

Arts Advocacy

Assessment Task 1 ECE704

Unit Chair: Mrs Fiona Phillips

Zahra Seyedshakeri
219340714
MTeach761
Burwood campus/Full-Time

Throughout history, arts have been an integral part of human being and a non-segmented component of any culture (Dinham 2020) that connect people together. Therefore, it is not surprising that it has been part of school's curriculum for a very long time. Contemporary education in the arts expects that through arts, children develop their capacity to become successful and fulfilled individuals in the twenty-first century (Dinham 2020). Indeed, this significant expectation is supported with all the Australian educational policies. For instance, both Melbourne Declaration (DEEWR 2008) and The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (Education Council 2019) include arts along with English, mathematics, science, language, and humanities in the curriculum in order to promote a world-class curriculum and assessment. In the same way, Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL 2017: 'Standard 2'), reinforce teachers to plan for learning and play that contain specific reference to creativity and arts to engage the children to a holistic learning experience that promotes high-quality teaching. Specifically, for young children, The Early Years Learning Framework [EYLF] (DEEWR 2009) brings up Arts under the fifth outcome in which highlighting children as effective communicators. The outcome five underlines the cruciality of 'communication' in developing *belonging, being and becoming* in the early years of life, which is considered as a foundation for children's future life. Moreover, arts can be a meaningful tool for communication and enhance communication skills. Likewise, Dinham and Chalk (2018) define arts as a form of communication. They also point out that art provides children with opportunities to express their thoughts, feeling and ideas through different mediums which is critical for various reasons. For instance, arts can manipulate a common language among children and educators. This common language is important because children in their early years of lives come with a wide range of abilities and demonstrate a rapid change in their identities, knowledge, understandings, and capacities (The EYLF, DEEWR 2009). For example, for non-verbal children-regardless of the reason behind it, arts can be an essential tool for communication and expression. Another example of the importance of arts for children as a common language is for the children with English as an additional language. Arthur et al. (2020) claim that in some early learning settings, children with non-English backgrounds experiencing some degrees of being disadvantaged. In those cases, arts might facilitate children's involvement and can create a more inclusive education by engaging all the children, regardless of their English competency. While some children have difficulties to communicate with 'words', arts offer them to communicate

through paints and bushes, with dance and drama. However, creating an inclusive education through arts is not limited to engaging children with different languages, but as Dinham and Chalk (2018) also point out, including authentic arts in the curriculum can establish an inclusive learning environment and enriches ALL children's learning experiences.

Another significant aspect of children's development that might be evolved in light of arts can be explained with the theory of mind. As Arthur et al. (2020) explain, theory of mind refers to the children's awareness of their mental states and others mental states, which develops over time and through social interactions. Arts provide unlimited opportunities for children to connect with themselves and others. For example, when children draw, they can see what was in their minds and show their drawings to their peers and understand their thinking. Also, through Arts, children perceive and understand their impact on the world, and they can see their persistent effect on their environment such as when children engage with paper and watercolours, they can see how colours mix and simultaneously make patterns on the paper (Dinham and Chalk 2018). Equally important, Dinham and Chalk (2018) emphasise that children should learn to understand arts both as artists and audiences and become capable of communicating with today's digital world.

Through Arts, children are offered various opportunities for trial and error, create large and small artwork which assist them to develop confidence as well as other important dispositions such as problem-solving. Dinham and Chalk (2018) also point out, authentic art-making experiences, under the expectations of the curriculum, would maintain a rich learning environment and leads to foster children's decision-making, problem-solving, experimenting, reflecting, refining, etc.; this is considered as children's emergent artistic concepts which can be developed by the actual 'doing' the artistic projects. Therefore, the availability of arts' resources is significant. Arthur et al. (2020) note that children's representation of their environment would develop if they are provided with high-quality art resources, encouraged to share and care about these resources and offered meaningful support to explore them.

In the same way, Arts contribute to children's wellbeing by providing them opportunities to feel competent both physically and spiritually. MacLachlan, Fleer and Edwards (2010) point out that educators should provide adequate opportunities for children to be physically active as it leads to develop their motor skills as well as emotional and cognitive

development. Dance and drama are two examples of the implementation of arts that cater for children's physical activities. Also, it can recognise as psychomotor skills in which children simultaneously experience arts and physical activity (MacLachlan, Fler and Edwards 2010) or, in other words, they move and seek meaning through it. In addition, the early years of life are critical for children's physical literacy since without adequate physical competency, children will face difficulties understanding their body's movements and even performing simple motor patterns (Dinham and Chalk 2018) which is essential for successful schooling.

Now turn to the role of arts in learning mathematics and numeracy. For this purpose, let us begin with the Australian curriculum. The Australian curriculum categorised Arts into five distinct but related subjects: Dance, Drama, Music, Visual Art, Media Arts. On the other hand, in terms of mathematics it explains that children's achievement by the end of the foundation level should include connections between number names, numerals and quantities, compare objects, explain the order and duration of events, use appropriate language to describe locations and sort shapes and objects (The Australian Curriculum n.d.: 'Mathematics foundation year level') which demonstrate overlaps with the children's expected achievements in different arts learning areas. For instance, in visual art, children should explore and apply visual conventions, such as line, shape, colour and texture (Australian Curriculum n.d.: 'Visual art foundation to year 2'). Similarly, MacDonald (2018) explains the importance of spatial visualisation for children and develops their ability to present their mental image, which is essential for their mathematical concepts and geometrical thinking which can be done through visual arts. Another example to demonstrate the association of visual art and mathematics is that visual arts provide opportunities for children to learn different attributes of objects. Knaus and Featherstone (2014) also point out the importance of understanding the attributes of objects such as colour, shape, texture and size in mathematics. In terms of Dance and Drama, children should explore space, time and dynamics as well as explore voice and movements (Australian Curriculum n.d.: 'dance and drama foundation to year 2'). As can be seen, Australian Curriculum outlines the contents, which are the foundation mathematical concepts that should be developed in the early years. In terms of music, it is significant for children to learn to move and perform with beat and tempo (Australian Curriculum

n.d.: 'music foundation to year 2'). This connects with understanding patterns which is an essential part of understanding mathematics. Björklund and Ahlskog-Björkman (2017) believe that in some senses, mathematics can be defined as a language of patterns, structures, and relationships.

After all, Arts is a vital aspect of children's lives, and its authentic implementation into the curriculum would result in a holistic and thorough learning experience and develop a whole child for the twenty-first century and it provides enormous opportunities for learning mathematics in their everyday routines as MacDonald (2018) also points out that mathematics should connect with children's real-life appropriately to be meaningful.

The following section of the essay will describe my creative piece from arts and mathematics perspectives as part of this assignment.

My creative piece: A Story, Podcast and Drama cards

My creative piece of this assignment is a story that is written and illustrated by me, and it was turned into a podcast for children to enjoy. The podcast begins with a piece of short beating music which is created with Chrome Music Maker. It has a simple pattern that children can be encouraged to tap on their lap as they listen to it.

In fact, this creative piece aims to manipulate a whole session of story-telling and drama. The illustrations were done in five A5 laminated cards, which can be used in drama sessions which have different purposes such as creating Tableaux. My aim was to provide the children with different opportunities which start from The Story and maintain a learning environment with experiencing music, drama and visual arts. As Establishing a multi-dimensional art session for children can enrich their learning and experience through arts (Dinham & Chalk 2018). I emphasise on turning this story into a drama session not only for exploring sequence, time and patterns and do physical activities which are significantly important, but also because drama links the story to children's own experience (Dinham & Chalk 2018) and provide a more meaningful learning experience by getting the children to share their own experience and stories related to the topic. Moreover, it would provide the teacher with an opportunity to know the children by accessing their funds of knowledge and also help to

plan more authentic learning experiences. This also would increase their social interactions and might result in evolving their knowledge of themselves and their dispositions.

While this story aims to foster children's confidence and self-acceptance as its golden goal through arts, it simultaneously provides opportunities to develop children's literacy and numeracy.

In terms of literacy, it can be seen that each animal is introduced to the children by one or two alliteration words such as Enormous Elephant, Petite Pygmy Possum, Teeny-Weeny Weasel, Gigantic Giraffe, Big Burly Bear and Wise Wombat. This helps the children engage with the text and develop their sense of play (Fellowes and Oakley 2020). While there are more aspects of the story that can be linked to children's literacy development, due to the emphasis of this assignment which is mathematics and numeracy, let us leave this here and turn to the mathematical aspects of the story.

MacDonald (2018) believes that storybooks can provide meaningful opportunities for children to engage with mathematics. This story's mathematical aspect can be categorised into four sections of exploring patterns, measurements, comparison, time and instructions. One of the essential components of the children's picture books that can address both children's literacy and numeracy is pattern (van den Heuvel-Panhuizen & Elia 2012) which is also emphasised in The EYLF (DEEWR 2009). Another mathematical concept is comparison and measurements. Throughout the story, the main character compares herself with different animals and uses specific words to refer to them, such as big, little, long, tall, short, fat, etc. The story touches on the concept of time briefly by mentioning different times of the day, like in the morning and when the sun was setting.

The last mathematical concept refers to the podcast, which encourages children to follow instructions and develop children's inquiry mind by asking open-ended questions. Knaus and Featherstone (2014) believe that the ability to follow an instruction relates to children's mathematical mind and provide a list of words that possibly help the children to follow the instruction on page 96, which I tried to use while I was telling the story (e.g. listen, join in and what comes next?). In the podcast, I tried to engage the children and foster their problem-solving skills by asking them open-ended questions in each section of the story, get them to guess and predict and link what they are listening to their own experience.

To conclude, Arts is one the most effective and authentic ways of communication known to human. Children are natural artists, and it is their right to have access to a high-quality and reasonable amount of Arts resources to be able to understand who they are, how they influence their environment, find their dispositions and develop their social interactions, as well as learn language, literacy and mathematics; and all happen through Arts.

Reference List

AITSL (Australian Professional Standard for Teachers) (2017), Standard 2: Know the content and how to teach it, [AITSL](#) , accessed 08 April 2021

Arthur, L, Beecher, B, Death, E, Dockett, S and Farmer, S (2020) *Programming and planning in early childhood settings*, 8th edn, Cengage Learning Australia

Australian Curriculum (n.d.) [Dance Foundation Level to Year 2 Band Description](#) , Australian Curriculum, accessed 10 April 2021

Australian Curriculum (n.d.) [Mathematics Foundation Year Level Description](#) , Australian Curriculum, accessed 10 April 2021

Australian Curriculum (n.d.) [Music Foundation to Year 2 Band Description](#) , Australian Curriculum, accessed 10 April 2021

Australian Curriculum (n.d.) [Visual Art Foundation Year to Year 2 Band Description](#) , Australian Curriculum, accessed 10 April 2021

Camilla Björklund and Eva Ahlskog-Björkman (2017) Approaches to teaching in thematic work: early childhood teachers' integration of mathematics and art, *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 25:2, 98-111, DOI: 10.1080/09669760.2017.1287061

Department of Education, Skills and Employment 2019 *Belonging, Being, & Becoming - The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*. ACT: Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment for the Council of Australian Governments

Dinham, J (2020) *Delivering authentic arts education*, 4th edn, Cengage Learning Australia Pty Limited, South Melbourne, Victoria

Dinham, J and Chalk, B (2018) *It's arts play: young children belonging, being and becoming through the arts*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, Victoria, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy-f.deakin.edu.au/lib/deakin/reader.action?docID=5199522>

Education Council 2019, *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration*, Department of Education, retrieved 20 April 2020, < https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/final_-_alice_springs_declaration_-_17_february_2020_security_removed.pdf>

Fellowes, J and Oakley, G (2020) *Language, literacy and early childhood education*, 3rd edn, Oxford University Press, retrieved 1 May 2020, < <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy-b.deakin.edu.au/lib/deakin/detail.action?docID=5979409>>

Knaus, M and Featherstone, S (2014) *Maths is all Around You: developing mathematical concepts in the early years*, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, < <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy-b.deakin.edu.au/lib/deakin/detail.action?docID=1939107>>

MacDonald, A (2018) *Mathematics in early childhood education*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, Victoria, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy-f.deakin.edu.au/lib/deakin/reader.action?docID=5407330>

McLachlan, C, Fler, M and Edwards, S (2010) Content Knowledge: The arts and health, wellbeing, and physical activity, in McLachlan, C, Fler, M and Edwards, S *Early Childhood Curriculum: Planning, Assessment, and Implementation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs 2008, *The Melbourne Declaration of Education Goals for Young Australians*, Department of Education, retrieved 15 April 2020,
<http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf>

van den Heuvel-Panhuizen, M and Elia, L (2012) *Developing a framework for the evaluation of picture books that support kindergartners' learning of mathematics*, *Research in Mathematics Education*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp.17-47, doi: 10.1080/14794802.2012.657437

