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This We Believe About Interdisciplinary Teaching

Education programs should provide opportunities for all students to achieve their academic, personal, social, and career potentials. **We believe that** interdisciplinary teaching involving business education courses offers multiple opportunities for meaningful learning experiences on all educational levels.

Interdisciplinary Teaching

Interdisciplinary teaching is defined as a knowledge view and curriculum approach that integrates learning through a central theme, issue, problem, or experience from multiple disciplines. Interdisciplinary teaching connects common knowledge and skills across content areas and employs interactive, real world applications to enhance learning. Common or complementary topics, problems, experiences, and/or skills are first identified and are then integrated into real life learning activities. Integrated learning occurs when teachers partner to link their disciplines and teach content and process skills in the context of broad career fields.

When knowledge and skills such as reading, writing, mathematics, problem solving, critical thinking, research, and technology are taught in isolation, the content may become fragmented and limit the transfer of knowledge and skills. **We believe that** to be more meaningful, education should provide a connection between real life and knowledge and skills. Interdisciplinary teaching enables students to experience authentic applications that make their knowledge and skills relevant. As an example, teams of students might study the viability of building a summer lodge in a rural area. Team proposals might require that a marsh be drained before construction begins. Students might research the science of draining the marsh, environmental effects, legal implications, and the impact on local business, government, and community. This project integrates knowledge and skills from business, economics, math, science, social studies, and language arts.

Educational Value

Workers, consumers, and citizens apply knowledge and skills in an integrated manner in their daily lives. **We believe that** to achieve personal and professional success, students need numerous opportunities to integrate knowledge and skills with real world applications. Students must demonstrate the ability to make connections, to solve problems incorporating multiple perspectives, and to apply knowledge and skills from all content areas.

An interdisciplinary approach is a powerful tool for bringing about school restructuring. The *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act*, the *No Child Left Behind Act*, and the Southern Regional Education Board, among others, recognize the educational value of interdisciplinary teaching and advocate for its continued development.

When rigorous curricula are taught in context and students are engaged in authentic applications, student learning and retention usually increase. Students are more motivated and demonstrate a better attitude toward school. **Therefore, we believe that** the entire learning experience is enhanced by interdisciplinary teaching.

In an interdisciplinary approach, students look at issues from multiple perspectives. Courses are organized around issues/problems, topics, and/or themes. As students work independently or in teams to solve problems, they engage in a cooperative rather than a competitive pursuit of a shared goal. Students who have interdisciplinary experiences often score higher in reading and mathematics in courses and on standardized assessments. Ultimately, students are better prepared for higher levels of education and/or the workplace.

Integrating Business Education

Interdisciplinary teaching requires committed teachers who are willing to devote time and resources needed to ensure program success. Business courses are well suited to interdisciplinary teaching. **Therefore, we believe that** business educators should take an active leadership role in developing, implementing, and promoting interdisciplinary partnerships and programs. **Further, we believe that** business educators should initiate and lead collaborative efforts to design an interdisciplinary program that includes one or more of the following:

- team teaching and teacher partnerships across disciplines
- student-centered, active learning
- project-based instruction
- short- and long-term projects aligned with standards
- thematic units (common language and common themes developed by an interdisciplinary team)
- authentic assessments that provide meaningful feedback
- academies and/or magnet schools

Implementation

We believe that implementing successful interdisciplinary teaching necessitates careful research, planning, design, and communication. Encouragement and support by administrators and faculty are essential. Both administrators and faculty must respect the value of each content area and its importance in quality education for all students. Teachers must be committed to the concept of integration and must work well as collaborative team members. Implementation may include the following:

- effective administrative practices and procedures
- collaboration and planning among teachers and other stakeholders
- professional development for interdisciplinary teaching
- teacher internships and externships
- designated team planning time
- curriculum aligned to standards
- articulated curriculum
- creative scheduling for students and teachers
- supportive school climate

Conclusion

In creating and implementing interdisciplinary teaching, educators and other stakeholders must work collaboratively, using shared goals and objectives. **We believe that** business educators must take an active leadership role in developing, implementing, and promoting interdisciplinary partnerships and programs. Business educators must work with colleagues to promote mutual respect for each content area and its importance in quality education for all students.

We believe that interdisciplinary teaching is an essential component of quality education. Business education courses are interdisciplinary in nature and greatly enhance the opportunity for interdisciplinary learning.