

Emily Hillman - Building a Family Art Night Art Transcript

- My name's Emily Hillman and I've been a music teacher in the public schools for 13 years. I'm currently teaching general music to kindergarten through fourth grade at Reeds Ferry School in Merrimack, New Hampshire. And I absolutely love my job. Even though my job title is music teacher, I've always had a passion for all the arts and I'm envious oftentimes of the interesting lessons the art and STEAM teachers get to teach at my school. I love teaching using arts integration and I've made it my mission to share it, to bring it into my classroom, the school and the greater community. One of the biggest questions I've wrestled with over the years is how do I share the amazing work my students are doing with the greater community? And I'm sure some of you have had that same question. I've found that musicals and concerts are a great way to connect with parents, but they don't always highlight the amazing arts integration work that is happening in our schools. A successful arts integration program has community support and involvement. To get that involvement, parents need to be first welcomed into the school so that they can see the awesome learning that their kids are engaged in. One of the best ways that I've found to share arts integration with the school or community is by doing, hosting a family arts night. This is an awesome way to showcase student learning while involving the greater school community. Family arts nights can be used to highlight media art, music, dance, and to connect with families, all while sharing the benefits of arts integration. The very best thing about a family arts night is that it's adaptable to any situation and not a one size fits all model, something that's super important in our diverse world. Today, I'm gonna take you through some ideas on how to customize and run a successful family arts night. Okay, we're gonna do a quick little exercise. I'd like you to take a minute and think about the most memorable school event that you've ever experienced. It can be something that you experienced when you were a student, as a teacher or as a parent. Write it down on a piece of paper or hold onto it in your brain. So an example would be when I was a fourth grade student, we had a night called Settler's Night. We got to dress up in period clothes, which was so exciting for this little girl who loved dress up. We shared some research projects that we had done on the time period, and we got to participate in a square dance. Our parents were invited to see the work that we had done which was really cool 'cause it wasn't just for our grade level. We got to show our parents and our grandparents the fun stuff that we'd been doing in school. It was an awesome night, and it's one of the best memories from elementary school. Okay, hopefully you have your event in your brain. Now I'd like you to write down one word to describe the night that you're thinking of. The word that I'd write down to describe Settler's Night is engaging. What word did you write down? Why do you think that word popped into your mind? Are there any other words that you would use to describe that night? My experience from Settler's Night stuck with me 25 years later because it was engaging, novel, creative and welcoming. Now, what do you think made your night stick out in your memory? Now that we've pinpointed that, we need to think about how can we create a similar experience for our students and our families? We all know that schools wanna share their learning with the greater community, it's often part of school's mission statements. But it's hard

to do that in an engaging way. So how can we do that in a way that's both fun and engaging for students and for parents? One way that we could do this is by hosting a family arts night. A family arts night is a night that showcases the integration of the arts across the school and it involves families in the integration process. Now that word is really important. Oftentimes, family events will just show the final product. That's what concerts do, that's what art shows do. And those are great, but families never get to see the the process of arts integration. So family arts night is a way for schools to showcase the process of the arts integrated learning that's occurred in their building. And at the same time, it builds up our school community. Now planning a family arts night might sound complicated, but I promise you, it doesn't have to be hard, especially if we keep these six things in mind when we're planning. So the first thing we wanna think about is what's the event? Who is our audience? How are we going to engage our audience? Where will we hold the event? What resources are we gonna need to pull the night off? And then finally, how are we gonna advertise it? All right, let's take a closer look at these six steps. The first thing that we need to think about is what is the event that we're going to be hosting? We need to pick a grade level or a class that we wanna highlight and decide what's the learning that they're gonna share. What have they been working on in their classroom? An example, if your school has fully embraced arts integration, you could not pick just one grade, but you could do a whole school arts integration night. And share the integration experience and experiences that have happened within your school in different parts of the building. So classroom teachers could highlight arts integration strategies that they use in their classrooms, such as stepping into a painting, or the "yes, and" improvisation game. At the same time, the art and technology teachers could showcase the integrated projects that they've been doing in their classes, like the stained glass shapes lesson from the Institute for Arts Integration and STEAM. The music and physical education teachers could host a family folk dance in the gym, where they can talk about the connections between music, physical education, dance, math and social-emotional learning. The theater teachers could share a performance of student created skits that they wrote based on the social studies topic. The neat thing about this is that the ideas are endless and they can and should be tailored to your specific school. Everybody's family's art night is going to look a little bit different and that's great, it should be that way. The second thing that we wanna think about when planning our family arts night is who is the event for, who's our audience gonna be? Is it gonna be a family friendly event for all ages, or are we just going to invite our parents? Is it be something that's open to the wider community or just to our school families? Are we gonna have just one class showcasing their learning for the rest of the school, or are we gonna highlight a whole grade level? In the example that I gave above, one grade level and their families would be invited to the event. Students would be responsible for leading their parents around the school to share the different activities and highlight the work that they've done. Okay, step three, this one's my favorite. We wanna think about how are we going to engage our participants? Do you remember our opening activity that we did? One of the words that kept popping up was engagement. So what are some different ways that we can engage our target audience in the family arts night? How can your audience participate in the arts integration experience, or the arts integration process? Remember, we wanna focus on sharing the process of integration, not just the final product.

This is gonna look different from events that you've put on in the past, and that's what makes it so great. So here's some examples. Families can participate in folk dancing, and have their children guide them through their steps. Have their kids teach them the folk dance instead of just sitting back and watching. Families can participate in an integrated project together in the art room, instead of showing what their kids did, the art teacher can lead a lesson. Within the classroom, teachers can lead families through an arts integration strategy with their child, such as the "yes, and" strategy. These are quick five to 10 minute lessons and it's gonna be so much fun for the kids to see their parents engaging in the learning that they do every day in their classrooms. When putting on these events, I found that participation by both students and families is the key to an engaging event. The next thing that we wanna think about is what are the space and time constraints? We need to decide where the event's gonna be held, and how long we want it to last. Is it gonna be an hour long hosted in one room, or are we gonna have a three hour long event that's a come and go activity and hosted throughout the whole entire school? When planning, you wanna make sure that you're considering your traffic patterns within the school, any parking restrictions and safety considerations. I find it super helpful to draw maps of traffic patterns, both for cars and people and what the setup is gonna look like before the event happens. I also recommend doing a test run of your setup beforehand, if possible. Along with thinking about this space that you're gonna utilize, we need to think about the resources that we need to pull off the event. So who are you gonna rely on before, during after your event? For example, how are you gonna use your janitorial staff? When setting up these events, they often get overlooked, but they're the key to running a successful event. So you really need to think about how are they going to help me? What setup do they need to be made aware of? Think about what materials you need to set up in each space. For example, if you were hosting a folk dance, you're gonna need speakers, you need music, you need a microphone, you need some open space, and then people are gonna be hot and sweaty, so you need access to a water fountain. Now is your event gonna cost money? How much money do you need to spend to host the event? Do you need to spend any, or can you host it for free? If you do need to spend money, what budget pots can you tap into to successfully run your night? Parent teacher organization funds are an awesome place to look for this. Another thing to consider is are you going to use any resources from the community? For example, are you gonna have a speaker come and share the benefits of arts integration with your parents? Or did your school maybe recently host an artist in residence that you wanna highlight at this night? You wanna make sure that you coordinate the night with your community resources and make sure that the night and the event works for them. This is another step where your map and your plan is gonna be super helpful. Make a list and a map of the setup and every single resource that you need to be successful. Share it with anyone helping with the event. This is gonna cut down on setup questions the day of, which is going to make your life so much easier. All right, we've made it to the last step. We need to think about how are you going to advertise your event? Decide how you wanna invite the community. Are you going to send home a flyer with the students? That's a possibility, but often they get lost in backpacks. Maybe you wanna do that and post something on social media, on Facebook or Instagram or Twitter. You could put posters up around town or around the school building. Maybe wanna share

something over the morning announcements, kinda hype the kids up. Remember, successful advertising is gonna be key to a successful event. If you don't advertise your event, you won't have anybody show up. So make sure that you've spent some time thinking about how you're gonna advertise. And don't do it by yourself. Use your resources to help you advertise. Parent teacher organizations are a great advertising partner and they often have access to parents that you might not have access to. All right, now that we've thought through the six main components of planning a family arts night, it's time to gather your team and start implementing your plan. A family arts night should be exciting and energizing, not just for your part participants, but for you as well. This should be something that you're excited about planning. If the night is well planned and thought out beforehand, it'll come together almost effortlessly. I'm so excited for you to get started planning your family arts night. If you have any questions along the way, please reach out to me. My email address is emily.lynn.hillman@gmail.com. Good luck with the process and have fun connecting with your community.