

Arts Integration

Time and again, important components of the Montessori approach, developed one hundred years ago, are proven to be beneficial in a modern context. One of these is the benefits of integrating arts into other components of the curriculum. In most traditional schools, arts are self-contained "specials" taught only for 45 minutes a week (or often cut from the curriculum) with a teacher who comes in only for that class. In our authentic Montessori classrooms drawing, music, drama, and performance are integrated as a means of learning and expressing all areas of the curriculum.

Arts integration is something that Hilltop Montessori School does amazingly well. The regular classroom teachers are at least bilingual, if not trilingual, in "academics" and art, music, and/or drama. Some of them have professional or educational backgrounds in the arts, while others have strong "hobbies" and passions that they bring to the classroom and share with the students. All have a deep appreciation for the arts as a means to further explore and express both personal ideas and knowledge gained.

The math manipulatives, language, science and cultural lessons all can have follow up works that use art. Here at Hilltop, I have seen art, music, and drama integrated in such an amazing, organic, and natural way! A few examples of note:

- Elementary Poetry Performances that include music, naturally keeping more children engaged in each poem and considering how to express the tone, emotion, and content of the spoken word
- All School Gathering where students of all ages naturally "perform" by sharing their work weekly with an audience of 150!
- Cultural and geography studies grow into beautiful artistic map work.

This integration of the arts grows students who view themselves as artists, musicians, and performers. Many parents have commented that because of their experience at Hilltop, their children have brought music into their families lives. It also helps children learn and retain academic skills and information, as this article highlights.

This arts integration happens every day in every indoor and outdoor classroom at Hilltop. Shortly it will also happen in our Arts Barn!!! It will be wonderful to have this new space for further demonstration of performance arts as a part of the integrated curriculum at Hilltop Montessori School!

April 15, 2014