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Relationship Between Arts Integration Experiences and Student Academic Achievement of Limited English Proficient Learners

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Walden University

College of Education

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Colleen M. Zando

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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

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of Limited English Proficient Learners

by

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M.A., State University of New York at Potsdam, 2012

B.A., State University of New York at Potsdam, 2009

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

There is a significant achievement gap between limited English proficient (LEP) learners and English proficient (EP) learners. This problem is important because the U.S. education system's inability to serve LEP students effectively results in significantly lower achievement on state exams and reduced career opportunities in later life. Arts integration programs can be a way to improve student learning in the classroom and state exam outcomes. The purpose of this study was to provide insight into whether bringing the arts into core curriculum can raise LEP students' academic achievement, thereby helping to close the gap in practice of LEP students lacking 21st century college and career ready skills. The theoretical framework for this study was based on Eisner's theory of expressive outcomes. The key research question investigated the relationship between the exposure to arts integration experiences and the outcomes of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) exam for 3rd grade LEP students in Golds County Public Schools (pseudonym). This study used a quantitative correlational design with archival data from 379 students, and a chi-square test of independence to investigate the relationship between the main constructs. A significant relationship between exposure to arts integration experiences and PARCC exam outcomes could not be identified ($\chi^2(3) = 2.44, p = .486$). Although no significant relationship was found in this study, bringing the arts into the core curriculum could be a viable way to raise LEP student academic achievement and thus contribute to positive social change by closing the achievement gap with EP learners. This study showed that further research is needed to close the gap between LEP and EP learners to promote a broader development of 21st century college and career ready skills.

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Dedication

To my loving husband Paul for always supporting and encouraging me to believe in myself even through the most difficult times. I would not have had the confidence to start nor complete this journey without all of your support.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Public schools in the U.S. education system have been experiencing a mass influx of English language learner (ELL) students (Ingraham & Nuttall, 2016). With this ELL population growth comes a challenge for the U.S. education system to overcome an achievement gap between English proficient (EP) and limited English proficient (LEP) learners. This challenge for our education system includes an absence of necessities to close this gap such as newcomer centers, pull-out programs, and coteaching push-in programs. Lack of financial backing in public schools throughout the United States is one reason for the inability to meet the needs of these students. Due to the current standards-driven public school system in the United States today, each school district feels the pressures of ensuring that all students achieve these implemented standards (Levy, 2008). While there is a substantial gap between the academic performance of EP learners and their LEP peers, it is apparent that more demanding standards and state tests will only make this worse (Zinth, 2013). However, LEP's performance on current state exams displays a significant gap between them and their English proficient peers. In order to find a cost-effective solution that may close this gap, arts integration is being proposed by the Kennedy Center as a possible answer (Chand O'Neal, 2014). This study was significant to education audiences because it addressed a local problem and has the potential to contribute to social change. The literature review also provided insight for whether bringing the arts into the core curriculum can raise student achievement, helping to solve or close the gap in practice of LEP students lacking 21st century college and career ready skills.

The purpose of this study was to provide insight for whether bringing the arts into core curricula raise student achievement and therefore help to close the gap in practice of LEP students lacking 21st century college and career ready skills. The research question investigated the relationship between the exposure to arts integration experiences and the outcomes of the PARCC exam for 3rd grade LEP students in GCPS. The theoretical framework for this study was based on the educational philosophies of Eisner (1965-2015) and specifically his theory of expressive outcomes (2002). The nature of this study was to provide data showing what happens when the arts are integrated into public school classrooms that have a large number of LEP students. Definitions of important vocabulary such as arts integration, public school budget cuts, 21st Century skills, LEP student needs, expressive outcomes, and more assisted in framing this study. My assumption was that a correlational methodology was the most appropriate choice for this study, while scope and delimitations of the study included that I did not use all of the elementary schools who were implementing the GCPS Arts Integration Program. This study was significant because it addressed a local problem by focusing specifically on LEP student achievement in the local public school system while providing quantitative research on the relationship between LEP students' academic achievement and participation in arts integration experiences within their public schools.

Background

Arts integration is defined by the Kennedy Center as “an approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate their understanding through an art form. During arts integration activities students engage in the creative process which connects

an art form and another subject area and meets evolving objectives in both.” (Chand O’Neal, 2014, p. 1). The research literature presented in this study was published information identifying prior scholarship relating to the scope of the needs of LEP learners, the approach of using arts integration in the classroom curriculum, and schools budget cut ramifications. The gap in practice exists where there is an achievement gap between LEP and non-LEP learners and a need for a successful teaching approach for teachers to be able to reach every student. This study is needed to help answer whether or not arts integration experiences may have an impact on LEP students' standardized exam outcomes. Arts integration programs have become a new avenue that school districts such as GCPS are piloting as a low-cost and effective solution. Possible evidence for the effectiveness of arts integration experiences can be seen in a study by Catterall (2012) who explains, “Teenagers and young adults of low socioeconomic status (SES) who have a history of in-depth arts involvement show better academic outcomes than do low-SES youth who have less arts involvement.” (p. 12).

The results of Catterall’s study showed higher academic achievement in both science and writing for students of low socioeconomic status who had a history of intense arts involvement over students with less arts involvement. Support for this conclusion is also demonstrated by Biscoe & Wilson (2015) as they propose that when students receive consistent art education, they earn better grades and demonstrate higher rates of college enrollment and attainment. One method for an educator to assist students in finding their own individual capability of learning is to combine both subject area content and the visual arts into one lesson. Few educators, however, have received training in the field of

visual arts, even with research pointing out the benefits for student learning when intertwining arts activities with language skill lessons (Greenfader & Brouillette, 2013). Arts Integration programs are becoming more popular because of the possible benefits to student learning. Research indicates that a school's environment may benefit in terms of culture, confidence, and collaboration, allowing for accelerated learning in the classroom (Ingraham & Nutall, 2016). Snyder (2014) found "that in addition to increasing student achievement on statewide assessments, implementing this arts integration model positively correlates with a 77% decline in discipline referrals" (p. 2). Regardless of socioeconomic status or ethnicity, arts education has been linked to greater achievements on assessments in English language arts and science. The decline of student dropout rates was also of note in comparison to other school that did not offer visual arts courses to their student body (Fehr, 2008). This study was conducted to fill the need for quantitative data depicting the relationship of arts integration experiences with LEP learners' academic achievement.

Problem Statement

The research problem that was addressed in this study was the achievement gap between LEP learners and English proficient learners. This shortcoming in our education system may be due to lack of funding for necessities such as newcomer centers, pull-out programs, and coteaching push-in programs. As stated earlier, a meaningful problem in our education in the United States is the public schools in the education system experiencing a mass influx of ELL students without enough current funding and resources to provide proper education and meet the needs of all learners (Ingraham &

Nuttall, 2016), resulting in an academic achievement gap in English language between LEP students and non-LEP students.

Evidence from literature shows a consensus that this gap in achievement is a current and very relevant problem in today's education system. Chmielewski (2019) showed strong evidence of increasing socioeconomic achievement gaps worldwide over the past 50 years. Gaps based on parent education have increased by 47%, gaps based on parent occupation by 28%, and gaps based on number of books at home by 52%. Due to the extensive difficulties that come with learning a new language, general education classrooms have become less stressful for some students to learn a second language, but even more difficult for some. Assessment results have shown the struggle and overwhelm ELLs are having as opposed to their English proficient peers, due to trying to learn a second language at the same time learning all other subjects. One example of this is in Florida where there is a 34% achievement gap between English proficient 3rd grade students and their ELL peers. Assessment results depict 78% of English proficient 3rd graders scoring at or above mathematics proficiency, while only 45% of ELL students were able to achieve this level (Fry, 2008). Many school districts are experiencing budget cuts and are unable to afford costly but necessary programs for newcomer students and LEP students. The Common Core State Standards have enforced rigorous educational standards at a time when there is a drastic rise in the number of ELL students entering the classrooms of overwhelmed teachers (Johnson & Wells, 2017). Martinez (2017) described that there is much research and literature on achievement gaps and that the number of these gaps is so extensive that there are even gaps within the gaps of ethnic

groups, gaps within and between ethnic groups, and gaps between gender and grades within a certain socioeconomic status. Hanushek (2016) explained that in the past almost 40 years, there has been little progress to close these enormous educational achievement gaps among these groups.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between LEP students' academic achievement and participation in arts integration experiences in their public schools. The future outlook suggests the number of ELL assistance programs needed in the United States is only going to increase (Ingraham & Nuttall, 2016). This is an educational issue because numerous school districts are unable to afford the needed ELL programs, such as newcomer centers, extra staff for ELL pull-out and push-in programs, and all-day English for speakers of other languages coteaching assistance (Ingraham & Nuttall, 2016). This study explored the differences between 3rd grade LEP students with exposure to arts integration experiences as opposed to 3rd grade LEP students without arts integration experiences using their PARCC exam outcomes. The purpose of this study was to provide quantitative data as insight into whether bringing the arts into core curriculum can raise student achievement, which may help to close the gap in practice of LEP students lacking 21st century college and career ready skills.

Research Question and Hypotheses

The guiding research question that was addressed in this study was:

RQ: Is there a statistically significant relationship between PARCC exam outcome and exposure to arts integration experiences among 3rd grade LEP students in GCPSs?

H_0 : There is no statistically significant relationship between PARCC exam outcome and exposure to arts integration experiences among 3rd grade LEP students in GCPSs.

H_a : There is a statistically significant relationship between PARCC exam outcome and exposure to arts integration experiences among 3rd grade LEP students in GCPSs.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework for this study was based on the educational philosophies of Eisner (1965-2015). Eisner presented the theory of expressive outcomes in 1994, which proposed the use of lesson plans in the classroom to foster the student's individual growth as well as their academic growth (Moroye, Flinders, & Uhrmacher, 2014). Eisner (1965-2015) consistently presented pathways for educators to use the creativity of the visual and performing arts in a way that enhances student learning in the classroom. Eisner (1965-2015) believed that the arts are a necessary component for a fruitful education as it helps to develop important thinking skills. As Blanken-Webb (2014, p. 55) explained,

Eisner's core argument makes claims about human cognition and asserts that the arts play a key role in the creation of mind. In sum, Eisner's argument starts with the assertion that we derive the content of all concepts from our ability to

experience different qualities of the world that we pick up through our senses. He thus rightly links our sensory capacities directly to cognition. (p. 55)

This cognition taking place during the creative process may allow students to process information from their experiences. Because the act of producing art is a cognitive and expressive experience, this act of creativity and innovation can be considered a valuable cognitive process (Gnezda, 2011). Students innovating and developing their own ideas are invaluable mental processes in academic development. From these specialized mental processes all students can benefit and better their 21st century skills. The theory by Eisner (1965-2015) relates to this study because the form of measurement, the PARCC test, was developed to score students' college and career ready skills. Eisner (1965-2015) believed that by incorporating the arts into the mainstream curriculum through "expressive objectives" assists students in achieving better real-world problem-solving skills. The selected theory relates to the present study and research question because in this study, I investigated the effects of teaching through the arts on 3rd grade LEP student's college and career ready skills.

Nature of the Study

I used a quantitative correlational study to investigate the relationship between LEP students' academic achievement and participation in arts integration experiences in their public schools. The nature of the study was to provide quantitative data showing LEP student PARCC exam outcomes from public schools that offer arts integration experiences and public schools that do not. The design of this study was to show links, if any, between arts integration and higher academic achievement on standardized tests.

The variables of interest in this research were the student's PARCC exam outcome and their participation in arts integration experiences. The rationale for the selection of the design is supported by Howell (2013), who stated that correlational studies are an important first step in assessing the strength of a relationship between two measurable constructs such as this. This design was to find approaches to improve teaching practices by infusing the arts into the general education curriculum, because few studies have specifically investigated integrating the arts with the sole purpose of supporting struggling English language learning students in improving their language acquisition skills. Chi (2017) stated, "In summary, arts in the learning English process can be a guider, refresher, stimulus and facilitator to make the learning process more interesting; make students be more willing to express EFL learners themselves, and make them open their mind" (p. 54). The arts can also act as a tool for unity in the classroom, contributing to a less stressful environment for learning the English language. Participants in Chi's study showed increased engagement and participation in the activities during the English language lesson featuring arts integration methods.

Definitions

Arts integration: Arts integration was defined by the Kennedy Center as "an approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate their understanding through an art form. During arts integration activities students engage in the creative process which connects an art form and another subject area and meets evolving objectives in both" (Chand O'Neal, 2014, p. 1). In learning through the arts, both content understanding and the retaining of main ideas are increased when information is

presented on multiple levels and at the same time (Saraniero, Goldberg, & Hall, 2014).

Arts integration is conducted by teaching connections using exploration between general education classroom curriculum and an art form. This strategy meets both of the evolving objectives in a more natural way through creative processes (Duma & Silverstein, 2014).

Public school budget cuts: Continuous public-school budget cuts have caused the disappearance of many essential school district resources, which is depriving school children of their right to an effective and thorough education. Farrie and Johnson (2015) explained specifically how budget cuts affect public schools, such as Newark Public School (NPS) in their students' education, including those with needs of extra support:

NPS has endured multiple years with significantly less funding to educate students, many of whom have extra-educational needs, and to address year to year increases in fixed costs, such as salaries, benefits and building maintenance. To balance the school budget over the last three years, NPS has had no alternative but to substantially cut teachers, support staff, and special education and other programs, shrinking the resources necessary for all students to achieve the State's Core Curriculum Content Standards. (p. 1)

21st century skills: In order to achieve the goals of the Common Core State Standards, or 21st century skills, there is much research that points to arts integration as a promising strategy with low resistance from the field of education (Doyle, 2014). As Common Core State Standards are trying to prepare students for the 21st century with skills such as innovation through creativity, arts integration may be an applicable solution

to this call for inventive and creative thinkers for the global economy (Bedetti, 2015, p. 1).

LEP student needs: Elreda, Kibler, Futch Ehrlich, and Johnson (2016) explained that when an ELL newcomer first arrives in the United States and begins attending public schools, they are granted only a very short “grace period” before being included in the mandated state assessments. Due to this, administrators and teachers alike feel the urgency to quickly tend to the specific needs of the ELL student population, including necessary language proficiency skills taught using effective classroom strategies (Elreda et al, 2016, p.1).

Expressive outcomes: Eisner (1965-2015) presented expressive outcomes in 1972 as an emerging model for teachers to use as educational evaluation. This strategy of evaluation allowed for more expressive outcomes from students instead of simply achieving a predetermined outcome given by the teacher. The learning outcomes from the activity is then evaluated and reflected upon. “The expressive curriculum activity is evocative rather than prescriptive and is intended to yield outcomes which, although educationally valuable, are not prescribed or defined beforehand. The task of the teacher is to look back, as it were, to evaluate what happened to the student rather than to ask whether the student achieved 90 percent mastery of a set of items placed before him during a forty-minute period” (Eisner, 1972, p. 581). Eisner found that the way that a student personalized meaning of the lesson while creating ideas generated from the content of the course is among the most important contributions of education.

English language arts: The goal for English language arts (ELA), according to Louisiana Department of Education (2016), is for students to show understanding of appropriate reading level texts through their reading, writing, and speaking abilities (p. 2). This specific course is especially important for students to be successful in the 21st century by acquiring the ability to apply language arts skills across subjects and disciplines.

Assumptions

My assumption was that my chosen methodology of a correlational study, which I used to investigate the relationship between two variables, was the best possible tool for solving my research problem. I assumed this because I had researched similar studies using the same methodology. Another assumption was that the arts integration experiences to which students were exposed were of good quality. Another assumption for this research study was that the PARCC exam itself tests the LEP students' ELA knowledge adequately. This was an assumption because all students test differently, and some LEP learners are more fluent than others taking the PARCC exam.

Scope and Delimitations

Scope and delimitations of the study included that I did not use all of the elementary schools within GCPS that were implementing the GCPS arts integration experiences during the 2015-2016 through 2016-2017 school years. The decision to study LEP learners specifically for this study was because of recent population growth of LEP learners in public schools. This specific focus was chosen because LEP students have more education needs that are often met through costly programs and hiring more

teachers. My reasoning for the boundaries of this study was to find schools that had similar demographics of population of LEP learners. I therefore chose five schools from GCPS that exposed students to arts integration experiences and six schools from GCPS that were without arts integration experiences. Another criterion of inclusion of the study was that the five schools that exposed students to arts integration experiences must also have participated with the Young Audiences AI professional developments, assemblies, or teacher in residencies programs. The degree of generalizability is small because this study's results would pertain only to LEP learners in 3rd grade. Because the results can only be applied to a very narrow population, the results may have poor generalizability.

Limitations

There were some limitations in my study. First, The PARCC assessment exam outcomes go back only to school year 2013-2014 when it began a pilot test in certain schools, used officially district-wide in GCPS in school years 2014-2015 through 2019. The PARCC platform where I acquired my data changed the way that they displayed student outcomes beginning in 2018, resulting in the most recent outcomes that I could use for my study being that of 2017.

Another limitation that I experienced was that there were only 19 elementary schools who met the criteria for having implemented the GCPS Arts Integration Program during the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years. After looking at the demographics of the schools receiving arts integration experiences in their classrooms, not all elementary schools had similar LEP demographics of between 35%-60% LEP learners. This was a limitation as it limited the amount of quantitative data that could be compared.

Some biases would be that teachers feel that they are overworked and stretched thin already, and they may not want to add the extra task of adding arts standards and objectives to their lesson plans.

Significance

The current study may be significant because it addressed a local problem by focusing specifically on LEP student achievement in the local public school system while providing quantitative research on the relationship between LEP students' academic achievement and participation in arts integration experiences in their public schools. This research is unique because it addresses the effectiveness of a teaching approach that is still considered controversial. Empirical data conveying possible effects of arts integration on LEP student achievement is scarce. The results of this study may provide much-needed insights for the school district, as well as educators. Positive social change could occur from the research data presented by illuminating a teaching approach that may help to close a gap in practice, providing LEP students with 21st century college and career ready skills.

Summary

In this chapter I explained the purpose of this study to provide quantitative data illustrating the relationship between LEP students' exposure to arts integration experiences in their public schools and academic achievement as measured by PARCC. I stated I research question and hypotheses and laid out the theoretical foundation on which the research was based. The nature of the study is based on an idea that integrating the arts throughout the school day may enrich student learning experiences and lead to higher

student performance in the general classroom. Catterall (2009) conducted a study that tracked 12,000 students from high school to age 26 over the course of 12 years. This longitudinal study found that in middle school and high school years, participation in the arts by students (including ELLs) successfully advanced education, with many going on to earn more degrees by age 26. Students expressed a more positive outlook on their secondary education and the benefits gained from it. In conclusion, this study presents research to support whether arts integration increases LEP students' academic achievement. Chapter 2 continues to explore the current literature and theories, establishing the significance of the research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter I present my literature review strategy, the theoretical framework of this study, and a literature review concerning the main concepts and variables that framed my study including public school budget cuts, LEP students' needs, and arts integration outcomes. The problem that this research addressed was an increasing academic achievement gap due to the difficulty of appropriately addressing the needs of LEP students during times of budget cuts and lack of resources. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between LEP students' academic achievement and participation in arts integration experiences in their public schools. This study specifically explored the relationship between 3rd grade LEP students with arts integration experiences compared to 3rd grade LEP students without arts integration experiences using PARCC exam outcomes. To establish the relevance of the problem, I conducted a literature review comprising three significant subsections: public school budget cuts, LEP students' needs, and arts integration outcomes. The major sections of this chapter contain the strategy that I used as I pursued my literature search, a theoretical framework embracing the lifelong studies by Eisner dedicated to learning through the arts, and a detailed literature review.

Literature Search Strategy

I collected and reviewed an extensive range of peer-reviewed and current literature from the past 5 years. I used the EBSCO database as well as advanced searches using the presented key concept and variable vocabulary, peer-reviewed journal sources, and specified date ranges. The main resources for literature were ERIC, which is

maintained by the Department of Education, SAGE Journals, which offer an abundance of current peer reviewed journal articles, Taylor and Francis Online, which is the world's leading publisher of scholarly journals, and Education Source, which allows searches of all levels of education and educational specialties. The following phrases and keywords for my main concepts were: *limited English proficient* or *LEP*, *LEP student needs*, *second language Learners*, *English language learners* or *ELL*, *arts integration*, *aesthetic education*, *arts-based education*, *expressive outcomes*, *public school budget cuts*, *school budget*, *Elliot Eisner*, and *James Catteral*. Combinations of search terms included *school budget cuts* with *LEP*, as well as *Elliot Eisner* with *arts integration*, and *James Catteral* with *arts-based education*. The publication years searched were 2013 through 2019 to ensure that the information found was current in the field of education. Seminal literature that assisted my study was by Catterall, a renowned researcher who showed through a longitudinal study of 12 years, *Doing Well and Doing Good by Doing Art*, how the arts helped to narrow the achievement gap. Other current peer reviewed literature searched was more specific to the effects of arts integration on LEP learners such as *Arts Integration: A Strategy to Improve Teaching and Learning, Promote Personal Competencies, and Turn Around Low-Performing Schools* by Biscoe and Wilson. I found that there was little literature to do with the budget cuts in my specific county or state, but I used literature from counties and states with a similar economic situation and demographic population as those in my study.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework for this study was based on the educational philosophies of Eisner. Eisner is an artist, teacher, and educational theorist who has written 17 books and published an abundance of peer reviewed articles addressing educational reform, arts education, aesthetic experience, teaching, learning, and curriculum theory. Eisner (1965-2015) suggested that the cognitive abilities that are necessary when composing a or creating a piece of artwork are applicable to all areas of learning in education. Therefore, integrating the arts into the general education classroom would be significantly beneficial to the learner. Eisner presented the theory of expressive outcomes in 1972 in *Emerging Models for Educational Evaluation*. In this article, Eisner discussed the use of expressive types of outcomes that are not predetermined by the teacher. According to Eisner, the outcomes are to be produced *during* an activity, reflected on, and then evaluated. Expressive outcomes are the proposed use of planned classroom curriculum activities, which are created to nurture the student's individual growth and intellectual journey (Moroye et al., 2014). There are two models of educational evaluation that Eisner called a new nonscientific approach. Eisner found that educational evaluation can successfully come from both an artistic model as well as a scientific model. There are two main processes that are necessary, and those are educational connoisseurship, which is reflection by the individual, and educational criticism, which is the public's appraisal and opinion of the event (Eisner, 1975, p. 4). Eisner questioned the evaluation abilities of state mandated assessments because they are not given in a way natural to a student's everyday life, but in an artificial environment of

pressures to score well. Eisner (1972) believed that this may result in inaccurate results as it cannot differentiate scores of what the student can do and what they will do. Research has showed that profound and inclusive educational experiences can be achieved by education through the arts, and that it is ideal for reaching multiple learning styles and intelligences (Eisner, 2003).

Eisner is known for his arguments that a curriculum that includes the visual, performing, and musical arts includes the essentials in evolving the student's critical thinking skills. Research interests of Eisner focused also on artistic methods used for educational practices and the implementation of aesthetic intelligence in classroom curriculum. His teachings and research centered on the ways that educational institutions can achieve more through the process of incorporating the arts and creativity into all their curricula, which is known as arts integration (Eisner, 2004). In a real classroom, children are responding to their education not only academically, but they are also socially and emotionally responsive to the current classroom environment. It is unjust to students to ignore these important facets of child development. Eisner (2005) stated that to assist youth in living a satisfying life, society must refrain from focusing attention solely on measured academic performance. Eisner's research has shown that teaching through the arts can benefit all students' academic careers no matter their learning style. Eisner (1965-2015) expressed that including the arts can potentially benefit a teacher's educational practices as well and help them to reach their full potential. Eisner (1965-2015) explained how the arts can benefit student learning through educational practices that help to refine their perception during a lesson. Eisner (2005) explained,

We need to help students learn to ask not only what someone is saying, but how someone has constructed an argument, a musical score, or a visual image.

Curriculum activities can be designed that call attention to such matters, activities that refine perception in each of the fields we teach. This will require activities that slow down perception rather than speed it up. (p. 5)

Eisner's theory relates to the present study and research question because in this study I attempted to find out whether teaching through the arts had an impact on 3rd grade LEP students' college and career ready skills.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable

There has been much interest in the world of education on the growing LEP population, implications for schools regularly faced with budget cuts, and the effectiveness of an emerging teaching approach called arts integration. The present study has touched on all three of these key concepts, and a comprehensive review of the literature has been provided below for an up-to-date understanding of the concepts of this study.

The first important key concept of the study was the issue of public school budget cuts. The educational programs offered by a school district are very dependent upon the amount of educational funding offered and budgeted. The current added accountability and pressure for student achievement adds another aspect into budget decision making (Burchbuckler, 2013). Today's schools are faced with many challenges ranging from classroom size, lack of technology, and lower number of services for students in need. Many believe that these issues begin at budget cuts and lack of funding. With ELA and

mathematics on the forefront of standardized testing, optional programs that are considered enrichment like the visual or performing arts are often the first to be cut from the budget (Peppler, Powell, Thompson, & Catterall, 2014). When budget cuts occur, the positions of school psychologist and social worker in the educational system are often cut, which studies suggest can lead to financial and psychiatric issues in the student population later in life (Huurre, Santalahti, Kiviruusu, & Solantaus, 2015). A key issue that emerged in one study was “the distinct lack of time available to the guidance counselors to provide a quality, holistic guidance counseling service to students due to a range of education cut-backs and the re-allocation of guidance” (Leahy et al., 2016, p. 102). Lee and Polocheck (2018) conducted a study finding that increasing school financial disbursements can cause a decline in the dropout rates of seniors.

Economic constraints are in direct conflict with the need for resources to reform teacher preparation (Ives, Alama, & Mosora 2013). Farrie and Johnson (2015) presented a detailed summary of the devastating impacts that underfunding can have on a school district. Budget cuts in the school district of NPS of New Jersey has depleted many necessary educational resources, which in return deprives its students of an essential and efficient education. As a result, NPS has resorted to cutting teaching positions, support staff, and special education. Funding for ELL and students with varying disabilities were drastically cut (Farrie & Johnson, 2015). Marker, Mitchall, and Lassiter (2013) conducted a study describing school’s challenges following district budget cuts, such as elimination of funding for schools’ mentor programs for beginning teachers. These kinds of cuts

increase demands from veteran teachers, forcing them to do more with less in all areas.

According to Greenfader (2013),

Due to budget cuts, nationwide, other content areas that provide oral language opportunities have faced dramatic cutbacks. Since 2007, almost 71% of U.S. schools have reduced—or eliminated—instruction time in such subjects as arts, music, history, and foreign language. (p. 173)

Trafi-Prats and Woywod (2013) explained that as budget cuts in public education systems are getting worse and the arts are getting cut, nonprofits have taken over the role of art educators even without the proper training in child development and classes that prepare them for a school setting. LaSalle (2015) described the fears that educators now experience during these difficult times including pay freezes, inability to pay student loans, and consistent teacher lay-offs. Knight and Strunk (2016) stated that budget cuts effecting teacher layoffs often disproportionately affect disadvantaged students. The education system's current situation has caused some cities to choose to just close schools that are not successful when it comes to a combination of their poor state testing and dealing with district budget cuts. (Ahmed, 2013; Jack & Sludden, 2013). According to Ahmed (2013),

Instead of looking at funding inequity, poverty, personal issues of individual students, and the very obvious issue that a test on reading, writing, and math skills does not describe a person fully, those in charge find it easier to claim a school as failing, making it much easier to close many schools. (p. 1)

Failing schools and educational inequality may be due to states lacking the capacity or inclination to address the lack of educational experiences for their students. (Debray & Blankenship, 2013). Persistent financial crises due to budget cuts can often create a vicious cycle for school districts as they encourage more parents to send their children to private schools or charter schools, which consequently harm district financing even further (Caskey & Kuperburg, 2014). School district CEOs often cut financial resources, increase the size of classrooms, and severely reduce intervention programs to satisfy state required accountability standards (Starret, Casey, & Dunlap, 2014). According to Starret et al. (2014), “Ultimately, this expectation of doing more with less will impact student learning” (p. 38). With the challenges of growing student numbers and budget cuts, it is consequently necessary for departments to formulate best practices based on the student needs and learning cultures of their departments (Feigenbaum & Iqani, 2015).

Another key concept within this study is how to teach to the special needs of LEP students. Even with the extensive rise in ELL students in public schools, many general classroom educators will be teaching students with English as their second language due to current policies in favor of mainstreaming education (Feinman-Nemser, 2018). ELL students of diverse backgrounds have the challenges of learning the English Language, acquiring general classroom content, while also attempting to keep up with their English-speaking peers (Jang, Dunlop, Wagner, Kim, & Gu, 2013). Okhremtchouk (2018) argues that there are multiple discretionary measures that are needed even on top of multiple criteria to determine whether a student is proficient in the English language or not. The high amount of ELL programs that are necessary in the United States is continuously

growing and is not thought to decrease any time soon (Ingraham & Nutall, 2016).

Arelleno (2018) presents research findings suggesting that initial Spanish proficiency assessments could serve as important proactive data by identifying students in elementary school who have difficulty learning the English language as well as academia. This research study found that those who scored low on these assessments require more intensive support services to learn English (p. 14). Rubenstein (2014) suggests that in order to build their oral proficiency successfully, there are simple instructional strategies such as promoting more ELL interaction with their peers and classroom participation with their peers. Other suggestions include providing scaffolding for writing assignments, pairing ELL students with a fluent English-speaking peer, and turning on English captions during video clips and documentary viewings. There has been much research on the educational needs of LEP students as well as the various teaching approaches used to reach students with these challenges. The specific needs of ELL students such as gaining academic language proficiency, are conducted by school through many different philosophies (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Sa'd (2018) predicts that teaching vocabulary learning strategies instead of spending too much time and effort on vocabulary itself can more effectively promote lexical learning as well as learner autonomy (p. 159). Both students and teachers benefit from oral practice in the classroom. This offers students the opportunity to learn as well as allow them to demonstrate their language skills providing teachers a way to gauge student comprehension and vocabulary skills. (Greenfader, 2013). Another teaching approach that may help LEP students is using connections to their daily lives or authentic materials. Integrating creativity, writing, and LEP student's incorporation of

stories of their daily lives is one example of meeting these student needs. For students to have the opportunity to self-reflect and be creative with the use of visual expression and literacy, the teacher can use literary and creative hybridity (Anae, 2014). This also assists with how researchers believe that there is currently not enough focus on the student's perspective when it comes to ELL students learning a second language (Shim, 2018). In order to create student discussion and reflection on student daily lives and issues, educators will use academic language in a realistic conversation within the classroom. (Zwahlen, 2017). Engagement has been found to be extremely significant in education, especially in the early grades (Brouillette et al., 2014). Murphy (2018) explains how often educators concentrate on an ELL student's comprehension. In order to achieve success however, the student must also have the ability to evaluate and analyze a text. Therefore teachers often use graphic novels as it is accessible to LEP learners (p. 62). Any strategies to assist LEP learners to progress and not become "long-term English learners" is of high importance. Long term ELLs who stay in the ELL program for many years often struggle much more than their peers whom progressed forward out of the program (Dounay, 2013). August (2016) presents findings that highlights the important role that extended and embedded instructional play in vocabulary acquisition of English Language Learners. The study also suggested the importance of summer school programs to help ELLs meet the new more challenging standards. Yanhun (2016) presents a study showing many areas of need for ELLS such as vocabulary, writing, reading comprehension, and critical thinking capabilities, as well as how to use inquiry-based learning to assist in these areas. These areas of learning are necessary for 21st Century skills in innovative

fields such as STEM. Shi (2017) explains that the academic gap between English-proficient and LEP students continues to be substantial even with the push for preparing more LEP students for considering a STEM field.

Other needs of ELL students include social-emotional resiliency skills according to (Castro Olivo, 2014). These skills are highly needed as they are to serve as a buffer when coping with sociocultural challenges. Johnson and Wells (2017) present a study which results suggest school districts make necessary changes due to the distinct needs of ELL students. Such changes include requiring pre-service extensive help in the field with ELLs, conduct more in-service educator professional development connected to their practices, as well as an evaluation method to capture all ELL teacher efficiency.

Another key concept within this study is the option of using Arts Integration as a cost-effective solution that may assist in closing the gap between LEP learners and their English proficient peers. Arts integration has many definitions. The Kennedy Center explains arts integration as, “an approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form.” (Chand O’neal, 2014). Another explanation of arts integration is when the arts is taught subtly in the classroom in the way of direct arts instruction, through art history or cultural content, or by relating arts techniques to other content areas to increase understanding and create an ambiance in the classroom (Simpson Steele, 2016). Taylor (2015) explains that bridging disciplines in education is necessary in order to have integrated knowledge and comprehensive understanding among students. There are many findings of arts integration experiences and outcomes on student academic achievement. This study’s definition of Arts

Integration comes from the Kennedy Center's Changing Education Through the Arts (CETA) Program which was established in 1999. CETA's research has concluded that there are many benefits to teaching through the arts such as higher state mandated test scores for lower achieving students, gains in both social and cognitive development, and a positive correlation between student engagement in the classroom and increased professional development (Duma & Silverstein, 2014). As educators look for successful teaching approaches, there has been much interest recently on incorporating arts integration into the classroom. With the wide array of student's interests, learning styles, and intelligences, incorporating the arts into general classroom curriculum has been offered as a logical approach to educate each and every student (Snyder, 2014). Teaching through the arts has the ability to engage many different learning styles and intelligences therefor creating equity in the education system and an inclusive curriculum (Chapman, 2015). Research has shown benefits where student's abilities to synthesize information and communicate their ideas in a group setting are exemplified when the art processes of creation are used in general education (Bedetti, 2015). Greenfader (2013) presented a study where teachers implemented arts-based education methods in Southeastern San Diego schools, where English is the second language for a majority of incoming students. The results of the study presented quantitative data showing momentous benefits to Listening and Speaking Assessments for Kindergarten students, and some benefits to the California English Language Development Test for 1st grade students. An illustration of how the arts are recently gaining popularity in education is how the letter "A" is making its way into the acronym of STEM, creating an arts integrated term of STEAM (Graham

& Brouillette, 2016). This recent change may signify that not only is science, technology, engineering, and mathematics of great importance, but adding the creativity and innovation of the arts is what makes this acronym complete. Incorporating the arts and creativity into everyday curriculum has been shown to engage all students, even in schools with higher drop-out rates. One such report in 2011 by PCAH (President's Committee on Arts and the Humanities) reported that additional funding to create arts rich educational institutions may assist in lowering stubbornly high dropout rates (Brouillette, 2014). Sotiropoulou-Zormala (2016) explains this way of teaching practices to have won over educational communities because it is a teaching strategy that is thought to create a diverse and advantageous learning atmosphere that leads to social and learning benefits for all students (p. 43). Another important study on the impact of arts integration on student achievement is by Catteral (2012). Catteral presented longitudinal study that researched the academic and communal behaviors of young adults who are very involved with the arts both either in or outside of their school building. Within the small group studies, research showed that students who participated in arts experiences showed a more positive future both socially and academically, as opposed to the students with no arts experiences. (Catterall, 2012). The main reason of the arts in general classroom content is to create an all-inclusive efficient education that is engaging and therefore absorptive (Brezovnik, 2015). Peloso (2014) presents a teaching strategy using integrating aesthetic education to make new connections and form patterns in students. In order to produce a deep and multifaceted educational experience for all students, academia can integrate the arts into the thematic objectives being taught in the classroom

(Baker, 2013). “In the school of education where we teach, all subjects are presented to teacher-candidates (TCs) in separate courses, yet we expound on the importance of integration because humans operate in contexts that are multidimensional, interconnected, and complex” (Steel, 2013, p. 1). Adding the visual and performing arts activities into a what has become routine or monotonous curriculum engages young learners while incorporating the mandated standards while also tending to the necessary literacy skills that are necessary for ELL students (Greenfader & Broulliette, 2013). Peppler et al. (2014) presented a study showing that ELL students participating in an Arts programming and integration showed greater growth in comparison to ELL students not participating in this program. Poldberg (2013). described the results of a similar study presenting an alternative way of building foundations for learning that focuses on basic skills using arts, literacy, science, and more to deepen student knowledge in arts and sciences (p. 16). Pruitt et al., (2014) describes the arts as rich modes of expression that can be used as a vehicle to help students to translate, make meaning, and communicate and use literacy expression. Saraniero et al. (2014) described teachers who have been properly trained to incorporate arts integration into their classrooms report that during arts integrated lessons they witness students more involved in the activity and with higher abilities to express what they have just learned. In another study, after implementation of arts integration methods, one county increased student achievement by 20% on statewide assessments, as well as showing a positive correlation between the positive change in school climate, according to the perceptions of teachers, staff, students, and parents, with the 77% reduction of discipline referrals (Snyder et al., 2014). A study by Scripp et al.,

(2014) presents similar results offering confirmation that students at an arts focused educational institution joined with an integrated arts program produced higher state assessment scores than students from schools who did not. Data from this study also showed evidence that achievement gaps had shrunk or disappeared at these schools as well (p. 2). There must be more open and public information on the many positive effects that the processes of arts experiences can have especially on youth from low income households. These actions may assist education reformers to understanding the progressive qualities of the arts incorporated into research, teacher pedagogy, and curriculum (Chappell, 2013).

Summary and Conclusions

In conclusion, my literature review consists of both empirical and theoretical research that is necessary to thoroughly examine the basis of the major themes. A literature review on arts integration provided insight onto how the general education classroom has been incorporating the arts as an additional teaching strategy to heighten student engagement as well as to make connection across disciplines. The next theme of the various difficulties and needs that come with teaching LEP students was described using the literature review to depict the vast range of complications that both educators and LEP learners must overcome to be successful in their academics and the 21st century. The literature review also depicted the difficult financial realities that today's schools are facing when creating their budgets. Literature from Elliot Eisner helped to create a theoretical base or framework for this study as he presented what he believes are possible solutions to the achievement gap we are seeing today. What is known in the discipline

related to this study is that the field of education has been attempting to close the education gap for an extended period of time. What is not known is in this discipline is evidence showing which teaching strategy will allow an educator to reach each and every student no matter what they have scored on the English proficiency exam given to students in need of learning English as a Second Language. The present study will fill this gap in research by extending knowledge on whether or not arts integration experiences in public schools can have an effect on state mandated exam outcomes. Because of the enormous pressure that student standardized exam outcomes have on the education in the form of school policy and funding distribution decisions, the impact of arts integration programs effect on these scores makes it an important research topic for stockholders (Pepplar, 2014). In Chapter 3, I will discuss my research design, rationale, and methodology that I planned to use in my study to address this gap in knowledge. The proposed research was to provide insight for whether bringing the arts into core curriculum may or may not raise student achievement, and therefore whether it may help to close the gap in practice of LEP students lacking 21st century college skills.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to provide insight into whether arts in the core curriculum is related to student achievement and therefore may help to close the gap in practice of LEP students lacking 21st century college and career ready skills. In doing so, this study examined the relationship between outcomes of the PARCC exam for 3rd grade LEP students in Golds County Schools and their exposure to arts integration experiences. In this chapter, I discuss the research design and rationale and the methodology, which will include the population, sampling, data collection, instrumentation, and data analysis. I also address threats to validity and explain the ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

I conducted this study using a correlational design to determine the relationship between LEP students' academic achievement and participation in arts integration experiences in their public schools. A correlational design is appropriate when assessing the strength of the relationship between measurable constructs. (Howell, 2013).

With this design, I expected to identify the existence and strength of a relationship between the PARCC exam outcome for 3rd grade LEP students in Golds County Schools and their exposure to arts integration experiences using archival data. I collected archival data from the 2017 Maryland Report Card website in anticipation of using a chi-square test of independence to assess the relationship. The variable of interest in this research was the student's PARCC exam outcome and participation in arts integration experiences.

My role as the researcher was to collect the data of the study and present it in a way that would assist administrators and teachers in their practice of education by providing insight into whether bringing the arts into core curriculum raises student achievement. This may help to close the gap in practice of LEP students lacking 21st century college and career ready skills. To accomplish this, I examined the difference in the PARCC exam outcome for 3rd grade LEP students in Golds County Schools that have been exposed to arts integration experiences compared to 3rd grade LEP students that have not been exposed to arts integration experiences.

Methodology

In this section, I discuss the population, sample, and sampling procedures. I outline the procedures for data collection and the instrumentation and operationalizations that I used. Finally, I describe the data analysis plan.

Population

The population consisted of 3rd grade LEP students in an urban school district of Golds County. According to the Maryland State Department of Education (2017), in the 2016-2017 school year, there were 2,530 3rd grade LEP students in the county, the majority of whom were boys (53.3%). Most were Hispanic or Latino (89.6%), with the rest consisting of White ($n = 17$), Black ($n = 169$), and Asian ($n = 73$) students. Many of these students were economically disadvantaged (89.1%), while 11.2% had an individualized education plan (IEP). A small number (0.4%) had a 504 plan, or Section 504, which prohibits discrimination based on disability and requires that the needs of

students with disabilities are met adequately and to the same level that the needs of nondisabled students are met.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

The sample consisted of 3rd grade LEP students in an urban school district from the 2016-2017 school year. I used G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2014), a power analysis and sample size calculating software, to determine an appropriate sample size. According to Cohen (1988), you can assume a medium effect size ($w = .30$), a power of .80, and an alpha of .05 for power analysis purposes. Applying the above parameters, the sample size required before this study was $N = 133$.

I used stratified sampling design, which involves defining and selecting specific groups (strata), and then randomly sampling from those groups (Acharva, Prakash, Saxena, & Nigam, 2013). I sampled two groups from 11 predetermined schools. The first sample group was 3rd grade LEP students from five arts integration schools. These schools were selected using three parameters: (a) each school needed to be a participating “Arts Integration School” with GCPSs throughout the school years of 2015-16 and 2016-17, (b) each school must have also participated and used arts integration services from the Young Audiences during the school years of 2015-16 and 2016-17, and (c) the schools must have had an LEP population between 35% and 60%.

The next sample group was 3rd grade LEP students from six non-arts integration schools. These schools were selected using the three parameters as well: (a) each school needed to not be a participating “Arts Integration School” with GCPSs throughout the school years of 2015-16 and 2016-17, (b) each school must not have had a record of

participating and using arts integration services from the Young Audiences “Arts for Learning” program during the school years of 2015-16 and 2016-17, and (c) the schools must have had an LEP population between 35% and 60%.

Archival Data

The archival data consisted of deidentified, individual student PARCC exam outcomes of 3rd grade LEP students from five arts integration schools and from six non-arts integration schools from the 2016-2017 school year. I gathered this data from the 2017 Maryland Report Card Website. I then input the data to an Excel spreadsheet in order to export to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). I received Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before carrying out any study procedures.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

For data collection, I used PARCC data and looked at the exam outcome of the LEP population of 11 different schools. Because I was using archival data, I did not administer an instrument. The original data was collected using the PARCC exams from 2017, administered to students by Golds County faculty. The PARCC exams were developed by the PARCC consortium and with assessment funds presented by the “Race to the Top” incentive by the United States Department of Education in 2010 and were designed to measure the proficiency related to ELA, literacy, and mathematics courses. The development of its assessments is through a consortium that now includes six states, the Department of Defense Educational Activity, the District of Columbia, and the Bureau of Indian Education. As Bowman (2016) explained, the (PARCC is an assembly

of states collaborating together to cultivate a series of assessments to track student achievement to ensure a successful transition into college and future careers. Specifically, I focused on the performance levels for the ELA exam. PARCC reports provided performance levels for the students' exam outcomes depending on their PARCC exam score. A complete score for English language arts/literacy and mathematics have a range of 650 to 850, with higher scores indicating higher proficiency in ELA. PARCC exam coinciding performance levels consist of *not met* as the lowest level, to *exceeded* as the highest level. PARCC test on English language and literacy score reports delivered separate "scale scores" for both the reading and the writing assessments. The PARCC writing "scale scores" have a range of 10 to 60, while the PARCC reading "scale scores" have a range of 10 to 90. As this directly measures one of the variables of interest of the present study, the PARCC exam coinciding performance levels were appropriate to utilize.

One example question from the PARCC ELA 3rd Grade "Computer Based Practice Test- Unit 1 is as follows:

<p>Read story titled "Johnny Chuck Finds the Best Thing in the World." Then answer the questions. In this unit, each question is worth two points, 1 point for Part A and 1 point for Part B. With 11 questions, there is an opportunity for 22 points all together in Unit 1.</p>			
<p>Part A: What does cross mean as it is used in paragraph 28 of "Johnny Chuck Finds the Best Thing in the World."</p>			
A. excited	B. lost	C. upset	D. scared
<p>Part B: Which statement best supports the answer to Part A?</p>			
A. "...ran this way and ran that way..."			
B. "...hadn't found the Best Thing in the World."			
C. "...the started up the Lone Little Path..."			
D. "They didn't hurry now..."			
<p>In this unit, each question is worth two points, 1 point for Part A and 1 point for Part B. With 11 questions, there is an opportunity for 22 points all together in Unit 1.</p>			

Figure 1. Example question: PARCC ELA 3rd-Grade Practice Test—Unit 1.

PARCC exam outcomes. This was one of the key variables of interest measured using the PARCC exam administered to 3rd grade LEP students in 2017 school year. The exam outcomes used were those of individual students from the 11 Golds County elementary schools. This was an interval-level variable that could range from 650-850 with coinciding performance levels that show student exam outcomes. A student's overall score, out of the possible 850, is shown with performance levels of 1-5 and presented as 1. *Not met*, 2. *partially met*, 3. *approached*, 4. *met*, and 5. *exceeded expectations*. The exact scores could not be obtained for this study.

Arts integration experience. This was a dichotomous (i.e., categorical variable with two categories) variable of interest. It was measured at the nominal level by whether or not the student belonged to a participating "Arts Integration School" with GCPSs

throughout the school years of 2015-16 and 2016-17. The two groups were defined as *no arts integration experience* and *arts integration experience*.

Data Analysis Plan

Once I accessed the PARCC exam outcomes, I was able to input them to an Excel spreadsheet and upload them to SPSS. My research question and hypotheses were as follows:

RQ: Is there a statistically significant relationship between PARCC exam outcome and exposure to arts integration experiences among 3rd grade LEP students in GCPSs?

H_0 : There is not a statistically significant relationship between PARCC exam outcome and exposure to arts integration experiences among 3rd grade LEP students in GCPSs.

H_a : There is a statistically significant relationship between PARCC exam outcome and exposure to arts integration experiences among 3rd grade LEP students in GCPSs.

In order to test these hypotheses, I used a chi-square test of independence. The chi-square test of independence is an appropriate analysis to use when assessing the strength of the relationship between two nominal-level variables (Field, 2013). For this analysis, the two variables of interest corresponded to PARCC exam outcome and arts integration experiences. PARCC exam performance levels ranged from 1 (not met) to 4 (met) because there were no students in my sample that earned 5 (exceeded expectations).

Arts integration experiences consisted two levels: no arts integration experience and arts integration experience.

Prior to conducting the analysis, I assessed the assumptions for a chi-square test of independence. In order for a chi-square to run accurately, the expected frequencies should not be too small. A traditional precautionary measure in the examination of a chi-square is that the expected frequencies below five should not account for more than 20% of the cells, and there should be no cells with an expected frequency of lower than one (McHugh, 2013).

To assess for statistical significance, a chi-square coefficient (χ^2) will be calculated. The calculated coefficient will be utilized, in addition to the degrees of freedom to obtain a *p*-value. The degrees of freedom for a chi-square test of independence are calculated as followed: $df = (r - 1)(c - 1)$, in which *r* and *c* are the number of rows and columns in the table, respectively. Statistical significance will be evaluated at the generally accepted level, $\alpha = .05$. If the *p*-value for the chi-square test of independence is less than .05, the null hypothesis will be rejected.

Threats to Validity

Threats to the validity of this study may have been that choosing the schools to sample from for this study was not random. This was because the researcher needed to find schools within the three parameters stated earlier. They needed to be participating Arts Integration schools that also closely matched within 25% of LEP population in the six non-arts integration schools. Because this was a non-experimental study using archival data, I could not randomly assign participants to groups, nor could I

experimentally manipulate the participants into the arts integration experiences groups. Thus, traditional threats to validity, such as testing effects, maturation, or experimental mortality, are not applicable. To ensure statistical conclusion validity, I tested the assumptions of the analysis used. To reduce threats to external validity, I did not make generalizations beyond the population under study.

Ethical Procedures

Prior to conducting the study, I made sure to obtain Walden IRB (approval number 03-11-20-0577707). Procedures that I was careful to adhere to was respect for intellectual property and confidentiality. In order to adhere to these, I have used a pseudonym for the county name as well as school names throughout this dissertation.

Summary

Through this correlational research I attempted to determine a relationship between LEP students' academic achievement and participation in arts integration experiences within the public schools. I used stratified random sampling to sample archival data involving 3rd grade LEP PARCC Exam outcomes from five schools in an urban school district that have and six schools that have not had Arts Integration experiences. A chi-squared test of independence was conducted to assess whether there was a significant relationship between ELA PARCC exam outcome and arts integration experiences. In the following chapter, Chapter 4, I will present the results of this study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between LEP students' academic achievement and participation in arts integration experiences in their public schools. The guiding research question addressed in this study was as follows:

RQ: Is there a statistically significant relationship between PARCC exam outcome and exposure to arts integration experiences among 3rd grade LEP students in GCPSs?

H_0 : There is not a statistically significant relationship between PARCC exam outcome and exposure to arts integration experiences among 3rd grade LEP students in GCPSs.

H_a : There is a statistically significant relationship between PARCC exam outcome and exposure to arts integration experiences among 3rd grade LEP students in GCPSs.

This chapter presents data collection, results, and a summary. I conducted the chi-square test of independence proposed in Chapter 3 as planned.

Data Collection

The time frame for data collection was 1 month from the time that the Walden IRB sent their approval. During this time, I accessed the exam outcomes from the 2017 Maryland Report Card website, input individual student data from the 11 schools to an excel spread sheet, and then uploaded it to SPSS.

Data Analysis

The data collection yielded 379 student PARCC exam outcomes as performance levels from the 11 schools. One hundred seventy-seven student PARCC exam performance levels were those who had been exposed to arts integration experiences, and 202 student PARCC exam performance levels accessed were those who had not been exposed to arts integration experiences. I then used a chi-square test of independence to analyze the relationship between 3rd grade LEP students' academic achievement and participation in arts integration experiences in their public schools.

Results

I used descriptive statistics to describe the trends in the variables of interest. A total of 177 students (46.7%) were enrolled in arts integration and 202 students (53.3%) were enrolled in non-arts integration schools. Possible PARCC scale scores could range from 650 to 850. A student's overall score, out of the possible 850, is shown with performance levels of 1-5 to give parents and educators a quick glimpse of whether or not the student is on track with the grade level expectations. The level 1 indicates that the student is of the greatest need for improvement while on the other end of the spectrum, level 5 indicates a strong performance level. A level 1 is a score of 650-699, level 2 is 700-724, level 3 is 725-749, level 4 is 750-809, and level 5 is 810-850.

A majority of students were categorized as a 1 (not met) for ELA PARCC performance. No students from both art integration schools or non-arts integration schools were categorized as a level 5. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for ELA PARCC performance level scores. Table 2 presents the Chi-Square Test of Independence.

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages for ELA PARCC Performance Levels

Variable	Arts integration (<i>N</i> = 177)		Non-arts integration (<i>N</i> = 202)	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
ELA PARCC performance level				
1 – Not met	86	48.6	114	56.4
2 – Partially met	47	26.6	45	22.3
3 – Approached	36	20.3	34	16.8
4 – Met	8	4.5	9	4.5
5 – Exceeded expectations	0	0.0	0	0.0

I conducted a chi-square test of independence to assess the relationship between PARCC exam outcomes and exposure to arts integration experiences among 3rd grade LEP students in GCPSs. All assumptions for a chi-square test of independence were examined and met.

Findings of the chi-square test of independence were not statistically significant, $\chi^2(3) = 2.44, p = .486$, suggesting that there was not a significant relationship between ELA PARCC performance level and participation in arts integration experiences. Due to nonsignificance in the chi-square test, the null hypothesis for the research question was not rejected. Table 2 presents the chi-square test of independence for the sample.

Table 2

Chi-Square Test of Independence for ELA PARCC Exam Performance and Arts Integration

ELA PARCC performance level	Arts integration		Non-arts integration		$\chi^2(3)$	<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Performance level					2.44	.486
1 – Not met	86 (93.4)	48.6	114 (106.6)	56.4		
2 – Partially met	47 (43.0)	26.6	45 (49.0)	22.3		
3 – Approached	36 (32.7)	20.3	34 (37.3)	16.8		
4 – Met	8 (7.9)	4.5	9 (9.1)	4.5		

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between LEP students' academic achievement and participation in arts integration experiences within their public schools. In this chapter, I presented the findings of the data analysis. I examined the research question for the study for a statistically significant relationship between PARCC exam outcomes and exposure to arts integration experiences among 3rd grade LEP students in GCPSs. I used descriptive statistics to report the trends in ELA PARCC exam outcomes. Findings of the chi-square test of independence were not statistically significant, suggesting that there was no relationship between arts integration and ELA PARCC outcomes.

The null hypothesis for the research question could not be rejected. In the next chapter, the findings of the data analysis will be interpreted in connection with the literature.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between LEP students' academic achievement and participation in arts integration experiences in their public schools. The theoretical framework of this study was based on the educational philosophies of Eisner (1965-2015) who was passionate about investigating the integration of the arts into the general education classroom. I used a quantitative correlational study to investigate the relationship between LEP students' academic achievement and participation in arts integration experiences in their public schools. The nature of the study was an approach that aimed to address the presented problem by providing quantitative data showing LEP student's PARCC exam outcomes from public schools providing arts integration experiences and public schools not providing arts integration experiences. The findings of the chi-square test of independence were not statistically significant, suggesting that there was no significant relationship between LEP students' academic achievement and participation in arts integration experiences in their public schools.

The results from a study similar to this one is by Snyder (2014) and relates to this study because the arts integration program included many professional developments to train classroom teachers the teaching strategy of arts integration. Both studies also tracked improvements by specific populations after the implementation of arts integration, though Snyder's study generated more specific results of both state and local test scores. As Snyder (2014) explained,

This evaluation also reviewed student benchmarks for the correlations between Arts Integrated Lessons and increased student achievement in Grade 6. In the Grade 6 Unit Test for Rational Number Concepts, more students received scores of Proficient or Advanced on the standard taught through Arts Integration than on the standards not taught through Arts Integration. This was especially true for Hispanic students. (p. 15)

Interpretation of the Findings

My interpretation of the findings is that though there was no significant relationship found between the academic achievement and students' exposure to arts integration experiences, a descriptive tendency did show a slightly higher achievement outcome of students exposed to arts integration experiences. Together with indicators from the literature, my interpretation of these findings is that by including the arts in an elementary student education plan, the student may be more engaged and benefit from art integration experiences.

My study can be compared to similar studies looking at state test achievement of students who were on a low level and in need of improvement. Empirical data from a similar study by Snyder (2014) showed a positive correlation between the implementation of arts integration at Bates Middle School and student achievement on the Maryland School Assessment (MSA). To evaluate the effect of arts integration on student achievement, evaluators analyzed the standardized exam outcomes. MSA tests student achievement in reading and math and has met the testing requirements for the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The results also showed development of a more

positive school climate as well as decreased suspension rates. My interpretation of the findings is that while the results did not show a significant relationship, it was still apparent in the results that the students who received arts integration experiences benefitted from them. I interpret this as it may be worth adding more arts to the elementary curriculum to see if achievement goes up. Today's students are the future; they are deserving of the educational system's best efforts to close the achievement gap in this country.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study coincide with those discussed in Chapter 1. The PARCC assessment examinations began being administered by Golds County in the school year of 2014-15. The Maryland Report Card website no longer showed individual student's performance levels after 2017. Due to this, the most recent PARCC exams outcomes that I could use for this study were those of 2017. Another limitation of this study was that actual student scores would have been better. This would have allowed me to more adequately capture variance in the data for this study and for further analysis procedures. Another limitation was limited generalizability to other populations.

Recommendations

Due to the results, my recommendations would be further research looking also at the effects of incorporating the arts into the general education classroom as well as qualitative research searching for the optimal sources of engagement of ELLs. Whether it is visual arts, music, or more technology, I found through my literature research that the answer could lie in the increased engagement of youth in the classroom that will create a

love of learning and a thirst for more knowledge. I also recommend that research needs to be conducted periodically going forward because the interests of U.S. children are changing at an ever-increasing rate. If the data collection would have yielded a statistically significant relationship, the study would have potentially represented more evidence on the importance of arts integration experiences for student academic achievement. In light of this, the need for this study still existed, and future research should address this topic. What could be done in future studies is to conduct a study using a district with a higher number of established arts integration schools, as well as using raw student test scores. This could provide a more detailed and accurate indication of whether bringing the arts into core curriculum can raise LEP student academic achievement. By following this recommendation, these new studies could contribute to positive social change by showing a possible solution to closing the LEP achievement gap with English proficient learners, promoting broader development of 21st century college and career ready skills.

Implications

The implications for social change in this study are that this study investigated a cost-effective way for public schools to improve LEP student learning in the public-school general education classroom during a time of budget cuts. At this moment, as this study is concluding, the United States is in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the impact of COVID-19 on state budgets, many districts across the United States will not be receiving any increase in school aid and may possibly see a decrease in aid. School districts are now faced with sudden unexpected budget deficits at the same time that

students will need extra help due to being out of school for an extended period of time. This research may also assist local social change as my current district, which will remain unnamed, is facing a budget deficit of \$4.6 million due to this crisis while another local district's budget deficits are even higher. This study and others like it are imperative right now for finding ways that schools might operate more efficiently with what resources they already have in these trying times. Though the findings of this chi-square test of independence were not statistically significant, this study compiled a significant amount of literature regarding the potentially important role that the arts play in assisting to close the gap in education. Considering the literature review as well as the research showing that arts integration students did achieve performance levels slightly higher than students without arts integration experiences, the implications may include that incorporating the arts into the general education classroom could be beneficial to the LEP learner population.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to propose that more research on this topic is still needed and could be conducted with a larger population of participants to consolidate or expand upon my findings. Correlational studies like this are important as educators today are consistently trying to meet the ever-changing needs of an ever-changing population of students. In order to meet these needs, the rationale for conducting more research on how to better engage our students still exists. Possible ways to continue this research would be to conduct a mixed methods study using interviews and qualitative data to study the experiences with arts integration of students and parents. This data could be triangulated

with a still needed study on possible effects of arts integration on ELA PARCC test scores. The literature review for this research study is very relevant to the challenges public schools are currently facing and will help classroom teachers, art educators, administrators, and policy makers to understand the value of integrating the arts into many classroom subjects in the general education classroom.

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