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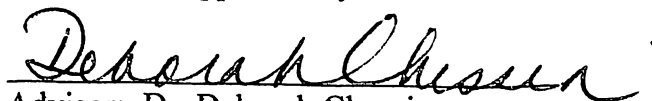
THE VALUE OF AN ARTS RICH EDUCATION
Why Every School Should Teach the Arts

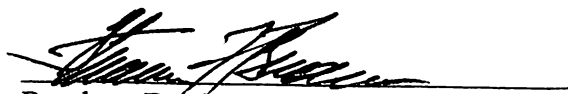
by
Holly L. Buntin

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College

Oxford
May 2005

Approved by


Advisor: Dr. Deborah Chessin


Reader: Dr. Steven Brown


Reader: Prof. Paula Temple

ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to prove that the arts should be a major component in every student's education. Statistics, research findings, and case studies from throughout the years were compared and compiled together in order to make a strong argument in favor of the arts. The National Art Education Association website provided many statistics as did the National Center for Education Statistics. Two of the specific studies presented in this thesis came from *Champions of Change*, a collection of seven major studies done by professional academics. It was produced by the Arts Education Partnership, the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, the GE Fund, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Studies were also drawn from *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development*. Similar to *Champions of Change*, *Critical Links* is a compendium consisting of many studies about the effects of learning in the arts. The National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Department of Education awarded funding to the Arts Education Partnership to commission and publish it. Other sources used in gathering data were books and articles written by arts educators with years of first-hand experience.

It was discovered that the arts are not only valuable in and of themselves, but also they can enhance learning in other academic areas. In addition, the arts are central to understanding and creating culture and can be utilized to provide motivation, reach struggling students, and present new challenges. For all of these reasons, it was concluded that the arts are fundamental to learning, and instruction in the arts should be offered in every school in order for students to receive the best education possible.

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GLOSSARY

Achievement Standards: standards in the National Standards for Arts Education that specify the understandings and levels of achievement that students are expected to attain in the competencies, for each of the arts, at the completion of grades 4, 8, and 12

Content Standards: standards in the National Standards for Arts Education that specify what students should know and be able to do in the arts disciplines

Higher Implementation Schools: In the Whole Schools Initiative program, schools that seriously and systematically integrated the arts into the core curriculum

Mississippi Arts Commission: (MAC) the official grants-making and service agency for the arts for the state of MS; active supporter and promoter of the arts in community life and arts education, funded by the state and the National Endowment for the Arts

National Center for Education Statistics: (NCES) primary federal entity for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data related to education in the United States and other nations

No Child Left Behind Act (2001): (NCLB) law that aims to improve the performance of the United States' elementary and secondary schools and ensure that no child is trapped in a failing school

Socioeconomic status: (SES) a measure of family education level, income, and type of job(s) held by parents

Visual Thinking Curriculum: (VTC) a course of study designed to teach students to look closely and observe carefully what they see

Whole Schools Initiative: (WSI) Mississippi's statewide comprehensive arts education program. It calls for the integration of the arts into daily classroom instruction and sequential, comprehensive instruction in dance, drama, visual arts, and music by certified arts specialists

INTRODUCTION

The task of educators today is to create schools that help students gain the knowledge, skills, confidence, and motivation needed to succeed in the workforce and as parents and citizens. Because the arts have the power to help meet this challenge, they should be a fundamental part of every child's education. The way in which schools are organized, what is being taught in them, the kind of norms they embrace and the relationships they nurture among adults and children all matter. These factors shape the experiences that students will have and at the same time influence who those students will become. Elliot Eisner, an experienced educator renowned for his work in arts education, insisted that education that was informed by the value of the arts was missing something crucial. Namely, Eisner stated that students lacking instruction in the arts would miss out on the arts' "championing of surprise, attention to sensorial experience, and engagement of nonverbal and visual means to express understanding and meaning." (Eisner 3).

Though the arts can have a huge positive impact on a child's learning experience, educators often do not allow sufficient time for instruction in the arts, or they disregard the arts all together (Cortines 5). The arts consist of learning in the disciplines of visual art, music, drama, and dance. Some consider these subject matters as "extras," and many schools that are experiencing intense pressure to improve performance on state standardized tests feel that they cannot take time from direct literacy and math instruction to include such "extras." Teachers admit that they would like to spend more time on the arts but, "there aren't enough hours in the day" (Cohen and Gainer 9). In actuality,

narrowing the curriculum rather than enriching it actually hurts students. The pleasure of working in the arts can alleviate the pressures of daily routines for teachers and students alike. This does not, however, mean that the arts are a “break” or a diversion from learning. In fact, the arts are a continuation of learning. Arts activities provide direction, clarification, and reinforcement of new concepts (Cohen and Gainer 10). Studies have shown that students involved in the arts outperform those uninvolved in the arts in academic areas as well as on measures of creativity, originality, expression, and imagination. In addition, engagement in the arts produces self-confidence and provides opportunities for positive social interaction with one’s peers. Moreover, the arts are essential to understanding and continuing one’s own culture.

In short, the arts play a central role in educating the whole child. Participation in visual arts, music, drama, and dance nurtures the development of cognitive, social, and personal competencies. There are so many benefits of teaching the arts that there is no reason any school should leave them out. Students should not have to be lucky to find themselves in a school that embraces the arts. The arts should be taught in every classroom and at every grade level to ensure that each student receives the best education possible, that being one in which students learn about themselves in addition to the world around them.

CHAPTER I: STATE OF THE ARTS

In 1990 the American Music, Art, Theatre, and Dance Education Associations came together to form the Consortium of National Arts Education Associations. The primary purpose of this union was to create *The National Standards in Arts Education* (Libman 31). In 1992 the Consortium of National Arts Education Associations approached the U. S. Department of Education, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities requesting a grant to determine what the nation's students should know and be able to do in the arts. The grant was given and the *The National Standards in Arts Education* resulted. It consists of a set of competencies in dance, music, theatre, and visual arts that specify what students should learn in relation to the arts by the end of 12th grade (National Standard for Arts Education 11). The content standards for each individual discipline are shown in Figure 1. These basic standards are further broken down into achievement standards for different sets of students. Grades kindergarten through 4th, 5th through 8th, and 9th through 12th each have a different set of achievement standards (National Standard for Arts Education 17). It is hoped that by developing the capabilities listed in the National Standards for Arts Education, that students will be able to "arrive at their own knowledge, beliefs, and values for making personal and artistic decisions." In other terms, they will be able to "arrive at a broad-based, well-grounded understanding of nature, value, and meaning of the arts as a part of their own humanity" (National Standards for Arts Education 19).

Figure 1: National Standards For Arts Education

Dance	Music	Theatre	Visual Art
Identifying and demonstrating movement elements and skills in performing dance	Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music	Script writing by planning and recording improvisations based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history	Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
Understanding choreographic principles, processes, and structures	Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music	Acting by assuming roles and interacting in improvisations	Using knowledge of structures and functions
Understanding dance as a way to create and communicate meaning	Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments	Designing by visualizing and arranging environments for classroom dramatizations	Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas
Applying and demonstrating critical and creative thinking skills in dance	Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines	Directing by planning classroom dramatizations	Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
Demonstrating and understanding dance in various cultures and historical periods	Reading and notating music	Researching by finding information to support classroom dramatizations	Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and work of others
Making connections between dance and healthful living	Listening to, analyzing, and describing music	Comparing and connecting art forms by describing theatre, dramatic media, and other art forms	Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines
Making connections between dance and other disciplines	Evaluating music and music performances	Analyzing and explaining personal preferences and constructing meanings from classroom dramatizations and from theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions	
	Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts	Understanding context by recognizing the role of theatre, film, television, and electronic media in daily life	
	Understanding music in relation to history and culture		

The National Standards for Arts Education was published in 1994 (Libman 31). Since then, during the last decade arts instruction has experienced increasing attention as an important component of education. By 1998 educational leaders realized that there were no national data that specifically looked at the state of arts education in the nation's public schools (U. S. Department of Education iii). To fill in this gap in data, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) issued a report on the state of the arts. The NCES is "the primary federal entity for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data related to education in the United States and other nations" (U.S. Department of Education ii). The purpose of the report on the state of the arts was to provide a national profile of the status of arts education in public elementary and secondary schools in the United States during the 1999-2000 school year. The report was based upon information gathered from school principals, school arts specialists, and classroom teachers (U. S. Department of Education iii).

During the 1999-2000 school year, instruction in music and the visual arts was available in most of the nation's public elementary schools. According to the statistical analysis report of NCES June 2002, music was found in 94 percent of schools and visual arts in 87 percent. Dance and drama, however, were taught in less than one-third of public elementary schools (20 and 19 percent respectively) (U. S. Department of Education iii). Findings for public secondary schools were very similar. Music was offered in 90 percent of public secondary schools, visual arts in 93 percent, dance in 14 percent, and drama in 48 percent (U. S. Department of Education iv). While these general figures implied that the arts were fairly abundant in schools, there was still much more to consider in order to obtain a complete picture of the state of the arts. One must

also look at the information the NCES report provided concerning specific characteristics of public elementary and secondary school arts education programs including data on the availability of instruction in the arts, staffing, funding, and supplemental programs and activities. This additional information is very important because it showed the depth of instruction that is being offered in the arts. For example, according to a study conducted by James Catterall, Richard Chapleau, and John Iwanaga, there is a big difference in receiving an hour of instruction in the visual arts each *day* from a certified art teacher and receiving an hour of instruction each *week* from a regular classroom teacher (Fiske 3). However, when the NCES gathered data, both cases were counted as providing instruction in the visual arts. Thus, it is important to look further at the findings of the report. For instance, when one examines the data about the set of public elementary schools that offered visual arts, one finds that there was a variety of differences among the group concerning how, where, and when the visual arts were taught.

Of the 87 percent of the public elementary schools that offered visual arts instruction, 55 percent employed full time visual arts specialists to teach the subject, and 18 percent employed part-time visual arts specialists. Twenty-six percent of the schools depended on classroom teachers to teach the visual arts, 6 percent relied on artists-in-residence, and 6 percent used other faculty or volunteers to teach the visual arts (U. S. Department of Education 20). Large schools were more likely than moderate-size or small schools to have full-time visual arts specialists teaching the arts (69 percent versus 53 and 49 percent respectively). Also, schools with the lowest concentration of poverty were more likely to employ full-time visual arts specialists than were schools with 50 to 74 percent poverty concentration. Sixty-three percent of schools with less than 35

percent of their students eligible for free or reduced price lunch employed full-time specialists while only 41 percent of schools with 50 to 74 percent qualifying for free or reduced price lunch did so. (U. S. Department of Education 20).

As for space, of the schools that offered visual arts, 56 percent had a dedicated room with special equipment for teaching the visual arts; 33 percent taught visual art in regular classrooms; 8 percent had a dedicated room for visual arts but no special equipment; and 3 percent taught the subject in a gymnasium, auditorium, or cafeteria. Again, large schools and schools with the lowest concentration of poverty had the most ideal circumstances. Sixty-seven percent of large schools had a dedicated room with special equipment for visual arts whereas 41 percent of small schools did. Schools with the lowest concentration of poverty were also more likely to have this feature compared to schools with 75 percent or more of students qualifying for free or reduced price lunch (65 percent versus 42 percent respectively) (U. S. Department of Education 21).

When it came to the amount of time spent teaching the visual arts, the overwhelming majority of schools (73 percent) reported that students received instruction in the visual arts once or twice a week. Only 3 percent provided visual arts classes every day. Nine percent provided visual arts instruction three or four times a week, and 15 percent taught visual arts less than once a week. The average class period of instruction lasted 43 minutes (U.S. Department of Education 17).

Funding-wise, out of the 87 percent of schools that offered visual arts, 78 percent used only district funding while 22 percent indicated that they received funds from additional non-district sources (U.S. Department of Education 24). In addition, 78 percent of the schools offering visual arts reported that their district possessed a written

curriculum guide for visual arts and 65 percent sponsored field trips to art galleries or museums (U. S. Department of Education 22).

Overall, the findings from the NCES report were on the positive side for visual arts, but the visual arts, as well as the arts as a whole, could still be further incorporated into the school curriculum in order for students to receive the maximum benefits from instruction. Also, no matter how small the percentage, it is still a tragedy that some students do not receive any instruction in the arts at all.

Shortly after the NCES conducted research, a new law was announced that may help improve the state of the arts in public schools. In January of 2001, just three days after taking office, President George Bush announced the *No Child Left Behind Act*. This new law aimed to improve performance in the nation's elementary and secondary schools and to ensure that no child was left trapped in a failing school ("No Subject Left Behind" 3). The NCLB Act is over a thousand pages long and covers many areas such as accountability plans that each state must develop, the definition of highly qualified teachers, and requirements for school programs to be based on research. The main area of interest to advocates of the arts is the information about core academic subjects. The NCLB includes support and assistance for core academic subjects. The definition of "core academic subjects" is located in Title IX, Part A, Section 9101 (1) (D) (11), Definitions. The definition reads, "Core Academic Subjects- The term 'core academic subjects' means English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography." Thus, according to the NCLB's definition of core academic subjects, the arts have equal status with reading, math, science, and other subjects. So, whenever federal education

programs such as teacher training, school reform, and technology programs are aimed toward “core academic subjects” the arts may be eligible to receive funds. Unfortunately, some state and local education decision-makers may not know that the arts are included as a core subject under the NCLB act. As a result, they may be unaware of many types of federal education funds that may be used for arts education (“No Subject Left Behind” 7). Nonetheless, it is notable that United States law now recognizes the arts as an important component of every child’s education, and the nation’s schools should reflect that. Figure 2 is a table that shows which states currently mandate the arts in public schools. Thirty-eight, or 74.5 percent, of the nation’s states do require that the arts be taught in public schools. While many states do support the arts, it is still a struggle to educate students properly in the arts because most citizens and policymakers do not really know much about art education and the arts in general. Furthermore, as a whole, general classroom teachers do not feel prepared to teach the arts (Libman 32). Unfortunately, general classroom teachers are probably the most frequently relied upon to teach the arts (Libman 33). As can be seen in Figure 3, only 14 states, or 28.0 percent, license, or certify arts teachers based on state standards specifically for arts teachers.

Figure 2: Arts in Public Schools Across the United States, 2002-2003

Are the Arts Mandated in Public Schools?

State	Yes	Limited*	No
Alabama	X		
Alaska			X
Arizona	X		
Arkansas	X		
California	X		
Colorado		X	
Connecticut	X		
Delaware	X		
Florida	X		
Georgia		X	
Hawaii	X		
Idaho	X		
Illinois			X
Indiana			X
Iowa	X		
Kansas			X
Kentucky	X		
Louisiana	X		
Maine	X		
Maryland	X		
Massachusetts			X
Michigan			X
Minnesota	X		
Mississippi	X		
Missouri			X
Montana	X		
Nebraska		X	
Nevada	X		
New Hampshire	X		
New Jersey	X		
New Mexico	X		
New York	X		
North Carolina	X		
North Dakota	X		
Ohio	X		
Oklahoma	X		
Oregon	X		
Pennsylvania	X		
Rhode Island	X		
South Carolina			X
South Dakota	X		
Tennessee	X		
Texas	X		
Utah	X		
Vermont	X		
Virginia	X		
Washington	X		
West Virginia	X		
Wisconsin	X		
Wyoming		X	

*Limited means it's a local decision, or the information is unclear

Resource: *2002-2003 State Arts Education Policy Database: Arts Education Partnership*. Council of Chief State School Officers, One Massachusetts Ave., NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20001-1431.
www.aep-arts.org/policysearch

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Are the Arts Mandated in Public Schools?

State	Yes	Limited*	No
Alabama	X		
Alaska			X
Arizona	X		
Arkansas	X		
California	X		
Colorado		X	
Connecticut	X		
Delaware	X		
Florida	X		
Georgia		X	
Hawaii	X		
Idaho	X		
Illinois			X
Indiana			X
Iowa	X		
Kansas			X
Kentucky	X		
Louisiana	X		
Maine	X		
Maryland	X		
Massachusetts			X
Michigan			X
Minnesota	X		
Mississippi	X		
Missouri			X
Montana	X		
Nebraska		X	
Nevada	X		
New Hampshire	X		
New Jersey	X		
New Mexico	X		
New York	X		
North Carolina	X		
North Dakota	X		
Ohio	X		
Oklahoma	X		
Oregon	X		
Pennsylvania	X		
Rhode Island	X		
South Carolina			X
South Dakota	X		
Tennessee	X		
Texas	X		
Utah	X		
Vermont	X		
Virginia	X		
Washington	X		
West Virginia	X		
Wisconsin	X		
Wyoming		X	

*Limited means it's a local decision, or the information is unclear

Resource: *2002-2003 State Arts Education Policy Database: Arts Education Partnership*. Council of Chief State School Officers, One Massachusetts Ave., NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20001-1431.
www.aep-arts.org/policysearch

CHAPTER II: JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ARTS

Justification for teaching the arts in schools is usually based upon either the intrinsic value of the arts or the value of an arts education's consequences (Cortines 5). The intrinsic value of the arts refers to what the arts can teach that no other subject can. Ramon Cortines, a long time school teacher and administrator who is now the executive director of the Pew Network for Standards-Based Reform at Stanford University, says that trying to answer the question "Why should we care about the arts?" from the standpoint of intrinsic value can be compared to trying to answer the question, "Why should we care about our health?" He claims that the arts, like one's health, need no justification. According to Cortines, "We engage in the arts, we ought to teach the arts, because this is part of what it means to be human." The arts are essential to understanding not only oneself, but others. Through the arts, a child learns to appreciate and even create things of beauty. Also, the arts stimulate, develop, and refine many cognitive and creative skills (Cortines 5).

The other way to justify the arts is by noting the consequences of being educated in the arts. These "consequences" refer to the "real world" benefits of the arts. There are many wonderful skills and habits that artistic appreciation and production help form. The arts draw upon the multiple intelligences of students, and many educators argue that being involved in the arts is beneficial to students academically. Indeed, test scores have reflected this (Cortines 5). While some may feel strongly that the arts are needed because



Image 1: These students will benefit from both the intrinsic value of studying music and the desirable skills and habits that will likely develop from studying music.

“Music Class” No Date. Online Image. Americans for the Arts. 10 May 2005.
<<http://www.artsusa.org>>.

of their intrinsic value and others may justify the arts because of their positive effects, both ways of reasoning are valid.

LINKING THE ARTS AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS

When noting the positive consequences of an arts education, the effect that most stands out is improvement in other academic areas. James S. Catterall, Richard Chapleau, and John Iwanaga of the Imagination Project at UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California conducted research exploring this link between involvement in the arts and success in other academic areas. Their study addressed developments for children and adolescents over the period of time spent between 8th and 12th grades, or late middle school through high school. The information in the study was based on a multiyear survey of more than 25,000 students

sponsored by the United States Department of Education. The sample of students was created to be representative of the nation's population of secondary school students (Fiske 2). The researchers examined involvement in the arts generally, across all disciplines using a definition of "involvement in the arts" that gave students credit for participating in arts-related classes in or out of school as well as involvement and leadership in school activities like theater, band, orchestra, chorus, dance, and the visual arts (Fiske 3)

In 1997, they released the first portion of their findings in a report titled, "Involvement in the Arts and Success in Secondary School." Their findings showed substantial and significant differences in achievement and in attitudes and behaviors between those highly involved in the arts and those with little or no arts involvement. Twenty of the differences found that favored arts-involved students were significant at the $p < .001$ level. This means that the odds of the differences resulting on the account of pure chance were less than one in one thousand (Fiske 3). Figure 4 displays some of the notable differences found between students highly involved in the arts and non-involved students. From Figure 4, one can see that students involved in the arts consistently showed more favorable results. They displayed higher achievement in academics, were less likely to drop out of school, made superior test scores, and showed better attitudes toward the community. In addition, these results also held true for students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds.

The low SES group represents the students at the bottom of the family income and education ladder. Students in this group came from families where parents either did not further their education beyond high school or did not finish high school at all (Fiske 7).

Figure 4: Comparisons of High Arts vs. Low Arts Students in Grades 8 and 10, All vs. Low SES Background

Grade 8 Academic Performance	All Students		Low SES Students	
	<i>High Arts</i>	<i>Low Arts</i>	<i>High Arts</i>	<i>Low Arts</i>
Earning mostly As and Bs in English	79.2%	64.2%	64.5%	56.4%
Scoring in top 2 quartiles on std. tests	66.8%	42.7%	29.5%	24.5%
Dropping out by grade 10	1.4%	4.8%	6.5%	9.4%
Bored in school half or most of the time	42.2%	48.9%	41.0%	46.0%
Grade 10 Academic Performance				
Scoring in top 2 quartiles, Grade 10 Std. Test Composite	72.5%	45.0%	41.4%	24.9%
Scoring in top 2 quartiles in Reading	70.9%	45.1%	43.8%	28.4%
Scoring in top 2 quartiles in History, Citizenship, Geography	70.9%	46.3%	41.6%	28.6%
Grade 10 Attitudes and Behaviors				
Consider community service important or very important	46.6%	33.9%	49.2%	40.7%
Television watching, weekdays percentage watching 1 hour or less	28.2%	15.1%	16.4%	13.3%
percentage watching 3 hours or more	20.6%	34.9%	33.6%	42.0%

(Fiske 3)

The results of the low SES students are especially important because those results provide evidence that achievement differences favoring students involved in the arts are not simply a matter of parent income and education levels, which do tend to coincide with children having more exposure to the arts in their lives (Fiske 4). Arts participation is highly correlated with socio-economic status. The probability of being highly involved in the arts is twice as high for students from economically advantaged families, and the probability of low arts involvement is about twice as high if a student comes from an economically disadvantaged family. Socioeconomic status is the most significant predicting factor of academic performance, and so some critics argue that students

involved in the arts (who, according to probability, are apt to have high socio-economic status) do better academically than those not involved in the arts simply because they likely come from a more privileged background (Fiske 7). This is why the analyses of the low SES students are so important. The research done by Catterall, Chapleau, and Iwanaga showed statistical significance in comparisons of those highly involved and those uninvolved in the arts in the lowest socio-economic segments. In Figure 4, one can see that out of the low SES students, those highly involved in the arts still outperformed those less involved in the arts. These findings prove that art is indeed associated with higher academic performance, and that it is not the case that arts-involved students are simply out-performing their peers because of an advantaged background.

After release of their initial findings, grants were received, and the researchers extended their study. Figure 5 contains data about students in grade 12. The results for students in grade 12 remain consistent with early findings in that those involved in the arts continued to outperform their less involved classmates. In addition, it can be seen that the relative advantage of involvement in the arts increased appreciably over time. For example, by grade 12 there was an 18 percentage point difference in the percentages of students scoring in the top 2 quartiles of standardized tests. This amounted to a 46 percent advantage for the high-arts group ($57.4/39.3 = 1.46$ or a 46 percent advantage) (Fiske 6). Figure 6 displays what the achievement advantages for involvement in the arts look like over time for students in grades 8 through 12.

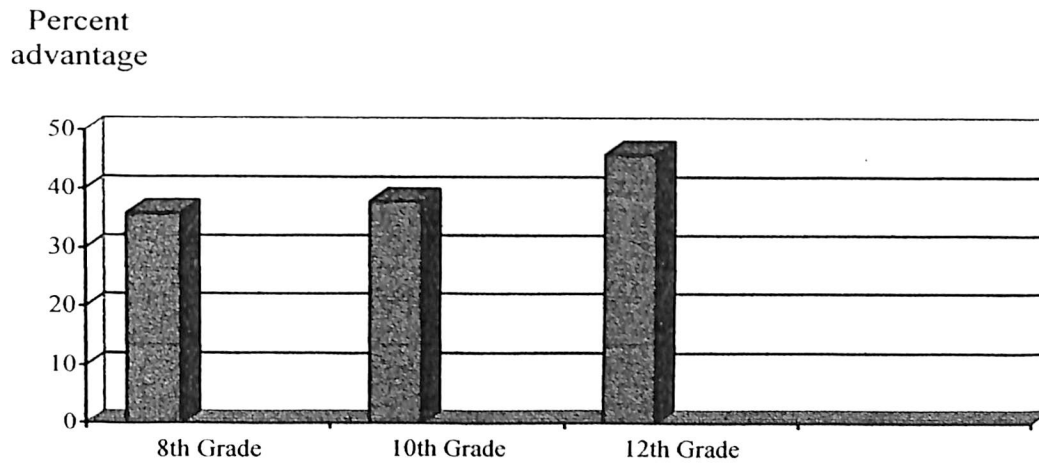
In summary, the main points of the study conducted by Catterall, Chapleau, and Iwanaga, 1999 are that students highly involved in the arts do better on many measures than students less involved in the arts, that performance advantages for arts-involved

Figure 5: Comparisons of High Arts vs. Low Arts students in Grade 12

Grade 12		
<i>% in each group</i>	<i>High Arts</i>	<i>Low Arts</i>
Top 2 quartiles on std. tests	57.4%	39.3%
Top 2 quartiles Reading	56.5%	37.7%
Level 2 or 3 (high) Reading Proficiency	58.8%	42.9%
Top 2 quartiles History/Geography/Citizenship	54.6%	39.7%

(Fiske 6)

Figure 6: Comparative Advantages in Composite Test Scores for High vs. Low Arts



(Fiske 6)

students increase over time, and that these two performance comparisons also apply to students from low socio-economic status. The researchers admitted that they were not able to attribute student successes unequivocally to the arts but the differences between students highly involved in the arts and students not involved in the arts were astounding, and the main confounding variable, family background, was reasonably accounted for in the work (Fiske 4).

Other data exist as well that imply that involvement in the arts is linked to excellence in academics. Figure 7 shows the SAT scores of college bound seniors for 2000, 2001, and 2002. Students involved in any arts area scored considerably higher every time than students with no arts involvement. In another example, researchers looked at reading scores. A program called "Learning to Read Through the Arts" involved around one hundred students who were initially at least two years behind their expected reading levels. These students participated in an intensive arts program where reading was taught in the context of art activities. The California Achievement Test for Reading was administered to all students before and after completion of the program. Students made significant improvement in their reading scores and exhibited increased enthusiasm for academic learning in general. A reading score gain of 8.4 months over a four month chronological period was determined (Cohen and Gainer 209).

In yet another study, it was shown how studying visual art could contribute to success in science. Researchers, in this case, posed the question, "When children aged nine to ten are trained to look closely at works of art and reason about what they see, can they transfer these same skills to a science activity?" To answer this question the researchers composed an experimental group of 162 nine to 10 year olds. This

Figure 7: SAT Scores of Students in the Arts

Course Title	Verbal Mean Scores			Math Mean Scores		
	2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
Art History/Art Appreciation	517	518	515	518	518	517
Studio Art/Design	524	525	522	528	528	528
Photography/Film	526	527	524	526	526	526
Dance	514	512	509	510	510	508
Drama: Study or Appreciation	534	534	531	522	523	522
Music: Study or Appreciation	538	539	537	537	538	537
Music Performance	532	533	530	534	535	535
No Arts Coursework	477	476	473	496	494	494

Resource: The College Board, Profile of College-Bound Seniors National Report for 2000, 2001, and 2002

<http://www.naea-reston.org/news.html>

experimental group was exposed to a Visual Thinking Curriculum (VTC) in which they were trained to look closely at works of art and talk about what they saw. Over the course of a year, the group participated in an average of seven to eight VTC lessons, each of which lasted about forty minutes. Students visited the Museum of Modern Art in New York City at least twice.

Before participating in the VTC, students in the experimental group were given an art activity designed to measure how well they could look at and talk about a work of art. They were shown one of two works of art and asked to give written responses to the questions, “What’s going on in this picture?” and “What do you see that makes you say that?” After one year of VTC, the same students were shown the other work of art and asked the same two questions. Immediately after, they were given a non-art image from the science domain and asked the same two questions again. The image was of a fossil

record of two intersecting sets of animal footprints and was labeled, "Footprints from the Past." A control group of 204 students of comparable ages, grades, and socio-economic status did not experience the VTC. They were given the same three activities. Prior to the VTC children in the control group and experimental group performed equivalently on the art activity, demonstrating that the two groups were equal. The two groups did not score equally on the footprint activity after the experimental group underwent the VTC. Responses to the footprint image were scored in terms of amount of reasoning about evidence used. After a year of VTC, students in the experimental group achieved higher scores on evidential reasoning in the footprints task than the control group did. They were also more aware of the fact that their interpretations were subjective. While other outside factors could have possibly affected the results, the main variable between the two groups in this study was participation in the VTC. Thus, the data from this study demonstrate how observing and talking about art can contribute to thinking well in other academic disciplines. In this particular case, the skills acquired through looking at and reasoning about a work of art transferred to the task of looking at and reasoning about a biological image in the field of science providing more evidence that involvement in the arts can contribute to success in other subjects (Deasy 142).

Several theories exist about why involvement in the arts is associated with academic success. Many attribute the role the arts play in promoting cognitive development. Others note that the arts increase student motivation and engagement in school, both of which attribute to academic achievement. Still others claim the successes students experience in the arts give them confidence to succeed in other academic areas

(Fiske 4). For whatever reason or combination of reasons, the fact remains that students involved in the arts are doing better in school than those who are not.

ARTS FOR ARTS' SAKE

Though research has established a link between the arts and academic success, some arts educators are against using this evidence as reason to include the arts in schools. They fear that if the arts gain a role in schools based on their ability to strengthen skills in other subject areas, then the arts will quickly lose their place if this improvement in other academic areas does not occur. In addition, many find it unfair that the arts are the only school subject that has been challenged to show transfer to other academic areas as proof of their usefulness. One researcher in the field of arts education stated that, "Arts educators should never allow the arts to be justified wholly or even primarily in terms of what the arts can do for mathematics and reading. The arts must be justified in terms of what the arts can teach that no other subject can teach" (Hetland and Winner). Thus, this researcher and various other arts educators believe that the arts should be included in schools because of their intrinsic value, not because of other secondary effects that may occur such as improvement in academics. When it comes to their inherent merit, the arts offer a way of thinking that is not seen in any other discipline. The arts are a time-honored way of knowing and expressing. For example, in quality visual art experiences analysis shows that children are learning to observe carefully and to record their observations, to organize ideas and to express feelings, to work with purpose, to solve problems individually through trial-and-error methods, to respect themselves through their own achievements, to communicate, to discover their

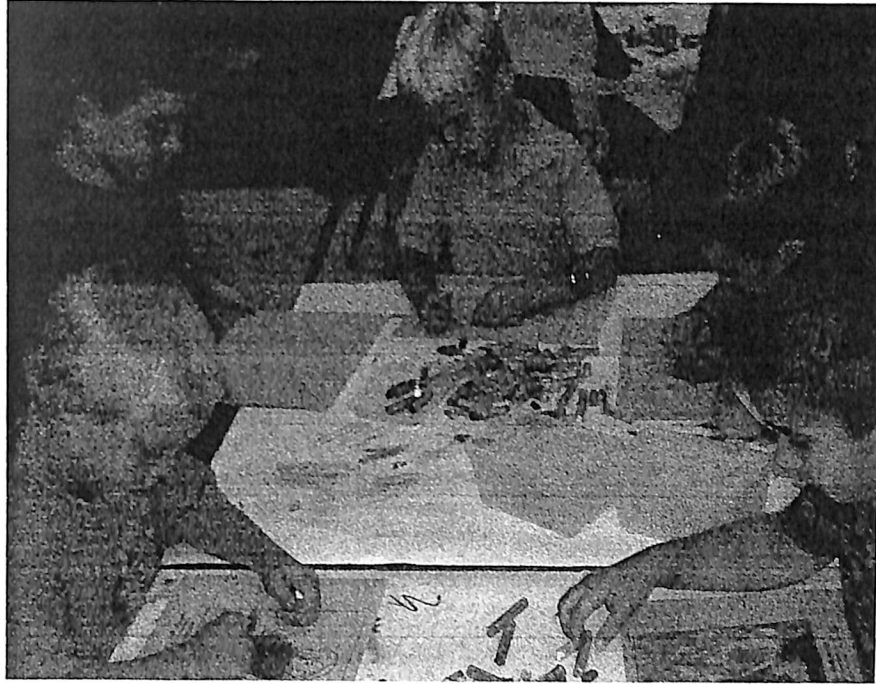


Image 2: The students in this photo are focused and engaged as they work diligently on their artwork using oil pastels. The opportunity to experiment with color and create change on the surface of the paper intrigues the students.

Buntin, Holly. "Students at Work" July 2004.

own points of view, to appreciate different viewpoints and cultures, to create change in their environment using a wide range of media, and to make aesthetic discoveries and judgments (Cohen and Gainer 23). In addition, in the arts, students can build links between verbal and nonverbal ways of interacting with the world (Koster 27). The arts "provide bridges to things we can scarcely describe, but respond to deeply"(National Standards for Arts Education 7). Furthermore, author and long-time teacher Wendy Libby states that arts activities are important because they "increase verbal and nonverbal expression, increase motivation and self-discipline, contribute to a positive self-image, allow expression of personal insights and emotions, help to develop concentration and

fine motor skills, utilize problem-solving techniques, contribute to historical and multicultural appreciation, fill the need for self-expression, and build a sense of accomplishment” (Libby xiii).

Obviously, much can be gained through involvement in the arts. One group of researchers conducted a study that revealed in great detail the intrinsic values of the arts. Judith Burton, Robert Horowitz, and Hal Abeles from Teachers College, Columbia University (1999) examined the artistic experiences of over two thousand students in grades 4-8. Specifically, the researchers examined the artistic experiences of 2046 children who attended various public schools in New York, Connecticut, Virginia, and South Carolina. Their goal was to determine what cognitive, social, and personal skills were developed through arts learning (Burton 36).

As seen in the report done by NCES about the state of the arts, arts teaching is very diverse. Some schools integrate the arts with other subjects while other schools teach the arts separately, and many different types of instructors with different levels of training can teach the arts. The researchers had to take all of this into account and consequently they designed a study to examine a broad spectrum of arts learning. In their research they utilized several standardized measures.

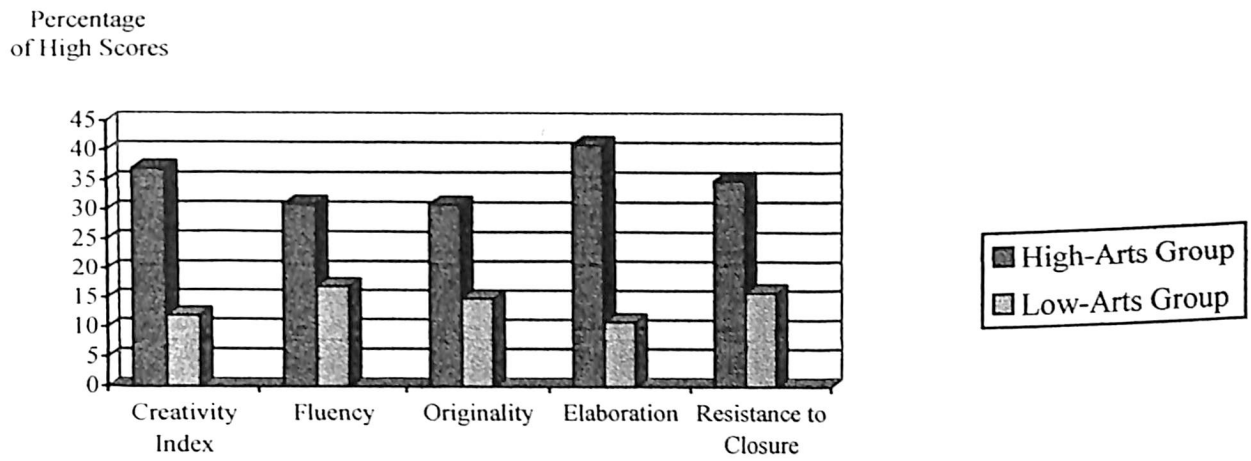
The Torrance Test of Creative Thinking was administered to measure creative thinking abilities, the Self-Description Questionnaire was used to measure self-concept, and the School-Level Environment Questionnaire was administered to evaluate aspects of school climate. Where standardized measures did not exist or were inadequate, the researchers designed and administered their own tests.

They developed a Teacher Perception Scale to measure teachers' judgments about qualities like risk-taking and creativity on the part of individual students, the Classroom Teacher Arts Inventory to assess teachers' practices and attitudes with regards to the arts, and the Student Arts Background Questionnaire to determine how much in-school experience children had previously had with the arts. In addition to gathering numeric data from these standardized measures, researchers also spent many hours talking with administrators, teachers, and students. They observed classrooms, attended various performances and exhibitions, and interviewed school administrators, general classroom teachers, and specialist subject teachers in science, mathematics, and language (Fiske 37).

As they gathered data, researchers made two groups: a high-arts exposure group and a low-arts exposure group. Placement within one group or the other depended on the amount of in-school instruction a particular child had received. A typical student in the high-arts group might have had instruction in art and music for three continuous years and a full year each of drama and dance. A student in the low-arts group might have had one year or less of music and art and no instruction in drama or dance (Fiske 38).

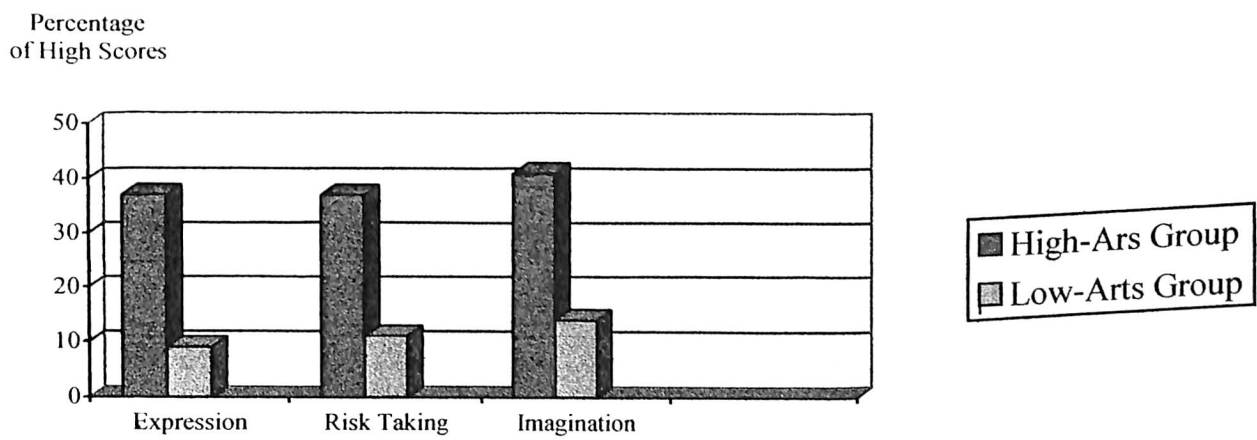
As Figure 8 shows, it was discovered that students in the high-arts group performed better than those in the low-arts group on measures of creativity, fluency, originality, elaboration, and resistance to closure. In this study fluency represented the number of ideas or solutions that the student expressed when faced with a stimulus or problem, originality referred to the unusual quality of responses, elaboration meant the imagination and exposition of detail, and resistance to closure represented the ability to keep open to new possibilities long enough to make the mental leap that makes original ideas possible (Fiske 38). Students in the high-arts group were also stronger in their

Figure 8: Creative Thinking Abilities, High Arts vs. Low Arts



(Fiske 39)

Figure 9: General Competencies, High Arts vs. Low Arts



(Fiske 39)

abilities to express thoughts and ideas, exercise their imaginations, and take risks in learning. This information is reflected in Figure 9. Moreover, they were more cooperative and more willing to display their learning publicly (Fiske 36).

The results from the study are very understandable when one considers the nature of arts learning. The arts consist of a learning environment where it is permissible and even desirable to take imaginative leaps and to envision new possibilities. Students can take risks in their thinking as they try out new, unexplored ways of learning (Fiske 39). Children learn about working together through the arts because the arts often require a great deal of collaboration and cooperation. The cooperation needed in music and drama is obvious when one considers concerts and plays, but even the visual arts can require students to come together. For example, students must cooperate to paint a mural, produce a book, or organize an exhibit. Through cooperation, students in the arts come to know what it means to share and learn from each other. Also, the arts enhance a child's willingness to display his/her learning because the arts give learning a public face. Paintings and drawings can be seen, music can be heard, and dance and drama can be observed. Inevitably, students involved in the arts perform or display their work publicly. In doing so they reveal their accomplishments and grow from praise, appreciation, and critique (Fiske 40).

Some of the most interesting differences in data from the study were related to students' perceptions of themselves as learners. High-arts students were far more likely to think of themselves as being competent in academics than low arts students were. From Figure 10 one can see that high-arts students were more than twice as likely to rate themselves as competent in academics. This is of importance because confidence not

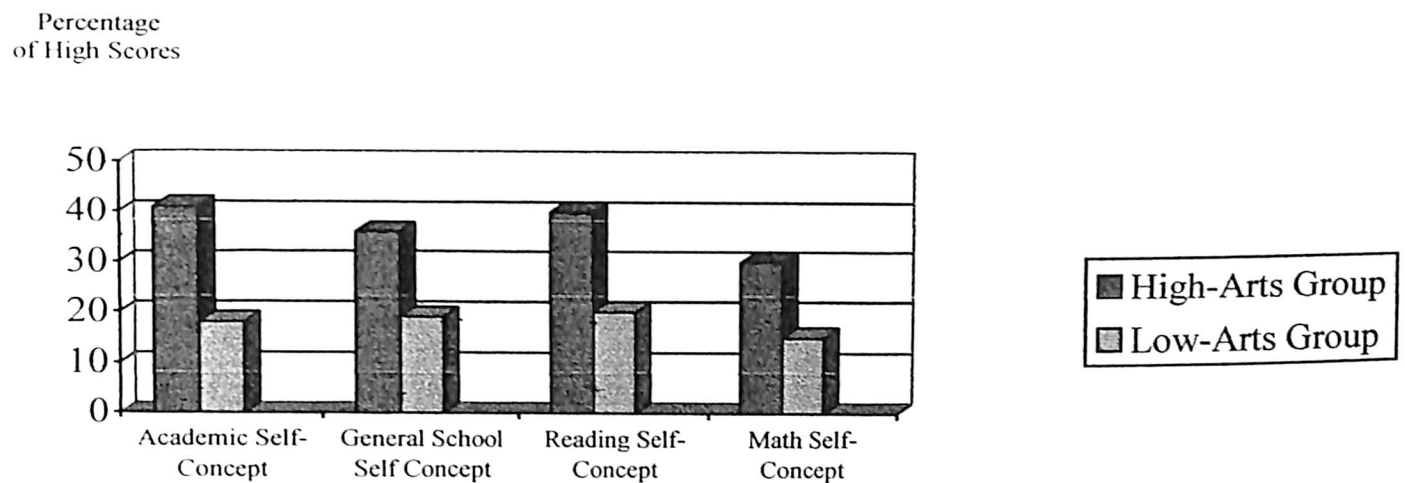


Image 3: Students in this photo are performing a dance together. As is often the case in the arts, students had to cooperate and work together in order to succeed in the task at hand.

“Dancers” No Date. Online Image. Americans for the Arts. 10 May 2005.
<<http://www.artsusa.org>>.

only plays an important role in learning but also affects a child’s social skills. As with other findings, the results in Figure 10 were validated when the researchers performed classroom observations and spoke with teachers and administrators. It was confirmed that students in the arts gain a sense of confidence in themselves that extends beyond the studios and performance spaces into other areas of their lives (Fiske 40). One experienced educator offered an explanation concerning the connection between the arts and self-concept. She suggested that a positive self-concept forms because, in the arts, students are encouraged to think for themselves and find their own solutions. They then take pride in the fact that they succeeded by relying on themselves rather than the

Figure 10: Self-Perception as a Learner, High Arts vs. Low Arts



(Fiske 40)

instructions of another. In addition, this educator noted that in the arts, many times individual work is accepted and appreciated for its own qualities rather than being placed in comparison to other works. She believes students benefit from this opportunity for individual praise and lack of pressure to compete (Libby 1).

In essence, the study conducted by Burton, Horowitz, and Abeles revealed that learning in the arts is complex and multi-dimensional. The results from their research concerning creative, cognitive, and personal competencies provided examples of how one could justify the arts based on their inherent merit.

In addition to research findings, one could also consider what Hope Brannon, the Southeastern Region Art Educator of the Year, 2005, had to say pertaining to the inherent value of the arts. According to Brannon, the arts have the ability to “transform lives and

the way we think, provide awareness of what is good, teach us to think critically, creatively and problem solve, provide an avenue to become aware of and express our thoughts and feelings about things that are and about things that are about to come, and provide cultural and historical awareness.” She also noted that while many students may go into fields that seem unrelated to the arts such as medicine, business, or law, the thinking abilities those students unknowingly learned through the arts could have a great impact on their professions. Specifically, she referred to the case of her ill mother. One doctor told her mother that there was very little hope and that she would certainly die, but another doctor was shocked by this diagnosis. He was of the opinion that she could live, and he used his skills, talent, creative and critical thinking abilities, problem solving abilities, and knowledge of medicine to heal her. Brannon notes “Somewhere along the way, someone taught Doctor A (the second doctor) to problem solve, to think critically and to combine these skills with his knowledge and to apply it in his specific work” (Brannon 6). Brannon is not saying that this doctor necessarily learned these abilities from involvement in the arts. However, according to the research conducted by Burton and her colleagues, the arts do aid in producing these thinking skills. Arts education initiates students into a variety of ways of perceiving and thinking (National Standards for Arts Education 6). The creative thinking that involvement in the arts requires helps strengthen problem-solving skills, such as those exhibited by the doctor (Libby 1). In short, this personal story of Brannon’s illustrates how the arts can contribute to education as whole. Brannon said, “Most of the time as we are going about the business of teaching the arts the most important thing we teach is not necessarily art itself, but what occurs

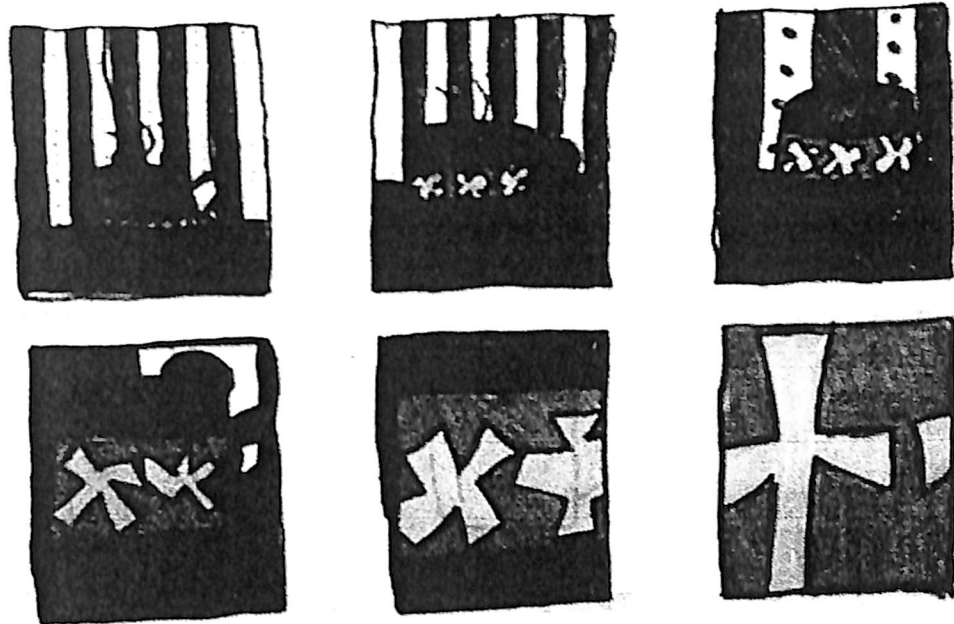


Image 4: The fifth grader who made this series demonstrated her abilities to think creatively about how distance can affect the appearance of an object.

Clement, Jessica. "Coffee Mug" No Date. Online Image. Kids Art. 10 May 2005. <<http://www.kidsart.com>>.

through great teaching of the arts- connecting through the arts to the world we live in” (Brannon 6).

COMBINING METHODS OF JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ARTS

Arts educators continue to disagree on the reason the arts should be taught in schools. On the one hand it has been argued that the arts should be taught because they play a critical role in a student’s ability to learn other academic subjects. On the other hand, it has been suggested that learning the arts is important in and of itself (Hetland and Winner). In fact, both approaches to justifying the arts are valid (Cortines 5). It has been shown that the arts do indeed lead to academic improvement, yet it is also been shown

that the arts are inherently valuable. One program that takes advantage of both of these effects is the Whole Schools Project.

The Whole Schools Project began in Mississippi in 1991 as a response to “back to basics” school reform. The Mississippi Arts Commission (MAC) began funding schools to include the arts in daily classroom teaching and to provide sequential, comprehensive instruction in the visual arts, music, dance, and drama by certified arts specialists. Since 1998, the effort has become known as the Whole Schools Initiative (WSI). WSI began as a systematic approach that aimed to change the organizational, cultural, instructional, and learning patterns in participating schools. There were five goals of the program: improve student achievement through infusion of the arts, enrich students’ lives by increasing their skills and knowledge in the arts disciplines, assist the growth of educators through arts based professional development, use the arts to increase parent and community involvement, and build a sustainable system for arts infusion (Corbett, Morse, and Wilson).

To monitor the progress of WSI, MAC enlisted a third party evaluation team. For four years, five researchers documented progress in schools and collected information from all of the participants: students, teachers, administrators, parents, artists, and community partners. Data were collected in a variety of ways. The researchers visited the schools to interview various participants and to tour the building and classrooms in order to observe instruction and student work. Surveys were administered to students, teachers, and parents both early and late in the implementation process. Participants also filled out “change journey maps” that required them to revisit and reflect regularly about their progress. Lastly, the researchers analyzed state-collected student performance data

from the Mississippi Curriculum Test which allowed them to perform comparisons among WSI schools, state averages, and a set of matched comparison schools.

When it came to evaluating the effectiveness of the program, educators agreed that looking at test scores was an inadequate way of capturing the full range of impacts the arts had on the students. However, with the implementation of the NCLB Act, Mississippi schools did not have the luxury of ignoring the states' expectations for improvement in student proficiency in basic literacy and number skills. Since learning to read was the biggest concern in all of the participating schools, the evaluators particularly focused on literacy. Results revealed that students in the WSI schools achieved proficiency in literacy as well as, if not slightly better than, both the state average for Mississippi schools and a set of matched comparison schools. Closer inspection revealed that 75 percent of higher implementation WSI schools met the state standard for *growth* in student literacy proficiency while less than 50 percent of the lower implementation schools did so. (Corbett, Morse, and Wilson). By "higher implementation schools" and "lower implementation schools" the researchers were referring to the variation in the degree and quality of implementing WSI. Schools varied in the amount of support they received concerning time, materials and human assistance. In some schools, the entire faculty was sold on the idea of WSI while other schools struggled to convince staff members of the new arts approach one at a time. Also, schools had varied success in making opportunities available for instructing classroom teachers on how to become skilled at integrating the arts with their lessons. Ultimately, all of the WSI schools benefited but results showed that students in the higher implementation schools, schools

who seriously and systematically integrated the arts into the core curriculum, gained the most.

In addition to improvement in test scores, participants in WSI experienced a host of other benefits from the arts. Teachers noted that integrating the arts into math, language arts, science, and social studies increased students' comprehension and retention of content. They also reported that the arts sharpened their students' abilities to think critically and creatively about other academic material. Due to the collaboration required in many arts activities, students also benefited from the heightened number of opportunities to communicate with one another on school-related matters. Perhaps most importantly, participating children and adults alike reported increased enjoyment and motivation.

Whether one looked at test scores or the reactions of students, teachers, and parents, improvement was made with the WSI approach. The arts helped WSI schools meet formal requirements, and they added considerable value to students' education as a whole (Corbett, Morse, and Wilson). Thus, it can be considered that the arts are needed in schools because they are both useful in improving academics and inherently good for students.

ART AND CULTURE

Beyond boosting academic performance and promoting cognitive, social, and personal competencies, the arts play a fundamental role in creating and understanding culture (Cohen and Gainer 10). Out of all living species, humans have the distinct and unique ability to establish a culture through which others in their community can grow. Humans can leave a legacy (Eisner 3). The arts are a necessary ingredient for

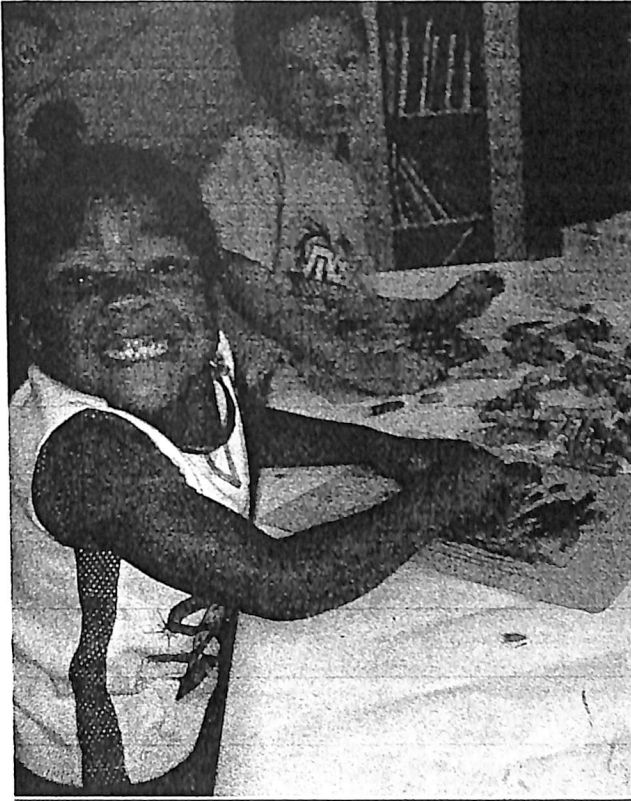


Image 5: This Mississippi student displays her great enthusiasm for the arts with a big smile as she works with oil pastels.

Buntin, Holly. "Happy Camper" July 2004.

establishing a culture and leaving a legacy. Many even go so far as to say that without the arts there is no culture. Indeed, it is impossible to name a society that has not expressed itself and explained itself through the arts (Cohen and Gainer 10). The arts provide a way to understand other people's lives (Koster 5). The beliefs, myths, fears, hopes, values, dreams, successes, and failures of every people are revealed through their arts (Cohen and Gainer 10). Today, people can look at the art of past cultures as

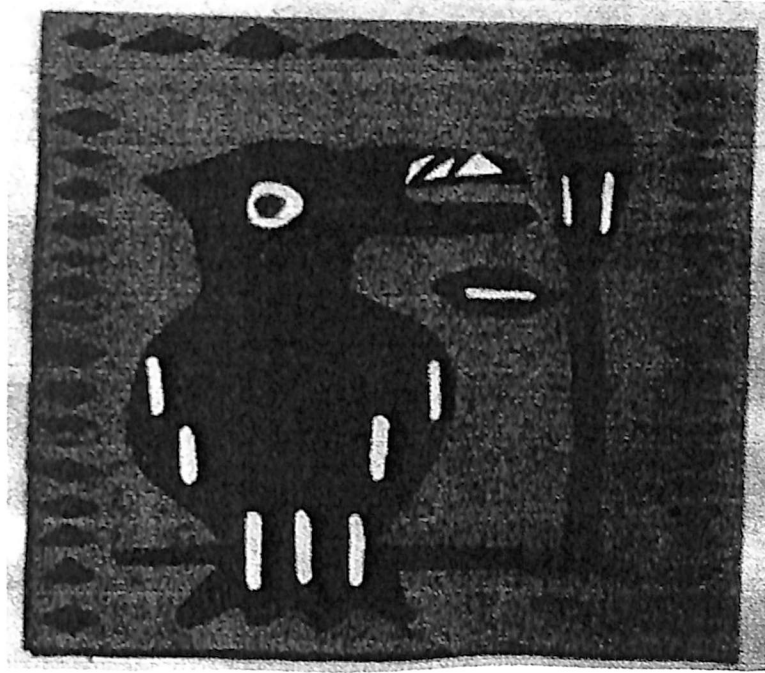


Image 6: A fourth grader who was studying the culture of Panama created this replica of a “mola” using colored paper. Traditionally, the women of Panama created colorful molas out of cloth to decorate clothing.

Roth, Stephanie. “Bird” No Date. Online Image. Kids Art. 10 May 2005. <<http://www.kidsart.com>>.

documents to be “read” (Koster 5). Much of what we know today about the ancient Greeks and the Native Americans is on account of the architecture, paintings, pottery, and songs they left behind. Sometimes the only record of an entire history of people is “written” in surviving artifacts. Someday, the current society will be known to future generations by the art that is produced today and left behind today (Cortines 6). Thus, if the nation would like to continue and renew its culture, it would be a wise choice to include the arts in the nation’s schools.

"Culture" is said to have hundreds of meanings. According to Eisner, two of these are relevant to education. Culture, in the anthropological sense, is a shared way of life. In the biological sense, culture refers to a medium for growing things. Eisner believed that schools function as cultures in both senses of the term because they make possible a shared way of life, a sense of belonging, and community, and they're a medium for growing things- children's minds (Eisner 2). Since schools play such an important role in children's lives regarding culture and the arts are a huge part of culture, then schools should teach the arts. Eisner admitted that all cultural institutions, including family and society as a whole, are significant forces that foster the cultural and artistic development of the individual. However, Eisner placed emphasis on the school because it provides an intentionally structured and planned agenda that family and the culture at large do not (Matthews and Uhrmacher 69). Eisner used the school's cultural responsibility to make a case for arts education. Eisner said:

I do not believe that the school's primary focus ought to merely replicate the cultural experience that is provided by the family or the society. The school has a special responsibility. That responsibility is to go beyond what that ordinary experience in everyday living is likely to foster. In short, schools ought not to be factories for cultural reproduction. They ought to be places in which student growth makes it possible for the culture at large to grow. (qtd. in Matthews and Uhrmacher 68)

Eisner suggested that schools should be environments where children are taught how to think, not what to think. This way, new ideas can develop and flourish and the culture will grow. The arts can contribute to making this ideal school environment because the

arts allow students to express themselves, develop creativity, and explore new ideas. If for no other reason, educators should teach the arts to ensure that students have a solid sense of culture because that is, after all, part of what it means to be human (Cortines 5).

CHAPTER III: UTILIZING THE ARTS TO ENHANCE LEARNING

There are many ways in which the arts can be utilized to heighten learning for students. Research has shown that involvement in the arts is inherently valuable and beneficial to academics, but there are also specific, concrete ways that educators can apply the arts and consequently enhance the learning experience. The arts can be relied upon to provide a motivational entry point into another subject, to reach students who are otherwise not being reached, and to provide challenges to students who are already considered successful.

THE ARTS AS A MOTIVATIONAL ENTRY POINT

One of the most popular ways of utilizing the arts to enhance learning is to use the arts as a motivational entry point into another academic subject area (Cohen and Gainer 148). By introducing a lesson with an arts-related activity, teachers can draw in students who normally are disinterested in a certain subject (Hetland and Winner). Not only that, but also employing the arts throughout the lesson heightens comprehension (Cohen 148). For instance, having students re-enact a historical moment can be a fun and exciting way to begin a history lesson. Dramatization will grab students' attention, and their enthusiasm from the role-playing will likely motivate them to pay attention to the rest of the lesson. Later, students will be more likely to be able to recall the information because they will have actually experienced the lesson in a variety of ways including acting it out, seeing it, and listening to it rather than learning

the information through only one of these (Cortines 6). Another example of using the arts as a motivational entry point can be seen in the following literature lesson. The teacher had her students retell their favorite story by illustrating it in cartoon fashion. Then she used these illustrations to teach them about literary elements. The students picked out the main characters, the setting, and the climax from their own drawings. In doing so the children gained an understanding of the concepts. A hands-on activity, like the ones used in this lesson and the one previously mentioned concerning history, is often a much more effective way of gaining knowledge and comprehending new concepts than a straight-forward lecture is (Cohen and Gainer 11). The arts provide the medium needed to construct a hands-on activity. Hence, the arts should be integrated with other subjects to enhance learning. In addition, by using the arts as a motivational entry point, teachers may help a child gain confidence in a subject in which he/she had previously felt inadequate. If a particular student is successful in an art form, then by linking that art form to another academic area, he/she may be able to build on the confidence he/she has in the arts area and become more comfortable in the other academic discipline as well. At the very least, integrating that art form could keep the student interested and increase their willingness to keep trying (Hetland and Winner).

Even when the arts are taught separately from other subjects, teachers will find that students often are motivated by the arts to learn something about another academic discipline (Cohen and Gainer10). In one instance students in a drawing class learned some new spelling words. A little boy who was drawing his football team carefully printed numbers onto each uniform. Then he asked how to spell "coach." Another student who was drawing her neighborhood wanted to know how to spell

"grocery" and "Amsterdam Avenue." The teacher was amused at their enthusiastic requests for correctly spelled words considering the lack of interest the students typically showed toward standard spelling lists. When motivated by their own interests and needs the children wanted to label everything accurately. They sought out correctly spelled words because these were needed for something they had chosen to do themselves (Cohen and Gainer 11). In this way, the arts were a motivational entry point into spelling even though the drawing lesson was not designed to do so.

HELPING STUDENTS THROUGH THE ARTS

Another way in which the arts can be utilized in education is to employ the arts to reach students who are otherwise not being reached. There are many different styles of learning. Some students are verbally oriented. Others are body and movement oriented, and still others are visually oriented (Cohen and Gainer 49). Unfortunately sometimes various students are considered classroom failures simply because conventional classroom practices are not engaging them. These "problem students" often excel greatly in an arts-integrated environment (Fiske ix). A study titled "Reading Is Seeing: Using the Visual Response to Improve the Literary Reading of Reluctant Readers" verifies this information. The study involved two seventh-grade boys who were learning disabled and labeled "reluctant readers." Throughout a nine-week session the boys were helped to visualize stories through the visual arts since the visual arts was something in which they took great interest. They were asked to make cutouts or find objects that would represent characters and ideas in the story they were reading. They were then asked to use these to dramatize the story. The boys were also asked to draw a picture of strong visual impressions formed while reading a story. Also, they participated in discussions about

how the pictures in illustrated books worked along with the words. They illustrated their own books and created collages that represented their responses to a particular literary piece. As a result of the visual arts approach to reading, both students became more sophisticated readers. They took a more active role in reading as they began to interpret text instead of just passively reading it. Ultimately, the visual arts were successfully used to reach these two students and engage them in reading (Deasy 144).

In another example an art teacher noted how art improved the situation for one particular young boy named “Chris” who was labeled “unresponsive” and a “slow learner” by his classroom teacher (Cohen and Gainer 45). Though “Chris” was behind academically, he excelled above his classmates in art. His paintings were rich in detail and color and clearly well composed (see Image 1). The art teacher encouraged “Chris” to further develop his talent. She helped him organize a show of his work that was exhibited in the school’s main hallway. With that show “Chris” earned the respect of his fellow classmates and his classroom teacher. His classroom teacher in particular was amazed at his talent and changed her attitude towards him. With his teacher and classmates believing in him and his newly found self-confidence, “Chris” improved in reading and writing. Though “Chris”’s academic work generally stayed at about average and he had to work hard to keep it at that, “his growing art ability helped him to develop enough confidence in himself to struggle his way through rather than give up in despair” (Cohen 48). From this example, it is can be seen that at times an art form can play a crucial role in the fate of a child’s education.

Like in the case of “Chris” researchers have found that the arts supply a reason, sometimes the only reason, for some students to be involved in school or other



Image 7: This painting of a still life is an example of a young student who excels in the visual arts. The composition is well thought out, the colors are vibrant, and the line quality varies from thick to thin.

McKinney, Tara. "Still Life" No Date. Online Image. Kids Art. 10 May 2005. <<http://www.kidsart.com>>.

organizations. Students who are not involved in school or other community institutions are at the greatest risk for failure and/or dropping out (Fiske ix). A study was conducted that posed the question, "Is involvement in the arts associated with lowered high school dropout rates?" In the study, forty students at risk for high school dropout (including both students currently in high school and some who have graduated but were once thought to be at risk) were surveyed. One of the questions on the survey asked why students had decided to stay in school. Of the 22 students who said that they had seriously considered dropping out of school, six (27 percent) answered that they stayed in school because they liked the arts or music. Three students (14 percent) said they remained in school because they wanted to pursue a career in the arts field. In total nine

of the 22 students (41 percent) responded that something about the arts kept them in school. Thirty-six of the forty students were asked directly whether participation in an arts course influenced their decision to remain in school. Of these 36, 30 answered "yes." Though students in this study attributed their decision to stay in school partly to the arts, the researchers did note that these results were subject to criticism. It is possible that students who are motivated enough to choose to take the arts and who then become engaged in these classes, are also those who are motivated enough to remain in school. Nonetheless, this study provides evidence that the arts can play a significant role keeping a student involved in school (Deasy 74).

Besides helping students who are struggling academically, the arts can also be utilized to provide new challenges for students who are already considered high achievers. Boredom is a barrier to success. For those students who quickly outgrow their learning environment, the arts can provide unlimited challenges (Fiske x). The possibilities in the arts are endless. Thus, the arts can be used to help students on both ends of the achievement scale and everywhere in between

RESULTS

Students receiving instruction in the arts consistently showed more favorable results. Out of a sample of students in grades eight through twelve, the ones involved in the arts were more likely to earn mostly A's and B's in English, score in the top two quartiles on standardized tests, and consider community service important. Higher percentages for dropping out and being bored in school were associated with those less involved in the arts. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds showed the same results. College bound seniors involved in any kind of art form scored higher in verbal and math scores on the SAT for 2000, 2001, and 2002 than those who had not received arts instruction. Children participating in an intensive arts program for reading gained 8.4 months of reading knowledge in just four months. Mississippi children in WSI schools, which systematically integrate the arts, achieved proficiency in literacy as well as, if not better than, the state average. Students in grades four through eight who were highly involved in the arts scored better on measures of creativity, fluency, originality, elaboration, and resistance to closure than did their arts-poor peers. They also were more likely to think of themselves as competent in academics. Ten year olds who participated in a visual arts curriculum scored higher on a visual science activity than children who had not been exposed to the visual arts curriculum. Two seventh-grade boys took part in a different visual arts program and improved their reading.

CONCLUSION

The arts have been around for centuries, even longer than the sciences. For ages, people have recognized knowledge in the arts as a characteristic of someone who is well educated. Today learning in the arts should still be considered valuable. The arts are not an “extra” that can be added on if there’s enough time during the school day. The arts are a serious discipline that is worthy of time, materials, and proper instruction. Studies such as the one conducted by Catterall, Chapleau, and Iwanaga have shown that students in the arts perform better academically than those who are not involved in the arts. In the study, arts students scored higher on standardized tests and generally exhibited better attitudes towards school. Catterall and his colleagues even broke the study down to consider the students from the lowest socio-economic backgrounds separately and found the same results. By examining these less fortunate students separately, they eliminated any claims that higher academic performance in arts-involved students was simply due to the fact that these students came from more privileged circumstances. In addition to enhancing academic performance, learning the arts also contributes to better thinking abilities. The study done by Burton, Horowitz, and Abeles showed that students who studied the arts developed stronger abilities to express thoughts and ideas, exercise their imaginations, and take risks in learning. Arts students also outperformed their peers on measures of creativity, fluency, originality, and elaboration. All school-related benefits aside, there is yet another reason to teach the arts. The arts are a fundamentally important part of culture. It would be difficult for students to appreciate other cultures, much less contribute to the growing culture of today, without any knowledge of the arts. Moreover,

students should be educated in the arts so that they can gain a better understanding of their own heritage and current way of life which will give them a solid sense of identity. The arts are also important to education because they can be utilized to help students in the learning process. The arts can provide a motivational entry point into another subject, and through the arts, teachers can sometimes reach students who are otherwise not engaging in learning. For all of these reasons, the arts need to be a basic subject matter covered in school. There are too many positive effects and benefits of an arts-rich education not to include the arts in every curriculum. Eisner summed up how meaningful to education the arts are when he said, "Work in the arts is not only a way of creating performances and products; it is a way of creating our lives by expanding our consciousness, shaping our dispositions, satisfying our quest for meaning, establishing contact with others, and sharing a culture" (Eisner 3).

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Researchers should consider achievement in the arts in addition to involvement in the arts. So far, studies have shown that having instruction in the arts is beneficial to students. However, these studies do not consider whether or not a student is excelling in the arts. The researchers are only considering whether or not the student is involved at all. Further research should be done to see if, how well one performs in the arts affects the benefits of an arts education.
2. The progress of WSI should continue to be monitored and documented so that others may take note of its success. More evidence of how effective the arts-integrated approach is is needed to motivate other states to develop an arts education program for their own public schools. WSI should be used as a model program.
3. Further studies should be conducted concerning the arts and reading. The arts involve the manipulation and comprehension of complex symbols just as reading does. While studies have shown that through the arts students' reading has improved, more research should be conducted to find out specifically how the arts can be used to enhance reading skills.
4. Research should be done in order to test how well integrating the arts with other subjects increases learning. Studies should be conducted comparing students who learn material through an arts-integrated approach and students who do not. Then results would show if learning through the arts increased comprehension and/or retention of new information.

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