



Leveraging the Arts: Effective Arts Integration for Social-Emotional Learning



Melanie Watson



Overview

- Rationale and supporting research
- Introduction to “Leveraging the Arts to Identify and Characterize Emotions”
- Examples
- Adaptations and further resources





[Feelings Wheel](#)

Why Learn Emotional Vocabulary?

Feeling

Students feel emotions and act upon them without thinking.

A student throws a desk.

Labeling

Students feel emotions and can label them.

The student recognizes the tension in their muscles and fiery sensation in their stomach as anger.

Understanding

Students feel emotions, accurately label them, and consider the initial sources of the feeling.

The student reflects, realizing the root source of their anger is humiliation. Unable to answer a question in front of the class, their peers laughed at them.

Regulating

Students feel emotions and accurately label from the context of root cause. They can develop a path toward healing.

The student understands that not knowing an answer is common and not shameful. They refocus their self-worth through a mantra and choose to reconnect with their peers.

Why the Arts?



01. Experiential

02. Innately engaging

03. Deeply personal

04. Appropriate for diverse learners

05. Reflective

Supporting Research

- Blasco-Magraner, J. S., Bernabe-Valero, G., Marín-Liébana, P., & Moret-Tatay, C. (2021). Effects of the educational use of music on 3- to 12-year-old children's emotional development: A systematic review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(7), 3668. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18073668>
 - Literature review of 26 separate studies
 - Music improves:
 - emotional intelligence
 - regulation
 - school performance and engagement
 - improves social emotional learning both as individuals and within part of a broader community
- Zana-Sternfeld, G., Israeli, R., & Lapidot-Lefer, N. (2024). Creative education or educational creativity: Integrating arts, social-emotional aspects, and creative learning environments. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 25(3). (PDF)
 - Literature review of 71 studies
 - Explores a broad framework
 - I > Us > Educational > Community
 - Considers students' cultural and community backgrounds

Supporting Research

- Kotaman, H., Inceoğlu, S. Ö., & Kotaman, Ş. (2024). Dancing program and young children's social development. *Current Psychology*, 43(21), 19171–19179. (PDF)
 - Case study of a dancing program for preschool children
 - Students in the dancing group experienced:
 - Improved pro-social behaviors such as sharing, helpfulness, and cooperation
 - Reduced negative behaviors such as shyness and aggression
- Armesto Arias, M., Neira-Piñeiro, M. D. R., Pasarin-Lavin, T., & Rodríguez, C. (2025). A drama-based intervention to improve emotional intelligence in early childhood education. *European journal of psychology of education*, 40(1), 13. (PDF)
 - Case study of a literature and drama program for children aged 4 and 5
 - Students experienced:
 - Decreased negative behaviors
 - Improved social and emotional skills such as self-confidence, social independence, and assertiveness

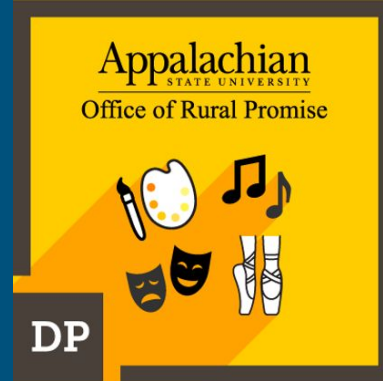
Micro-credential Introduction

"Leveraging the Arts to Identify and Characterize Emotions"

Create an arts-based SEL activity focused on building emotional language.

Submission requires:

- Part 1: Overview
- Part 2: Work Examples
 - Demonstration of Practice
 - Student Reflections
- Part 3: Reflections



Designing Experiences

Choose an arts activity



Integrate emotional vocabulary



Create opportunities for discussion/reflection



Determine evidence:

1. Demonstration of Practice
2. Student Reflections

Effective Arts Integration

DO:



- Consider your students (age, interests, culture)
- Create a safe, accepting space for exploration
- Collaborate with your arts specialists
- Incorporate emotional language meaningfully
- Be intentional about creative expression

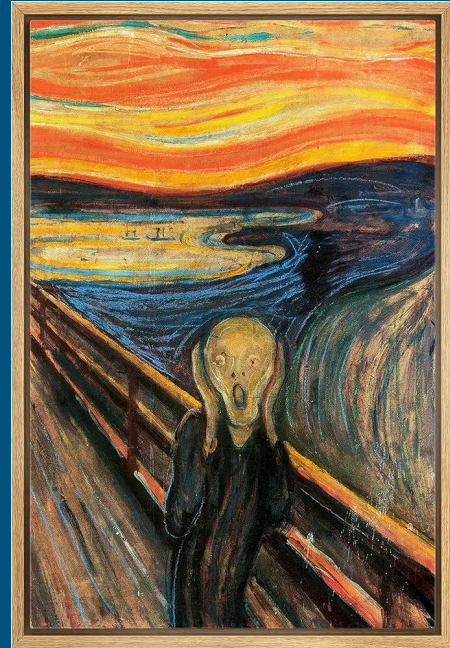
DON'T:



- Choose artistic mediums at random
- Try to find a right answer
- Ask your arts specialists for supplies
- Create superficial crafting opportunities
- Simply consume art

Example #1 - Emotions into Art

1. Use an existing piece of art as an introduction. Discuss both emotions and technique.
2. Have students select a feeling from The Feelings Wheel. Draw a picture representing that emotion.
3. Allow students time to discuss their art with a partner or group. Provide time for written reflection.



The Scream by Edvard Munch

Example #2 - Say the Line

1. Choose a short line for students to say.
“These pretzels are making me thirsty.”
2. Spin the emotions wheel. Have students consider how the emotion would look, sound, and feel.
3. Have students take turns saying their line with the chosen emotion to their partners or groups.
4. Provide time for discussion and reflection.



Example #3 - Music as Inspiration

1. Select a musical example to play.
2. Using the Feelings Wheel, have students reflect on what they think the music represents.
3. Allow students to present their reflections with any creative means (drawing a picture, a collage of pictures, poetry, etc.)
4. Provide time for collaborative discussion and reflection.



Adaptations

Age	Developmentally appropriate language Art Mediums Group vs individual
Content Area	Opportunities for integration Build empathy
Cultural Assets	Varied submissions Technical knowledge Example selections

Resources and Next Steps

Micro-credential: [Leveraging the Arts to Identify and Characterize Emotions](#)

- Templates and resources are available under the “Research and Resources” tab.

Contact Information:

Melanie Watson

melanie.watson@yadkin.k12.nc.us

[View this full slideshow here.](#)