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ABSTRACT

A descriptive study investigated the use of an arts-based core curriculum as an alternate teaching model in all content areas with populations diverse in ability, disability and culture. Quantitative demographics and 52.6 hours of audio, video, still photo, and running record data were completed in 44 classrooms (n=545 students) from preschool through middle grades in an Italian school system. The data were transcribed, translated, and analyzed by task type, type of art, and social organization. Qualitative teacher questionnaires were completed, transcribed, translated, and analyzed for themes. Results support arts-based tasks as an alternate teaching method. (Contains 43 references and 3 tables of data.) (Author/RS)

The Arts and Content Literacy in Italian Schools: Alternate Methodology for Inclusion Classrooms.

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Abstract

The descriptive study investigated the use of an arts-based core curriculum as an alternate teaching model in all content areas with populations diverse in ability, disability and culture. Quantitative demographics and 52.6 hours of audio, video, still photo, and running record data were completed in 44 classrooms (n= 545 students) from preschool through middle grades in an Italian school system. The data were transcribed, translated, and analyzed by task type, type of art, and social organization. Qualitative teacher questionnaires were completed, transcribed, translated, and analyzed for themes. Results support arts-based tasks as an alternate teaching method.

Running head: Arts and Inclusion

The Arts and Content Literacy in Italian Schools: Alternate Methodology for Inclusion Classrooms.

Introduction

Since PL 94-142, I have been concerned with the classroom instruction of groups that differ widely in ability, disability, and culture. The postmodern philosophy of eclectic classrooms had solved some issues of inclusion, but created issues of achievement in such diverse groups. Although the structure of the classroom has changed, basic teaching methods have not (despite theoretical attempts e.g. Slavin, 1991; Wang, 1981). According to recent research, students are not competing internationally or achieving nationally (Elley 1992; Snyder, T.D.1997; The National Council for Educational Statistics 1998, 1993, 1992). Thus, educators are calling for new models of inclusion instruction for all content areas (Elkind, 1997: Krechevsky & Malkus, 1998).

We know that each learner acquires and expresses knowledge through a unique combination of modalities (e.g., Gardner, 1983; Jensen, 1998). Research tells us that 30% take in information best through the visual modality; 20% auditory, 20% Kinesthetic/Tactile, and 30% mixed. However, 90% of classroom on-going action uses only the visual and auditory channels of learning (Vitale, 1981). Further, research tells us that all learners, especially those with cultural or disability differences, learn best by adding tactile and kinesthetic dimensions to tasks (Armstrong, 1996; Jensen, 1998; Sheridan, 1997). Since all students learn differently because of the way they acquire and

express knowledge (Jensen, 1998; Learner, 2000), up to 50% of our students are not able to learn fully because of *how* information is being presented.

Recent Brain Research

The right and left side of the brain differs significantly (Vitale, 1981). The right side of the brain is more holistic, concrete, artistic and non-verbal, while the left is more linear, abstract, mechanical and verbal. Recent research states that when learning new information, all learners process with it on the right side of the brain. Once they are proficient at the information, it is transferred to the left side for further use (Jensen, 1998). Present models present information primarily through left-brain processing (Vitali, 1981). A new model, then, must not only accommodate learners of different abilities, disabilities, and cultures, but also be grounded in brain research. Thus, it must be based on instructional design that presents information through right brain multisensory processing.

A New Instructional Design Model

Since the arts provide the venue for right brain to access information, one way to create a new multisensory model of instruction design for inclusion classrooms is an arts-based core curriculum (Hooper 2000; Hooper & Glass, 2000; Hooper, 1994; Hooper, 1993; Hooper & Miller, 1991). An arts-based instructional design is grounded in current brain research and in the visual (painting/drawing and sculpture) and performing arts (drama, music, dance, and storytelling). The arts provide a motivational base and offer 'equal access' to information and alternate ways of expressing that knowledge. 'Equal access' occurs because knowledge is received through the open

modalities: Alternate expression occurs because the arts offer alternates to paper and pencil responses (Gardner, 1993; Silver 1983; Silver 1978).

In order to investigate the viability of such a curriculum, I have researched national and international programs since 1994. As Elkind (1997), I believe the arts can serve postmodern educational classroom challenges. I was awarded a six-month Fulbright Senior Research Grant to study and describe the existing arts-based instruction design models in Italy for the spring of 2000. Italy was chosen because the world's best preschool system is in Reggio Emilia. The Reggio Approach is well documented (Hendrick 1997), and on-going research continues at Harvard University (Krechevsky and Stork, 1998). In Italy, immigration from Africa, Bosnia, and Eastern European countries has increased significantly since 1990. Children from these cultures, as well as children with special needs are fully incorporated in classrooms (Spaggiari 1998). Therefore, the Reggio Approach utilizes the arts in an emergent curriculum based on the constructive philosophy in classrooms ranging in ability, disability, and culture (Hendrick 1997).

This paper examines two questions:

1. Are art-based methods used in Italian schools beyond preschool?
2. If so, how are they used to help students acquire and express knowledge?

Theoretical Framework

The Arts In Education

Learning through the arts increases achievement and cognitive skills in regular learners (Martorelli, 1992), children with special needs (Silver, 1978), and students from

other cultures (Goldberg, 1997). For example, no differences are found in cognitive thinking skills between children with special needs and children functioning normally when the arts are used in learning (Silver, 1978). Thus, a multisensory model of inclusion instruction for all content areas can be based on a arts core curriculum. Students use the arts to understand meaning, before using symbols (words and numbers) to describe knowledge. In this way, the curriculum uses right brain functions (the visual and performing arts) to generate left-brain skills (content literacy) (Dewey, 1934; Eisner 1972; Foshay, 1979; Martorelli, 1992; Walling, 1997, Vitali, 1981). Children who may not be developmentally ready or cannot express what they know in written or spoken forms, may use painting, drawing, sculpture, pantomime, drama, dance/movement, and/or music to express knowledge (Gardner, 1983; Silver, 1978). Thus, the arts engage students in ways other disciplines cannot, across communication and cultural barriers (Martorelli, 1992). The use of the arts also impacts on internal and external behaviors. Arts-based tasks increase positive achievement. Positive achievement raises self-esteem (L'Ecuyer, 1981) and decreases the behavioral manifestations of failure (Goldberg 1997; Silver 1978). Moreover, the arts are a way to express unacceptable feelings in acceptable ways (Goldberg 1997; Silver 1978). The arts, then, develop critical thinking skills, transfer of knowledge, creativity, problem solving skills, and the tools of verbal and nonverbal communication with a diverse population of students (Martorelli, 1992; Silver 1978).

Methodology

Ethnographic Background

It is well established that observation and documentation are vital research tools in the improvement and creation of curricula (Athanases 1997; Baker, 1997; Green and Bloome 1997; Krechevsky & Stork, 1998). The procedures of this study involved the stakeholders and considered the emotional, esthetic, cognitive, and intellectual (zones of proximal development) aspects in how the visual and performing arts were used in the access, acquisition, and expression of what students learn and how they learn it, from pre-school through middle schools. In order to establish credibility, validity and reliability of the qualitative results, I recorded and described what existed without any attempt to influence the process. I concede that my presence in the classroom made some changes in the dynamics and thus the process (Green and Bloome 1997) however, every attempt was made to keep these effects to a minimum. The intention was one of description and the analysis of facts as well as emerging patterns and themes. The video, audio, and photographic recording methods of data collection and subsequent verbatim transcriptions of recordings in natural settings is a form of educational ethnography. This form is well established as a viable research tool (Baker 1997). For purposes of generalizability, demographics at system and school levels were assembled. They describe developmental level (grade), gender, race, socioeconomic level, ability levels, and size of class, and teacher experience. The study is guided by questions, purposes, needs, and concerns from those fields (Green and Bloome 1997).

Subjects

The six-month study was conducted in The State Comprehensive Institute of Elementary and Middle Schools, Giovanni Dozza (L'instituto Statale Comprensivo di scuola elementare e media "G. Dozza). It consists of eight public schools: One middle

school (scuola media), three elementary schools (scuole elementare), and four preschools (scuole del infanzia). Four schools were used in the study: the middle school, two elementary, and one preschool (Tables 1a & b).

(Table 1a here)

The eight school system has N= 894 students in 59 classes. Forty-eight percent (n= 428) are boys, 52% (n= 466) are girls, and 3.6% (n= 32) are children with disabilities in four categories- physical handicaps, learning disabilities, mental retardation, and social deprivation from low socio-economic status. Ninety-four percent of the students (n= 839) are Italian and 6% (n=55) are other races. In the category of ability, 15% (n=134) are high achievers, 30% (n=268) are average achievers, and 55% (n=492) are low achievers. In socio-economic status, 30% (n= 268) are high, 60% (n= 536) are average, and 10% (n=90) are low.

For this study, the sample of four schools was selected as representative of the larger population. The four were one middle, two elementary, and one pre-school. Seventy-five percent of the classrooms (n=44) were selected by teacher volunteer. Sixty-one percent (n=545) students attend these schools. Forty-eight percent (n=260) are boys; 52% (n=285) are girls; and 4.4% (n=24) are students with disabilities. Ninety-four and one half percent (n=515) of the students are Italian and 5.5% (n=30) are other races. The categories of achievement levels and socio-economic status percentages are the same as the population. The system had predominately female teachers with more than 15 years of classroom experience (Table 1b).

Table 1b here

The study had 40 teachers (3 male, 37 female), 11 (2 male, 9 female) in middle school averaging 25.8 years of teaching; 25 (1 male, 24 female) in elementary averaging 19.7 years of teaching, and four (female) in preschool averaging 17.25 years of teaching. Seven and one-half percent of the teachers had one to five years experience; 7.5% had six to ten years experience; and 85% had 11 years or more years experience.

Measurement and Procedures

Measures

Data collection was a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodology.

Quantitative measures.

1. Demographics: Demographics were collected at the school level, the classroom level, and the teacher level. In each school, data was collected, tabulated/coded and analyzed by: the number of classes, the total number of students, students by gender, students by disabilities, race, academic ability level, socioeconomic status, total number of teachers, teachers by gender, and years of teaching experience. Results are reported in tables 1 (a and b).

Qualitative measures.

1. Mixed Media: Audio recordings, video taping, and still photos areas of mixed media were used to collect on-going classroom action. Questionnaires were used to assess the reasons for the teacher choices of methodology.

a. The audio data consists of 52.6 hours of on-going classroom dialogues and discourses. These were later transcribed and translated into English. This data was collected in 44 preschool, elementary, and middle school classrooms (n= 545 students)

for 28,667 contact hours (The number of students observed multiplied by the number of actual hours recorded 545 x 52.6. In the middle school, some students attended more than one class). Data was collected in one preschool class each for three year-olds, four year-olds, and five year-olds. In Elementary, data was collected in two each of first, second, third, fourth, and fifth grades. In middle school, data was collected from one classroom each in class 1 (grade 6), class 2 (grade 7) and class 3 (grade 8).

b. Video: Although video children's faces was not allowed, video documentation of classroom projects was completed as a part of triangulation of data.

c. Running Records: Further triangulation was accomplished with written record documentation of the on-going action. These confirmed the audio and video data.

d. Still photos: Final triangulation was accomplished in still photo documentation of children's work.

The translated transcriptions were analyzed along five dimensions: the total number of tasks, the type of tasks, the level of presentation of the task, the art forms used in the task, and the social organization of the task. Results were quantified and are presented in table 2.

Number of tasks: The number of tasks was compiled through simple counting. A classroom task is defined as a product students complete (Doyle, 1983). Tasks define what information and content is processed, and what goal is required. Thus, tasks influence students' reasons for learning through the thinking and written requirements and social organization (Hooper, 1994).

Types of tasks: Tasks can be high level or low level. The determination is defined by the cognitive level, the written level. The cognitive levels are knowledge,

comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Bloom, Englehard, Furst, Hill & Krathwohl, 1956) and describe the degree of depth of the cognitive engagement demanded by the task. The written levels are (simple mark [circle, underline], word, phrase, sentence, sentences, paragraph, or paragraphs (Meece, Blumenfeld and Hoyle, 1988) and describe the type of writing required. When cognitive and written dimensions of a task are crossed, it results in type of task (simple or complex) (Hooper, 1994). A simple task is low level, NOT easy to do. It is defined when the cognitive level is knowledge or comprehension and the written level is simple mark (circle, underline), word, phrase, and sentence. A complex task is high level, not difficult. It is defined when the cognitive level is application, analysis, synthesis, or evaluation, and the written level is sentences, paragraph, or paragraphs (Hooper, 1994).

The level of presentation: Teachers present tasks through different modality levels of learning. Students have four channels of learning: visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic. Each channel stores the learning in different memory centers of the brain. These correspond to learning styles of seeing, hearing, small muscle touching, and gross muscle and whole-body learning (Armstrong, 1996; Sheridan, 1997). In ascending order of difficulty, concrete learning represents concepts through physical movement (predominantly kinesthetic); semiconcrete through predominantly tactile manipulation of small items; semiabstract through drawing, graphs, models (predominantly visual), and abstract through symbols, words and numbers read aloud (predominantly auditory) (Hooper, 1993).

The art forms: The art forms involved the visual arts (painting/drawing, sculpture) and the performing arts, (storytelling, drama, music, dance). These can be used to help

students gain access to information and to express that information (Armstrong, 1996). For educational use, the arts can be defined in a broader sense. For example, dance is movement, any movement; sculpture can be building models. These art forms also can generate the levels of learning. Concrete learning can be achieved through kinesthetic movement (dance), drama, pantomime; Semiconcrete learning can be achieved through painting and sculpture; Semiabstract learning can be achieved through drawing/painting, visual organizers; and abstract through music, drama (script writing), etc. The form of art used was noted and counted for each task.

The social organization: Social organization is defined by the way students complete work. Students can work alone, or work in small groups, or work as a class. This dimension was assessed because it also influences learning and motivation (Johnson & Johnson, 1990; Slavin, 1983). Tabulations of the three forms of social organization were made and counted for each task.

2. Questionnaires: Standardized written questionnaires were sent to 27 randomly chosen teachers. Fifty-six percent (n= 15) were returned. The questions were:

Question 1: Do you use arts-based tasks (painting, sculpture, drama, music, dance/movement, and storytelling) to help students gain and express knowledge?

Question 2: In what subjects do you use the visual and performing arts-based tasks?

Question 3: Why do you use the visual and performing arts in your teaching?

Question 4: Have you other thoughts to add which are useful for this research?

The interviews were translated into English, and analyzed for themes and patterns concerning the use of the visual and performing arts in the acquisition and expression of

content. Analysis attempted to answer the following questions: What is influenced or generated? Are there emotional, esthetic, cognitive- intellectual, behavioral or social patterns? Inter-rater reliabilities were established in other research (Hooper & Miller, 1991; Hooper, 1999). For example, a study of a second grade arts-based reading curriculum in Maryland was completed in 1999 (Hooper, 1999). The 1999 study generated the themes and patterns below.

Theme One: Arts-based Tasks Influence Motivation.

Theme Two: Arts-based Tasks Influence Success Which Breeds High Self-esteem.

Theme Three: Arts-based Tasks Empower Children and Give Them Responsibility.

Theme Four: Arts-based Tasks Use Cooperative Work.

Theme Five: Arts-based Tasks Empower Teachers and Facilitate Affiliation.

Theme Six: Arts-based Tasks Reinforce Classroom Skills.

Theme Seven: Arts-based Tasks Teach Classroom Skills.

Theme Eight: Arts-based Tasks Generate More Interest, Fun, and Motivation.

Theme Nine: Art-based Tasks Decrease Non-compliant or Other Behavior Problems.

Theme Ten: Arts-based Tasks Facilitate Teacher and Student Affiliation

Theme Eleven: Arts-based Tasks Increase Parent Participation.

Theme Twelve: Arts-based Tasks Increase Student School Attendance.

The results of the Italian study were compared with these themes.

Results

Results demonstrate that from preschool through middle school, Italian public schools heavily utilize arts-based, right brain tasks to present left-brain knowledge and skills. However, t the quality of the task decreases in late middle school. As students progress through the grades, the use of arts-based tasks decreases. Task levels become more abstract, task type becomes more simple, and the use of three art forms decrease.

Tasks

The first research question: Are art-based methods used in Italian schools beyond preschool?

An analysis of Table 2, Analysis of Tasks in Percentages, clearly shows that the answer is yes.

(Table 2 here)

Each grade level analyzed is summed in these categories across the page. For example, preschool 3 year olds completed 6 tasks during the data collection period. Twenty-five percent of these tasks were at the concrete level, 25% semiconcrete, 25% semiabstract, and 25% abstract. All tasks were at the complex level, 38% involved painting, 12% sculpture, 0% each storytelling and dance, and 25% each drama and music. Finally, 33% were completed in small groups, and 67% at the whole class configuration. At the end of the preschool, elementary, and middle school sections, is the average for each type of school.

Results show that in this Italian school system, the use of the visual and performing arts in the acquisition and expression of learning and language in all content

areas is very prevalent at the preschool and elementary level. However, the use declines throughout the years of middle school.

Although the number of tasks is relatively constant throughout these 11 years of schooling, the level of the task, the type of task, the art forms, and the social organization decline in quality as the grade level rises. Middle school students experience tasks that are more abstract, half simple and half complex, less use of the arts in some areas, and decreases in small group work. It is noteworthy that this study supports other research in the conclusion that most simple tasks require students to work alone and most complex ones necessitate small group or whole class activity (Hooper, 1994). In general, the curriculum in preschool is an arts-based, Constructivist approach similar to Reggio Emilia. As children progress into elementary, there is an increase in simple tasks (from n= 23 to n= 46) and a decrease in complex tasks (from n= 77 to n= 45). Further, the use of the arts is either maintained or increases except for music (from n= 15 to n= 5) and dance (from n= 19 to n= 9). The students experience a change in social organization of the task. Individual work increases (from n= 0 to n= 37), small group work decreases (n= 56 to n= 8), and whole class increases (from n= 44 to n=55).

Informally, the transcripts reflect an increase in behavior problems as the use of arts-based high-level tasks decrease. Further study is needed in this area.

Teacher Questionnaires

The second research question: If art-based methods are used, how and why are they used to help students gain and express knowledge?

How they are used is partly answered by the data in table two. The qualitative data supported the quantitative data. Teachers in preschool and elementary made more use of arts-based, high level tasks than was found in later middle school. Eighty-three percent of those responding to the questionnaire were preschool and elementary school teachers and 17% were middle school teachers. Some of the themes and patterns that emerged not only reinforced other research (Hooper, 1999), but also added new themes.

Question 1: Do you use arts-based tasks (painting, sculpture, drama, music, dance/movement, and storytelling) to help students gain and express knowledge?

All the teachers who responded (n=17) answered yes to this question.

Question 2: In what subjects do you use the visual and performing arts-based tasks?

Teachers in both preschool (n= 4) and elementary (n= 8) stated they use arts-based tasks in all subjects (language arts, math, science, history, geography, social studies). Of the middle school teachers, only the one teacher responded that arts-based tasks are used in her subject.

Question 3: Why do you use the visual and performing arts in your teaching?

Question 4: Have you other thoughts to add which are useful for this research?

The third and fourth questions result in following major themes and patterns.

Theme one: The arts generate more interest, fun, and motivation.

All teachers in preschool and elementary stated that arts-based tasks created interest, high internal motivation, and made learning fun, for example:

Languages Children learn easily enjoying themselves.

Grade 2 Because the work is more pleasant and easier to understand.

Grade 3 These make the subjects, and what the children learn more fun....

Music Students enjoy themselves and this helps them to learn.

Theme two: Arts-based tasks offer alternate ways of communication.

Arts-based tasks allow other ways of demonstrating knowledge and use all modes of learning, for example:

3 Y/O To make easier [facilitate] the relationship and the knowledge of the different languages (visual, bodily, etc.)

5 Y/O I use these activities to [facilitate] make easier the knowledge of language and for the visual and body forms of gaining and communicating, and also imagination. I use these also to stimulate creative and social relationships. I always need it because communication without words is so important in children. Children need to learn a different language for work, and school must give them active moments of learning.

Grade 5. Because it is useful for communication between teacher and child....

Theme three: Arts-based tasks teach and reinforce classroom Skills.

The tasks can be used to initially teach and later review classroom work, for example:

3 Y/O to stimulate and enhance what they learn.

4 Y/O The one idea of school as a promoter of culture [curriculum] must be to use emotional participation to promote enthusiasm of

children and teachers. If you use emotion and joy, you can transfer more things than if you teach without them.

Grade 1 The expressive activities make gaining knowledge of math concepts easier because they create a positive atmosphere for learning and they help the children not to fear mathematics.

Grade 1 The activities with their hands, movement, theater, and music are indispensable in the elementary school. They make learning easier in room space and temporal space.

Grade 1 What one thinks is linked to words that are used by children. What one thinks is build in like a language in the body of everybody. These activities help bring them out.

Grade 4 I think that it is useful to study what these methods can do when the children are learning to read and write.

Grade 5. I often do drawing activities with graphs when the children draw rooms or build maps. It is a method that makes it easier to understand and gain knowledge.

Tecnica I use it in subjects like technical and architectural design. It is a part of

the subjects, which I teach

Theme four: Arts-based tasks stimulate student empowerment and self-esteem.

The tasks help students gain feelings of responsibility and internal control, resulting in belief in self as an actor in the world, for example:

4 Y/O I think that they are the best channels because if you use them, the children are

very motivated to be the actor in their culture. Children know what they are

doing if you use these activities. They are protagonists.

Theme five: Arts-based tasks connect school with life outside school.

School and home become compatible entities in a student's life, for example:

5 Y/O Because these things are what children need. They are in the culture of the child. Therefore, it is important that the children experience them in school.

It connects home and school, teaches subjects from their experiences, and gives background knowledge.

Theme six: Arts-based tasks have a connection to creativity.

Students must use one or more of their several languages or, as Vygotsky (1962) describes it, their inner voices, to complete the task, for example:

5 Y/O I use these activities ....to stimulate creative and social relationships. .

Middle SchoolTo give a different experience [and] gives value to manual creativity.

Theme seven: Arts-based tasks are better for special education problems.

Special needs students require tasks that use most of the modalities of learning, for example:

Grade 3 These make the subjects...easier especially for weak learners (low achievers).

Grade 4. These help children to maintain attention and to be more interested. It helps the weak children understand, especially when you teach an abstract concept.

Grade 5 it makes it easier for different children to gain the knowledge. This is important because different children learn differently (5)

Sculpture Laboratory was born as an instrument for scholastic integration of children who have handicaps and for those with relationship problems

Theme eight: Arts-based tasks generate the four levels of learning.

Concrete, semiconcrete, semiabstract, and abstract learning levels are used, for example:

3 Y/O to stimulate and enhance what they learn.

Grade 1 The activities with their hands, movement, theater, and music are indispensable in the elementary school. They make learning easier in room space and temporal space.

Grade 3 It is easier to learn if you start from a concrete thing. These make the subjects, and what the children learn more fun and easier—especially for weak learners (low achievers).

Grade 4. These help children to maintain attention and to be more interested. It helps the weak children understand, especially when you teach an abstract concept.

Grade 5 I often do drawing activities with graphs when the children draw rooms or build maps. It is a method that makes it easier to understand and gain knowledge.

Comparisons

Although a comprehensive comparison between the themes and patterns of the studies completed in the USA and Italy is too long for this paper, some interesting similarities exist. Both studies revealed themes in interest, fun and motivation, self-esteem, student empowerment, reinforce and teaching classroom skills, improved teacher/student communication, and communication in general . The Italian study did not address cooperative work, teacher empowerment, behavior problems, parent participation, or school attendance. It is believed that the last five were not addressed because of cultural attitude differences. Italian culture fosters workers rights and considers parents part of schooling. Thus, the ideas of teacher empowerment, parent

participation and school attendance are not issues in Italy. The issue of behavior problems, well established in the USA, is just beginning in Italy. Future research might include this element.

Conclusions

One might argue that as students mature, it is natural to change task delivery to more skill based, independent, abstract work. However, globalization demands that workers be independent creative thinkers who can solve problems and create new systems. It is well documented that motivation is tied to the elements measured in this study (Hooper, 1994, Stipek, 1988). A drop in the frequency of complex tasks in small group settings using all four levels of learning through the arts, decreases 'equal access' to information for all students and eliminates alternate ways of expressing and/ or assessing that knowledge. In a world where literacy in all content areas (reading, language, science, mathematics, history, geography, etc.) is required, teaching in ways that provide the means to gain required skills is essential. Equal access to information is essential in today's diverse classrooms. One cannot guarantee equal outcome or that students will learn, because learning is a choice. However, teaching is the presentation of content information in ways that all students can receive it. The type of task is essential in this process. Research demonstrates that the use of complex arts-based tasks at all levels of learning increase internal motivation and decrease behavior problems (Hooper & Glass, 2000; Hooper, 1994). As with behavior, informal reports from the Italian study show that achievement decreases as students progress through the grades. However, although the study is extensive and mirrors other studies of its type, there is a

need for further research on the connection between achievement, behavior and the use of an arts-based core curriculum in postmodern inclusion classrooms.

The purpose of this study was to explore the need for a better model of teaching in today's postmodern inclusion elementary and middle school classrooms, whose students differ in abilities, disabilities, and cultures. The goal was to describe an international program that utilizes tasks based on the visual and performing arts as tools in the acquisition and expression of learning and content literacy. The descriptive study, supported by other research indicates that content literacy through the arts may be a concept whose time has come. Our complex, interactive, global world needs people who can think and creatively solve problems, if we are to maintain ourselves as people and preserve the earth. It begins in the classroom: It begins with the arts.

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Table -1

General Statistics of
The State Comprehensive Institute of Elementary and Middle Schools, Giovanni Dozza (L'instituto Statale Comprensivo di Scuola Elementare e Media "G. Dozza")

School	Classes #	Ss	Gender Boys	Girls	Disabled	Race Italian	Other	Ability H	A	L	Years Teaching 1-5	6-10	11+	Avg	SES H	A	L
Middle	27	199	96	103	9	189	10	15%	30	55%	0	0	11	25.8	30%	60%	10%
Elem.G1	5	92	46	46	9	87	*5	"			1	1	9	20.5		same	
Elem.C2	9	179	89	90	3	168	**11	"			1	1	12	18.9		same	
PreD	3	75	29	46	3	71	4				1	1	2	17.25		same	
Sub-Total	**44**	**545**	**260**	**285**	**24**	**515**	**30**	**15%**	**30%**	**55%**	**3**	**3**	**34**		**30%**	**60%**	**10%**
			48%	**52%**	**4.5 %**	**94.5%**	**5.5%**				**8%**	**8%**	**84%%**				
Elem M3	6	127	72	55	4	121	6										
PreF	3	75	29	46	0	69	6										
PreM	3	74	31	43	3	67	7										
PreP	3	73	36	37	1	67	6										
Total	**59**	**894**	**428**	**466**	**32**	**839**	**55**										
			49%	**50%**	**4%**	**94%**	**6%**										

Teachers	Total	M	F
Middle	11	2	9
Elementary	25	1	24
PreSchool	4	0	4

- 4 Born in Italy of immigrant parents
- **54 Born in Italy of immigrant parents

Table -1
Students
General Statistics of
The State Comprehensive Institute of Elementary and Middle Schools, Giovanni Dozza (L'instituto Statale Comprensivo di Scuola Elementare e Media "G. Dozza")

	Classes		Gender			Race		Ability			SES		
School	#	Ss	Boys	Girls	Disabled	Italian	Other	H	A	L	H	A	L
Middle	27	199	96	103	9	189	10	15%	30	55%	30%	60%	10%
Elem.G1	5	92	46	46	9	87	* 5 "	same			same		
Elem.C2	9	179	89	90	3	168	**11 "	same			same		
PreD	3	75	29	46	3	71	4	same		same			
Sub-Total	**44**	**545**	**260**	**285**	**24**	**515**	**30**	**15%**	**30%**	**55%**	**30%**	**60%**	**10%**
			48%	**52%**	**4.4 %**	**94.5%**	**5.5%**						
Elem M3	6	127	72	55	4	121	6						
PreF	3	75	29	46	0	69	6						
PreM	3	74	31	43	3	67	7						
PreP	3	73	36	37	1	67	6						
Total	**59**	**894**	**428**	**466**	**32**	**839**	**55**						
			48%	**52%**	**3.6%**	**94%**	**6%**						

- 4 Born in Italy of immigrant parents
- **54 Born in Italy of immigrant parents

Table –1b
Teachers
General Statistics of
The State Comprehensive Institute of Elementary and Middle Schools, Giovanni Dozza (L'instituto Statale Comprensivo di Scuola Elementare e Media "G. Dozza")

Class of Teachers	Total	Male	Female	Years of Experience			Average in years
				1 to 5	6 to 10	11+	
Middle	11	2	9	0	0	11	25.8
Elementary	25	1	24	2	2	21	19.7
Preschool	4	0	4	1	1	2	17.25
Total number	**40**			**3**	**3**	**34**	
Total Percent				**7.5%**	**7.5%**	**85%**	

Table 2

Analysis of Tasks in Percentages

Class	# of Tasks	Multilevels				Task Type		Art Form						Social Organization		
		C	SC	SA	A	S	C	P	S	St.	D	M	Da.	I	S	W
PS 3	6	25	25	25	25	0	100	38	12	0	25	25	00	00	33	67
PS 4	9	25	37.5	12.5	25	30	70	6	00	37.5	19	12.5	25	00	67	33
PS 5	15	32	32	22	14	40	60	8.3	8.3	33	13	8.3	29	00	67	33
E 1	24	19	22	33	26	29	71	26	16	32	6.5	6.5	13	58	9	33
E 2	13	16	26	32	26	23	77	21	13	38	16	4	8	38	8	54
E 3	9	00	8.3	33.3	58.3	78	22	50	33	17	00	00	00	22	00	78
E 4	9	25	19	31	25	44	56	15.3	00	15.3	8	15.3	46	22	11	67
E 5	7	30	30	40	00	57	43	37.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	00	25	43	14	43
[Middle classes in content areas]																
M 1	7	33	17	25	25	57	43	11	11	11	11	34	22	57	00	43
M 2	18	22	6	19	53	39	61	26	9	35	26	00	4	33	22	45
M 3	9	14	14	14	58	56	44	25	00	25	37.5	00	12.5	20	10	70
Preschool and Elementary Average Percents																
PS	**10**	**27.3**	**31.5**	**19.9**	**21.3**	**23**	**77**	**17**	**7**	**24**	**19**	**15**	**18**	**00**	**56**	**44**
E	**12.4**	**18**	**21**	**34**	**27**	**46**	**54**	**30**	**15**	**23**	**9**	**5**	**18**	**37**	**8**	**55**
M	**11**	**23**	**12.3**	**19.3**	**45.3**	**51**	**49**	**20.7**	**6.7**	**23.7**	**24.8**	**11.3**	**12.8**	**36.7**	**10.7**	**52.6**

Key: Class: PS is preschool, the number is the age level class; E is elementary, the number is the grade level; M is middle school, the number is the grade level (In Italy, 1 is our grade 6. Content areas observed N=8; 2 is our grade 7, Content areas observed N=4; 3 is our grade 8. Content areas observed N=3). Tasks: the number completed under observation. Multilevels: C is concrete; SC is semiconcrete; SA is semiabstract, A is abstract: Task Type: S is simple; C is complex. Art Form: P is painting/drawing, S is sculpture, St. is storytelling, D is drama, M is music, Da is dance. Social Organization: I is independent, S is small group, W is whole class.

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