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Abstract

The paper attempts to investigate the theories and practices of curriculum integration with visual arts as a core subject. It starts with a brief review of recent developments in art education theories, and the value of art-centered curriculum integration, followed by an experimental, integrated curriculum built within a postmodern framework and with postmodern contents. Theories such as Transforming Education Through the Art Challenge (TETAC) and its related developments, and the role of Big Ideas and Themes in art-centered curriculum integration, are discussed. The authors then use their research at the Graduate Institute of Art Education, The Ohio State University, to develop

and implement a community-based art curriculum, and conclude with an analysis of the process and results, as well as the implications for classroom teaching.

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Key words

Integrated Curriculum with Visual Arts as a Core Subject Community Based Curriculum Big Ideas Themes

Introduction

In his influential book *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, Howard Gardner refutes the conventional wisdom in education that IQ plays a decisive role in a student's learning and academic achievements. He believes that there are different intelligences at work, interacting with and complementing one another. This theory of multiple intelligences can explain the causes behind so many problems in Taiwan's art education, and can lead to a new horizon in education where arts education plays a greater role.

In line with the postmodern educational trends, many researchers have called for further efforts in arts education reforms in Taiwan, to fully use arts as an anchor that binds the various disciplines, and to help students develop their self and understanding of cultures (A. Kuo, 2000). But is art-centered curriculum integration absolutely necessary? What is involved in the development and implementation of such a curriculum? Does it deliver the desired results? These are real concerns for classroom teachers as well as art teachers

Why do we need art-centered curriculum integration?

Postmodern thinking and theories have led to new perspectives in the arts, and technological advances have given rise to the idea of a global village as well as a whole new range of social issues. In response to these changes, education in many nations around the world, and arts education in particular, is undergoing constant reviews and sweeping reforms with regard to its functions and contents.

Art education has undergone art-making approach, discipline-based approach and comprehensive approach, before multiculturalism and post-modernism as well as developments in cognitive research bring about new theories that replace the traditional views of developmental stages. Vygotsky's socio-cultural contexts and Koroscik's knowledge transfer have shifted the emphasis from individuals' free expression and creation to a more meaningful, comprehensive visual communication (M. Cheng, 2003; Efland, 2002; Efland, Freedman, & Stuhr, 1996; Parsons, 1998; Walker, 2001).

In this postmodern global village, understanding of cultures is a key to further understanding the nature of arts. So how to broaden one's artistic views to bridge cultural gaps has become an essential, though difficult issue (A. Kuo, 1998). It is urged that art education should move beyond "art for art sake", and that arts can and should play a much greater role in education. Increasingly, curriculum integration with arts as an anchor is researched, and the discipline-based art education re-examined (M. Cheng, 2003).

The content and scope of art education is faced with unprecedented challenges, and cultural study and curriculum integration has become the prevailing trend. Art education expands learning to address the comprehensive contexts and environments of learning, so that learning is connected to students' real life and personal concerns. More than discipline-based teaching that emphasizes integration within the disciplines, art-centered curriculum integration involves all relevant fields of learning, especially the connection between visual arts and the other disciplines (M. Cheng, 2003; A. Kuo, 2001; J. Chen, 1999).

Curriculum integration is a comprehensive approach to understanding (Wofinlger & Stockhard, 1997) that improves students' ability to learn, including:

- Conceptualization: students are guided to establish their concepts from the learning experiences, rather than being told ready, fixed answers.
- (2) Self-discipline: students have to take responsibility for their learning and participate actively in developing their own learning plans.
- (3) Problem solving: students are provided with real learning situations to perceive and experience real problems, and learn to resolve the prob-

lems on their own.

- (4) Interpersonal skills: in an integrated curriculum, there is less interaction between students; working in teams or groups can increase their learning interaction.
- (5) Learning style: every student has his/her own dominant learning style, and curriculum integration can help students develop multiple learning styles.

In short, art-centered curriculum integration allows students to learn the essential core abilities necessary for their success in tomorrow's world.

Learning and development that connects contemporary theories and issues

Art education reforms in Taiwan have seen a new momentum in recent years, thanks to the commitment and efforts of Professor Ann Kuo of the Department of Art Education, National Changhua University of Education. She has invited many renowned researchers to be visiting professors at the university, and led four study trips of graduate students, art teachers and administrators to the Ohio State University for extensive studies and research under Professor Michael Parsons and others. She is regularly invited to mainland China, Hong Kong and Macao for academic exchanges, and organized an art education study group to Roehampton University of Surrey in London this summer.

Among the many international exchanges, the most successful is the curriculum integration program using art as a core subject at the Ohio State University in the summer of 2000. Based on the Ohio State University's Transforming Education Through the Art Challenge (TETAC) research project, an integrated art-centered curriculum was developed and brought back to Taiwan for further refinement and adjustment by the researchers and local art teachers. The curriculum was finally adopted and incorporated in high school art textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education. The second part of this paper recounts the experience and process of art-centered curriculum integration based on the TETAC model, using the community-based curriculum developed by Yu Chun Chen, Chien Ling Chen, Cheng Yueh Chung and Yu Chin Shiau as an example, and concludes with some suggestions for class-

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room teaching.

Big Ideas & Themes

The content of integrated curriculum is usually presented by themes, which should be chosen based on the students' needs. They should be important, relevant, interesting to the students and involve certain meanings, phenomena or experiences. In Erickson's curriculum model *Our place in the world* for instance, the theme "our place in the world" helps students bring together all their knowledge to establish a connection between past experiences and new ideas, between art-making and art history, and between art concepts and those in other disciplines (Erickson, 1996).

Fogarty and Stuhr (1995) have suggested the following steps for choosing a theme:

- (1) Discussing and brainstorming over possible themes;
- (2) Listing of the discussion results;
- (3) Examining the themes with agreed criteria, and adding or deleting themes:
- (4) Elaborating the chosen theme;
- (5) Incorporating the theme into the activities;
- (6) Deciding objectives and evaluation methods.

For a TETAC learning experience, big ideas and themes are the core for the comprehensive curriculum. Big ideas are the conceptual focus of the core competences. Like the center of a spider web that connects all the threads, big ideas hold together the various disciplines and fields of knowledge. The researchers of this study believe that all the big ideas of an art-centered curriculum are relevant to cultural activities and interpretations. And cultural activities and interpretations of high educational values will, in turn, become big ideas for the curriculum content. M. Cheng (2003) points out that big ideas can be used to investigate interpersonal relationships or the so-called power issues. To elaborate how big ideas fit in with curriculum development, key concepts and essential questions are introduced (Parsons, 2002; Walker, 2001). Parsons emphasizes that curriculum integration should pinpoint big ideas to help students connect what they learn at school with their own experiences. The answers to the question "what can this course

teach the students?" are often the big ideas, and it is very helpful for teachers to keep in mind this simple yet complex question in the process of curriculum development.

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A theme is the concrete subject matter that holds the big ideas together. Parsons (2003) observes that a student's experience has two main sources outside of school: the home and community, and popular culture. These two categories therefore are good sources of topics for the curriculum. This paper urges that ultimately integration occurs in the mind of the learner, where his/her values and attitudes, sensory experiences, and understanding of self are connected and organized.

Cultural environments in transition: community-based, art-centered curriculum development

Introduction

Taiwan is a very postmodern society, as the island has been ruled by various governments in the past four centuries, and its population is comprised by people of different ancestral backgrounds and dialects. Many people do not share a common cultural identity. But cultural identity for self as well as for the island is of tremendous significance. Postmodern views of arts emphasize "education through the art" and a cultural focus. This curriculum development starts with a community-based theme that reflects local culture and characteristics, in an attempt to raise students' awareness of the general neglect of cultural ideology, and to encourage them to think about community-based cultural identity.

Curriculum development

This curriculum is community-based with visual arts as an anchor. Beginning with open *big ideas* and through the introduction of a public art project in the community, students are encouraged to look at themselves, their living environment and community culture, and to nurture their identification with the local culture from a better understanding of local traditions.

I. The background

The curriculum is a result from the authors' training at the Department of Arts Education, the Ohio State University, in the summer of 2000. TETAC is a national reform project in arts education in the United States, led by the OSU Department of Arts Education. The faculty of the department work with local school teachers in developing and experimenting integrated curricula with visual arts as an anchor. The project has been going for several years, and established a model for curriculum development. Its success is recognized by local schools, parents and the educational authorities and the model continues to be revised and improved.

II. Content and emphasis

Theme: cultural environments in transition

(1) Big Ideas

What changes do we experience in our lives?

- (2) Key concepts
 - 1. Community culture is key to one's cultural identity.
 - 2. Awareness of the changes in the community is the first step to understand the cultural environment.
 - Reflection on the significance of cultural transition is an underlying basis for cultural identity.
- (3) Essential questions
 - 1. Where are we?
 - 2. Who are we?
 - 3. Where are we from?
 - 4. Where are we going from here?
 - 5. What changes can we see in our cultural environment?
- (4) Lesson objectives
 - 1. Identification with local environment
 - 2. Reflection on the significance of self and surroundings
 - 3. Mutual care between self and the surroundings

III. Implementation process

The implementation of the curriculum varies from school to school, adjusting to the school environment, teaching resources and students, but the general model is as shown in the chart below:

Introduction of a public art project in the community.

(Using artworks as a starting point;
this curriculum uses Field of Corn as a teaching example)

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Introduction of artworks related to local community and culture. (this curriculum uses old pictures of Keelung city.)



Comparison of the old pictures and the city today to get a better understanding of local community and culture, and to reflect on the changes in the cultural environment.



Reflections, expression of views or artistic creation based on the understanding of local community and culture.

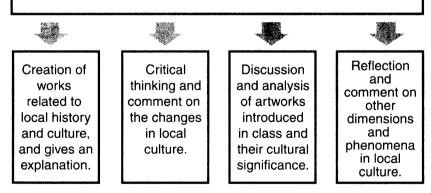


Figure 1 Flowchart of Curriculum Implementation

IV. Content and analysis

This curriculum starts with an introduction of a public artwork and its characteristics and significance. Then the pictures by a local photographer are discussed, especially their local themes and contents. By understanding those artworks and participating in the learning activities, students are guided to reflect upon their self, changes in the surroundings and local culture, and the

implications of related social-economic contexts. Artworks introduced in the curriculum include:

1. Public artwork—Field of Corn

Field of Corn is located in Dublin, Ohio, a satellite city of the state's capital Columbus. As Columbus grew rapidly into an industrialized city, Dublin underwent tremendous changes too. Vast expanse of corn fields was replaced by emerging town houses, activity centers, parks and sport grounds.

Field of Corn has been created as a result of the efforts by the city's authorities in recent years to promote local culture and public art in the community. Winner of a contest for art in honor of local history and culture, the work was created by Malcolm Cochran, who is the professor of art at the Ohio State University. It contains the following elements and symbolic significances (Figure 2):



Figure 2 Public artwork
Field of Corn

(1) Corn: 107 white concrete ears of corn, some 200 cm tall, spread across a square lawn. The corn symbolizes the agricultural life of corn planting in the early days, while the concrete symbolizes modernity. White is the color for memorials in the United States. The height of the corn makes it necessary for most people to look up to the corn, but without feeling overwhelmed (Figures 3-4).



Figure 3 The proportion of the ears to people (the woman is about 155cm tall).



Figure 4 White concrete ears of corn



Figure 5 White ear of corn and Osage orange trees

- (2) Orange trees: Osage orange trees were used as field dividers for the Arkansan and Missourian Indians in the 19th century, and provided materials for making and dyeing bowls and baskets. The concrete corn ears are surrounded by oranges trees which symbolize a link between the past and the present while provide a shelter from the sun for the visitors (Figure 5).
- (3) Text panels: A row of seven text panels made of stone and copper explain the history of corn production in the area. Each of the panels has an independent story and comprises part of a complete account (Figure 6).



Figure 6 Text panels under the trees explain the meaning of the work.

(4) The complete work: *Field of Corn* is a large traffic island, cut off from neighborhood subdivisions by two roads. Travelers can stop any time to walk into the work and enjoy the cooling shades of the orange trees. And the text panels help visitors better understand the significance of the creation. *Field of*

Corn, therefore, is a highly accessible public artwork that interacts with the viewer and inspires him to reflect on the changes in the neighborhood and local culture (Figure 7).



Figure 7 Field of Corn by the roadside.



Figure 8 Photographic album

Those Old Feelings for

Keelung by Sang Shi Cheng

2. Photographs of Keelung city by local photographer Sang Shi Cheng Sang Shi Cheng is a famous photographer from Keelung city in northern Taiwan. He is known for a rich and diverse visual language, as well as a truthfulness in his works. These simple and vivid records of local history are of great value. Commissioned by the Council for Cultural Affairs in 1985, Sang Shi Cheng compiled his unpublished pictures of Keelung in the 1950s into an album: *Those Old Feelings for Keelung*. The pictures bring back old memories of the city and encourage the viewer to reflect on the changes in the past decades (Figure 8).

V. Evaluation methods

The focus of these units is for students to better understand and reflect upon their community and local culture. For evaluation, a multimedia approach is adopted, including art-making, data collecting, written reports and oral presentation.

Table 1: Evaluation methods

Item Unit theme	Evaluation methods	Whom to be evaluated	Evaluation criteria	Time for evaluation	evaluator
What changes can we see in our environment?	Observation, Worksheets, presentations, art-making	Individual students and teams	 Able to appreciate the artworks introduced in class, and understand the reasons for the creations and the significance of public artworks. Able to respond and comment on old pictures of hometown, and tell the difference between the past and present. Able to answer questions in the worksheets. Able to discuss with team members the questions in the worksheets, and make a presentation in class. Able to create a painting on an "ideal Tien-liao River." Able to participate in an exhibition by the riverside, and the clean-up after the exhibition. Able to explain the reasons and meaning of his/her work. 	All stages in the teaching process	Teachers, teaching team; students; community public; parents

Implementation of the curriculum

The curriculum was developed in 2000, and since then has been implemented in two schools, in September 2000 and March 2002 respectively. Adjustments were made to meet the needs of three different grades.

Table 2: Details of the curriculum implementation

Item School	Class	Time	Community environment	Resources	Content	Results
Dong Shinn Elementary School	Six-grade general class, about 12-13 years old	Sep. to Oct. 2000	Educational district half way up a hill in a natural environment	1. Slides of artworks 2. library 3. Internet	Public art photography community culture	Oral presentation by teams Explanation poster of each team
Shin Yi Elementary School (1)	Third-grade art for the gifted class of 30, about 9-10 years old	March to May, 2002	Downtown business district, near a night market by the river, with a crowded campus.	Field observation Briefings of artworks Internet Parents	1. Public art 2. photography 3. community culture 4. artist's creative methods 5. Outdoor exhibition	1. Observation record 2. Record of team discussion 3. Individual comments 4. Worksheet: Old Stories of Keelung 5. Worksheet on Change 6. Paintings of an "ideal Tien Liao River"
Shin Yi Elementary School (2)	Fourth-grade general class, about 10-11 years old	March to May, 2002	Downtown business district, near a night market by the river, with a crowded campus.	Field observation Briefings of artworks	Public art photography community culture	1. Observation record 2. Record of team discussion 3. Worksheet on "Changes" as an issue

The curriculum has been given to three classes, in different teaching environments, with markedly different results. The following account uses the example with the art class at Shinn Yi Elementary School and explains the implementation process and results.

- 1. Target students: a third-grade art class of 30, with 11 boys and 19 girls. The students had to pass a screening test to enter the class, and are from many school districts. The art teacher is responsible for art, social studies and computer courses, and spends at least ten class hours a week with the students (as well as some hours for other activities).
- 2. Period of implementation: The curriculum was designed for 24 class hours, but took 18 hours actually, from March to May, 2002.
 - 3. Implementation of the curriculum:

(1) Field trip to Tien Liao River and Lucky Goat Bridge two blocks away from the school. Students completed Worksheet 1 (Appendix 1) after the trip. Altogether 2 class hours (Figures 9-10).

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Figures 9-10 Field trip to Tien Liao River and Worksheep 1.

(2) Introduction of *Field of Corn* using PowerPoint, and group discussion of the five questions in Worksheet 2 (Appendix 2). Presentation of discussion results by each group. About four class hours altogether (Figures 11-14).





Figures 11-12 Public art Field of Corn, details.

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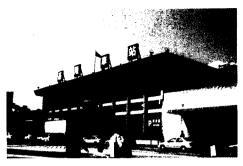
Figures 13-14 The class discussed public art *Field of Corn* and related questions, and shared their findings with the class.

(3) Introduction of local photographer Sang Shi Cheng using PowerPoint, including background knowledge of photography, photographers and photographic works, as well as Keelung city in the old days, as recorded in the pictures. A total of 55 old pictures were presented for students to get to know the city better, especially those of Tien Liao River. Then the students were asked to do Worksheet 3 as a community reporter, interviewing their elders and neighbors, and searching the Internet and library, to find out more about the city's past. The results of their research were then posted in the classroom. About four class hours altogether (Figure 15).



Figures 15 Results of students' research on Keelung city's past posted in the classroom.

(4) Comparison of pictures of Keelung's past and present, using PowerPoint. Worksheet 4 (Appendix 4) returned to the big ideas: "What changes can we see in our surroundings?" and students were asked to discuss and explore the questions, and complete the worksheet. About four class hours altogether (Figures 16-17).





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Figures 16-17 Pictures of present day kellung (2001) taken by the authors.

(5) Art making on "My Ideal Tien Liao River". Students were asked to explore the theme before creating the painting, and to name the work and explain the underlying reasons. About four class hours (Figure 18).



Figures 18 Art making on "My Ideal Tien Liao River"

(6) Preparing for and holding a one-week outdoor public exhibition of student works over Lucky Goat Bridge. All the preparation was done by the volunteer assistance parents. Worksheet 5 (Appendix 5) asked the students to think about what precautions should be taken for an outdoor exhibition and what they and their family and friends learned from the experience (Figures 19-24).





Figures 19-20 Parents participating in the preparation for the exhibition.

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Figures 21-22 Exhibition over Lucky Goat Bridge and viewers looking at the student's work.





Figures 23-24 two pictures and the artists

- 4. Review and analysis
- (1) Artworks introduced in class include public art *Field of Corn*, photographer Sang Shi Cheng's *Those Old Feelings for Keelung*, and pictures taken by the art teacher. Students found *Field of Corn* highly interesting, while the old pictures of the local city brought back some familiar yet vague memories. They wanted to know the story behind every old picture, and were eager to compare the pictures with the present day city.
- (2) The big idea of the lessons was "what changes can we see in our surroundings?" which guided the students to discuss in depth. The researchers also asked "what is a work of art?" "What criteria do you think public artworks must have?" In the process, students also learned to work with other people, establish their own opinions, and to express themselves in public.
- (3) The lessons used a lot of multimedia materials and five worksheets, which were relatively new for the students and increased their motivation for learning. Emphasis on observation, thinking and expression of ideas was a

challenge to the art students who were more used to art making.

- (4) The outdoor exhibition gave the students an opportunity to really connect their works from school with their life. And they were eager to invite their family to participate in the process. Worksheet 5 raised their awareness of the challenges and solutions of outdoor exhibitions.
- (5) To the excitement of the art class and teachers, the exhibition of their works over the Lucky Goat Bridge did attract attention in the local community. People stopped to look at the pictures, and on the first day of the exhibition, a young child liked it so much that he became interested in learning art.
- (6) Through a series of discussions and presentations, the students became used to voicing their opinions in public, and to the difference in people's viewpoints. "In a group, people have to find a solution or consensus that everyone agrees by peaceful means."
- (7) Contemporary artwork and artists were introduced in the lessons. And the students found it amazing that the artists were "alive." Their response led the researchers to ponder whether students thought that artists were all dead? Have educational institutions taught about or held exhibitions primarily for "dead" artists only, and led students to view art as something outdated of the past?
- (8) As the curriculum targeted younger schoolchildren, there was more time and effort involved in the preparation. During the teaching, there was a high level of interaction between the students and teachers, and many questions were posed by the students. It was a successful and meaningful experience for both parties.
- (9) For a curriculum to be successful, there must be effective communication between teachers and parents. In a traditional art education that emphasized art making, parents used to judge the success or failure of a curriculum by the students' final works. But this experiment kept the parents informed of the content and objectives of the units, and the students' progress along the way. Parents were also encouraged to participate in and contribute to the learning activities.
- (10) Because the art teacher was also responsible for social studies and the computer course, integration of the disciplines became easier. All three disciplines shared the same theme of knowing one's hometown.

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Conclusions and suggestions

The three experiments of the curriculum with three different classes have given the researchers valuable insights into art-centered curriculum integration. Their findings and suggestions are explained as follows:

- 1. Findings
- (1) Integration of the arts and humanities in the 1-9 curriculum

The 1-9 curriculum emphasizes trans-disciplinary learning. While visual arts, music and performing arts are related, each has its unique disciplinary characteristics and core skills. The content of and approach to integration, therefore, are of extreme importance. Performances or displays of the disciplines under a common theme are only "integration for integration's sake," because integration should ultimately occur in the learner's mind. Curriculum integration is about developing an ability to connect one's life experiences, community environment and cultural realities, and to establish an understanding of self and one's values. An art curriculum involves our ways of life and cultures; it is more diverse than presentation of activities or display of works. Visual arts, more than any other subject, can integrate the other disciplines effectively. This curriculum, for example, uses postmodern artworks that are critical and rich in historical, cultural and social implications. Through observations of the community environment (Worksheet 1), understanding and discussions of artworks (Worksheet 2), and collection of historical data (Worksheets 3-4), the curriculum combined social studies and language, as well as environmental and ecological issues, with the aid of high-tech multimedia resources.

(2) Community-based art education

Amid the trends of globalization and multiculturalism, an in-depth understanding of and identification with local culture has become increasingly important. This curriculum led students out of the campus to look closely at the river, bridge and streets around the school, and compare what they saw with pictures of the old days, inspiring the students to reflect upon how the environment is being treated. Awareness of the environment is the first step towards caring and identifying with the local community, and eventually towards sustainable development of the environment and culture.

(3) Breaking away from the myth of art "making" of traditional art educa-

tion

Art education in Taiwan has long been centered on making finished works of art. Even with the 1-9 curriculum, "art packs" of ready-made materials for art projects are still very popular with many teachers. But most of the completed works end up in trash cans or recycling bins after they are graded. This should be a warning for art teachers to ponder whether their lessons have any educational meanings for the students. This curriculum asked the students to observe, discuss, debate, judge, present and interview—non-conventional activities for art lessons—but the students were able to really explore art and culture, and their implications for one's own life.

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(4) Influences of the impressionists and Picasso etc.

The students in this curriculum were quite surprised to find that the artists introduced in class were "young and alive." It reflects the fact that for a long time great masters of the past, such as the impressionists, Van Gogh and Picasso, were all that students knew about art. But the world of contemporary art is full of creativity and vitality, and art teachers will do well to include more diverse contents and resources in their teaching.

2. Suggestions

(1) Development of the art curriculum

In a diverse society, learning activities in the classroom should be highly relevant to social-economic realities and the environments. An art curriculum is no exception.

(2) Integration and extension of the curriculum

This curriculum can be extended to include other activities or lessons for individual students or groups. Figure 25 shows a possible framework of extension.

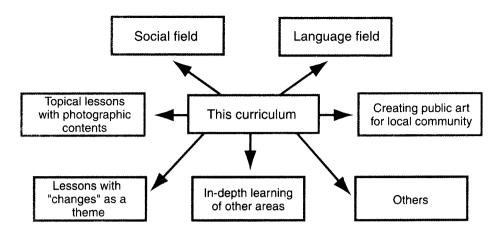


Figure 25 A framework of curriculum integration

(3) Professionalism and commitment of art teachers

Teachers play a key role in classroom teaching and the students' learning. Teaching contents and approaches must be adjusted to meet the changing needs of diversified student populations. It is the teacher's responsibility to constantly improve his/her professional expertise and respond to the requirements of the time.

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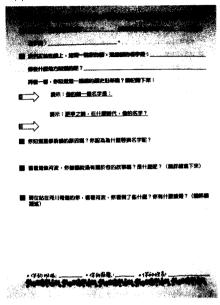
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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Worksheet 1

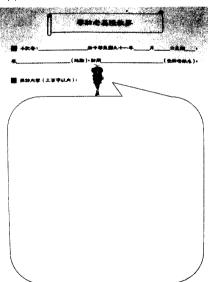


Appendix 2: Worksheet 2

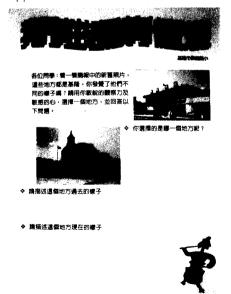


CURRICULUM
INTEGRATION
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THEORY AND
PRACTICE

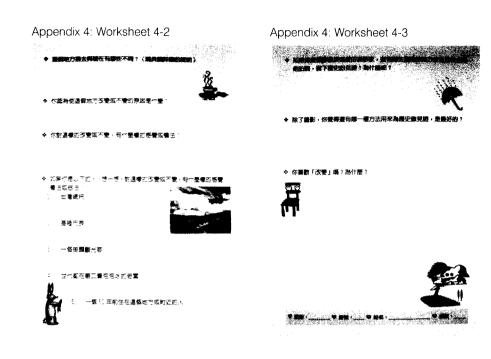
Appendix 3: Worksheet 3



Appendix 4: Worksheet 4-1



CURRICULUM INTEGRATION WITH VISUAL ARTS AS A CORE SUBJECT: THEORY AND PRACTICE



Appendix 5: Worksheet 5

