Putting the “Inter-” in Interdisciplinary Education

Angel Sanchez  
*Illinois Wesleyan University*

Leah Nillas, Faculty Advisor  
*Illinois Wesleyan University*

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/jwprc

https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/jwprc/2015/ESposters/5

This Event is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@iwu.edu.

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.
PUTTING THE “INTER-” IN INTERDISCIPLINARY EDUCATION

Angel Sanchez and Leah Nillas*

Educational Studies, Illinois Wesleyan University

Literature Review

• According to Knight and Lattuca and Kimball (2013), among professionals in the same field there is inconsistency in determining what are interdisciplinary programs (para. 145).

• There is no consistent definition for interdisciplinary education which contributes to the confusion experienced by professionals.

• In order to create successful interdisciplinary programs there has to be structure to the program (Knight et al., 2013; National Council of Teachers of English, 1995), and higher level learning outcomes (Ivanitskaya and Clark and Montgomery and Primeau, 2002).

• Nikitina (2006) proposes three different strategies (e.g., contextualizing, conceptualizing and problem-centering) that are use in interdisciplinary education by different content areas.

Research Question

What is an interdisciplinary approach to education?

Methodology

• The purpose of the study is to investigate the different approaches in interdisciplinary education at the K-postsecondary level.

• A conceptual framework was used to examine English Language Arts integration with Mathematics, Science and Social Science based on structure, learning outcomes, and types of inquiry used.

Literature Analysis

• ELA was integrated in mathematics, science, and history according to the different strategies (e.g., conceptualizing, and contextualizing) as suggested by Nikitina (2006).

• Organization and clear objectives is key to the success of students’ experiences in an interdisciplinary approach.

• Collaboration and co-teaching is crucial to eliminate teachers discomfort with another discipline.

• An interdisciplinary approach is used when a discipline requires a different approach to teach students the skills needed in the original disciplinary field.

• A problem-centering approach to interdisciplinary (Nikitina, 2006) can only occur when teachers foster a learning environment where the student is supported and independent from the teacher.

Conclusion

• There has to be an emphasis on the structure, objectives, and inquiry-style in order to effectively implement an interdisciplinary program in schools.

• Measuring learning outcomes happens only after structuring the program.

• This literature review supports Knight et al.’s (2013) and the NCTE’s (1995) position statement on how to structure interdisciplinary education.