

# Educate. Inspire. Connect.

ARTS INTEGRATION LESSONS



## Santa in the City

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# Who is Arts for Learning WNY?

Formerly Young Audiences of Western New York, Arts for Learning WNY is the leading arts education organization in Western New York seeking innovative ways to integrate the arts into learning. For more than 60 years, Arts for Learning has empowered teachers to inspire young people through meaningful creative experiences, seamlessly integrating the arts into the classroom.

## WHAT IS ARTS INTEGRATION?

Arts integration is an approach to teaching where the arts (e.g., music, dance, drama, or visual arts) are woven into lessons from other subject areas such as math, science, language arts, or social studies. The goal is for students to learn both the art form and the academic content at the same time.

## WHY IT WORKS!

Arts integration is a powerful educational tool because it unlocks how kids naturally learn. This type of instruction utilizes the whole brain and hands-on experiences connect academic content to real-life. It supports different learning styles, bolsters relationship-building skills, and naturally boosts motivation.

# How to Use this Arts Integration Guide

**THE ARTS ARE ALL AROUND US** and everyday moments can become creative adventures when we pause to look, listen, and imagine together.

Whether you are dancing in the kitchen, drawing your favorite story characters, or acting out scenes from a book, you are using the power of the arts to make learning stick in joyful, meaningful ways.

This guide is designed to help you and your family dive deeper into the story, beyond just reading the words on the page. With this book, the suggested art supplies, and a little imagination, you will explore the characters, setting, and themes in a whole new way.

You do not need to be a trained artist or teacher – just be willing to play, create, and explore. Along the way, you will support your child’s learning, build memories, and maybe even discover your inner artist!



Visit our website to explore more arts integration ideas!



## Visual Arts meets English Language Arts

In the story, **Deja's Grandma and Pop-Pop** live in Jamaica. Sometimes they travel to Jamaica to visit them for Christmas, and **Deja** is worried about Santa finding her. To make sure Santa doesn't get lost looking for **Deja**, her mom sends Santa a postcard. Let's create our own postcards to send a message to Santa!

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

- ▶ *Santa in the City* book
- ▶ Postcard size paper
- ▶ Colored pencils/markers/crayons
- ▶ Notebook
- ▶ Postage stamp (optional)

### INSTRUCTIONS

**1. In the story, Deja's mom mails a postcard to Santa to let him know where to find Deja while they are traveling for Christmas.**

What are some other reasons you might send a postcard to Santa?

**2. Think about what type of message you want to send Santa.** Are you thanking him for last year's gift? Are you sending him your wishlist? Will you be somewhere other than your home this year for the holiday? Practice writing your message to Santa. Keep it short! A postcard is only 3–5 sentences long.

**3. Look at your sentences.** Can you add any adjectives to your sentences to make them more descriptive? Try words like cozy, warm, happy, jolly, thankful, etc. What other adjectives can you use to enhance your story?

**4. Now that you have added adjectives to your sentences, copy them to the back of the postcard.** The back is the side with the placeholders for the stamp and address.

**5. Now it is time to make an illustration to go along with your message to Santa!** Flip your postcard over and draw a picture that explains your note to Santa. If you are sending him your wishlist, maybe you can draw a picture of one of the items you are hoping for. If you are traveling, you could draw a picture of the place you are visiting. Use your imagination and think about the adjectives you used in your message. Can those help inspire your artwork?

### INSTRUCTIONS CONT.

**6. Now it is time to mail your postcard!** With the help of a trusted adult, use the internet to locate a Santa Letter drop box in your community. You can also put a stamp on your postcard and mail it through USPS to 123 Elf Road, North Pole, 88888.

### VOCABULARY

**Illustration** - A drawing or picture that helps to explain or tell a story in a book, magazine, or other text.

**Postcard** - A small card you can send to someone, usually with a picture on one side and a message on the other.

**Travel** - To go from one place to another, usually for fun or to visit somewhere new.

**Adjective** - A word that describes a noun or pronoun.

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY

**Send a postcard to a loved one!** Santa isn't the only one who makes this time of year magical. Our friends and family also bring joy to this special time of year. Think of someone who is really special to you and make them their very own holiday postcard to tell them what they mean to you.

# Dance meets

## English Language Arts

In the story, Deja is worried about Santa because the North Pole is so cold and icy! Uncle Ronnie assures her that they have special ways to move around in the North Pole and lots of hot cocoa to stay warm. Let's imagine you are a character living in the North Pole and move like them!

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

- ▶ *Santa in the City* book
- ▶ Pencil
- ▶ Notebook

### INSTRUCTIONS

**1. In the story, when Deja and Uncle Ronnie are talking about the weather in the North Pole, the illustrations show us two North Pole characters, Santa and penguins.** What are some other characters that might live in the North Pole? Write them down in your notebook.

**2. Think about each character on your list and what adjectives might describe them.** Add those adjectives next to your characters in your notebook.

**3. Using your descriptions as inspiration, practice moving like each of your characters.** Make sure you incorporate expression and level in your movements. For example, Santa might stand tall, holding his belly for a jolly laugh while stomping his feet through snow, or a penguin might slide on its belly across the icy ground.

**4. Now pick your favorite character.** How would this character help Santa get ready to deliver toys in the city, like in the story? How can you represent those movements for your character? An Elf might quickly help load Santa's sled. What level would you use to represent an elf?

**5. Create a sequence of 3-4 movements to represent your character.** Adding in facial expressions, use your sequence to tell a story of how your character helps Santa in the North Pole!

### VOCABULARY

**Expression** - Showing how you feel through your face and body movements.

**Space** - The area you move in; it can be big or small.

**Level** - How high or low your body moves.

**Sequence** - A series of movements that follow each other in a certain order.

**Character** - A person, animal, or being in a story that has personality traits and furthers the plot.

**Adjective** - A word that describes a noun or pronoun.

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY

**Grab a friend or family member to move with you!** Each of you should select a different character to enhance the same scene. For example, if you are an elf loading the sleigh, your partner could be Santa or the reindeer. Work together to create a pantomime (acting out a story through physical movements and gestures without speaking words) to express your scene.

# Music meets

## English Language Arts

Deja experiences the magic of Christmas in so many different ways: visiting Santa, looking at decorations, eating yummy food with family and dancing! Let's make some holiday music that gets us moving too!

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

- ▶ *Santa in the City* book
- ▶ Jingle bells

### INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. In the story, Deja and her family are surrounded by the Christmas spirit.** The illustrations help to bring the story to life. If you were in the city with Deja, what type of music do you think you would hear?
- 2. Think of your favorite song during the holiday season.** Is the tempo fast or slow? Is the pitch high or low? How does the music make you feel? What part of the story do you think your favorite song would represent – would it be shopping for presents? Visiting the bodega? Having a family dinner?
- 3. Tap out the rhythm of the song using your finger or hand.** Once you have mastered the beat, add in your jingle bells instead of tapping your finger.
- 4. Instead of singing, chant the words in time with the rhythm of the jingle bells.** Think about your tone and pitch as you chant. Can you match the rhythm of the original song? How is it different from singing?
- 5. Now that you know the rhythm of your favorite holiday song, turn to the page in the story that best represents the song.** Can you say the words from that page in the same rhythm as your song? Shake your jingle bells to keep the rhythm to make it even more fun!

### VOCABULARY

**Tempo** - How fast or slow the rhythm is.

**Pitch** - How high or low a sound is.

**Rhythm** - A steady beat or pattern of sounds or movements.

**Represent** - To show or tell about something in a special way.

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY

**Add a new verse to your favorite holiday song!** Can you add new words to tell part of the story? You could add a verse about family dinner to Frosty the Snowman or the sleigh taking you shopping in Jingle Bells. Try to keep the same rhythm, tempo, and pitch as the original song.

# In the Community

In the story, one of the Deja is worried that Santa will not find her apartment because her neighborhood is not decorated yet. Her mom assures her that the mayor and her neighbors will decorate soon, so Santa will not be lost. Let's create our own decorations to share with our neighbors!

## SUPPLIES NEEDED

- ▶ *Santa in the City* book
- ▶ Construction Paper
- ▶ Markers/crayons/colored pencils
- ▶ Scissors
- ▶ Glue stick

## INSTRUCTIONS

**1. In the story, Deja's mom puts special lights around their apartment windows to light Santa's way.**

Think about your home during the holidays. Are there any special decorations your family puts out? What shapes are common in your decorations? What colors are common?

**2. Using common colors and shapes as inspiration, take your pencil and notebook and sketch out some decorations you want to create.**

**3. Now that you have practiced sketching your decorations, create them out of colored construction paper and cut them out with your scissors.** Use your colored pencils to add more detail and color! Can you add a word or phrase to represent how you feel during the holiday season?

**4. With the help of a trusted adult, share your decorations with your friends and neighbors to spread the holiday cheer!**

## VOCABULARY

**Sketch** - A simple drawing that shows an idea or plan.

**Decoration** - Something that is used to make a place or object look more special or beautiful.

**Neighbor** - A person who lives near you.

**Neighborhood** - A place where people live near each other - like your street or the area around your home or school.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY

**Not everyone in your neighborhood celebrates Christmas.**

People celebrate many different holidays during this time of year. Do any of your neighbors celebrate Hanukkah? What about Kwanzaa? Choose one holiday that is different from your own and make a special decoration to represent it. You can share your decoration with a neighbor or display it to celebrate the many traditions in your neighborhood.

**Education** ▶ For over 60 years, we have been the leading arts education organization in Western New York seeking innovative, equitable, and inclusive ways to integrate arts into learning.

**Inspiration** ▶ We are committed to empowering local artists to teach and inspire young people and educators through new and meaningful creative arts experiences.

**Connection** ▶ By serving as a reliable connector between artists and organizations and providing high-quality education, we seamlessly fill a need to integrate arts into the classroom.



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*Affiliated with the national Young Audiences Arts for Learning*