

THE EFFECT OF ARTS INTEGRATION ON SELF-EFFICACY

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BACKGROUND

- **Arts integration (AI)** is defined by the Kennedy Center as “an approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form. Students engage in a creative process which connects an art form and another subject area and meets evolving objectives in both” (Silverstein & Lynne, 2010).
- AI has been shown to positively impact academic performance (Peppler, et al., 2014; Robinson, 2013; Lee, et al., 2015), and certain groups of students, specifically those with disabilities, those who are economically disadvantaged, and English language learners (ELLs), benefit more from AI than their peers (Brouillette, 2010; Ingraham & Nuttall, 2016; Peppler, et al., 2014; Robinson, 2013).
- **Self-efficacy** is an individual’s perception of their ability to successfully engage in a particular behavior (Bandura, 1977).
- In an academic setting, the behaviors associated with strong self-efficacy contribute to a student’s successful completion of tasks, thus creating a virtuous cycle in which self-efficacy beliefs are bolstered by mastery experiences, the achievement of which is aided by actions that are generated by self-efficacy itself. (Usher et al, 2019)
- According to Bandura (1994), “self-efficacy builders avoid placing people in situations prematurely where they are likely to fail often,” suggesting that teachers must carefully consider how they can create the conditions for developing strong self-efficacy.

PURPOSE

- This study sought to determine whether the integration of arts activities into a four-week English language arts unit with geology content would enhance not only general academic self-efficacy, but science (content) and arts/creativity self-efficacy as well in a fourth-grade classroom .
- It was hypothesized that the intervention would enhance self-efficacy in the three relevant domains.

METHODS

Participants

- Fourth-grade class ($N = 25$)
- 82% white, 18% Hispanic/Latino, Asian, Black/African, American Indian/Alaskan Native; 34.5% free and reduced lunch

Procedures

- Pre- and post-intervention self-efficacy questionnaire with three subscales: general academic, science, arts/creativity
- Intervention: Nine arts integration activities in four weeks
- Collected field notes, reflections, intervention artifacts

RESULTS

Results

Quantitative

- Mean questionnaire score declined from 36.68 to 36.00
- Statistically significant increase in one general academic self-efficacy item and significant decrease in one science item

Qualitative

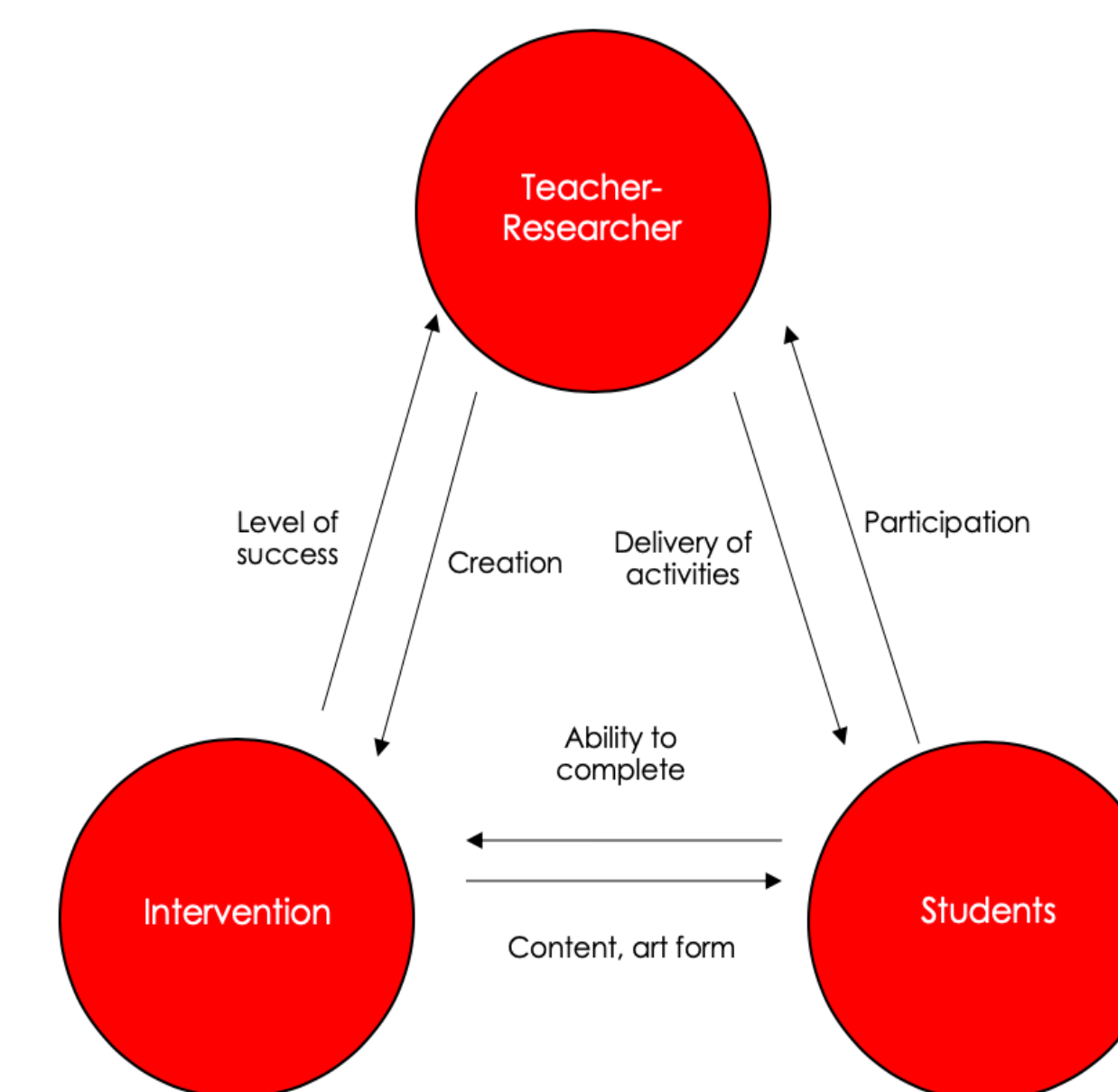
- Coding themes grouped into three categories

Student - Understanding of content, understanding of art form, lack of understanding of art form, high engagement, low engagement, resistance/negativity

Teacher-researcher - lack of experience, student teacher status

Intervention - incomplete intervention, unfamiliar task, challenging to complete, easier to complete

The larger categories of themes that emerged in the data interacted with each other to affect the self-efficacy outcomes of arts integration interventions.



DISCUSSION

Students

- Students were able to demonstrate greater understanding through AI than in traditional assessments activities, which may be attributable to the wider range of modalities addressed.
- Students may have been operating within their ZPD in heterogeneous groups and demonstrating understanding with the help of peers, but not higher self-efficacy on their surveys.
- Engagement was high for the first five activities and lower for the last three, which were repeated, suggesting novelty effects.
- Self-reporting should be viewed with caution: Teye & Peaslee (2015) found weak response validity of self-reported data from elementary students.

Teacher-researcher

- Lack of experience led to setting activity levels too high and running out of time for three activities, which could have contributed to the lack of change in self-efficacy beliefs.
- The teacher-researcher’s status as a student teacher meant that making interventions a priority was difficult, resulting in imperfectly delivered activities.

Intervention

- Three incomplete intervention activities due to time constraints may have had a neutral to negative effect on student self-efficacy.
- Familiarity with activities may have reduced cognitive engagement and limited any boost in self-efficacy beliefs.
- Lack of creative license might have led to greater self-efficacy in general academics, but lower arts/creativity self-efficacy.

The lack of significant findings did not lead to the conclusion that arts integration has no benefit for students; rather, the strong student engagement and construction of knowledge witnessed implies that further research is needed to determine whether there are conditions under which student self-efficacy increases as a result of arts integration. This would require an experienced teacher who has been trained to deliver AI activities to implement a full school year of arts being integrated throughout the curriculum.