

**“SOCIAL STUDIES ON STAGE:”  
AN INQUIRY INTO ARTS INTEGRATION  
IN THE ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOM**

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Honors Degree in History Education with Distinction

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	viii
ABSTRACT .....	ix
1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
2 LITERATURE REVIEW .....	4
Introduction .....	4
The Emergence of Standards-Based Education in the United States, 1965-1994 .....	5
The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 .....	6
The Consequences of NCLB on Social Studies and the Arts .....	9
The Case for Preserving Social Studies and the Arts in Public Schools .....	12
Development of Civic and Cultural Competence .....	12
Improved Cognitive Ability and Academic Performance .....	15
Arts Integration as a Solution to Curriculum Narrowing .....	17
History of Arts Integration .....	17
Impact of Arts Integration on Students with Learning and Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities .....	19
The ArtsBridge America Program .....	21
Conclusion .....	22
3 PILOT STUDY .....	25
Introduction .....	25
Purpose .....	25
Sample .....	26
Method .....	26
Curriculum Design .....	26
Data Collection and Analysis .....	27
Results .....	28

	Limitations of Study .....	29
	Discussion.....	29
4	MATERIALS AND METHODS .....	31
	Introduction .....	31
	Purpose .....	31
	Sample .....	32
	Method.....	34
	Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis .....	34
	Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis .....	36
	Focus Group Student Profiles.....	38
	Student 10.....	38
	Student 11.....	38
	Student 14.....	39
	Student 18.....	39
5	RESULTS.....	40
	Impact of Integrated Arts Curriculum on Student Performance on Content Knowledge Tests .....	40
	Relationships Between Student Performance on Content Knowledge Tests and DCAS Reading Test .....	42
	General Population .....	42
	Students with Learning Disabilities.....	43
	Impact of Integrated Arts Curriculum on Student Engagement.....	43
	Limitations of Study.....	44
	Conclusion.....	45
6	DISCUSSION.....	47
	Rationale and Summary of Results .....	47
	Suggestions for Future Research .....	49
	Implications on Educational Policy.....	50
	Conclusion.....	51
	REFERENCES.....	52
A	SELECTED LESSON PLANS .....	59
B	DATA COLLECTION.....	65

C	TESTING DATA .....	70
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## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	“Social Studies on Stage” Units, Essential Questions, and Lessons .....	27
Table 2	Demographic Information of Participants of 2012-13 Study .....	33
Table 3	Spring 2012 Pilot Study Content Knowledge Pre- and Posttest Scores.....	70
Table 4	Fall 2012 Study Content Knowledge Pre- and Posttest Scores .....	70
Table 5	Student Responses to Focus Group Questions .....	71

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1	Spring 2012 Pilot Study Mean Content Knowledge Pre- and Posttest Scores .....	28
Figure 2	DCAS Reading Proficiency Scores for 2012-13 School Year .....	36
Figure 3	Fall 2012 Study Mean Content Knowledge Pre- and Posttest Scores.....	42

## **ABSTRACT**

In the wake of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the emergence state-mandated tests in language arts and mathematics, untested subjects have been drastically marginalized from the curriculum. Social studies and the arts have especially suffered in quality and subsequent effectiveness of instruction despite their educational value. At the same time, past research has shown that the integration of the arts into the academic classroom presents a cost effective and engaging way to both instruct students in a content area and allow them to hone artistic and creative abilities. Because social studies and the arts offer similar academic benefits to students, the combination of these subjects in an integrated arts curriculum is both a logical and sensible way to revive or reintroduce these disciplines into the elementary school.

"Social Studies on Stage" is scholar-designed curriculum that teaches third grade students social studies content and skills through creative movement and music. This project consists of ten lessons that address the Delaware State Standards for third grade social studies. This paper discusses the context, design, implementation, and evaluation of this curriculum. After a pilot study was conducted in the spring of 2012, a more comprehensive study was undertaken in the fall of 2012. The former study, which accounts for the centerpiece of this project, sought to analyze relationships between students' participation in the curriculum and improved academic performance, as measured by content knowledge tests in the arts and social studies and

standardized reading test scores. While the design of the Fall 2012 study could not substantiate a direct causation between the curriculum's implementation and any change in student performance on these assessments, results show a statistically significant relationship between participation in the curriculum and improved standardized reading test performance, especially among students with learning disabilities.



## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The No Child Left Behind Act was perhaps one of the most far-reaching pieces of educational legislation ever passed in the United States. Aiming to promote increased academic achievement and address the problem of educational inequity that has plagued the American educational system for decades, NCLB was passed in 2001. Under the provisions of No Child Left Behind, states were required to provide evidence of students' progress, measured by scores on standardized tests in mathematics and literacy (Hayes, 2008).

NCLB has had both positive and negative impacts on the American public education system. One of its negative consequences has been its impact on untested subjects. Under immense pressure to bolster standardized test scores, many schools have made substantial reductions in the time and resources allocated to untested subjects so that they can be allotted to mathematics and literacy instruction. A phenomenon known as curriculum narrowing, the arts and social studies have suffered in the wake of No Child Left Behind (Sunderman, et. al., 2005). Because states are not required to test these subjects, the arts and social studies are frequently given less time in the curriculum than mathematics and literacy (Winstead, 2011).

Curriculum narrowing potentially does a great disservice to students as they have limited opportunities to be exposed to disciplines that are also integral to their education. Scholars have repeatedly demonstrated that both social studies and the arts offer multiple academic benefits to students. For instance, multiple studies have

shown correlations between participation in the arts and improved academic performance (Nathan, 2008; Posner, et. al., 2006). There are also significant connections between social studies and literacy (McGuire, 2007), and scholars have found that participation in social studies curricula is linked to an increase in civic participation (Levine and Lopez, 2010).

A possible solution to this problem is arts integration. The Kennedy Center's Changing Education Through the Arts program (CETA) offers a definition of arts integration that is used by arts integration programs nationwide, including the ArtsBridge Scholars Program. CETA's definition of arts integration is as follows:

“An approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form. Students engage in a creative process which connects an art form and another subject area and meets evolving objectives in both” (Silverstein and Layne, 2010).

This definition is based on constructivist learning theory, which holds that learning is “actively built, experiential, evolving, collaborative, problem-solving, and reflective” (Silverstein and Layne, 2010). Arts integration requires students to create original artistic work; students do not simply repeat or copy the teacher. The art form and content area should complement each other, and not be compartmentalized. Arts integration curricula also need to meet standards for all disciplines involved (Brouillette and Burns, 2005).

Not only does arts integration allow schools to provide students with instruction in the arts at virtually no cost, studies have found that participation in integrated arts curricula is correlated with higher standardized test scores and overall academic performance (Kahne and Spote, 2008; Rabkin and Redmond, 2004). Given the potential positive impacts of NCLB, the implementation of integrated arts

curricula might be the best possible solution to the disappearance of the arts in public schools.

The purpose of this project is to introduce an integrated arts curriculum in social studies, to assess the curriculum's effect on student performance, and to propose policy changes based on these findings. The study found that there was a connection between improved performance on social studies content knowledge tests and improved standardized reading test scores among the general population, as well as a relationship between improved performance on music content knowledge tests and improved standardized reading test scores among students with learning disabilities. The study also found a relationship between participation in integrated arts curricula and heightened student engagement in the classroom. This thesis is organized into four sections: (a) a literature review, (b) a description of the implementation and findings of the pilot study, (c) a study on the curriculum's effect on academic performance and student engagement, and (d) a discussion of the study's findings and implications for educational policy.

## **Chapter 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

This literature review first explores the historical foundations for the current status of social studies and the arts in American public schools. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 is placed in historical context, followed by a discussion of its unforeseen consequences on the public education system, namely in terms of its impact on the arts and social studies. As these disciplines are in danger of disappearing from the elementary school curriculum, an explanation of their potential academic benefits is included, and thus why they should be preserved. Finally, the concept of arts integration is introduced as a possible solution to the disappearance of these subjects from public schools.

The movement towards standards-based education, which began in the 1960s, led to a nationwide compulsory system in which one measure of student and school aptitude includes performance on standardized tests, which do not assess all areas of student learning (Jorgensen and Hoffman, 2003). Instead, only certain subjects are tested, which may have unintentional negative impacts on untested subjects, including social studies and the arts (McGuire, 2007; Center on Educational Policy, 2011). This is because people have begun spend less classroom time on these disciplines as they are not assessed on state exams. Additionally, schools have had to allocate resources to tested subjects because of state testing requirements, which has resulted in untested

subjects losing these resources, including professional development opportunities and monetary funding (Sunderman, et. al., 2005).

While some do not perceive these disciplines as having a high educational value, the second part of this literature review explains why students should continue to receive instruction in social studies and the arts. Multiple studies have found connections between improved academic performance and participation in these areas, as well as emotional and behavioral benefits for children and adolescents.

One of the greatest arguments against keeping untested subjects in the curriculum is that they are costly. The third part of this literature review offers a solution to this problem. Through integrated arts curricula, students can gain access to instruction in both the arts and in academic areas in a cost-effective way. By participating in integrated arts curricula, not only do students benefit personally, but there may be a correlation with improvement in standardized testing scores.

### **The Emergence of Standards-Based Education in the United States, 1965-1994**

The achievement gap has plagued American public education for decades (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Hayes, 2008). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) was passed as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty." Title I of ESEA provides federal financial assistance to schools with high percentages of students from low-income families, as defined by the United States Census Bureau. The purpose of these grants is to provide additional academic support to low-achieving children to help them achieve state standards and master basic skills. State educational agencies apply for these grants, which then allocate them to local educational agencies and schools. Title I has

provided millions of children with the resources necessary for academic success (Jorgensen and Hoffman, 2003).

By the 1980s, it was apparent that ESEA was not the “magic bullet” for solving educational inequity in the United States. The National Commission on Excellence in Education was chartered in 1981 for the purpose of “help[ing] define the problems afflicting American education and to provide solutions.” The Commission published its report, *A Nation at Risk*, in 1983, which concluded that the American education system was failing to prepare students effectively for college and careers. The Commission found that twenty three percent of all American were illiterate, including about thirteen percent of 17-year-olds. Average scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) fell drastically from 1963 to 1980 in both the verbal and math sections. Business and military leaders also reported spending millions of dollars on remedial education and training programs. The report recommended that “schools, colleges, and universities adopt more rigorous and measurable standards” in order to address this problem (National Commission on Excellence in Education,1983).

Thus, the age of standards-based education was born. Some states began to adopt their own sets of standards, largely in literacy and mathematics. With the passage of Goals 2000: The Educate America Act of 1994, standards-based education became the law of the land. The law required all states to have content and performance standards, an accountability system to identify failing schools, and state-wide assessments to align with standards (Jorgensen and Hoffman, 2003).

### **The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001**

Nearly forty years after the passage of ESEA, the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) was a continuation of the 1965 legislation and expansion on the Goals 2000

initiative. Signed into law by President George W. Bush, it was a landmark piece of legislation for American public education reform. NCLB sought “to close the achievement gap with accountability, and choice” by establishing rigid provisions for measuring student achievement. NCLB mandated that by the 2005-2006 school year, all states administer standardized tests in language arts and mathematics in grades three through eight. It also mandated science tests at all levels by the 2006-2007 school year. Results of these tests are reported in the aggregate, and also in eight subgroups: White, Black, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian/Pacific Islanders, students receiving free or reduced lunch, students with limited English proficiency, and students qualifying for special education services (Hayes, 2008).

According to President George W. Bush, the law would ultimately ensure that all children perform at grade level in literacy and mathematics by the 2013-2014 school year. Section 1111 (b)(F) of NCLB requires that each state create a timeline to achieve this goal, with yearly benchmarks for student progress. Each year, states must measure schools’ or districts’ adequate yearly progress (AYP) to determine if students’ academic performance is improving in concordance with the established annual benchmarks. AYP is measured only in literacy and mathematics, and is primarily measured through standardized test scores. At least one other indicator of school performance is also required in the calculation. For secondary schools, this indicator is the graduation rate. For a school to make AYP, at least 95 percent of students must be assessed, and each subgroup must meet or exceed the target set by the state each year.

In the state of Delaware, AYP is measured through student scores on the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS). The test is administered in the

fall, winter, and spring. The mathematics and reading DCAS tests report two scores: an instructional score and an accountability score. The instructional score includes all questions presented to the student during the test, regardless of whether or not they were on grade-level. The accountability score reflects the student's grade-level proficiency. Only spring accountability scores in mathematics and reading are reported for NCLB purposes, while the fall and winter scores are used to set students' individual testing goals and to measure improvement over the school year. While mathematics and reading are tested yearly, science is tested three times over the course of eight years. Social studies is only tested twice (Delaware Department of Education, 2011). Science and social studies DCAS scores are not reported to the federal government. Accountability scores are divided into four categories, each with a corresponding number: "well below standard" or 1, "below standard" or 2, "meets standard" or 3, and "advanced" or 4. The cut scores for each category vary depending on subject and grade level, but increase with each grade level (Delaware Department of Education, 2011).

Under NCLB, each year a school does not achieve AYP, levels of government intervention and scrutiny increase. Because the public is made aware of a school's progress or lack thereof, local administrators and teachers are held to a greater level of accountability. As stated in Section 1111 (b)(F) of the law, if a school fails to meet AYP for two consecutive years, it is publically labeled "in need of improvement," and the district must implement a "professional improvement plan." Parents of students are notified, and have the option to send their child to a better-performing school in the district. If a school does not meet AYP a third year, these conditions continue, and the district must provide additional academic support to students in failing subgroups.

A fourth consecutive year of failing AYP results in severe consequences for the school as the federal government takes a greater presence in the local district. The federal government may take actions such as: “replacing staff, overhauling the curriculum, reducing management authority at the local level, hiring outside experts, or lengthening the school day and/or year.”

It seemed NCLB was successful in the first few years of its implementation. In 2007, The Department of Education proudly reported that 70 percent of schools nationwide were making AYP. However, a report by the Center on Education Policy revealed that between 2006 and 2011, the percentage of schools not making AYP increased from 29 percent to 48 percent (Usher, 2012). As the 2013-2014 school year draws closer, and AYP requirements increase, many more schools are having difficulty in achieving their annual goals. It is important to note, though, that the number of schools not making AYP varies greatly from state to state, which is due to differences in state testing and accountability systems (Center on Education Policy, 2011).

### **The Consequences of NCLB on Social Studies and the Arts**

The prevalence of instruction in social studies and the arts has declined in public schools since the implementation of comprehensive mathematics standards in 1989. The subsequent push for similar standards in language arts further marginalized these disciplines. As the standardized testing movement began to take hold in American public education, subjects other than mathematics and literacy were increasingly overlooked in order to allocate as many resources as possible to the tested subjects. No Child Left Behind further exacerbated this problem, as school districts found themselves under immense pressure to meet AYP (Heafner and Fitchett, 2012).

While some states administered standardized tests in other areas, they have only been required to report scores in mathematics and literacy to the federal government. Consequently, resources were shifted towards these subject areas and away from ones that are not reported to the government as part of NCLB provisions. The result is a phenomenon known as curriculum narrowing (Sunderman, et. al., 2005), areas such as social studies, art, and music, are either de-emphasized or neglected completely.

It appears that some schools may have reduced or eliminated instruction in social studies and the arts because of the alleged educational value of these disciplines. For instance, Winstead (2011) compiled self-reported surveys from nine teachers and found that the implementation of high-stakes testing has led to the perception among both teachers and administrators that mathematics and language arts are the most crucial components of the curriculum, especially among elementary school administrators and teachers. In addition to diminished instructional time and material resources, many social studies and arts teachers have noted a lack of professional learning opportunities or advancements in their fields in recent years. For instance, McGuire (2007) noted that state standards in social studies have remained static since the mid-1990s. Sabol (2010) surveyed 1,458 arts educators across the country, and found that fifty-six percent of these educators had not received any professional learning opportunities related to NCLB.

Several studies have shown an alarming decrease in instructional time devoted to social studies and the arts in public schools. Of 299 elementary schools surveyed across the United States, 71 percent reported reducing instructional time in at least one untested subject. Thirty-three percent of these schools reported reducing instructional time in social studies (Center on Educational Policy, 2011). The Wisconsin Education

Association Council reported that, during the 2000-2001 school year, 38 percents of all school districts in the state made cuts to their arts programs. The situation is even worse for the arts. By the 2006-2007 school year, this statistic had increased to 58 percent of Wisconsin school districts (Allen and Leverich, 2008). The Music for All Foundation (2004) noted a fifty percent decrease in participation in music programs in California public schools from 1999 to 2004.

It seems that these disciplines only receive a fraction of the instructional time devoted to mathematics and literacy. A survey of 236 elementary teachers in North Carolina, found a great discrepancy between the amount of instruction time dedicated to mathematics and literacy and subjects not assessed on state standardized tests (North Carolina Board of Education, 2003). Elementary school teachers spent an average of 401 minutes per week teaching reading, 292 minutes per week teaching mathematics, and 198 minutes per week teaching writing. Untested subjects received significantly less instruction time. On average, these teachers devoted 102 minutes per week on social studies instruction, 99 minutes on science, 61 minutes on physical education, and 44 minutes on music. Heafner and Fitchett (2012) analyzed instructional time of subject areas from the National Center for Educational Statistics and Schools and Public School Teacher Staffing Survey from 1993 to 2008. Their study concluded that the time devoted to social studies instruction in grades three through five has decreased by an average of fifty-six minutes per week. Meanwhile, the average weekly instructional time for language arts and mathematics has risen, by fifty-two minutes and thirty minutes, respectively.

Some scholars claim that NCLB may have widened the achievement gap and worsened educational inequity. Schools with high levels of poverty are more likely to

neglect untested subjects entirely to make room for mathematics and literacy instruction, while schools with larger middle- and upper-class student populations offer a much greater range of subject areas (McGuire, 2007).

### **The Case for Preserving Social Studies and the Arts in Public Schools**

The fact that instruction in these areas has been greatly compromised as a result of NCLB is troubling, especially because these disciplines are critically important to a student's holistic learning. Through participation in social studies and the arts, students demonstrate civic competence, practice higher-order skills, and develop respect and appreciation for diversity and multiculturalism (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2003; Winstead, 2011; McGuire, 2007). All of these are paramount to a student's success in contemporary society.

### Development of Civic and Cultural Competence

The National Council for the Social Studies defines civic competence as “the knowledge, intellectual processes, and democratic dispositions required of students to be active and engaged participants of public life” (National Council for the Social Studies, 2010). Research done by the Carnegie Corporation of New York (2003) suggests that children begin to develop a sense of social responsibility and interest in politics before age nine. The Carnegie Corporation suggests that the disappearance of social studies from the curriculum could be worsening voter apathy among young people today. While approximately one half of voters aged 18 to 29 participated in presidential elections in the early 1970s, this percentage decreased to one third by the year 2000 (Levine and Lopez, 2002). A study at the University of California – Los Angeles (2010) supported this. Out of a survey of 219,864 college freshmen

nationwide, only 36 percent believed that keeping up to date with politics was “very important” or “essential.” This statistic represented a 3.5 percent decrease from the year before.

Both these disciplines promote civic competence among students. The aim of social studies instruction is to increase students’ social awareness and to help them develop their own civic voices, as knowledge on the content area is necessary to reflect critically on current events and issues (Winstead, 2011; Neumann, 2008). In their study, Kahne and Sporte (2008) found a correlation between students’ exposure to social studies instruction and their likelihood to vote. The study surveyed 4,057 students from 52 schools in the greater Chicago area, and revealed that exposure to effective strategies of civic education was one of the greatest indicators of whether or not a student would exhibit civic participation. Research has also shown that exposure to civic education at an early age is also important to a student’s civic competence, and also makes students more likely to be involved in civic life as an adult (McGuire 2007; Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2011).

Similarly, participation in the arts endows students with democratic values and a sense of civic responsibility. According to Linda Nathan, the creation and consumption of art is integral to citizenship. She writes: “creat[ing] art...will help the rest of us experience what it means to be a citizen of the world” (Nathan, 2008). According to Ken Krafchek of the Maryland College of Art (as cited in Willis, 2006), artistic creation and expression helps students to mold and affirm their identities in a global context, as “understanding oneself in relationship to others makes each student a better artist and citizen” (p. 60).

The arts have the capacity to allow individuals to understand this meaning, as they have vital connections to culture and history. As Liora Bresler has stated, art has been created since prehistoric times, and it can reveal a great deal about a society's history, beliefs, values, and practices. There is a reciprocal relationship between art and culture. Culture gives meaning to art, and conversely, art has the ability to influence culture. By studying music and dance, one can achieve a greater understanding of ethnicities, cultures, and historical eras (Nathan, 2008; Hanna, 2008).

A part of civic competence, cultural competence is the ability to interact effectively and respectfully with people from different cultural backgrounds. According to data collected by the United States Census Bureau (2010), the nation will likely be much more racially and ethnically diverse by 2060. By 2043, there will be no singular group will represent a racial majority. It is therefore clear that we live in an increasingly diverse society. Not only is American society diversifying culturally, but also in terms of types of learners (Wade, 2002). Thus, a critical characteristic of contemporary education should be an emphasis on cultivating cultural competence. Banks (2004) states that it is imperative that citizens of the twenty-first century possess the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to demonstrate this quality both within their community and beyond their cultural borders. Cultural competence is cultivated in both the social studies classroom and the arts classroom.

Through learning social studies, students develop a more refined worldview, become more tolerant of others, and gain respect for others. Multicultural learning requires that students learn from others, which improves their listening skills, attention to detail, and retention of information (Todd, 2003). By learning from others and about others, students realize commonalities among people and societies. Hartoonian

(2001) notes that ethics are too frequently applied exclusively to the group in which one “belongs,” but multicultural learning helps students to abandon the “us and them” dichotomy. Likewise, arts education requires students to work with others from different socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. They also collaborate with others whose learning styles and ability levels are diverse. This not only fosters the democratic values of teamwork and cooperation, but also causes students to become more respectful and tolerant of others’ differences (Nathan, 2008).

### Improved Cognitive Ability and Academic Performance

In addition to providing students with opportunities to develop civic and cultural competence, social studies and the arts are correlated with increased cognitive ability and academic performance. These disciplines require students to cultivate and practice higher-order skills, which according to ten Dam and Volman (2004), are necessary to participate in a democratic and pluralistic society. Through learning history, students are required to think critically and participate in reflective inquiry of key themes and ideas. Participation in the arts also requires a great deal of critical thinking (Neumann, 2008; Kahne and Sporte, 2008).

There is a significant link between social studies and critical literacy, which is an integral component of civic competence. Steven Wolk (2003) states that social studies provides students with the opportunity to develop critical literacy, which “is about how we see and interact with the world; it is about having, as a regular part of one’s life, the skills and desire to evaluate society and the world.” Being critically literate reaches beyond being able to read and write for comprehension. Those that are critically literate are able to form and communicate their own opinions on important societal issues. Additionally, Margit McGuire (2007) states that there is a strong link

between social studies in literacy: “Students are asked to find main ideas and supporting details, to compare and contrast, to make inferences, to scan, and to understand graphical material—all important reading skills” (p. 621).

A recent study at the University of Oregon (Posner, et. al., 2008) has revealed more about the biological connection between participation and the arts and increased cognitive ability. Researchers identified specific neural networks for different art forms, and found links between these networks and those involved in conducting higher-order tasks. That is, it seems that participation in the arts has similar cognitive benefits as practicing higher-order tasks.

Perhaps the most compelling argument against sacrificing arts programs in schools is the fact that participation in the arts is correlated with higher standardized test scores. Numerous studies have shown this correlation in all levels of K-12 education. Because of this, advocates of arts education maintain that the arts should not be sacrificed for test preparation, but embraced for their cognitive benefits. A recent study (Wilkins, et. al., 2003) surveyed 547 elementary schools in Virginia to determine if devoting less instructional time to the arts had a positive effect on standardized test scores. The results of the study suggested that students who received instruction in art, music, and physical education generally performed better on standardized tests than those who did not. Ultimately, the study concluded that allocating less instructional time to the arts and physical education was not correlated with higher rates of passing scores. Therefore, cutting arts programs from schools was deemed unnecessary, even counterproductive. Another study by Johnson and Memmott (2006) revealed a correlation between quality of arts instruction and student performance on standardized tests. One group was instructed by an exemplary music

teacher, and the other was taught by a teacher considered to be deficient. On average, the students taught by the exemplary teacher scored 22 percent higher in language arts, and 20 percent higher in mathematics. While this study shows a connection between better instruction and better test results, it does highlight a relationship between immersion in the arts and improved academic performance.

### **Arts Integration as a Solution to Curriculum Narrowing**

Integrated arts curricula are an effective means of confronting the pressing issue of curriculum narrowing in schools. As schools are pressured to allocate a majority of material resources to language arts and mathematics, one of the most vociferous arguments against social studies and arts education is the lack of resources available. Some educators and administrators argue that the revival or maintenance of these programs is too costly (Silverstein and Layne, 2010). However, integrated arts programs are inexpensive to implement, and do not necessarily require any additional materials or technology (Rabkin and Redmond, 2004).

### History of Arts Integration

While arts integration as it is known today is an emerging field, this technique has been used by teachers for nearly a century. One of the earliest integrated arts references available to teachers was the *Illustrative Handwork for Elementary School Teachers*, published in 1917. This book explained how teachers could integrate movement and visual arts into classroom instruction in order to engage students more effectively (Dobbs, 1917). About twenty years later, in 1939, Leon Winslow published *The Integrated School Art Program*, which was very instrumental in promoting arts integration practices and encouraging research on the field. Winslow

argued that the arts enabled students to build a foundation of functional knowledge through aesthetic experiences. While many educators praised the concept of arts integration in theory, most arts integration practices were not very effective, and there were not many professional development opportunities for teachers on the field (Burnaford, et. al., 2007).

Arts integration began to gain more attention from educators during the 1960s and 1970s. Teachers and administrators realized the utility of the arts for engaging community organizations in public schools, particularly in low-income, urban areas (Burnaford, et. al., 2007). Holzman and Byrne (1978) noted that the “back to basics” education movement of the 1970s compromised students’ understanding and appreciation of culture. Schools were emphasizing instruction in basic skills and vocational development, and as a result, students were not being nourished creatively and morally. Holzman and Byrne (1978) proposed integrating the arts into the secondary curriculum to address this issue.

The *Joint Statement on Integration of the Arts with Other Disciplines*, written in 1992, represented the views of the Consortium of National Arts Education Associations on arts integration practices. Organizations in the Consortium included the American Alliance for Theater and Education (AATE), the Music Educators’ National Conference, (MENC), the National Art Education Association (NAEA), and the National Dance Association (NDA). While the Consortium firmly believed that all students should receive comprehensive education in the arts, it feared that integrated curricula would lead to the demise of arts-specific instruction. The question of arts integration remains a controversial subject among arts educators, mainly because there is no singular definition of arts integration. An extensive literature review by

Burnafor, Brown, Doherty, and McLaughlin (2007) reveals that there are three main categories of definitions: learning “through” and “with” the arts, as a curriculum connections process, and as a collaborative effort.

Several studies have found that participation in integrated arts programs are correlated with higher standardized test scores. A study by Catterall and Waldorf (1999) surveyed twenty-three schools in Chicago, Illinois, all of which had integrated arts programs. On average, students in these schools scored twice as high on standardized tests compared to their peers in traditional schools.

#### Impact of Arts Integration on Students with Learning and Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities

In the wake of No Child Left Behind, some educators have argued that teachers tend to “teach to the test” without making material relevant or interesting to students (Pederson, 2007). Rabkin and Redmond (2004) argue that integrated arts programs are effective in combating this issue. Their study found that implementing integrated arts curricula had the effect of cultivating a more energized school atmosphere, one in which students were highly engaged in what was going on in the classroom. This is because arts integrated curricula allow students to realize meaningful connections between their personal experiences and the classroom. Teachers also assumed more extensive leadership roles in curriculum planning. Teachers and students were able to take ownership of their learning environment, instead of “going through the motions” of state-mandated criteria. A study by Ingram and Reidell (2003) also noted a connection between integrated arts curricula and improved standardized reading test scores for fifth grade students.

Additionally, the arts greatly benefit children with special needs. Art forms allow students to solve problems in different ways that may elude them in the conventional classroom (Ponder and Kissinger, 2009). There is evidence that arts enrichment for special needs may be beneficial. One such success story is that of Camp Thunderbird, an arts enrichment program in Dallas for low-income students, which was offered from 2003 to 2008. Core subjects were taught through music, movement, theater, and computer activities. The program also met all of the National Dance Standards. Students of all abilities attended, but Keglton (2011) noted a profound improvement in academic performance of special needs students who attended Camp Thunderbird. Dorff (2012) studied an inclusive arts integration program at Kent State University, and found that participation in the program was especially beneficial to students with special needs, namely in terms of their ability to focus in the classroom.

Integrated arts curricula also provide opportunities for students to improve upon their social skills, as they can connect with others through art forms. Special needs students especially benefit from a personal connection with the creative process and with an artistic product. As stated by Wexler (2012), traditional special education programs too frequently bring students closer to their disabilities. This is because they often attempt to force a “normal” way of thinking upon students, instead of “honor[ing] the disabled individuals’ ways of knowing.” Integrated arts programs, however, mesh well with more divergent ways of thinking (McCord, 2004). A teacher at the Creative Growth Art Center in Oakland, California, noted that integrated arts programs allow teachers to “focus on the person and not the disability” (Wexler, 2012). Additionally, Andrus (2012) completed a study of an arts education and arts

therapy program run by Buffalo State College, which confirmed previous findings that the arts are especially beneficial for special needs students, especially those considered to be “high risk.” BSC’s Art Partners program, which started in 1994, targeted inner city classrooms. A majority of these students had intellectual, physical, emotional, and behavioral special needs. The study found that participation in the program increased teachers’ cultural competence, or their ability to effectively connect with and educate special needs students from diverse backgrounds. When teachers lack cultural competence, the achievement gap grows. Thus, integrated arts programs could help to bridge this gap.

#### The ArtsBridge America Program

The ArtsBridge America program has demonstrated that integrated arts curricula are effective in improving students’ academic skills. ArtsBridge was started at the University of California – Irvine in 1996 in response to the need for arts education in public schools. Since then, the program has spread to twenty-two universities in thirteen states (Center for Arts Research in Education, 2002). A study by Brouillette and Burns (2005) showed that the ArtsBridge program required “transformation of abstract procedural knowledge into a more flexible and fully assimilated performance capacity,” which had cross-curricular applications. The program had the effect of creating a nurturing environment for artistic and academic development, as students were able to cultivate meaningful relationships with teaching artists. This interdisciplinary approach to learning made school more relevant to students’ lives, which in turn, positively affected their motivation.

Over the past seventeen years, the program has expanded to thirty-one universities in sixteen states, including the University of Delaware. Supported largely

by governmental grants, ArtsBridge teaching artists offer arts education and arts enrichment programs in local schools across the United States. The program also provides artistic support and professional development opportunities to teachers. The ArtsBridge America program seeks to demonstrate the importance of the arts to a student's holistic education, and to promote activism for arts education (ArtsBridge America, 2012), which is especially crucial in the wake of jeopardizing budget cuts and the reality of curriculum narrowing.

The University of Delaware ArtsBridge Program was established in 2008 under the direction of Dr. Lynnette Overby. A part of the Office of Undergraduate Research and Experiential Learning at the university, UD's ArtsBridge program is both a service-learning and a research program. Not only do students work as teaching artists in local schools, they are also the principal investigators of original projects and studies on arts integration. ArtsBridge scholars design, implement, and evaluate original integrated arts curricula based on their own academic and artistic disciplines (Overby, et. al., 2013).

### **Conclusion**

This literature review detailed the current status of social studies and arts education in historical context. The disappearance of these subjects from public schools is an unforeseen circumstance of education reforms that began in the mid-1960s and the advent of standards-based education (Jorgensen and Hoffman, 2003). With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the age of state-mandated standardized testing in mathematics and literacy, the character of American public education transformed dramatically. NCLB has potentially deleterious consequences for untested subjects, especially social studies and the arts, as the

majority of elementary schools across the United States have narrowed their curricula in order to devote more time and resources to mathematics and literacy instruction (Heafner and Fitchett, 2012; Center on Educational Policy, 2011). Schools with high levels of poverty are more likely to dramatically reduce or abandon social studies and/or arts programs than schools in more affluent areas, effectively widening the achievement gap that NCLB was intended to close (Sunderman, et. al., 2005).

As curriculum narrowing has become increasingly widespread in recent years, social studies and arts instruction has suffered greatly (McGuire, 2007; Allen and Leverich, 2008). Studies have shown that instruction in social studies and the arts offer similar benefits to students, namely, the development of civic and cultural competence and improved cognitive abilities (Kahne and Sporte, 2008; Neumann, 2008; Nathan, 2008; Bresler, 2005). Nevertheless, some districts are reluctant to revive or reinstitute them due to cost (Silverstein and Layne, 2010; Rabkin and Redmond, 2004). Thus, the introduction of integrated arts curricula may be a possible solution to this issue, since these programs are inexpensive to implement and also offer a wide array of benefits to students.

While the literature has shown that participation in integrated arts curricula is beneficial to all students, several studies have shown that these curricula are uniquely equipped to instruct students with special needs. These especially benefit from arts integration because these curricula allow for divergent thinking and a more accessible, less restrictive classroom environment (McCord, 2004; Horowitz, 2002). Not only is participation in integrated arts programs associated with improved focus in the classroom among these students (Keglon, 2011), these programs may also help students with special needs develop social skills (Andrus, 2012).

Unsurprisingly, while several studies on integrated arts curricula have been conducted, these studies have largely focused on curricula designed to teach mathematics and literacy. Very little research has been done on the impact of a social studies integrated arts curriculum on student achievement and engagement. The following chapter introduces such a curriculum, entitled “Social Studies on Stage,” which was evaluated for its impact on these two parameters. Chapter Three discusses the pilot study of the curriculum.

## **Chapter 3**

### **PILOT STUDY**

#### **Introduction**

This section discusses the design, implementation, and results of the initial study of the “Social Studies on Stage” curriculum, which was conducted from February to June 2012. Part of the University of Delaware ArtsBridge program, the curriculum was created in response to the problem of curriculum narrowing explained in the literature review. Designed to teach third grade social studies content and skills through movement and music, “Social Studies on Stage” was created as a possible solution to address the disappearance of social studies and the arts from elementary schools.

#### **Purpose**

As this was a pilot study, its purpose was to develop and test the adequacy of research instruments, design and assess research protocol, to collect preliminary data, and to identify issues with study logistics and design (van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). Information gathered from this study would be used to inform changes and revisions in order to improve the efficacy and quality of subsequent studies of the “Social Studies on Stage” curriculum.

## **Sample**

Sixteen third-grade students participated in the study, including ten females and six males. All participants were enrolled in a charter school in Wilmington, Delaware. No participants had been formally identified with a learning disability at the time of the study.

## **Method**

### Curriculum Design

The “Social Studies on Stage” curriculum consists of ten lessons divided into three units. These are: cultural anthropology and geography, American history, and civics and government. Each unit is centered on an essential question and consists of three or four lessons.

All lessons are forty-five minutes long and follow the same basic format, which consists of four components. The first lesson component is an “exploration in literature.” Literature serves as the core of each lesson, and it may be presented in any number of ways here. Some lessons include a traditional read-aloud, such as the “D is for Democracy” lesson. The “China and the Ribbon Dance” lesson calls for a multimedia text, while the “Barack Obama and the 2008 Election” lesson requires the students to tell the story through a dance and role-playing activity. The second component of each lesson is an “immersion in content” in which students review information in order to draw connections between the literature and social studies concepts. Here, students also learn or review arts concepts central to each lesson. This is largely accomplished through stand-alone arts activities that preview the final integrated arts activity for each lesson. Finally, students participate in an integrated

arts activity that allows them to express mastery of academic content through an art form.<sup>1</sup>

Table 1 Revised “Social Studies on Stage” Units, Essential Questions, and Lessons

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Essential Question</b>	<b>Lessons</b>
Cultural Anthropology and Geography	Why do people dance?	The Zuni People of the Southwest United States
		The Chinese Ribbon Dance
		Russian Fairy Tales and the Troika
American History	What can music tell us about history? / How can we communicate history through music?	George Washington and the Revolutionary War
		Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War
		Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement
		Barack Obama and the 2008 Election
Civics and Government	How do I fit into American society?	All About Delaware
		Rights, Privileges, and Responsibilities
		“D is for Democracy”

#### Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative data was obtained through written pre- and posttests. The first measured social studies content knowledge, and included questions on American history, world geography, and civics. The second measured knowledge of movement and music concepts, including Laban terminology, basic musical notation, and types

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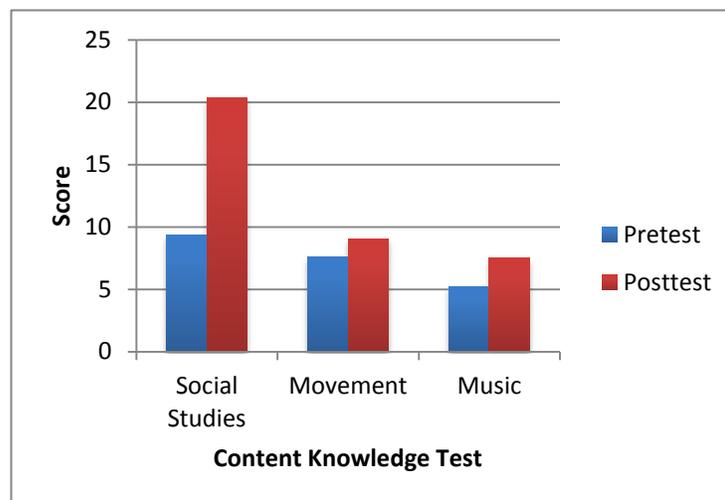
<sup>1</sup>Selected lesson plans used for this study can be found in Appendix A.

of instruments. Students took the same tests at the conclusion of the study in order to determine if the treatment, or participation in the curriculum, was effective in increasing students' knowledge in these disciplines.<sup>2</sup> Paired t-tests were conducted to determine if a significant difference between pre- and posttest scores existed.

## Results

Analysis of quantitative data revealed that there was a relationship between participation in the integration arts curriculum and performance on social studies, movement, and music knowledge tests.

**Figure 1 Spring 2012 Pilot Study Mean Content Knowledge Pre- and Posttest Scores**



The mean difference score on the social studies test was 10.88, with a standard deviation of 3.36. This represented a significant difference in pre- and posttest scores,

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<sup>2</sup> These assessments, including a breakdown of scoring, can be found in Appendix B.

$t(15) = 12.93, p < .05$ .<sup>3,4</sup> The same was true of movement knowledge scores ( $M=1.50, SD=1.41$ ),  $t(15) = 4.24, p < .05$ , and of music knowledge scores ( $M=2.31, SD=2.24$ ),  $t(15) = 4.12, p < .05$ .

### **Limitations of Study**

Perhaps the greatest limitation of the pilot study was its design. Only one group received a treatment, which in this case was instruction in the “Social Studies on Stage” curriculum, and was administered pre-tests and post-tests to measure the treatment’s effectiveness. This type of design has very little internal validity and no external validity, as it cannot be concluded that the treatment alone was responsible for the change in the dependent variable; there may have been additional variables influencing this change that were unaccounted for (Cohen, et.al., 2007; Sheskin, 2003). Additionally, there were not enough participants in this study to warrant a significant statistical analysis of data.

### **Discussion**

While it cannot be concluded from this study that the “Social Studies on Stage” curriculum was solely responsible for improved student performance on content

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<sup>3</sup> Typically, a p-value of  $p < .05$  is used as the cut-off for determining if the probability of an observed difference due to chance is too great. A p-value of  $p < .05$  denotes a 95% confidence interval, or probability that the change in the dependent variable did not occur by chance (Taylor, 1990; Morgan; 2010).

<sup>4</sup> For a population of this size, using a 95% confidence interval, a p-value greater than 1.753 signifies a statistically significant change in the dependent variable (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2012).

knowledge tests, it can be stated that a relationship exists between the two. Most importantly, information was gathered that informed the changes and implementation of the subsequent study, which is discussed in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 4**

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

#### **Introduction**

The study described in this section, which was conducted from October 2012 to January 2013, sought to answer more complex inquiries about the effectiveness of integrated arts programs than the preceding study. While the “Social Studies on Stage” program appeared to be related to increased knowledge of academic and artistic content, it still remained to be seen if any correlations existed between the academic and artistic, namely in terms of standardized test scores and the impact of arts integration on students with special learning needs. This study sought to determine if any relationships existed between participation in the integrated arts curriculum and improved standardized test scores, as measured by student performance on content knowledge test and the reading section of the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System. A second goal of the study was to determine if participation in the “Social Studies on Stage” curriculum was associated with heightened student engagement in the classroom, as measured by qualitative information gathered from a student focus group.

#### **Purpose**

The overall purpose of this study was to determine if any correlations exist between participation in integrated arts curricula and improved academic performance. This study examined the relationships among participation in the “Social Studies on

Stage” program, content knowledge tests, and standardized reading test scores. This study sought to answer the following questions, building on the findings of previous studies in the literature: (a) What connection(s) exist between student achievement on social studies knowledge test scores and standardized reading test scores?, (b) What connection(s) exist between student achievement on arts knowledge test scores and standardized reading test scores?, (c) What academic benefits does participation in integrated arts curricula offer to students with learning disabilities?, and (d) How does participation in integrated arts curricula affect student engagement in the classroom? Ultimately, the study sought to evaluate a relationship between participation in the curriculum, as measured by content knowledge pre- and posttest scores, and performance on standardized tests, as measured by DCAS reading scores. The study also sought to assess the impact of the curriculum on student engagement through a student focus group.

### **Sample**

The population selected for participation in this study was a group of eighteen third-grade students. These students attended a charter school in Wilmington, Delaware. This group represented one of two third-grade classes at the school, which served a total population of 263 students from kindergarten to fifth grade. The class selected for participation was a full inclusion class; students with learning disabilities are educated alongside those without, while still receiving any special education services necessary.

The population of eighteen third graders included five males and thirteen females. Participants were between the ages of eight and nine at the conclusion of the study. All lived in the greater Wilmington, Delaware area and officially identified as

Black/African-American. Table 2 tabulates the demographic information of each student according to school records, including gender, race/ethnicity, age at the conclusion of the study, and if the student had been formally identified with a learning disability (LD). Of the eighteen students who participated in the “Social Studies on Stage” study, six students were formally identified with learning disabilities.

Selection of this population was based on convenience. The University of Delaware’s ArtsBridge Program had previously established a partnership with this school, which was in close proximity to the Newark campus. The class was selected based on grade level and the teacher’s interest in the program.

Table 2 Demographic Information of Participants of 2012-13 Study

<b>Student</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>LD</b>
1	Female	Black/African-American	9	No
2	Male	Black/African-American	9	No
3	Male	Black/African-American	8	No
4	Female	Black/African-American	8	No
5	Female	Black/African-American	8	No
6	Female	Black/African-American	9	No
7	Female	Black/African-American	8	Yes
8	Male	Black/African-American	8	No
9	Female	Black/African-American	8	No
10	Female	Black/African-American	8	No
11	Female	Black/African-American	8	Yes
12	Female	Black/African-American	8	Yes
13	Male	Black/African-American	9	No
14	Female	Black/African-American	8	Yes
15	Female	Black/African-American	8	No
16	Female	Black/African-American	9	No
17	Male	Black/African-American	8	Yes
18	Female	Black/African-American	8	Yes

In accordance with University policy and federal laws on human subjects, a protocol for the study was approved by the University of Delaware Institutional Review Board prior to the commencement of the study. The protocol included procedures for obtaining informed consent and ensuring participant confidentiality. As the students who were selected for participation in the “Social Studies on Stage” study were minors, obtaining consent from parents and/or guardians was necessary in order for students to participate. Informed consent was obtained through permission forms, which described the purpose and design of the study. Parents/guardians had the option to grant or deny permission to participate in the study. All eighteen permission slips were returned, and all granted parental permission to participate in the study. In order to ensure participant confidentiality, participants’ identities were kept strictly confidential, known only to the principal investigator. Students’ names have been replaced with a number from one to eighteen. These numbers were assigned arbitrarily as an added security measure. Written materials, videotapes, and audiotapes were kept in a secure location and will be destroyed three years after the conclusion of the study.

## **Method**

### Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

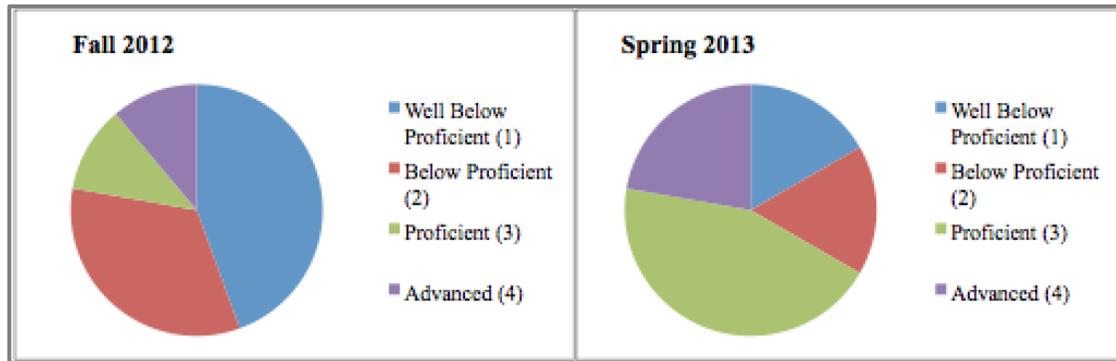
As in the pilot study, a single-group, pretest-posttest data collection method was utilized, in which students were given the same written assessment before and after being exposed to a treatment, or the implementation of the integrated arts program. These were the same pre- and posttests used in the pilot study. One test measured social studies knowledge, and the other measured movement and music

knowledge. Building on the findings of previous studies (Caterall and Waldorff, 1999; Ingram and Riedel, 2003), quantitative data analysis also included students' scores on the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS). As previous studies showed a relationship between participation in integrated arts curricula and improved standardized test scores, this study sought to examine this relationship in the context of the "Social Studies on Stage" curriculum. Because this study was concerned with the relationship between social studies, the arts, and literacy, only reading standardized test scores were collected.

Fall DCAS assessments were administered to the class during the first week of September 2012. At the beginning of the 2012-13 school year, four students demonstrated grade-level proficiency or advanced proficiency in reading at the beginning of the 2012-13 school year. This represented 22.22 percent of the class. The mean accountability score on the fall reading DCAS was 656.3, which is indicative that a student is performing "below standard." For students identified with learning disabilities, the average score was 626.83, which is considered "well below average."

Students completed the spring reading assessment during the last week of March 2013. Scores indicated that twelve students, or 66.67 percent of the class, reached or exceeded grade-level proficiency in reading by this point. The class average accountability score for the spring reading assessment was 700.17, which was within the parameters of "meet[ing] standard." While the average accountability score for students with learning disabilities was 705.5, two students were not demonstrating grade-level proficiency in reading.

**Figure 2 DCAS Reading Proficiency Scores for 2012-13 School Year**



A series of paired t-tests were conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between pre- and posttest scores. Correlational coefficients were then calculated for relationships among social studies, movement, music, and literacy. Relationships analyzed were: (a) social studies and music knowledge tests, (b) social studies and movement knowledge tests, (c) social studies knowledge tests and DCAS reading tests, (d) music knowledge tests and DCAS reading tests, and (e) movement knowledge tests and DCAS reading tests. These five relationships were analyzed to determine if exposure to the arts was associated with improved achievement in social studies and if participation in the curriculum was associated with improved standardized test scores.

#### Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

A focus group was also integrated into the research in order to assess the effect of the integrated arts curriculum on student engagement. Students responded to five questions, all of which pertained to the effect of “Social Studies on Stage” on their engagement and enjoyment of lesson material. Students had the opportunity to answer each question individually and to respond to peers’ answers and comments. An audio

recording of the focus group was later transcribed. The transcription was then coded for themes to determine trends in student engagement in the curriculum. The questions were as follows:

1. Was learning social studies with dance, movement, and music fun? Why or why not?
2. Did learning social studies with dance, movement, and music make sense to you? Why or why not?
3. Would you like to learn through dance, movement, and music in other subjects? What subjects?
4. What did you like best about learning social studies through movement, music, and dance?
5. Is there anything you didn't like about the program?

Four students were randomly selected from the total population to participate in a focus group, which and took place one week after the conclusion of the study in January 2013. All students in the sample population had an equal opportunity to be selected for the focus group; students were selected by chance. Student 10, Student 11, Student 14, and Student 18 comprised the population for the focus group. All four of these students were female, three of whom had been formally identified with learning disabilities. The fourth student was being screened for learning disabilities at the time of the study.

## Focus Group Student Profiles

### **Student 10**

Student 10, a female, was eight years old at the conclusion of the study. She was reserved and quiet in the classroom, and seemed to prefer working individually. In fact, Student 10 was the only focus group participant to not report enjoying group work. She consistently met behavior expectations, and was able to remain on-task. She had performed below grade-level since kindergarten, and was initially not recommended for promotion to the third grade at the end of the 2011-12 school year. Although never formally identified with a learning disability, she had been tested for processing disabilities previously. Student 10 will be reevaluated for learning disabilities before the conclusion of the 2012-13 school year at the recommendation of her teacher.

### **Student 11**

Student 11, an eight-year-old female, was identified with a processing disability during the 2011-12 school year while in second grade. Since the identification of the disability, an individualized education plan (IEP) was created to address her special learning needs. Student 11 struggled to meet grade-level proficiency in mathematics and reading for the past couple years, but had begun to make encouraging progress in these subjects by the middle of the school year. Described by her teacher as “talkative,” Student 11 did not always meet behavior expectations in class, which could present classroom management issues at times.

**Student 14**

Student 14, a female, was eight years old when the study was finished. This student had been identified with a speech impairment in kindergarten. Although her speech greatly improved over the last few years, Student 14 had difficulty making some retroflex sounds at the time of the study, such as the sound “R.” She had an IEP to address special needs, but is not considered to have a learning disability. She is advanced in reading, and meets grade-level proficiency in mathematics. A very talkative and outgoing student, she also had a twin sister who attended the same school.

**Student 18**

Student 18, also an eight-year-old female, has consistently performed at grade-level proficiency. She was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder while in second grade during the 2011-12 school year. She takes medication for ADHD, but does not receive any formal special education services from the school. Student 18 could occasionally be disruptive in class, but met behavior standards the majority of lessons.

## Chapter 5

### RESULTS

#### **Impact of Integrated Arts Curriculum on Student Performance on Content Knowledge Tests**

Analysis of pre- and posttests revealed improved performance on social studies, movement, and music knowledge tests.<sup>5</sup> For the social studies knowledge test, the mean pretest score was 9.28, with a standard deviation of 2.72. The mean posttest score was 19.67, with a standard deviation of 4.55. This difference was statistically significant,  $t(17) = 11.26, p < .05$ .<sup>6</sup> There was also a significant difference found between movement knowledge pretest scores ( $M=6.94, SD=1.83$ ) and posttest scores ( $M=9, SD=1.08$ ),  $t(17) = 6.08, p < 0.5$ . On the music knowledge test, the mean pretest score was 3.56, with a standard deviation of 1.58. The mean posttest score was 7.28, with a standard deviation of 1.53. The difference between these scores was also statistically significant,  $t(17) = 7.30, p < 0.5$ . Because all three sets of testing data yielded statistically significant results, it is possible that the implementation of the “Social Studies on Stage” curriculum may have contributed to the observed increase on content knowledge tests.

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<sup>5</sup> A breakdown of individual student scores can be found in Appendix C.

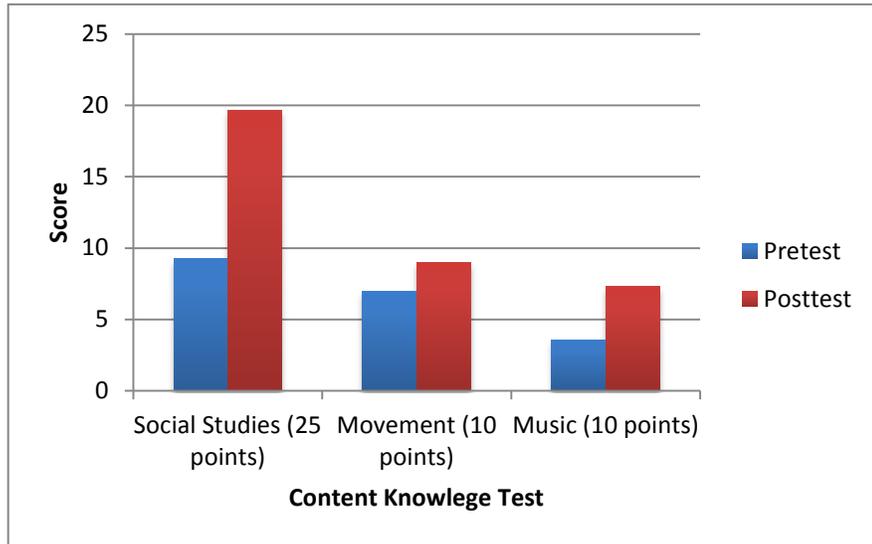
<sup>6</sup> For a population of this size, using a 95% confidence interval ( $p < .05$ ), a t-value greater than 1.740 indicates a statistically significant change in the dependent variable (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2012).

Mean difference scores were then calculated for each test. This data was used to calculate the correlational coefficients ( $r$ ) between scores on the social studies and movement tests and scores on the social studies and music tests. There was a moderate positive relationship noted between the social studies knowledge test and the movement knowledge test,  $r(16) = 0.60$ ,<sup>7</sup> meaning that as students' social studies scores improved, their movement scores did also. A similar, though not as strong, relationship was also apparent between the social studies and music tests  $r(16) = 0.48$ . In other words, as social studies content knowledge test scores improved, so did movement and music content knowledge test scores. Thus, there seems to be a relationship between improvement in social studies and improvement in the arts.

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<sup>7</sup> A correlation coefficient is an integer between -1 and 1, which represents the strength and magnitude of the linear relationship between two sets of data. A coefficient below  $\pm 0.35$  indicates a weak correlation, while a coefficient greater than  $\pm 0.67$  indicates a strong correlation. A coefficient between these two values indicates a moderate correlation. However, the smaller the population is, the closer the correlation coefficient needs to be to  $\pm 1$  to indicate statistical significance (Taylor, 1990).

**Figure 3 Fall 2012 Study Mean Content Knowledge Pre- and Posttest Scores**



### **Relationships Between Student Performance on Content Knowledge Tests and DCAS Reading Test**

#### General Population

There was no significant relationship found between student performance on the social studies content knowledge test and standardized reading test for the general population,  $r(16) = 0.19$ . There was also no statistically significant correlation found between student performance on the movement content knowledge test and performance on the DCAS reading test,  $r(16) = 0.14$ . However, a moderate positive correlation was found between performance on the music content knowledge test and performance on the standardized reading test,  $r(16) = 0.36$ . In other words, as students' scores on the music content knowledge test increased, so did their DCAS scores in reading. Thus, there seemed to be a relationship between exposure to the arts and improved test results among the general population.

### Students with Learning Disabilities

Among students with learning disabilities, a strong positive correlation was found between performance on the social studies content knowledge test and performance on the DCAS reading test,  $r(4) = 0.72$ .<sup>8</sup> Thus, as these students' social studies scores increased, as did their scores on standardized reading tests. While these were negative correlations were found between performance on movement and music content knowledge tests and change in DCAS reading scores, these were not found to be statistically significant for a population of this size. The calculation between movement content knowledge tests and DCAS reading tests was  $r(4) = -0.45$ . For music content knowledge tests and DCAS reading tests, this was  $r(4) = -0.19$ .

### **Impact of Integrated Arts Curriculum on Student Engagement**

Common trends among questions pertaining to the effect of the “Social Studies on Stage” curriculum included heightened engagement, enjoyment of working in groups, and appreciation for creating original work. All four students were in agreement that the integrated arts curriculum in social studies was more enjoyable and arousing than traditional social studies curricula. Students frequently mentioned the positive effects of being able to move around the classroom.

When asked if learning social studies through dance, movement, and music was enjoyable, students frequently discussed their preference for the integrated arts curriculum over a traditional curriculum. Students 10 and 14 stated that “reading boring books” and “sitting at your desk” had the effect of decreasing their engagement

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<sup>8</sup> With a population  $n=6$ , the correlation coefficient must be greater than 0.707 to be considered statistically significant (Kanji, 2006).

in a traditional curriculum. Students 11 and 18 stated that they particularly enjoyed moving around the classroom. Student 11 reported not immediately realizing she was learning because of how greatly she enjoyed the activities: “It doesn’t feel like you’re learning, but you are.” All four students agreed that the integrated arts curriculum made social studies accessible and understandable. Students cited the patience and explicit directions given by the teacher as the reason why “Social Studies on Stage” fostered understanding of social studies. However, when asked what their favorite part of the program was, Students 10 and 14 mentioned that working with a partner or in groups enabled them to better understand lesson material. Student 11 also stated that the program could be improved with the inclusion of additional group work. It is notable that Student 18 was the only student not to mention a preference or gravitation towards group work. Student 18 had been diagnosed with ADHD at the time of the study, so it is interesting to note that she did not mention this.

Of all the students in the focus group, Student 11 mentioned movement the most. This is interesting given that Student 11 had been identified with a processing disability. In addition to mentioning that the addition of movement made learning more enjoyable, Student 11 also mentioned the effect of participation in “Social Studies on Stage” on her ability to focus: “I could focus better because I wasn’t bored.” Based on Student 11’s responses, it seems that there is a connection between movement in the classroom and heightened student engagement.

### **Limitations of Study**

Due to time constraints, there was no control group included in the study. One group was studied, which received the treatment, but these results were not solidified by a comparison to a control group. Time constraints also affected the way in which

quantitative data was collected. Students were pre- and posttested on arts written knowledge, and not performance. Because of this, some dimensions of students' mastery of movement and music skills may not have been assessed. Another consideration that should be made is the alignment of testing times. While the reading DCAS test was administered in September 2012 and March 2013, "Social Studies on Stage" content knowledge tests were administered in October 2012 and January 2013. Because of this, relationships among these sets of testing data may not accurately reflect the effect of the integrated arts curriculum on student performance on standardized tests. Finally, the population size was too small to warrant a significant statistical analysis of testing data. While the general population included eighteen participants, there were only six students with learning disabilities in the population.

### **Conclusion**

The study did not find a statistical significance between improved social studies knowledge scores and improved reading scores on standardized tests in the general population. However, there was a moderate positive correlation noted between improvement in social studies and improvement in reading DCAS scores among students with learning disabilities. There was no significant correlation found between improvement on movement knowledge scores and improved standardized testing scores for either the general population or students with learning disabilities. However, improvement on music knowledge scores is highly correlated with improved standardized reading test scores among students with learning disabilities.

Despite the flaws of this study, it did highlight several important relationships: (a) the "Social Studies on Stage" program is correlated with improved performance on social studies, movement, and music content knowledge tests; (b) there is a

statistically significant correlation between improvement on social studies content knowledge tests and improvement on standardized reading tests among students with learning disabilities who participated in the study; (c) a moderate positive correlation exists between improvement on the music content knowledge test and improvement on standardized reading test scores in the general population; and (d) integrated arts curricula that implement movement and group work seem to be effective in increasing student engagement in lesson material. It is important to note, though, that correlation is not causation, and it cannot be definitively stated that the “Social Studies on Stage” curriculum alone was responsible for any change in students’ academic performance.

The following section includes a discussion on this study. The results are discussed in comparison to findings of previous studies, the comparison of which sheds light on implications for educational policy and suggestions for future research.

## **Chapter 6**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Rationale and Summary of Results**

This study primarily sought to determine if and what relationships existed between participation in an integrated arts curriculum and academic achievement, as measured by performance on content knowledge tests and standardized reading tests. In the literature, numerous scholars have previously noted connections between participation in social studies instruction and improved critical thinking abilities (Neumann, 2008). Earlier studies have also highlighted a relationship between social studies and literacy (Wolk, 2003; Kahne and Spote, 2008). Similarly, in the study discussed in this paper, there seemed to be a connection between improved performance on social studies content knowledge tests and improved performance on standardized reading tests, particularly among students with learning disabilities. Because standardized reading tests require students to apply critical thinking skills to literacy concepts, the findings of the “Social Studies on Stage” study also pointed to the relationships among critical thinking, literacy, and social studies instruction that previous studies have shown to exist.

As for the arts, studies by Johnson and Memmott (2003) and Wilkins, et. al. (2004) revealed similar connections between arts instruction and performance on standardized tests. Both these studies found relationships between improved standardized test scores and increased exposure to performing arts instruction. The “Social Studies on Stage” study also suggested that a relationship exists between these

two variables. Analysis of testing data showed a moderate positive correlation between improved performance on music content knowledge tests and improved performance on standardized reading tests. In other words, as a student's scores increased on one test, so did his or her scores on the other.

A secondary purpose of the "Social Studies on Stage" study was to evaluate the impact of the integrated arts curriculum on student engagement in the classroom. In addition to observing connections between participation in integrated arts curricula and improved academic performance, the literature have also found that participation in integrated arts curricula also has the effect of heightening student engagement in the classroom. Analyses of integrated arts curricula by the Center for Arts Education (2012) and Brouillette and Burns (2005) have revealed that schools that schools in which these programs are implemented tend to have more energized learning environments, in which teachers and students alike are more engaged and invested in education. This is especially true for students with special learning needs. Integrated arts curricula are well suited for instructing children with divergent ways of thinking (Keglon, 2011; McCord, 2004), and also are associated with improving these students' focus in the classroom (Andrus, 2012). The "Social Studies on Stage" study found similar patterns to the ones discussed in previous studies. Based on responses to the focus group questions, it seemed that students strongly preferred the integrated arts curriculum to the traditional social studies curriculum, mainly because of the inclusion of movement in the lessons. Students also appreciated the amount of partner and group work that was included in the curriculum, stating that this greatly helped them focus and comprehend lesson material.

While not the primary focus of the study, what the “Social Studies on Stage” study revealed in regards to student engagement is perhaps its most significant finding. It is important to note that the four students included in the focus group had either been formally identified with or were being evaluated for learning disabilities. The overwhelming positive response to movement in the classroom from these students may offer an explanation as to why special needs students are better able to focus and complete complex tasks in an integrated arts classroom than they are in a traditional classroom. This can be summed up in a student’s comment: “It doesn’t feel like you’re learning, but you are.” Thus, it can be inferred that the inclusion of movement in the curriculum had the effect of increasing engagement in the classroom, as students approached activities as if they were recreational.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

In order to more accurately evaluate relationships between the “Social Studies on Stage” curriculum and academic performance, several changes should be made to the research design. The implementation of a quasi-experimental design, rather than a single-group pretest-posttest design, would increase the external validity of testing data analysis. External validity refers to the ability to generalize results to other populations (Trochim, 2008). In this design, a control group would receive traditional social studies instruction, while the experimental group would receive instruction in the “Social Studies on Stage” curriculum. Both groups would be administered the same pre- and posttests in social studies, movement, and music content knowledge. Statistical analysis of this testing data, along with analysis of standardized reading test scores, would determine whether or not the curriculum was responsible for any change in students’ academic performance.

A subsequent study might also take a different focus, evaluating the curriculum's impact on student engagement in the classroom in more depth. A more comprehensive tool for measuring student engagement should be developed. These tools may include student surveys or journals, which could be used to track levels of student engagement over the duration of the study, or as it pertains to certain lessons. This study also highlighted the need to create better prompts for students when discussing how participation in the curriculum affected their engagement in the lesson. Students should be asked several follow-up questions in order to determine the reasons behind their feelings towards the program. Instead of evaluating connections between student performance on content knowledge tests and standardized test scores, perhaps a more appropriate and relevant relationship to analyze is that between student engagement in the classroom and performance on standardized test scores.

### **Implications on Educational Policy**

As this study highlights the potential for integrated arts curricula to increase student engagement and energize the classroom environment, it becomes clear that teachers should have more opportunities for professional development in this area. An area that has traditionally seen few opportunities professional development among classroom teachers, the benefits of implementing integrated arts lessons cannot be understated, especially for students with special needs. Thus, teachers of children with special needs, particularly elementary school teachers, should be prioritized in receiving this professional development. However, professional development in arts integration methods would be beneficial to all teachers.

## **Conclusion**

The provisions of the No Child Behind Act, namely standardized testing, do not seem to be a mere phase in American public education; they are here to stay. The arts and social studies may disappear from the elementary curriculum entirely if policy makers and administrators do not realize their importance to students' holistic education. When married in an integrated arts curriculum, the synergy of these disciplines may offer a way to improve students' academic performance, exactly what NCLB is intended to do. It seems that the link between integrated arts curricula and improved academic performance is attributed to heightened engagement in the classroom, which future studies may choose to look into. In the words of Charles Fowler, "the arts affirm the interconnectedness of all learning" (1994). Arts integration may help schools realize this interconnectedness, thereby preserving two disciplines that recent policies have endangered.

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## Appendix A

### SELECTED LESSON PLANS

#### Cultural Anthropology/Geography Unit Lesson 2: The Chinese Ribbon Dance

**Length:** 45 minutes

**Materials Needed:** *The Myth of Creation* video, ribbons, speakers for music, MP3 of traditional Chinese music

<b>Unit Essential Question:</b> Why do people dance?		
<b>Standards Addressed</b>	<b>Lesson Questions</b>	<b>Learning Objectives</b>
<i>Delaware Geography Standard Three:</i> Students will develop an understanding of the diversity of human culture and the unique nature of places.  <i>National Dance Standard Three:</i> Understanding dance as a way to create and communicate meaning	What is the purpose of myths in culture?  What can dance tell us about Chinese culture?	Students will understand how dance can tell a story through learning traditional choreography for the Chinese ribbon dance.  Students will gain an understanding of and respect for similarities and differences between cultures.

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#### **Introduction:**

Tell students we will be learning about a myth from China. Ask what a myth is. Introduce key elements of Chinese culture: yin and yang, dragons, luck. Explain to them that people use myths to explain why the world is the way it is.

#### **Instructional Procedures:**

1. Warm-Up
  - Review concepts of level, energy, and tempo.
2. Exploration in literature

- Ask students to define a “myth.” What is make-believe? What is real?
  - Introduce aspects of Chinese culture in the story: yin and yang, dragons, luck.
  - Show the “Creation” video to the class.
  - Ask students what in the story was made-up, and what could be real.
  - Ask students what they think this could reveal about Chinese culture.
3. Connection to content
- History of the ribbon dance
    - Emperor had a dream about fairies dancing with ribbons
    - Originally performed only for royalty
    - Became popular among common people decades later
  - How can dance tell a story?
4. Arts integration activity
- Learn ribbon dance with traditional music.
  - Show the myth of creation through movement.

**Closure:**

Students will write a short reflection paragraph including:

- One thing they learned about Chinese culture
- What their favorite part of the lesson was
- An explanation of how a story can be told through dance

## American History Unit

### Lesson 7: Barack Obama and the 2008 Election

**Length:** 45 minutes

**Materials Needed:** *Barack Obama: Son of Promise, Child of Hope*, PowerPoint with pictures/video from 2008 election, audio for “Yes We Can”, scene cards

<b>Unit Essential Question:</b> What can music tell us about history? / How can we communicate history through music?		
<b>Standards Addressed</b>	<b>Lesson Questions</b>	<b>Learning Objectives</b>
<p><i>Delaware History Standard Four:</i> Students will develop historical knowledge of major events and phenomena in world, United States, and Delaware history [Content].</p> <p><i>National Standards for Music Education:</i> 5. Reading and notating music.</p>	<p>Why is the 2008 election important in American history?</p> <p>Why is it important to celebrate diversity in our society?</p>	<p>Students will understand the importance of Barack Obama in American history through acting out scenes from <i>Barack Obama: Son of Promise, Child of Hope</i>.</p> <p>Students will practice reading simple rhythmic notation.</p>

#### **Introduction:**

Ask students why the President is important. Why is Barack Obama such an important president in American history? How do people choose the President?

#### **Instructional Procedures:**

1. Exploration in Literature / Arts Integration Activity #1
  - Introduction
    - Opening questions
      - Why is the President important?
      - Why is President Obama so important in American history?
  - *Barack Obama: Son of Promise, Child of Hope*
    - Review and explain concept of improvisation.

- Break students into groups of 2 or 3. Each group will receive a note card with a scene from *Barack Obama: Son of Promise, Child of Hope*. They will have rehearsal time to plan their “performance” of the scene.
  - As the teacher reads the book aloud, each group will perform their scene to bring the story to life.
2. Connection to Content
- Mini-Lesson on Barack Obama
    - Students previously submitted responses for what they would like to know about President Obama. These questions are answered in a PowerPoint presentation.
      - Obama’s childhood
      - The Obama Family
      - How Obama became president [transition into government/civics lesson]
  - Mini-Lesson on Government and Civics
    - Opening question: Why is voting important?
    - What do candidates do when they’re running for president? [transition into Arts Integration Activity #2]
3. Arts Integration Activity #2
- Music literacy in “Yes We Can” song
    - Have students echo simple rhythms (clapping)
    - Show notation of rhythms on board. Explain values of each note.
    - Write out rhythms on board, ask students to clap them back as teacher keeps the beat. The last one of these rhythms will be the chorus of “Yes We Can.”
    - Listen to “Yes We Can” song and tell students to listen for chorus. When they hear it, sing and clap along.

**Closure:**

Journal reflections

- One thing you learned about Barack Obama.
- Why are elections important?
- Your favorite part of the lesson.

## Civics and Government Unit Lesson 8: All About Delaware

**Length:** 45 minutes

**Materials Needed:** *F is for First State*, PowerPoint with Delaware symbols, “Our Delaware” MP3

<b>Unit Essential Question:</b> How do I fit into American society?		
<b>Standards Addressed</b>	<b>Lesson Questions</b>	<b>Learning Objectives</b>
<p><i>Delaware Civics Standard One:</i> Students will examine the structure and purposes of governments with specific emphasis on constitutional democracy [Government].</p> <p><i>National Standards for Music Education:</i> 5. Reading and notating music.</p> <p><i>National Dance Standard Three:</i> Using dance to communicate meaning</p>	<p>What is the difference between a city, state, and country?</p> <p>Why is it important to learn about the state I live in?</p>	<p>Students will communicate the history and significance of Delaware state symbols through creative movement.</p> <p>Students will practice reading simple rhythmic notation.</p>

**Introduction:**

Ask students to name the city they live in. Ask students to name the state they live in. Ask for prior knowledge about the history and/or symbols of Delaware, and why students think it is important to learn about the history and symbols of their state.

**Instructional Procedures:**

1. Exploration in Literature
  - Read *F is for First State*.
  - Explain to students that Delaware is called the “First State” because it was the first state to sign the Constitution in 1787.
2. Connection to Content #1

- Show students PowerPoint with pictures of Delaware symbols. Do not explain significance yet.
3. Integrated Arts Activity #1
    - Delaware Symbols Dance
      - Have students get into groups of 2 or 3.
      - Each group will receive a picture of a Delaware state symbol. They will also receive a note card which briefly explains the history and significance of the symbol.
      - Working with their group members, students will “dance” the significance and history of the symbol. Students will perform these in order to teach their peers.
  4. Connection to Content #2
    - Show students PowerPoint slides with maps locating their town, state, and country.
    - Name other towns, states, and countries. Have students correctly identify each.
  5. Integrated Arts Activity #2
    - Project lyrics to “Our Delaware” on the board. Ask students what words come to mind after reading it – how would they describe the emotion of the song?
    - Play MP3 of “Our Delaware.”
    - Have students learn chorus of the song. They should clap the rhythm of the melody as they sing.
    - Each group will write a new stanza to “Our Delaware” about their symbol with body percussion accompaniment.

**Closure:**

Journal reflections

- One thing you learned about Delaware.
- What town do you live in? State? Country?
- Your favorite part of the lesson.

## Appendix B

### DATA COLLECTION

#### Social Studies Knowledge Test

**25 points total**

1. List three American Presidents. (3 points)
2. Who is the President of the United States today? (1 point)
3. Why is Martin Luther King, Jr. important? (1 point)
4. What is the capital of the United States? (1 point)
5. What is the capital of Delaware? (1 point)
6. Circle your answer:
  - a. Voting for the president is a: (1 point)  
**responsibility   right   privilege**
  - b. Driving is an example of a: (1 point)  
**responsibility   right   privilege**
  - c. Freedom of religion is a: (1 point)  
**responsibility   right   privilege**
7. What are the seven continents of the world? (7 points)
8. Is Wilmington a city, state, or country? (1 point)
9. Is Maryland a city, state, or country? (1 point)

10. Is China a city, state, or country? (1 point)

11. Can you color in the United States on this map? (1 point)



12. Can you name three different countries? (3 points)

13. Why is it important to learn about other cultures? (1 point)

## Arts Knowledge Test

### MOVEMENT – 10 points total

1. Is walking a traveling or stationary movement? (1 point)

**Traveling      Stationary**

2. Is turning a traveling or stationary movement? (1 point)

**Traveling      Stationary**

3. Can you name another kind of traveling movement? (1 point)

4. Can you name another kind of stationary movement? (1 point)

5. If I am floating, what kind of **energy** am I using? (1 point)

**Sharp      Smooth**

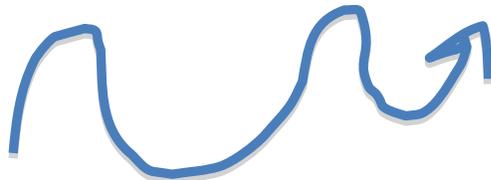
6. If I am melting, what kind of **tempo** am I using? (1 point)

**Fast      Slow**

7. What kind of **energy** am I using when I wiggle? (circle one) (1 point)

**Bound      Free**

8. What kind of pathway is this? (1 point)



**Curved      Straight      Zig-zag**

9. What kind of pathway is this? (1 point)



**Curved   Straight   Zig-zag**

10. If a shape is symmetrical, is it the same or different on both sides? (1 point)

**Same   Different**

**MUSIC – 10 points total**

11. Is the beat of a song constant or changing? (1 point)

**Constant   Changing**

12. Rhythm is the \_\_\_\_\_ of beats in the music. (1 point)

13. The volume of music is called *dynamics*. If you sing piano, you are singing: (1 point)

**Loud   Soft**

14. What kind of note is this? (1 point)



- a. Eighth note
- b. Quarter note
- c. Half note

15. What kind of note is this? (1 point)



- a. Eighth note
- b. Quarter note
- c. Half note

16. If you are singing the main line of the music, you are singing the: (1 point)

**Melody Harmony**

17. Can you name a percussion instrument? (1 point)

18. Can you name a string instrument? (1 point)

19. Can you name a woodwind instrument? (1 point)

20. Can you name a brass instrument? (1 point)

**Appendix C**  
**TESTING DATA**

Table 3 Spring 2012 Pilot Study Content Knowledge Pre- and Posttest Scores

Student	Social Studies (25 points)		Arts – Movement (10 points)		Arts – Music (10 points)	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
1	7.5	21	5	10	6	6
2	8	22	7	8	5	8
3	11	16	5	8	4	8
4	11.5	21	7	9	5	4
5	12	18	8	9	5	7
6	4	15	9	9	5	8
7	7	16	6	8	6	10
8	9.5	22	10	9	4	8
9	8.5	23	7	9	6	7
10	15	24	9	9	3	7
11	14	23	9	10	2	8
12	10.5	25	7	10	7	7
13	9.5	16	8	10	5	9
14	6	21	7	8	8	6
15	10	23	8	9	7	8
16	5	20	9	10	5	9
<i>Mean</i>	<i>9.31</i>	<i>20.38</i>	<i>7.57</i>	<i>9.06</i>	<i>5.19</i>	<i>7.50</i>
<i>SD</i>	<i>3.05</i>	<i>3.20</i>	<i>1.46</i>	<i>0.77</i>	<i>1.52</i>	<i>1.41</i>

Table 4 Fall 2012 Study Content Knowledge Pre- and Posttest Scores

Student	Social Studies (25 points)		Arts – Movement (10 points)		Arts – Music (10 points)	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
1	9	16	8	7	4	4
2	10	22	8	10	4	9

3	7	13	4	8	1	5
4	16	25	8	9	3	10
5	11	25	9	10	5	7
6	10	24	9	10	6	8
7	7	24	8	10	3	8
8	5	15	5	8	2	7
9	12	22	9	10	7	7
10	10	12	4	7	3	6
11	9	16	8	10	3	8
12	10	23	8	9	1	7
13	12	23	6	8	5	5
14	10	24	8	9	2	8
15	6	22	8	10	3	8
16	10	16	5	8	4	9
17	5	14	4	9	4	8
18	8	18	6	10	4	7
<i>Mean</i>	<i>9.28</i>	<i>19.67</i>	<i>6.94</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>3.56</i>	<i>7.28</i>
<i>SD</i>	<i>2.72</i>	<i>4.55</i>	<i>1.83</i>	<i>1.08</i>	<i>1.58</i>	<i>1.52</i>

Table 5 Student Responses to Focus Group Questions

<b>Question</b>	<b>Response</b>
Was learning social studies with dance, movement, and music fun? Why or why not?	Student 10: "Yes! Before, social studies was so boring. I don't like reading boring books. I didn't know you could move and sing at school like that."
	Student 11: "I like when you move around all the time. It doesn't seem like you're learning, but you are."
	Student 14: "I liked it. I wish we could do all our classes this way. School is too boring when you're sitting at your desk."
	Student 18: "Yes it was! Especially the dancing. I liked singing too. It was a lot different than what we normally do but I like it better."
Did learning social studies with dance, movement, and music make sense to you? Why or why not?	Student 10: "Everything pretty much made sense to me. You explained everything a lot."
	Student 11: "I could focus better because I wasn't bored. But when I was confused I asked questions and then I got it."
	Student 14: "Sometimes things didn't make sense, but you always helped me, and then I was okay. It was better than normal social studies stuff, though."
	Student 18: "I got it. I want to do social studies this way for the rest of school."
Would you like to learn through	Student 10: "Yes! Math. Definitely in math."
	Student 11: "Math. It's too boring, and we do a lot of it."

dance, movement, and music in other subjects? What subjects?	Student 14: "Math, and science too."
	Student 18: "All of them! It was so much fun!"
What did you like best about learning social studies through movement, music, and dance?	Student 10: "I liked that we worked with groups or with partners a lot. Sometimes I get confused, but my partner can help me."
	Student 11: "That I got to move around! We never get to move around except in gym class."
	Student 14: "Working in groups. I don't like working by myself because sometimes it's too hard."
	Student 18: "Being able to come up with our own ideas about stuff. We made up our own dances and moves and that was fun."
Is there anything you didn't like about the program?	Student 10: "We could have worked in groups more. Some things were hard to do on your own."
	Student 11: "Yeah, more groups!"
	Student 14: "Could we use instruments? We use them in music class and it's really fun."
	Student 18: "No, I liked everything."