Art Integration

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I will be integrating art into a culminating project about responsible human-environment interaction for my students. Previously, I used a similar project to have students create a calendar with information about animal's adaptations and a scientific drawing of their animal, but I am taking the project in a different direction and using it for a different unit culmination. I like the calendar format, especially as it allowed us to raise money to support a local organization, but I want to change the content that students are engaging with. In an effort to have students working with a professional format, I am planning to have them use a digital art form (what I previously misunderstood to be media art). I think this will allow students to convey information in a concise and neat format. It will also promote a creative and attractive layout. Previously, students researched their animals and decided on the most important information to put on their slide, but adults typed the information and scanned and inserted their animal drawings. The use of a digital art format should allow for my students to be responsible for the entire creation of their calendar infographic. My goal is for students to create an informative piece, but for them to be able to present it in an attractive manner with images that support the message they are trying to express.

The use of digital art allows me to support my students' growth both artistically, technologically, and with the use of research and using evidence to form an argument. Students will be responsible for educating the public through the use of the infographics they are creating. As a good majority of the population tends to learn visually, having my students create digital art will make it so that their work is more visually intriguing and possibly easier to understand for many people. My students will be responsible for including text on their infographic, but I want them to use graphics to create visual interest and call attention to their chosen suggestions about how to interact with the environment responsibly. Students will be able to use photographs to support their ideas as well. These could be photographs they take when we go into the field to

learn about human-environment interaction, or they could be photographs they find through the research process. Another element that students will have the opportunity to include is graphs or charts. This will allow them to present more information effectively that also supports their opinion on how to be responsible stewards of our local ecosystems. With the use of these different visual elements, my hope is that students will be able to find several ways to represent information that makes sense to them and interests them.

I see that there are many reasons to integrate are into instruction. For many students, there are few opportunities to express themselves in a way that makes sense to them. Art can support that personal expression while also increasing engagement and comprehension of content. Engagement is something we are always striving for as educators and for that reason, I think it would be incredibly difficult to argue against the integration of art into instruction. One struggle I have is thinking about how to integrate art on a daily basis, rather than just as it pertains to projects. This is something I am becoming more aware of through this course. Again, it is not that I do not *want* to integrate art I just need to find ways to do it that I am comfortable with and that support my daily or weekly lessons. Another obstacle I am trying to overcome is how ambitious I tend to be when it comes to integration. It is as though I cannot just find a way to integrate art that does not take over what I am doing or cause significant levels of added difficulty for planning and preparation. I truly believe that the infographic I want my students to create could be a great success. They give the opportunity to use art, science, math, and literacy skills. I do become somewhat overwhelmed when I try out different programs, such as Canva or Google Slides, and think about how to teach my students to use all of the different functions. Overall, I think there are amazing opportunities, but I just have to be ready to break down instruction to an even greater level than I have with other projects.

The human-environment interaction project gives great opportunities for me to connect multiple disciplines in one final product. Beginning with the science, and more specifically, biology, piece, students will be researching the impact that humans have on the environment. They will already have studied plant and animal adaptations and will need to use their prior knowledge to support the direction of their research. Students will be very concisely explaining how humans can act in nature to allow animals to be able to have their needs met. Students will be choosing to explain ways to support plant survival or animal survival. Their research should include evidence/data that supports certain practices that promote species thriving. This will allow me to have math incorporated into their infographics. I will be able to use my math class to review and practice using several varieties of graphs and the different types of information they can display. Students will practice making graphs and charts that represent different information. This way, when the time comes to incorporate a graph or chart into their infographic, they will be able to select the appropriate one.

Another skill I will be able to incorporate into the production of these infographics is argumentation. My students come from a variety of backgrounds and even at a young age, they come with certain opinions about how to treat the environment. After researching their topic, I plan to use science talks to further my students' thoughts on human-environment interaction. They are sure to latch onto different ideas and hold strong opinions about topics such as whether fire is good or bad, whether we should allow unlimited amounts of construction, how and if animal crossings should be used in busy traffic areas, and whether humans should be allowed to camp and hike anywhere they want. Using science talks to have students engage with one another and hear each other's opinion and plans on how to interact responsibly will further their

thinking and likely their limited world view. This should support further thinking on the content they choose to include on their infographic.

Once students have finished their research and decided their final views after engaging in respectful argumentation, they will have to write the final content for their calendar infographic. Students will have to work on the skill of summarizing in order to present their findings and opinions about their findings in a very concise manner. One strength of infographics is that they can convey a great amount of information in a small space. This is what I want my students to do, which will require strong, accurate word choice and very succinct suggestions about how to interact with nature. Finally, students will be integrating art. Again, infographics are well known for being easy to look at. They use supporting visuals that give the reader an idea of what information is being conveyed even before they read the text. There is a careful balance between text and visuals as well as the colors and images that are used. Students will have to take presentation into account to ensure that their final infographic expresses their information attractively and clearly.

I think that this project provides a great opportunity to engage students whose interests lie across a broad ranges of areas, whether scientific, mathematical, historical, or artistic. Through this redeveloped project, I have the opportunity to encourage strong craftsmanship and high quality, professionally-formatted work from my students.