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# INTEGRATING ART HISTORY INTO K-5 SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOMS

The American public school system's instruction of social studies, one of the four main curricular pillars of an elementary education, could be strengthened through using art to teach history, visual literacy, and empathy.

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Assessed every year from 3rd-8th grade, and once in 9th-12th grade.

## SCIENCE

Assessed at least once at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

## MATH

Assessed every year from 3rd through 8th grade, and once in 9-12th grade.

## INTRODUCTION

The era of No Child Left Behind (2001) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) revealed where curriculum planners value the most growth- those subjects in which strong data can be collected through standardized tests.

## SOCIAL STUDIES

No federal assessment framework

Since social studies performance is not being evaluated until the upper grades, **HOW CAN WE ENSURE THAT OUR SCHOOLS USE SOCIAL STUDIES TIME IN A WAY THAT IS MOST EFFECTIVE AND INFORMATIVE FOR YOUNG LEARNERS?**

## IN PRACTICE

### ART EDUCATION

- Traditional study of art
- Student-created art
- Technical skills
- Studio environment

vs.



### ARTS INTEGRATION

- Emerging study of art
- Fine (museum quality) art
- Interdisciplinary skills
- Everyday classroom environment

## THEORETICAL SUPPORTS

**Piaget-** Constructivism, students create systems of knowledge using experience  
**Parsons-** children acquire aesthetic taste in stages following cognitive development  
**Blake-** studying history using primary sources provides students with a deeper understanding of the past  
**Moore, Alouf, and Needham-** K-12 social studies curriculum teaches skills *and* content  
**Erickson-** 2nd grade students can generate a historical understanding of art  
**Taylor, Monck, and Ayoub-** elementary school educators support Arts Integration, but do not feel they have the tools necessary to do so effectively

## CONCLUSION

In order to strengthen the American public education system's waning social studies initiatives, we should look toward integrating a study of art and art history to teach our children visual literacy, empathy, and a historical and cultural understanding of the past.

## EXTENSIONS

Students do not only learn within the classroom!

I used my knowledge of the Frist Art Museum in Nashville, TN (gained through an internship with the Education Department) to guide educators through planning a field trip.

## CURRICULA

An arts integration approach to studying history in the primary grades is not only developmentally appropriate, but is also part of best practice. However, fully arts integration curricula do not yet exist. For this study, I created an arts integration unit on mapping skills for 2nd grade using Çatalhöyük, a neolithic site.

## III

Using art as a touchstone for historical understanding is not new—the Luba peoples of Africa create *lukasa*, tactile boards whose projections aid a storyteller in remembering important details.

