

PREPARE: Learning Targets

A PD experience designed around a single essential question supported by only three interconnected objectives could potentially be more powerful than one focused on a long list of tangentially related knowledge, skills, and dispositions. (SEE Resources-Big Picture Planning)

DEFINITION: What are Learning Targets in an arts integration PD experience?

Learning targets articulate what the teaching artist expects participants to know, do, and appreciate by the end of the PD experience. These targets guide the design of the learning experiences and focus the participants on the learning purpose. Learning targets may include a) essential question(s), b) enduring understanding(s), and c) objectives that address specific new knowledge, skills or dispositions. Contextual information (see Context) informs the learning targets which in turn guide the teaching artist's facilitation choices.

CHECKLIST REVIEW

- ✓ What is the big idea or question guiding this professional development experience?
- ✓ What knowledge, skills, and dispositions do teachers need to cultivate and develop in order to address the big idea?
- ✓ How will you prioritize the learning targets that are most important?

An **essential question** (EQ) is open-ended and evokes creative thinking or problem solving (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). An EQ is a profound question that challenges a person to develop an idea through experience, and support that idea with evidence. EQs can repeat over time and have equal relevance for 6 year-olds – 60 year-olds. EQs might also appear across subject matter with interdisciplinary applications. Some EQ examples for a professional development experience include:

- How can asking questions develop student creativity?
- How does careful observation enhance interpretation?
- How do the arts generate student engagement?

Enduring understandings (EU) often live hand in hand with essential questions. They are big ideas, conceptual understandings that remain in our minds after all the details have been forgotten (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Example EUs include:

- Problems cultivate problem solvers.
- Close observation sparks the imagination.
- The arts generate focus, energy, and delight.

Together the EU and EQ help the teaching artist succinctly frame why the topic is worth studying.

Finally, objectives express specific, expected short-term outcomes of the PD experience. Objectives generally fall into three categories – what classroom teachers will know, do, and be like as a result of their learning. Knowledge-based objectives refer to the specific content of a discipline. In an arts integrated PD experience, this may include knowledge from an art form as well as knowledge from another integrated

subject. Knowledge includes elements, principles, history, theory and other know-able facts. For example, a classroom teacher may know the definitions of the B.E.S.T. elements of dance by defining body, energy, space, and time (see Resources).

The teaching artist may also expect classroom teachers to develop performance skills, both within the art form and as an instructor of the art form (See Art Content). Often, classroom teachers need to develop the skills of an artist before being able to teach the skills to others. They practice dancing to teach dancing. They practice drawing to teach drawing. For example, a teaching artist may expect classroom teachers to demonstrate using a variety of body parts, shapes and actions through creative movement. However, classroom teachers also need to practice the skills involved with how to teach the arts – how to prompt, question, probe, coach, and assess, among many other skills teachers need, to be agile as arts integrators (see Facilitation). A teaching artist might expect classroom teachers to provide coaching during a creative movement exercise by describing how their students are using their bodies.

Ideally, a classroom teacher leaves the PD experience with new dispositions, or values and beliefs, that help them interact with their students as an artist would. For example, artists often see the value of failed attempts, mistakes that lead to discoveries, and errors that support more risks. If a teacher can learn to see failures as opportunities, he or she is practicing the temperament of an artist. In addition, teachers cultivate the same dispositions they want to nurture in children. For example, during a PD, teachers might explore and experience situations that require empathy in order to develop student empathy later within their classrooms.

PURPOSE: Why are Learning Targets important to an arts integration PD experience?

In the art of backward design, the learning target is the final destination. Knowing the end point is the first step in creating a map that supports the journey to get there. Wiggins & McTighe (2005) often discuss the “twin sins” of design. One sin occurs when the instructor is activity oriented and provides hands-on experiences that are fun in the moment, but fail to intellectually engage the learner. The second sin occurs when an instructor focuses on coverage, driving to introduce every fact or figure related to a subject. In this case, there is not enough time for the learners to make personal connections or socially construct understandings, and the information may quickly crumble. A PD experience constructed with strong learning targets frames experiences with power and purpose.

IN PRACTICE: How might Learning Targets be applied to an arts integration PD experience?

Determining learning targets is ultimately about committing to priorities. A teaching artist carries a wealth of knowledge and experience that most classroom teachers do not have, but it is impossible to present the archive of a life’s work within a single PD experience. Articulating learning targets is about curating and focusing on an intentional collection that hangs together like paintings in a gallery. Consider selecting a few, focused learning targets that work together to support classroom teacher practice and their students’ learning. A PD experience designed around a single essential question supported by only three interconnected objectives could potentially be more powerful than one focused on a long list of tangentially related knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

Over the course of a PD experience, the teaching artist should also be able to collect valuable feedback about how the classroom teachers met the target. A teaching artist will be constantly observing classroom teachers engage with the work, listening to their questions and discussions, and reading their written

reflections to ascertain where they are as they approach the learning target and what they need along the way. When the PD experience has reached completion, final evaluations, reflections and portfolios also provide evidence to help the teaching artist determine how participants met the intended learning targets. This information supports subsequent work, as a teaching artist continues to explore and design professional development experiences for classroom teachers. (See Evaluation.)

Arts Discipline Examples

DANCE

In a 3-day PD course entitled Explaining Science Through Creative Movement, the teaching artist publishes the following learning targets on the first page of the packet. She also shares selected objectives that pertain to the day's work verbally and on PowerPoint at the beginning of each day of the course, along with the Enduring Understanding and Essential Question.

Enduring Understanding: Explanation is an art.

Essential Question: How can creative movement explain science?

Objectives: Teachers will:

- KNOW the B.E.S.T. elements of creative movement.
- KNOW the sequence and steps for three creative movement strategies.
- KNOW principles for the effective facilitation of creative movement.
- BE ABLE TO facilitate the creation of simple movement sequences about a topic in Science.
- BE ABLE TO use dance elements vocabulary to support their students' revisions of their dances.
- Be ABLE TO ask questions and provide prompts that support student explanations in Science.
- APPRECIATE dance as an expression of ideas.
- APPRECIATE the role of commitment and focus in creating quality artwork.

DRAMA

To frame a 3-day PD course focused on integrating drama with language arts, the teaching artist introduces the following learning targets in order to orient the classroom teachers to the overall purpose of the workshop:

Enduring Understanding: Personal experience enhances comprehension

Essential Question: How do drama strategies assist readers as they construct meaning with complex texts?

Objectives: Teachers will...

- KNOW drama enhances student engagement with learning.
- KNOW integrating drama with complex text increases student comprehension and interest.
- BE ABLE TO facilitate select drama instructional strategies.
- BE ABLE TO design a lesson integrating drama with Common Core English Language Arts standards.
- BE ABLE TO assess student achievement through drama.
- APPRECIATE how drama makes learning more personal and relevant to each individual student.

- APPRECIATE how drama helps focus a learning experience.

MUSIC

In preparation for an 8-week residency integrating music with reading comprehension, classroom teachers learn the musical elements used in a “sound story” to represent their comprehension of a text. The teachers’ learning targets mimic the targets their students will be aiming for in the classroom. The teaching artist includes learning targets for the art form as well as for the area of connected curriculum (reading comprehension strategies, such as inference, sensory details, and synthesis.) Only the art form learning targets are included here.

Enduring Understanding: Sound has color.

Essential Questions: How can sound demonstrate our understanding of text and story?

Objectives: Teachers will...

- KNOW sound has different qualities, and that these qualities have names.
- KNOW that bodies can make sound through voice and percussion.
- KNOW developmental norms for children and learning in music.
- BE ABLE TO use their voices and bodies to create a variety of sounds and rhythms.
- BE ABLE TO give feedback to young performers about the expressive qualities of their soundscapes.
- APPRECIATE connections between creating a sound story and students’ comprehension of text.
- APPRECIATE aspects of the creative process: collaboration, imagination, revision, performance.

VISUAL ARTS

In a 3-day institute, teachers apply visual arts techniques within field journals. Since the first day of the institute is outdoors, the teaching artist sends the agenda and the learning targets via email in advance, and verbally reminds participants on site.

Enduring Understanding: Art enhances observation, and observation enhances art.

Essential Question: How do visual arts techniques help us observe and record the natural world?

Objectives: Teachers will...

- KNOW a variety of place-based and adaptable strategies for utilizing field journals to gather and synthesize information about the natural world.
- BE ABLE TO apply a variety of place-based and adaptable strategies for utilizing field journals to particular situations and circumstances.
- Be ABLE TO approach art making with confidence.
- BE ABLE TO develop classroom lessons that integrate art, literacy and science using field journals.
- APPRECIATE interdisciplinary approaches to making meaning of the natural world.

VIDEO EXAMPLES

(Online only)