

BREAKOUT SESSION

WHY I CAN'T DO ART IN MY CLASSROOM



PRESENTER:
PAMELA BRENNAN

TRANSCRIPT

Hi, I'm Pam Brennan. I'm going to talk to you today about why I can't do any art in my classroom. Welcome. Truth is, I've heard lots of reasons why people say they can't do their art in their classroom. My favorite is I have no artistic ability, yeah, I fall in that boat too. I have zero artistic ability, at least according to my opinion, anyway. I love hearing other teachers say that you don't have the money for the art supplies. I don't have, the art teacher won't share with me. I can't afford to give up my class time. These are all valid reasons, things that need to be addressed, but they are not the reason why we can't do art in our classroom.

So if you haven't figured it out by now, the truth is we can do art in our classroom and it is something that throughout my, oh my goodness, 20 plus years of teaching that I have found out that it is probably something that I have done on a regular basis and really had no idea that that's what I was doing. Because one of the things that I learned early on when reaching out to students and trying to bring them in is the fact that you have to get something that they enjoy and something that they're involved in, and a lot of times they do enjoy the arts, they enjoy music, they enjoy dance. So just as a good teacher, you bring those in anyway. So today we're going to talk about how you can use those more effectively in your classroom and make sure that the students appreciate and are gaining the information and the concepts that you're interested in bringing to them.

I have attended, to give you a little background, I've taught grades seven through 12, a mother of two, a stepmother of five, and a grandmother of 10, love all of them, I am known as the craft grandma because they love coming over to my house and doing arts and crafts even though I have no artistic ability, but that's okay. I first started attending Princeton's summer program for integrating the arts about three years ago and was actually invited last year to participate in presenting a couple of my projects along with the art teachers. So I feel pretty confident, although as we go along, I think you'll find that I'm not always the best judge at whether I'm hitting my marks or not, and we're going to talk about that.

So why do we need art enhancement and art integration in the classroom? If you haven't figured it out by now, I'm sure you will soon understand that districts don't have a lot of money for books and students can Google almost anything and everything that they need to find out information. So the days of pulling information out of books is probably going to be going by the wayside. That's my own opinion on



that subject, not that I have anyone who would say yay or nay. I know we have the book publishers that are trying to keep on top of that. Every year I see more and more book publishers turning to the internet and the computers and technology in order to make sure that they are hitting the needs for the 21st Century life skills that we are using in our classrooms and helping our students to to develop.

I believe that using the arts in the classroom helps the students actually interact with whatever material that is being presented to them. I've seen it in science class, I've seen it in social studies class, I've seen it in math class, definitely have seen it in the English language arts classroom, and I see that the students are much more engaged when the art process is part of whether it be daily, weekly, monthly by unit. They expect that that's going to come and they really appreciate being able to have that hands on opportunity.

The other thing that I would like to discuss is the difference between enhancement and integration. I know those are two areas that you'll see people go back and forth on and maybe not necessarily fully understand what the definition is. I'll be the first to admit that even I have issues with that. But enhancement is not a bad word, it's not an evil word. It definitely helps us to lead into the integration aspect of our arts program. It helps when the arts and the subject area teacher can sit down and find that the standards do align and usually the easiest way to do that is through our verb usage. I believe that if you were to pull up the National Arts Standards, you would definitely see that there isn't a lot of difference between the two and you can find a lot of commonality in there.

So the number one key is collaboration. One of the things that I joke about is that I run into my arts teachers in the hallway and that we just kind of casually have a discussion. But truth be known, teachers talk shop all day long and when you pass another teacher you start talking about what you're doing in your classroom. The arts teachers are definitely in tune with understanding what concepts by grade level are being taught, so they're already in tune with what the teachers are doing or what they may be able to do to take it to that next level.

Collaboration between the teachers, collaboration between the teachers and the students, and then collaboration between the students themselves are number one key in weaving your arts integration into the classroom. Both teachers, as I had mentioned



earlier, have to be sure to sit down and collaborate on aligning the standards that are going to be addressed and they don't have to be a lot, it can be one or two. But aligning those allows for that integration to be authentic.

It allows for both teachers to understand what is being expected from the students, but most importantly, it also allows for an equitable assessment program so that as teachers, and one of the things I do remember hearing from many other teachers is that I'm not qualified to assess any of the arts projects that my students do. Well, if you sit down and collaborate with the art teacher, you find that deciding on what the assessment is going to be certainly does help to enable teachers, whether they're classrooms, subject area, or its teachers, it allows them to fully understand what it is that is being expected.

Okay, so now I'm done with the lecturing. Now I'm going to tell you about how I have, what I'm hoping is going to be the arts integration factor. I say that tongue in cheek because it never fails. Anytime I come up with what I consider to be a great idea, a way to bring arts integration into my classroom or into your lesson, I find out, oh nope, nope, that's just an enhancement and there's nothing wrong with that. The enhancement oftentimes I find is a great way to do a formative assessment, to do a quick assessment with the students to see if they understand if they truly get it. Versus my summative in which that's where I try to weave in my arts integration.

So now I'll get into some samples. One of my units that I have in the ELA with my eighth graders is understanding and defining human rights through struggle. So we do several very interesting texts, some fiction, some nonfiction in which we discuss and we go online and we find examples of where human rights being violated. But I did find an interesting assessment or an idea that I wanted to weave in and it was finding a way to use yarn. So one thing led to another, I sat down with the arts teacher. I'm going to go ahead and click on this link for you. It's a very interesting link in the fact that it shows you how the art teacher and I, and actually this was two art teachers, visual and a music auditory.

We sat down with our rubric here, our template, and we found some the standards, the 21st skills that we were interested, the standards that we were interested in and making a connection with we found our commonality. Then I lay down how I planned on going about the lesson description, and in this case I was going to play for them a song by



Stevie Wonder entitled The Black Man, excuse me, Black Man, no the, and then we made cardboard looms. We weaved their definition of what they heard and how they saw and interpreted the song. Then turned around and then had them write a five paragraph format, an essay explaining the project, the loom, and what it is that they got from out of the assignment and the definition.

As you can see, we had our essential questions and then we also detailed how are assessments were going to look. I'm going to talk a little bit more about what type of assessments we do put into effect, but we outlined the assessments that we would be using between the arts and in the English. If you click on this link, you will find that you too can have a copy of that. The only thing I ask is that you download that first and make a copy and then you can erase and copy and put in whatever it is that you and your arts teacher would like to use.

Okay, so here's some samples of the work one of the students had finished and what they heard and what they saw. If you're not familiar with the song, the song actually Stevie Wonder is explaining how the various colors, skin colors, help to actually bring about the introduction of projects and inventions that we use today and whether you be a black man, a white man, a yellow man, or red man. He went into explaining about all the contributions that have been made today.

The next one that I did was art in psychology. The next unit that the eighth graders were working on was called the information age, and while addressing this unit we did Flowers for Algernon, and in the reading the character was administered the war shock test twice. The first time, no clue, no idea, could not see anything. Then the second time he started seeing things, but obviously the students were, their curiosity was peaked as to exactly what this test was and what those inkblots meant.

So we did a little research, we did a background check into the origin and when all was said and done, the students actually took the time to look at some original inkblots. They then colored in so that everyone could see what they were seeing and how they made the assumption about what the inkblots meant. We then, after we did some online tests and they got their sheet back, we then practiced around art inkblot artwork in which was a real thing that the students discovered... oops, sorry about that.



That they had discovered that it is an actual thing and that they can make \$300 to \$500 on just one outstanding inkblots, and needless to say, all my students now are looking at a career in inkblot art. But after doing all of that they then turned around and wrote a fiction story and when they were given a random inkblot, so here's where we have our stories. It's very interesting because some of the stories were pages long and all the students had the same amount of time... Sorry about that, it is now time for the late bus. Then after that some of them only wrote a couple of paragraphs, but they still all saw something that was very interesting and got their creative juices going.

Okay. The next one that I'd like to bring to your attention and talk about is called the visual language. I was fortunate enough to be introduced to a book called *The Doodle Revolution* by Sunni Brown. I have linked both the book and a YouTube video here that is for your viewing pleasure at a later date. But Sunni Brown is very interesting individual who believes that the students need to experience more from just one or two senses, that the more senses that are involved then the more opportunity that they get to to learn the information. I highly recommend *The Doodle Revolution* for your summer reading. I found it very interesting, a quick read, even though it looks like it may be a little on the long side and you all should actually get to practice in the book what she is preaching.

So yes, you will take a pen, color pencil right to the pages. So it allows you the opportunity to engage. Linda Jennifer wrote a blog called *The Guide To Visual Note Taking*, which led me to what I plan on doing and taking this visual language to the next level for next year. I always ask my students for homework to go and read, reread over their notes, 10 minutes a day re-studying. So for next year, I'm actually going to introduce the visual language which I will share with you in just a moment. I'm going to introduce the 12 letters in the visual language and I'm going to insist that they rewrite two to three nights their notes from a subject area into a notebook, rewrite them using visual language. So application in the classroom, and this is where it did take part of this this year, is that I allowed them to bring characters to life.

As I mentioned, note taking, students like to doodle, and there isn't any waste of time when doodling. It is the brain's opportunity to stay engaged. So there is studies that have been done that doodling is a good thing, and then it helps to even the art field for all students. Even those that say, "Can I just draw stick figures because I can't draw." The answer to that is absolutely yes. Because when you click on that link, you're



going to see the 12 symbols that are part of the visual language are things like points, lines, angles, an arc, a spiral and the loop. Then the next six, an oval, an eye shape, the triangle, a rectangle, a house, and a cloud. The students find these very interesting to draw. They then realize, oh these aren't difficult.

These are things that I can put together. I can form my designs using this visual language. As I had already clicked earlier to the next slide, here are some examples where they took and wove in the arc, the eye shape, several different shapes for noses. This one character in the middle is our character from, is a character from the outsiders, in which the students took the attributes that and characteristics that the author used to write about and came up with what they felt was the visual image for the character.

These other two the students were told about, we talked about flow chart and how things were to go from one thing into another and the use of the various shapes in order to mean different parts of the flow chart. So while they were reading The Children Of Willesden Lane, which I want to get to that as well, which is yet another arts integration just in itself in it's own right. The students used, once again the visual language to do a flow chart that summarized and showed the various stages that, and the stories about the orphan train, that a lot of these individuals from the Holocaust had to go through and endure.

I love this one in particular because the student, and I apologize I didn't turn it sideways, flames burning the student actually use the arcs to put together her flames and she was extremely proud over the fact that she used a simple drawing to make something that she felt was very complicated, and very intriguing as far as the design one.

Another unit we do, it's called the power of words, and in this one I have to give a shout out to first a group on Facebook. I took an idea that I got from Facebook in which it was called selfies, and it was an introduction and I use this in the beginning of the school year, but also a way of letting the students introduce themselves. They asked parents, friends, to give them describing words about themselves around 50, so that they didn't have to use them all, but it gave them a good choice to work with.

They then took, we took selfies in the classroom, printed the selfies just on computer paper so that they don't really need color. Black and white is probably the best to use.



We used black sharpies. They outline the major lines on their selfies using those black lines. They then put another piece of paper on top and using their words, they let their words create their image or recreate the image about themselves. Then from there we took it one more step. There's summer reading. They chose the main character. They pulled out words that describe the main character and then they had to do a selfie image for the main character.

A lot of the students just choose either like a regular cookie cutter outline for the character and wrote those words that they chose to describe the character. They use that to make the outline or they found characters online that they felt represented the image of the character in the story. So to give you an idea of what I was talking about, these two on the left hand side are the black sharpie outlines from the black and white pictures of the two students. Finished products over here on the right hand side reflect how they took the words and they use them to outline those same outlines and it gives some idea about themselves.

Some students would make the words very big if they wanted to represent something bold, other students might have made them very small. I've had students with over abundance of words if they had longer hair, put everything into a strand. But it's very amazing of what they can recreate, and it's nice because the collaboration isn't just between the teacher and the student. It's a collaboration between student and student, and collaboration between students and their own parents and families. In the beginning of the school year, back to school night, this project has already been started and a lot of times families are very excited to come in and talk to me because they've never had their child come home and say to them, so what kind of words would you use to describe me?

So it gets them talking and the parents usually enjoy that because in middle school kids don't like to talk to their parents quite as much. Then the second half when they then took the same idea and applied it to recreating characters from their summer readings. So as you can see these two characters, nothing in great detail that might have come from offline, whether they chose to do it or not or was just a free hand thing. But they were able to go either way, and as you could see they had a lot of words that they put in and were much more confident to come up with a character sketch.



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So what else can you do? First of all, I know I had mentioned something about enhancement and integration. Don't fret over that. There are times when I'm like, oh, I'll just, we'll just do, I like to call it scribble word art, and not that at that particular moment does anything that they do art wise help them make it any kind of connection with a vocab word, but it just allows them an opportunity to use art in a different way or to use vocabulary in a different way. We would call that enhancement. They're not really creating anything new. They're just allowing the art aspect to come in and help to enhance the understanding that we are already talking about. Integration is an actual new product that's totally created based on the knowledge that they have received in their subject area class, and then the knowledge that they are receiving in their arts classes.

So one of the things that we constantly hear is that I don't have time in my classroom setting to bring the art teacher in to teach something. Well that's where the collaboration comes in. You may not have to, a lot of times the art teacher may have already covered things like the being able to read the shadowing, the use of light and dark, and the effect within the classroom already in the art classroom. So by finding out what's been covered already in art class, you can now have the students go back and reflect on prior knowledge. Doing this and then moving it to another, to the next level in the classroom, but then be an integration aspect. I enjoy still using enhancement, like I said earlier, for some formative assessments, did they really get the idea? Did they really get the concept? Let's draw it out and see.

I also find that the student who's not comfortable in arts or not, or is comfortable in art but say not writing, or loves being able to interpret music but can't write a poem. Well you know what? This allows them an opportunity to connect with the non subject area that they may not feel necessarily comfortable in. So it allows that and then you can take them to the next level without scaring them right away. It also offers point of conversation, as I had mentioned, collaboration is a big, big part of all of this, and whether collaboration is casually in the hallway, or collaboration is through Google docs, or an email or a text message. It's still collaboration even though it may not be face to face, but by doing the enhancement, by showing the enhancement to, or sharing the enhancement with the art teacher. Now the art teacher says, "All right, this is what I understood. This is what I'm seeing that you have. Let's take it to the next level and see if we can't develop something that goes to that level."



So some of the workshops and seminars that I've been to have done nothing but teach some of the very basics. Some of the simplest things. One of my favorite workshops was learning all about Tableau. Couple of years ago there was the, and I always get the name wrong, the freeze, the freeze challenge, where students were freezing in some type of a moment and challenging other students to do that. That's a Tableau. I love to pick, excuse me, several pages from what we may be reading, excuse me, in the classroom and say, all right, this group, you guys are going to create a Tableau from this page and we talk about Tableau's. We talk about the creation from the higher level, the medium level, the lower level, and getting that visual aspect so that the students understand that you know what, there's more to reading than just reading the words.

Being able to come up with those concepts in the brain help them to understand the various levels of the Tableau, rewriting using the visual language, that was something that I had mentioned earlier that I'm going to have my students do next year. That's not necessarily an arts integration aspect. It may be nothing more but an enhancement, but still being able to summarize using a different language, being able to have that student who has to have more of the mental aspect as opposed to hearing or audio.

Essays that allow composing, and I know one of the connecting items for arts integration and any of the subject areas is finding the common vocabulary. So obviously I'm going to focus right now on composing. We have composing in music, when I bring that up students from the band, or from our music theory classes get very excited. They all of a sudden understand, oh it's okay to compose an essay the same way that you think about a musical piece. So I may allow students an opportunity to compose using music.

Can you then sit down with me and orally tell me, this is the beginning, this is the middle, this is the end. Or I go to them and say, "When I hear your piece, I am hearing, I am feeling, are these the same things that you were intended or vice versa?" Ask the students to tell me, what were you feeling? What were you thinking? What was the emotion that you were trying to get across? The students feed me with a lot of apps that they find that help them to create that musical flow.

Playlists, asking the students to create playlist when we're at a certain aspect of our reading. What might a character be listening to? What might both these characters be



sending messages to each other? What part of the song illustrates what they're feeling, what they're thinking? Especially with the love story, or love interest. This is something I referred to earlier when I talked about The Children Of Willesden Lane. We, in the unit about defining human rights we do Anne Frank and we talk about the Holocaust.

So I bring in yet a different aspect of arts integration. We read a book called The Children Of Willesden Lane that talks about a famous musician pianist who her parents sent her away as a means of being able to survive. They sent her on the orphan train to England and the students read about her struggles and her desire to remain in the music field, and we talk about what type of arts were lost because of the Holocaust and what rights were denied these individuals.

So they see a lot of connection once we do talk about that book and share other areas as well, especially in our... sorry in the news articles today. There's a lot of art that's being recovered that went missing during the Holocaust. So the students find these day in and day out. Then the last thing I want to just mention, we use flip grids, gives the students an opportunity to interact with the technology, talk about their feelings and their thoughts. This one particular one was I brought in for the power of words. I brought in several artists that had some powerful pieces and asked the students to tell me about the piece that they chose the artwork using five W's and each, and what power they got from there and what words they would use synonymously with what they were seeing from the five W's in each. The who, the what, the where, the why, the how, the when, which is an excellent way for them to be able to weave in the visual and the auditory for this arts integration.

And now it's confessions time. I don't just think art integration in my classroom, I incorporate as many of the steam items as I can. I find that if I can weave in science and technology, engineering, arts, math, I get students who feel that they're not great in art, but they have some engineering background, they like designing. Then they all of a sudden will see that there's a connection. Oh, there's a connection in science with art. Oh, there's a connection with technology and art. I never thought about bringing all of these three items in together. So for me, it's not just art integration. It may be a STEM, it may be STAM, it may be MAT, and just all depends on how I want to use those, those acronyms, that acronym with each of those and what they stand for. Because I also believe in a lot of project based learning.



I come to the students, I'm, "All right, so here's what we're learning about. Where can we make those connections to today? How can we make that a real world connection?" When studying about the Holocaust, we brought in a site called Six Billion Miles, or Six Million Miles, I'm sorry, in which the students got to do an online taking them from place to place to place because of what a lot of the immigrants are having to experience. So they got to talk about some math aspect, how far the distance is and the whole technology of being able to put together and be able to survive when something like that is happening and what do you need. So again, we bring in that project based learning.

So how do I find time to do all of this? I think I have missed a slide somewhere. If you don't, just bear with me for a minute. I don't know where that went. Maybe it's still going to come up, so I apologize. Assessment, as I had shown you earlier, assessment is something that we collaborate on so that there's an equal balance. There's a lot of teacher observation and I do this through stations, through small groups when I want to watch and to be able to see what they are doing. I may say, "All right, today we're going to have stations. One of you, one of the stations is vocabulary. You know what you're doing."

So that each of my stations understands already what they're doing allowing me that time to sit with a smaller group and be able to watch what they're doing, observe, ask the questions, get a feeling as to exactly how they are progressing and where I may need to intervene and make other changes, or just see what growth they've experienced, where works are a great way to go. Equal points for items that are expected from the project now allows if I'm expecting that you've got artwork in the art integration, I'm going to equal, I'm going to make that worth the same amount of points in my rubric as say the essay that they may be writing afterwards.

Peer evaluation. They know what each individual, what was expected because of the assignment, and I often find that they are great at being able to point these things out. The production of a writing assignment, participation points, sometimes they're very minor. It's just did you do what needed to be done today? Did you, were you part of a collaborative group and you did your part so that the group now can move forward, whether it's individual or group assignment.



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So all of these things play into being able to evaluate and see if they understand formatively, summatively about what is going on. Celebration. It's very, very important. Putting their work up around the room, putting their room up in the hallway, or excuse me, the work up in the hallways. I find it's very important to let them participate in that. Oftentimes we'll put stuff up in the lunch room so that they can do some gallery walks so that during lunchtime they can chit chat with their peers and talk about what it is that they've created or what somebody else may have done.

We just finished doing some books for a science project in which they studied the trout from egg to releasing into the river, the rainbow trout. We wrote a fiction story and now they are going out and reading their stories to younger students. They've created some books that went beyond by illustrating and coming up with a product.

Here's the site I was looking for because I know that this is the one where everyone's going, how does she have time? How can you possibly do that? I gave up study guides. I don't do study guide packets. I don't look to see if from chapter one to chapter five to chapter 10 if they are getting all of the minute details. I have my essential questions. Those are my study guide packets. If we have issues with the essential questions, then we go back and find out where the breakdown is. By the eighth grade I'm not necessarily worried about did you get the characters? Did you get the setting? They come to me already knowing that information, so then we progress on, all right, you've got this now let's take it to our central questions.

I use, as I had mentioned earlier, the small groups, the stations so that every 20, 25 minutes we're rotating stations. We are in a block schedule, so I see the students for 44 minutes. If I had to only do it for 40 minutes, which we've had early release days where we've had to scale it back, then I may only do two or three small groups or still keep my four groups going, but two groups do the same thing and the other two groups do the same thing. So that I get a chance to work with small groups.

Oftentimes I will ask them to do the reading outside of the classroom. I don't give a lot of homework. My homework is you read 20 minutes a day, you write, so now as far I'm going to say, "Well, I will use your visual language to count when you rewrite that for homework, I will use that as a homework grade. I will use that moving forward." So now when I asked that homework and writing be done outside of the classroom, that's my

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only homework. I can expect that because I'm not giving the study guide packets where they have to make these completions.

I combine my tests, so I may say, "All right, today I'm going to ask you to take your vocabulary words, use them effectively in a pamphlet. Our characters need to advertise, so you're going to write a pamphlet advertising or petitioning something for characters using our vocabulary words." I combine as many of my concepts as I possibly can into a project, one project. It helps to free up time to do these other items that I'm talking about.

Find common concepts with your other subject areas. Do more of a team approach. This just came out from education closet this week. I found it extremely beneficial. I'm going to open it, once it opens up, you'll find tabs at the bottom. If you haven't seen this already from them and the tabs at the bottom will give you grade levels, so now there's a nice little area here where you know that these are things that you're going to be covering in each of the grades, so you sit down with your ELA, your math, your science. These are the areas, these are the concepts we're going to be covering. I might be able to do something that parallels that or we can take changes to matter and write songs about that, write poetry about that, so that they can see that there's a crossover between and now we have that arts integration going on.

Excellent, excellent template. I was very pleased to come across that little tidbit. That leaves me with my contact information. I apologize, I'm not able, I will be out of contact with very limited internet access during the day of the conference, but I will answer my emails. You have my email address, Twitter, I love followers. I don't post a lot, but I certainly will respond. If you have questions, email me. I will be glad to sit down and share whatever information you may want, whatever information you may need, or if you did any of these and you found that there were some modifications that you want to share with me, I would love to hear it.

Collaboration between my peers in the building, between my peers outside of my building, outside my district is what I thrive on. I have found that there's no better way to share them through collaborating. So I appreciate your time, I appreciate you sitting in and staying with me. Hopefully I didn't preach to you too much and I gave you a lot of things that will get you started. Good luck to you, have fun and enjoy this because

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the best time to do arts integration is during the summertime because you can let your creative side go. Good luck, take care, and thanks again. Bye, bye.

And I can't find, that's not it. I apologize. There it is, take care. Thank you.