

Arts Integration

“Arts Integration allows us to build chefs who make choices – not cooks who merely follow the recipe.” I first posted a copy of this quote by Susan Riley of Education Closet on my face book page five years ago. The arts integration certification program didn't exist then, but I was drawn to this approach to teaching and learning where the content is taught and assessed equitably in and through the arts. I have always believed that the arts are an integral part of a child's education. I see children live in their authentic selves when they work with the arts. Now, as a certified arts integration specialist, I am excited to lead the Chilmark School in an arts integration program so our students can acquire those important twenty first century skills in tangible, meaningful ways.

Long before it was identified as a twenty first century skill in education, I taught collaboration in my classroom. It is only through the power of collaboration where everyone is valued equally no matter their position in the project, can success happen for everyone. The improv principle of "yes and" is practiced in all my lessons. I set up an atmosphere of respect for students and teachers in all my projects. When people feel supported by everyone in the room, they are able to take the risks needed to achieve their full creative potential. I strive to hear all creative voices so we can together build meaningful lessons, projects and performances. I believe my role with teachers and students is to guide the collaborative process.

Arts Integration gives the staff at the Chilmark School the opportunity to model collaboration for our students. We work together to create meaningful lessons that teach both classroom and arts content side by side. We co-teach in our Arts Integration classes and then extend the lessons in our separate classrooms. Arts Integration is an opportunity to strengthen the tradition of project based learning at the Chilmark School.

-Donna Swift
Music and Theater Teacher
Arts Integration Specialist