

Seeking Clarity About Curricular Connections

Meaningful Connections in a Comprehensive Approach to the Music Curriculum

A comprehensive music curriculum is characterized by breadth and depth of musical experience. Curricular breadth involves planning for students' participation in a wide range of musical engagements (singing, playing, composing, improvising, listening, moving, evaluating); exposure to a broad repertoire of works, styles, and genres; and emphasis on the ways that music is organized and constructed through its distinctive elements and forms. Depth of musical understanding comes from pursuing a well-chosen sample of these engagements, musics, and elements with regularity and intensity. Through a curriculum that offers both breadth and depth, students become aware of the vast possibilities for lifelong involvement that music affords, and gain the keen satisfaction of knowing some music well. In classrooms where teachers plan for breadth and depth of experience, students make personal connections to the music they have studied by viewing it as an integral part of their (p. 362) lives, and explore how music is closely related to other interests and areas of study as well. It is this interpretation of a *comprehensive curriculum* that leads most readily to meaningful interdisciplinary connections.

This chapter begins by addressing key concepts that support a principled foundation for interdisciplinary work in music. Next, we clarify distinctions among common terms used to refer to curricular schemes for organizing a connected curriculum. Principles that can be used to guide curricular decisions are provided. We then explore interdisciplinary work in music from perspectives of (1) the teacher, (2) the learner, (3) the overall curriculum, and (4) approaches and models for generating and organizing interdisciplinary experiences. Whenever possible, we supplement our North American perspective (the U.S. and Canada), with select examples that reflect a more international scope.

Disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to education are sometimes viewed as incompatible. Proponents of disciplinary approaches argue that school subjects, or disciplines, are historically developed systems of ideas, theories, and ways of knowing that constitute key areas of human achievement. Accordingly, these subjects need to be studied as domains in their own right. With greater disciplinary specialization comes rigor. A common argument for integrated approaches maintains that schools partition knowledge into school subjects, and in so doing, make it difficult for students to understand complex, interrelated problems and to generate new solutions. Interdisciplinarity is viewed as the remedy for this disconnectedness, while perhaps sacrificing some disciplinary rigor for relevance. In this chapter, we hold these two perspectives in productive tension. Rigorous study of music as a subject is as essential as understanding how music influences, and is influenced by, other disciplines. Disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives are complementary; both are necessary to realize educational aims. Parsons aptly conveys this balance: "A good traditional curriculum aims at an understanding of disciplines, and a good integrated curriculum aims at an understanding of the lifeworld" (2004, p. 76).

Meaningful Connections in a Comprehensive Approach to the Music Curriculum

The music curriculum for elementary or primary education has traditionally emphasized performing music through singing and playing instruments. Skillful and expressive performance has held fast as the organizing center, with learning to read and write musical notation in a supporting role. Historically, this emphasis on performance and musical literacy was expanded to acknowledge that children learn music through listening, creating, and moving as well, what has been called the “fivefold curriculum.” In recent decades, the music curriculum has become more inclusive through greater emphasis on improvisation, composition, analysis, and evaluation, study of the historical and cultural roots of music, and imaginative bridges to other school subjects. A greater diversity of repertoire, access to diverse musics, inclusion of vernacular as well as classical traditions, and availability of technology have also prompted more variability in what is taught and learned. The move toward comprehensiveness is prompted by the belief that children can be musical in many different ways, and that the curriculum should offer (p. 363) them experiences to develop these interests and musical roles in varied capacities (Boardman, 1996; Reimer, 2003). This expansion implies that teaching music in relation to other subjects is not an auxiliary goal, but central to a broad education in music. As the music curriculum has become more comprehensive, it has necessarily become more interdisciplinary as well.

Teaching for connections, and doing it well, depends on the formation of meaningful, rather than superficial, relationships between music and other subjects, and learning to identify these in mutually illuminating ways. Relational thinking, then, is fostered in a sound and well-designed interdisciplinary curriculum through teachers’ efforts to promote:

- Connections *within* an arts discipline, so that students will understand how the processes, works, styles, and ways of thinking within an arts domain are related
- Connections *across* the arts, so that students understand how the expressive and aesthetic experiences of the arts share commonalities and inspiration, as well as distinctive qualities
- Connections *across* the arts to subjects *outside* the arts, which lead students to realize how the arts influence, and are influenced by, these subjects
- Connections that *transcend* disciplinary boundaries altogether, allowing students to see the world, including the arts, more clearly and to situate themselves within that world (Barrett, 2008, p. 4)

Coming to Terms

A central question guiding the design and organization of school experiences is “How should the curriculum be interrelated?” The quest for coherence within arts education has taken shape through many approaches and initiatives, known by a wide variety of labels, such as the *interdisciplinary curriculum*, *integrated curriculum*, *arts integration*,

Meaningful Connections in a Comprehensive Approach to the Music Curriculum

interrelated arts, and *arts-infused curriculum*, among others. Most typical, perhaps, is the broad term *integrated curriculum*, which, when applied to the arts, is usually described as *arts integration*. Common definitions of arts integration include

- “Integrating one or more of the arts into the academic curriculum” (Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland, & Palmer, 2009, p. 53)
- “The effort to build a set of relationships between learning in the arts and learning in the other skills and subjects of the curriculum” (Deasey, 2003, p. 3)
- “The use of two or more disciplines in ways that are mutually reinforcing, often demonstrating an underlying unity” (Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, 1994, p. 13)

(p. 364) Teachers must employ clearheaded thinking when designing and evaluating integrated models to determine what they imply for those who teach the arts (curricular specialists, generalists, teaching artists), the constellation of subjects to be studied (arts to arts, or arts to subjects “outside”), and the aims and intentions of bringing subjects together (Russell & Zembylas, 2007). The term *arts integration*, for example, can connote a balanced and reciprocal study of two or more subjects, in which learning in one area is enhanced by well-planned experiences in the other. It can also lead to instrumentality if the arts are taught primarily for the purpose of enhancing or supporting learning in other areas of the curriculum rather than for their own sake, a “subservient” approach (Bresler, 2002). If integrating the arts implies a loss of their distinctive expressive qualities and consequently, a loss of their vitality and importance in school settings, little is gained. Nonetheless, the term *arts integration* is widespread, requiring thoughtful evaluation to determine the extent, degree, and purposes for arts learning.

Taggart, Whitby, and Sharp (2004) report on a UK-initiated international study of arts curricula. In eight of the twenty-one countries surveyed, the arts are integrated into a single curriculum area. This study found that “the majority of ‘integrated’ arts systems use themes to group artistic knowledge and skills across the arts disciplines” (p. 13). In other educational systems, they may be taught as separate entities, each art with its own traditions, skills, and processes.

Another curricular approach fosters study within and across arts disciplines, sometimes called the *related arts* or *integrated arts*. Such initiatives focus on the design of arts rich experiences that place two or more art forms together to highlight the commonalities and distinctive qualities of each. Integrated arts programs invite the imaginative exploration of two or more arts in tandem, such as music and art, music and dance, music and theater, or multiple arts.

The lack of common language across approaches has challenged curriculum scholars and designers to distinguish educationally sound programs from more superficial attempts by focusing on validity and integrity. For example, Marshall calls for *true* integrated art education that is *substantive* when it “explores and explicates connections between areas on a conceptual and structural level” (2006, p. 18). As Bresler notes, “because

Meaningful Connections in a Comprehensive Approach to the Music Curriculum

integration, like all concepts, is a construction, it can mean different things to different people in terms of contents, resources, structures, and pedagogies; yet the multiplicity of meanings is not always explicit in the ways we use the term” (2002, p. 20).

In this chapter, we have adopted the inclusive term *interdisciplinary* to refer to curricular approaches involving music and other disciplines that lead to students’ understanding of meaningful connections among topics, subjects, works, and experiences, or put another way, toward the development of relational thinking. We hold that the primary goal of an interdisciplinary curriculum in the arts is to promote relational understanding between and among disciplines, to intensify the expressive meanings that the arts provide, and to foster lifelong engagement and participation in the arts. The crux of interdisciplinarity stems from music educators’ goals to teach music broadly, and to lead students toward understanding its (p. 365) varied meanings, influences, sources of inspiration, uses, and significance to their lived experience.

Key Principles for Promoting Meaningful Connections

Curricular expansion has intensified the number of decisions that music teachers must make in planning educational experiences. As the curriculum has broadened to encompass many forms of music-making, study, and types/genres of music, curricular choices have also become more complex and varied, stimulating a need for principles to guide the design of valuable musical experiences for children. Interdisciplinary initiatives add further opportunities and challenges to the mix. In searching for substantive ideas, teachers rely on key principles to guide thoughtful planning, teaching, and assessment.

Music is influenced by, and in turn influences, other realms of human experience—the principle of *permeability*. Detels (1999) writes about “soft boundaries” between areas of study that are “continually open to redefinition and change as additional experience is received and examined” (p. 28). Evidence for this evolving transfer of ideas can be found in historical and contemporary work in music, art, theater, dance, and other expressive forms as artists are often inspired “across” subjects or domains, borrowing across art forms to create new works that redefine and challenge our experience of the arts. This fluidity across art disciplines serves as a strong rationale for interdisciplinary work as teachers and students explore the permeable boundaries between school subjects.

Another central concept is *multidimensionality*, the notion that a musical work can be experienced in many different ways. Music is based in sound, and students can examine the varied ways that music moves through time. Some musical works have “extramusical meanings,” particularly through text or programmatic associations. Personal associations and responses to music are also part of its expressive power. Music is also influenced by the time and place in which it is created, performed, and experienced; these social and cultural meanings convey nuances of understanding. Any educational encounter with music may foster multiple responses to these multiple dimensions. In turn, a multidimensional view offers more points of connection with other musics and ideas

Meaningful Connections in a Comprehensive Approach to the Music Curriculum

outside the work itself. As students experience musical works and related ideas from multiple perspectives and through multiple media, their capacities for forming strong connections are deepened. Encountering art works while taking on varied roles as creators, performers, and perceivers is a promising antidote to superficial exposure.

Interdisciplinary projects, initiatives, or programs make educational sense when the principle of *complementarity* is held in mind. Teachers strive to highlight reciprocal relationships between or among disciplines as students examine and understand how one discipline illuminates aspects of the other. Attention to complementary relationships makes it more likely that music will not be forced into a subservient position to other disciplines or subjects, and that consequently, (p. 366) connections from music to other subjects will reflect and respect the ways of thinking in the related discipline as well. In this regard, understanding is a “two-way street.” Closely related is the notion of *hybridity*, which acknowledges that some realms of artistic expression mix or combine multiple art forms (opera or film, for example); studying how characteristic qualities of various arts fuse into a larger whole is a compelling and sensible avenue for interdisciplinary study.

Meaningful connections arise through *juxtaposition*, which is exercised when teachers place key ideas, works, and disciplines in close proximity to one another to invite relational thinking. The artistry of teachers is revealed in the way disciplines, works, or themes are arranged within the curriculum, inviting creative interplay, investigation, and invention. When teachers and students collaborate in evaluating how well ideas complement one another, they evaluate their goodness of fit. The strength of connections between and among disciplines, works, and themes varies. Evaluating interdisciplinary approaches depends on judging the extent, depth, type, and substance of connections, the principle of *integrity*. For many teachers with experience and expertise in interdisciplinary curriculum, this principle is especially important in gauging the quality of the students’ experience and its lasting impact.

The Music Teacher as Interdisciplinary

In North America, most music teachers are educated as disciplinary specialists, immersing themselves in the study and performance of music in order to attain high levels of accomplishment and understanding. Teacher education and professional development programs are organized tightly and sequentially in ways that promote musical expertise. Disciplinary depth is the goal. Designing a substantive interdisciplinary curriculum and teaching for meaningful relationships requires, however, that music specialists branch out from this strong core of musical preparation, drawing on or acquiring a more eclectic knowledge base. Here, breadth is desired. Music teachers who strive to become interdisciplinarians take this challenge seriously, seeking life experiences, educational offerings, curricular openings, and personal interests as venues for new learning.

Meaningful Connections in a Comprehensive Approach to the Music Curriculum

As interdisciplinarians, music teachers become skilled at drawing on musical expertise while also developing lateral knowledge, or an interdisciplinary knowledge base across disciplines, domains, and life experiences (Barrett, 2007b, 2008). Teachers' intellectual curiosity, artistic playfulness, willingness to stretch through new experiences, and capacities for inquiry and reflection enable this move into new realms of curricular territory. School context plays an important role as well, as professional learning opportunities, continuing education, and access to cultural resources support teachers' lateral moves. Upitis, Smithrim, and Soren (1999) (p. 367) studied how participation in arts experiences enabled teachers to deepen their artistic sensibilities and beliefs about the values of the arts, promoting significant transformation of their practices. Teachers in two distinct professional development programs developed curriculum projects for their classrooms but, most importantly, experienced personal growth that changed their artistic worldviews.

The transformation of teachers' thinking is often enabled by collaboration with other teachers, guest artists, and experts in other fields. Collaboration, writes Bresler, has not always been valued in school settings. It depends on "a shift of perception regarding the relationship of the individual to the society, from the individual *constrained* by the community, to a framework where the individual becomes *enhanced* by interactions with others" (2002, p. 18). Collaboration allows for shared expertise, for joint work on behalf of students and school communities, and for more coherence in the overall curriculum. Many interdisciplinary initiatives imply that collaboration is a necessary condition for integration, but individual teachers can adopt an interdisciplinary mindset as "singletons" in their own school settings, particularly when conditions make collaborative work difficult or unlikely. Understanding collaborative processes is especially vital for interdisciplinarians working across programs, specialties, personalities, and classrooms on behalf of a more connected school curriculum.

Meaningful Connections from the Student's Point of View

Parsons situates students' understanding at the center of any interdisciplinary moment in classrooms: "Integration occurs when students make sense for themselves of their varied learning and experiences, when they pull these together to make one view of their world and their place in it. It takes place in their minds or not at all" (2004, p. 776). The sense-making impulse is also the cornerstone of constructivist views of education, which hold that meaning is constructed rather than transmitted, and view the curriculum as a medium through which meaning can be formed (Eisner, 2002).

Astute observers of very young children know how they convey genuine enthusiasm for seeing the world as meaningful through the spontaneous and often charming associations they make. They exhibit an early form of relational thinking that Gardner and his

Meaningful Connections in a Comprehensive Approach to the Music Curriculum

colleagues call predisciplinary thinking, involving commonsense perceptions (Gardner & Boix Mansilla, 1994). Many curricular materials designed for young children exemplify this premise by centering instruction around some topical theme, such as animals, the seasons, or the senses. As grade levels progress, schooling socializes the child to view the world in more categorical and disciplinary terms, not surprisingly since the curriculum (and often the child's day) is organized through subject matter. The primary school curriculum (p. 368) takes on more differentiated shape as the child progresses from early years through intermediate levels. As children progress, they learn the structure of the discipline through sequentially planned experiences. Framers of the music curriculum have considered the sequential nature of the curriculum essential to build children's understanding from simple to complex levels. Models of curricular planning at the middle school level often highlight interdisciplinary relationships for the purpose of exposing students to a wide range of ideas, topics, and subjects before they supposedly specialize further in secondary school and college. Thus, the structure of the formal curriculum often makes opportunities for relational thinking more or less likely, depending on predominant ends and goals.

Yet the drive to seek relationships and to find how one seemingly disparate idea might be relevant to another idea animates the purpose for interdisciplinary studies across the curriculum. Regardless of the carefully planned integrative lessons or units within the formal curriculum, students seek coherence and correlation in their own views of the world. Boix Mansilla, Miller, and Gardner offer this metaphorical rationale from students' vantage points: "interdisciplinarity becomes a prism through which students can interpret the natural, social, and cultural worlds in which they live and operate in them in informed ways" (2000, p. 31). This point of view acknowledges students' sense-making tendencies, and the way that musical connections open up new vistas of interest and enthusiasm.

Meaningful Connections from a Curricular Perspective

Music teachers with an interdisciplinary mindset organize educative experiences that will foster meaningful connections both *within* the music curriculum and *across* corridors and classrooms within the school. An excellent way to develop these capacities is to start with *intradisciplinary* relationships, which involve studying musical works, styles, and artists in tandem and in juxtaposition. Fostering such intradisciplinary work engages students in finding connections within music, and seeing how musicians have built on and acknowledged other musical ideas. Although sometimes this kind of thinking is not seen as integrated, the meanings students create within music are as valid as the meanings they find across disciplines.

Meaningful Connections in a Comprehensive Approach to the Music Curriculum

Interarts or related arts study involves music and the “other” arts, which most typically include visual art, dance, and drama but also embrace the literary arts of poetry and fiction, as well as film, photography, architecture, and everevolving new media. Arts-to-arts approaches have been heralded as pathways for foregrounding the role of imagination, expression, and creative interplay in school settings (Eisner, 2002; Greene, 1995). Particularly valuable are instances where the study of two of more arts enhances students’ understanding of the similarities and (p. 369) distinctive ways of perceiving, responding, and creating among the arts, while opening up multiple means of expression. Across the arts, greater attention to historical and cultural underpinnings and influences leads organically to substantive study related to the social studies. Just as music's roots are intertwined with the time and place in which the music is created and experienced, so is this true with related arts. An emphasis on the origin, transmission, and reception of artistic ideas demonstrates how the arts transform individuals and societies.

Finding strong and meaningful relationships between music and subjects outside of the arts requires thoughtful examination and careful judgment. For example, music and science are integrally and meaningfully related when sound itself serves as the bridge, through the study of sound production (acoustics) paired with sound in musical contexts (timbre). In mathematics, fundamental relationships of pattern, sequence, and structure may be found in the rhythmic directions, phrases, and overall forms of music. The search for complementary parallels—each informing the other—is key.

Ultimately, the significance of the interdisciplinary curriculum resides in the way that students construct more coherent, intersecting, and illuminating understanding of music as it relates to their personal experience and identity. When students employ musical understanding as a way of making sense of new concepts and ideas in other fields, this broad goal is realized. When they bring insights from other studies that in turn enrich their expressive responses to music, the curriculum becomes integrated into their ways of thinking, feeling, creating, judging, and valuing music as a site for knowing themselves and their worlds.

Approaches and Models

The following section surveys common interdisciplinary approaches organized by type. These categorical distinctions influence where teachers start when planning for interdisciplinary experiences, how the educational experiences are structured, and to some extent, what students learn from them. Because these are planning structures for teachers’ benefit, such models only come to life when they are taken off the page and put into action with students.

There have been attempts to develop typologies that group interdisciplinary approaches in helpful and illuminating ways. Some typologies are all-purpose schemas (Brown & Nolan, 1989; Fogarty, 1991; Jacobs, 1989). Jacobs's (1989) seminal continuum of options

Meaningful Connections in a Comprehensive Approach to the Music Curriculum

for content design includes six levels: (1) discipline-based, (2) parallel disciplines, (3) multidisciplinary, (4) interdisciplinary units/courses, (5) integrated day, and (6) complete program. Fogarty (1991) proposes 10 levels of integration (fragmented, connected, nested, sequenced, shared, webbed, threaded, integrated, immersed, and networked), while Brown and Nolan (1989) describe evolutionary stages in integration (correlation between subjects, thematic or topic (p. 370) approach, problem-solving and practical resolution of issues, student-centered inquiry). Krug and Cohen-Evron (2000) offer four approaches to arts curriculum: “1) using the arts as resources for other disciplines; 2) enlarging organizing centers through the arts; 3) interpreting subjects, ideas, or themes through the arts; and 4) understanding life-centered issues through meaningful educational experiences” (p. 260). Although each typology offers insights, the music educator may infer that substantive analyses break down into three overarching categories: (1) topical, thematic, and generative organizers; (2) process-based approaches; and (3) works-based curricular strategies.

Topical, Thematic, and Generative Organizers

Topical, thematic, and generative organizers for interdisciplinary projects use an overarching theme, central topic, or essential questions as focal points. Most approaches in this category are created on the premise that a “big idea” will unify the curriculum and allow for exploration of that idea from many vantage points and disciplinary perspectives. Classroom teachers are well acquainted with this method of structuring activities, although it is used less commonly in music and arts classes.

Burnaforde (2009) found “big ideas” and “big understandings” were the major tool for arts integration in a case study of six schools: “Big ideas in the world of arts integration often work from the concept level; when curriculum is organized around concepts, there is room for multiple inquiry questions, multiple approaches to teaching, and multiple products in terms of student work in various disciplines and media” (p. 19). To qualify as a “big idea,” Burnaforde cited Erickson's definition of a concept as a “mental construct that is timeless, universal and abstract” (Erickson, 2008, p. 30).

Central themes allow teachers to collaborate on short- or long-term projects, to link curricular fields, to share expertise, to plan over the course of a year or years, and even to unify entire school philosophies. This use of a central or underlying theme may appeal to music and arts educators if it helps them understand how disparate subjects relate and cognitively connect to the structure of the curriculum.

Meaningful Connections in a Comprehensive Approach to the Music Curriculum

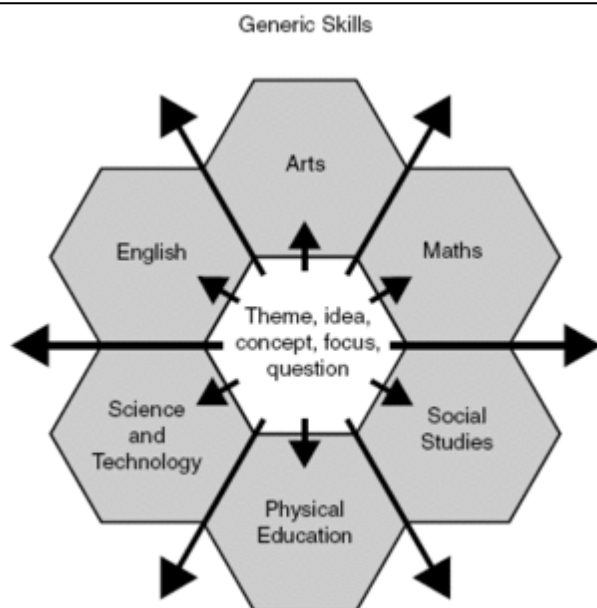


Figure 3.4.1 Russell-Bowie Syntegration Model. Reprinted with permission from *International Journal of Education and the Arts* (Russell-Bowie, 2009).

One ongoing research group that has investigated and catalyzed learning, thinking, and creativity in the arts is based at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Founded in 1967, Project Zero continues to provide leadership in arts thinking through the work of Howard Gardner, David Perkins, Lyle Davidson, Lawrence Scripp, and others. Gardner's multiple intelligences theory has been used as the rationale

for many interdisciplinary programs. Likewise, a number of projects carried out through Project Zero experiment with themed models for integration. Perkins, in particular, emphasizes the generative approach to works of art, calling for a pedagogy of understanding. He notes: "Since understanding something involves building relational webs...education in the arts and elsewhere (p. 371) might explicitly highlight such relations and webs built of them.... Moreover, discourse of this sort would promote two other characteristics of understanding: generativity and open-endedness" (1988, pp. 128-129).

Perkins sets forth standards for good generative themes. He advises that fertile topics are distinguished by: (1) centrality to a subject or curriculum; (2) accessibility (to allow wider understanding); and (3) richness (so that the topics encourage many and different connections) (1992, p. 93).

Erickson (2008) advocates that teachers plan with essential questions, unifying the curriculum through an inquiry focus. Snyder (2001) finds themes as a useful organizing center for interdisciplinary design, recommending that music teachers be involved directly in choosing the theme. "The danger in having others determine themes," she cautions, "is that sometimes the selected themes are unsuitable for teaching music" (p. 37).

Russell-Bowie (2009) terms her thematic organizer a Syntegration Model (see figure 3.4.1), illustrated through the Community Harmony Project. During the course of the project, a core group of 18 children selected from a primary school in Australia worked with facilitators to create artwork reflecting and promoting peaceful relationships within their community. Activities culminated in an exhibition (including a rap, a Readers'

Meaningful Connections in a Comprehensive Approach to the Music Curriculum

Theatre presentation, a multimedia presentation, and a shadow puppet play) where the core group presented and taught music, art, and drama activities to some 300 participating children (pp. 13-14).

Many interdisciplinary projects employ theme-based models and serve as useful examples for examination. Chen-Haftek's Sounds of Silk project combines (p. 372) study of Chinese music and culture with three schools, six teachers and 250 fifth and sixth grade teachers in New York City (2007). The overarching curricular focus allowed for collaboration among arts specialists and classroom teachers. Ferrabee-Sharman and Stathopoulos (2006) document the Montreal FACE project, the evolution of an inner-city public school's curriculum through a thematically integrated arts curriculum. Chrysostomou (2004) describes how Greek curriculum uses Flexible Zone, or blocks of time deliberately allocated throughout the school week, to facilitate interdisciplinary projects. She cites the ongoing Melina project in selected Greek elementary schools that integrated music, arts, and culture as a specific example. Kosky and Curtis (2008) investigate a social studies and arts integration project in Pennsylvania at a sixth grade level. Wilkinson (2000) describes the Toronto-based Community Arts and Education Partnership (CAEP) that combined arts and literacy in a theme-based, sequential, integrated curriculum for over 500 students from diverse heritages at all grade levels at four sites over five years.

Process-Based Approaches

These approaches operate from the notion that characteristic ways of thinking, or cognitive skills, will unify the curriculum; students engage in these processes using various subject matters as the content to be connected via the skills involved. In these approaches, students engage in "higher order" procedures that allow them to find relationships across disciplines.

Powerful advocates for the process-based approach include progressive educational thinkers such as Dewey. In *Art as Experience* (1934), Dewey advocated that isolated disciplines should be integrated and that students need to engage in concrete and enjoyable experiences to understand how subjects are interrelated. Reacting to Kilpatrick's (1918) projects-based curricula, Dewey favored interdisciplinary studies where "the interdependence of knowledge and the relationship between knowledge and human purpose would be made clear" (Kliebard, 1995, p. 153). Dewey's insights galvanized curricular planners of the day and served as a foundation for later influential thinkers such as Beane (1997).

Such process-based approaches may be what Fogarty (1991) refers to as a threaded metacurricular approach, where teachers incorporate strategies such as self reflection and inquiry into the overall curriculum. The threaded approach, according to Fogarty, "supersedes all subject matter content." Using this approach, "interdepartmental teams can target a set of thinking skills to infuse into existing content priorities" (p. 64).

Meaningful Connections in a Comprehensive Approach to the Music Curriculum

Strand (2006) documents how two third grade classes and a team of teachers collaborated with a theatre company to tell the story of Gilgamesh, the story serving as the basis for a year-long curriculum. She compares collaborations in the elementary experience to a related summer program for gifted high school students, in which integrated arts courses were developed and team-taught by arts and humanities teachers. Strand proposes a model of relationships between themes (p. 373) in collaborative curriculum development that extend the topics-based model into process and thinking dimensions.

The field of language arts/literacy offers additional opportunities for integrating arts through process according to Burnaford et al. (2007). Particularly when citing common practices of using children's picture books as the starting place for curricular units, Burnaford notes:

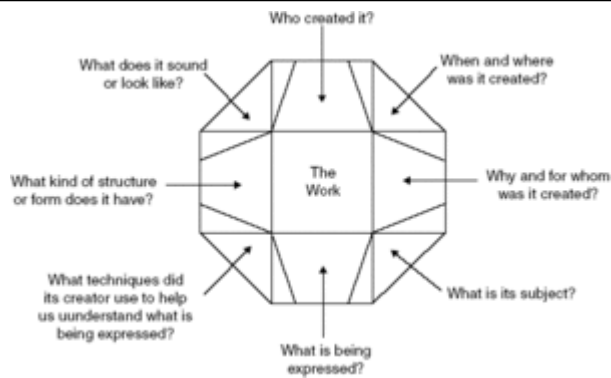
While much of this work is not titled explicitly as “arts integration,” authors suggest ways for classroom teachers to help students notice the pictures, draw meaning, and at the same time learn about the visual representation, artist and illustrator choices, and media. The correlation between subjects is apparent in the instructional materials themselves. (p. 24)

The Ontario Arts Curriculum takes a process-based approach to literacy by grouping artistic knowledge and skills across the four areas of dance, drama, music, and visual arts. Process targets for this integrated arts system are: (1) creating and presenting/performing, (2) reflecting, responding, and analyzing, and (3) exploring forms and cultural contexts (Ministry of Education, 2009, pp. 13-14).

Works-Based Approaches

These approaches take their impetus directly from the artistic nature of creative inspiration with the underlying assumption that when composers, poets, painters, choreographers, novelists, filmmakers, and others work, they draw on their substantial knowledge of separate disciplines as they make creative moves across several fields. Although few models have been developed, these approaches attempt to bridge the gap between artistic realms and school study.

Meaningful Connections in a Comprehensive Approach to the Music Curriculum



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Figure 3.4.2 Facets Model (Barrett, McCoy, & Veblen, 1997). Reprinted by permission of the authors.

The facets model developed by Barrett, McCoy, and Veblen (1997; see figure 3.4.2) is based on a metaphor that a work of art is like a gem with many facets. In order to move beyond superficial acquaintance to deeper levels of understanding of a particular musical work (or a painting, poem, or sculpture as well),

individuals must study and experience multiple dimensions of that work. Teachers and students who use the model are led to consider the time and place in which the work was created, the characteristic elements of the work and how these relate to one another, and the range of expressive meanings that the work conveys and evokes. The model becomes particularly useful to guide interdisciplinary planning when this multifaceted examination leads to closely related subject areas, such as the historical and cultural context in which the work was created, or related forms of expression in other arts. If the curriculum incorporates several works, and especially works from several different art forms, the connections between and among the works become more apparent once teachers and students have pursued possible answers posed by the model for each work. The juxtaposition of multiple art works leads to the realization of substantive, meaningful connections. (p. 374)

Morin (2003) evokes categories for activities in a web and brainstorming approach. She uses West African music as the springboard, but her model could be transferred to other musical genres. Morin's model (figure 3.4.3), bears some resemblance to a topics-centered approach in that music lies at the center with strategies radiating outward. However, the focal musical example shares an indivisible bond with the culture and time of that specific music. Morin's model is also clearly not static or fixed since it moves from a piece of music to relevant and complementary topics. Teachers who use this for planning and students who explore music through suggested activities will benefit from a broader perspective of how the music and culture are interwoven.

Meaningful Connections in a Comprehensive Approach to the Music Curriculum



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Figure 3.4.3 Morin's Web and Brainstorm Model. Reprinted with permission from *Music Educators Journal* (Morin, 2003, p. 29).

Other approaches include full curricular models centered on specific pieces of music, artwork, poetry, related disciplines, and instructional strategies. Younge (1998) generated, implemented, and researched a middle-school curriculum focused on African music, specifically on Boboobo (the most social music and dance of the central and northern Ewe peoples of Ghana). History, geography, science, economics, anthropology, movement, arts,

storytelling, instrument playing, drumming, and singing are woven through all lessons. Pyne (2006) worked with teachers and students from two New York high schools to generate and implement a curriculum based on the blues; lessons included historical and sociological contexts, related arts, and writing with music as the central focus. Russell (in press) investigated the Brazilian arts collective Grupo Mundaréu; community-based groups such as this one reach intergenerational audiences in both formal and informal contexts. She ponders the feasibility of using community-based arts models for integration of music in school curricula, the level of expertise required (p. 375) for successful arts projects, and the place of cultural and sacred traditions, as well as matters of funding.

Whether originating in themes, topics, inquiry questions, processes, or works, many of the models surveyed trace the evolution of simpler to more involved (p. 376) structures. To some extent, all of these approaches are theme-based and, to some extent, all rely on process. Exemplars, by their very nature, are limited in capturing the energetic, creative, and complex exchanges that occur during the course of an actual interdisciplinary endeavor. Such models, however, are also extremely useful to help facilitate organizing, planning, and collaborating.

Deepening the Impact of Interdisciplinarity in the Music Curriculum

Meaningful Connections in a Comprehensive Approach to the Music Curriculum

Music educators who seek to practice interdisciplinarity in their work continually strive for integrity and validity of classroom experiences (Barrett, McCoy, & Veblen, 1997). They thoughtfully construct an instructional environment in which students will be more likely to make meaningful connections that move beyond superficial associations between music and other subjects, creating an interpretive zone (Bresler, 2002) for forming and reforming connections. As disciplinary specialists, teachers may see themselves as stewards of subject matter, working to uphold their values about the nature of music and its inherent satisfactions. Accordingly, some integrated proposals may be viewed as compromising music study rather than enhancing it. Various approaches may not fit particular school contexts and communities, requiring adaptation and modification if they are to be implemented and sustained with any great effect.

A crucial area in need of professional attention is the development of instructional strategies and appropriate models for assessing the strength of connections students form (Barrett, 2007a). Assessment is a great clarifier in that it crystallizes expectations and efforts to articulate what we envision for school experience as compared to the realities of what actually transpires. Eisner reminds us that “students learn both more and less than they are taught” (2002, p. 70). In the interdisciplinary curriculum, this is particularly true, requiring flexibility of educational aims as well as clarity of intentions. In order for students to exhibit and convey relational thinking, we need to develop imaginative vehicles and lively spaces for them to do so, and to foster integrative and synthetic thinking throughout schools.

Within the interdisciplinary curriculum, music generously offers rich possibilities for students’ engagement in meaningful work. Taking an interdisciplinary approach invites teachers to stretch their curricular imagination and to branch out in fruitful and complementary directions that augment goals for music learning. When students’ capacities and inclinations toward relational thinking are encouraged, they are even more likely to incorporate music into their school experience (p. 377) and to seek lifelong involvement, meaning, satisfaction, and understanding by pursuing music beyond school.

The following questions invite readers to consider the ways that a comprehensive music education fosters meaningful connections and enriches the curriculum.

Reflective Questions

1. Why should music educators take both disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches into account? What might a combined approach look like?
2. What makes students’ connections between music and other subjects meaningful? How do you facilitate valid interdisciplinary experiences?
3. The chapter offers several models for use in planning interdisciplinary activities for students. Which are most useful for your teaching context and why?

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Meaningful Connections in a Comprehensive Approach to the Music Curriculum

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