

What does it mean to be in an interdisciplinary arts program?

The students, faculty, and curriculum one encounters in the MAIAI program reflect a wide variety of educational, artistic, and professional backgrounds. This is by design, as we believe you have much to learn from each other. We see great potential with the intersecting of various arts practices, just as we see great potential for the arts to be taught and learned in concert with other academic disciplines and sectors. To that end, our courses typically immerse students in visual art, theatre, dance, and music. Most students come into the program proficient as a classroom or arts teacher or teaching artist of one of those art forms. Our goal is for students to become adept with arts integration in the discipline with which they are most familiar and hopefully develop skills in a secondary art form.

While it is not our goal for students to suddenly become proficient practitioners of all four arts forms (this would take many years of training and dedication), we do see value in our students becoming well-versed and literate with the integration of all of the arts forms for the following reasons:

- You can be well-informed allies and advocates for this growing practice
- You can recognize rich learning opportunities when they are presented
- You can have substantive language and literacy skills in all of the various arts forms to collaborate with fellow arts teachers
- You know when and how to contract a teaching artist and be an adept collaborator in shaping learning experiences for students
- You have the confidence and experience to experiment with other art forms that may tap into the student learning potential in a richer fashion

For all of these reasons and more, students in our program can look forward to working alongside faculty and students with a range of artistic and educational backgrounds and becoming versed in these arts forms.

This programmatic design also means that classes and class discussions are not typically geared towards just one population. We look and read and explore and discuss on broad terms and it then becomes the task of each student to translate what their discoveries offer to their own arts/teaching setting or purposes. With that in mind, we often refer to MAIAI students as “translation artists.” Just as educators must become skilled at adapting curriculum to the diverse needs of their young learners, MAIAI students engage in a similar adaptation and translation process with the knowledge and practices they learn through the MAIAI program.