The alliance: mathematics and the arts.

Summary: The existence of standardized tests drives the school curriculum, marginalizing nontested subjects. In particular, the arts (fine and applied) are all too often the first to be reduced or eliminated in a budget crisis. Even without a budget crisis, their position is precarious in today’s "back to basics" environment, and teachers of these subjects dare not venture into controversial territory. The arts are in constant danger of elimination from the curriculum; yet, at the same time, the arts invariably rely on an intuitive or subconscious understanding of mathematics. This is the basic idea behind "Math across the Curriculum" (MATC). But most MATC initiatives do little more than mention the presence of mathematics in other disciplines. This disregard makes it too easy to dismiss the mathematical content of these disciplines as peripheral and incidental. In this article, the author stresses that mathematics teachers should reach out and make a true alliance with the teachers of the arts. By reaching out and forming an alliance with teachers of the fine and applied arts, mathematics teachers can make their subject more relevant to their students and more applicable to their daily lives while helping preserve a crucial part of a good education. The author provides a concrete example of an interdisciplinary project by considering two subjects that are often viewed as antithetical: poetry and mathematics. (ERIC)

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