What is arts integration?

The CPS Department of Arts Education defines arts integration as an educational approach in which an artistic discipline (or disciplines) and another academic subject (or subjects) are combined to teach and learn content knowledge and skills.

Benefits of arts integration

- Multiple pathways to construct and demonstrate understanding
- Opportunities to make and articulate connections across subject areas
- Development of cross-subject, 21st-century competencies like problem-solving, decision-making, collaboration, and communication skills
- Improved social-emotional skills
- Higher levels of engagement

Students
- A means of differentiating instruction through multiple modes of representation, expression, and engagement
- Increased collaboration with peers
- Opportunities to share knowledge and skills across fields
- Increased engagement in high-quality instructional practice

Teachers
- More engaged, more motivated students
- Increased academic achievement
- Improved discipline
- Increased success in attracting and retaining teachers
- A vibrant, creative, and innovative teaching and learning environment

School
A sampling of arts integration impact research

Students participating in arts-integrated lessons are 4.4 times more likely to be highly thoughtful and highly engaged than in regular classroom instruction. (Perpich Center for Arts Education, 2014)

Students who participated in arts integrated units were able to see multiple perspectives in a situation, have better classroom dialogue, notice and respect personal boundaries, and to critique others in productive, non-hurtful ways (Broussard, 2011).

In eight underperforming schools across the nation that implemented an arts-integrated curriculum, the average improvement in math proficiency over four years was 22.5 percent. Reading proficiency improved by 12.6 percent. (Abodeely, 2015)

Arts integration can have a dramatic effect on student attendance rates (Jensen, 2002; Walker, Tabone, & Weltsek, 2011). It can also lead to a decrease in referrals and suspensions (Nobori, 2012) and increased intrinsic motivation (DeMoss & Morris, 2002).

The average student could move from the 50th to the 54th percentile as the result of arts integration in his or her school. (Ludwig, Boyle, & Lindsay, 2017)
Concerned about implementing arts integration in your classroom or school? Below we bust some myths and common misconceptions about the approach.

**Myth #1**

Introducing the arts into other subjects will distract students from learning or affect the depth of instruction.

Research shows that students in arts-integrated classrooms remember more content for a longer period of time. Skill- and knowledge-building in the integrated subjects is not affected; on the contrary, students learn better and at a higher level.

**Myth #2**

Non-arts teachers need a degree, endorsement, or background in the arts in order to practice arts integration.

Non-arts teachers do not need to be experts in the arts to practice arts integration—and vice versa. Collaboration, curiosity, and open-mindedness are key to arts integration. Each teacher brings their own subject-area skills and knowledge to the table to create integrated learning experiences, and facilitate (rather than drive) student exploration, learning, and transfer of learning across subjects.

**Myth #3**

Arts teachers should be mainly responsible for leading, creating, and sustaining a school's arts integration initiatives.

Authentic arts integration happens when all stakeholders—teachers, administrators, students, families, community members, and arts partners—support an arts integration approach, understand its value, and work collaboratively to create an arts-rich environment throughout the school.