Is art a necessity in the school curriculum? This question is very relevant in an age of school budget cuts and the stress on academic standards. Some corporations seem to think art should be the first to go when schools lose money or test scores drop. However, it can be shown that art is, in fact, a necessity to a school curriculum.

Art has a place in today’s schools that are based on academic standards and the No Child Left Behind Law, and it is a necessary part of the curriculum to reach all students, raise the test scores, and promote creativity and problem solving skills.

While some people believe art is disposable, art has a place in today’s schools. With the emphasis for academic standards, there is a push for schools to get back to basics in order to raise test scores. However, this argument does not work. Art is basic. Ellen Dissanayake wrote much about the idea of art as a universal subject. She “presented art as a universal behavior,” and thought that “early human beings have engaged in art since the earliest beginnings of our species” (Bates 8). Art is a basic.

Art also has a legal place in the schools. Budget cuts, combined with academic standards and a push for teacher accountability with the No Child Left Behind Law, have caused people to rationalize art being cut from the school systems. There is a misconception that art education is not protected by the law, and the educational push with No Child Left Behind is not inclusive to art. This is not the case. In a letter, the United States Education Secretary Rod Paige stated, “The truth is that No Child Left Behind Act includes the arts as a core academic subject because of their importance to a child’s education” (Sec) He went on to say, “The arts, perhaps more than any other subject, help students understand themselves and others, whether they lived in the past or
are in the present,” showing how important the arts are to the higher educational officials. No matter what goals a school has, art education has a necessary and legally bound place.

Not only does art have a place in the curriculum, but it is a necessity. Teachers know it is important to reach all of their students, and art is one way to do that. No two children are exactly alike, and this is also the same for their learning styles. All children learn a little differently, and they have different strengths and weaknesses. Howard Garner came up with the theory of multiple intelligences, basically meaning that people are smart in different ways. Not everyone can have a math centered mind. Gardner identified seven intelligences that people have, while understanding that they can have strengths in more than one. One of his lists was spatial intelligence, or commonly called art smart. This intelligence involves the ability to see patterns easily and learning more from creating or drawing than from lectures or readings (Smith).

Since educators who support Gardner’s theory know that people can have strengths in more than one area, teaching art will benefit many children. It is also deemed important to push children in their weaker areas, so teaching art is beneficial to the children who are not art smart. Teachers like the multiple intelligences theory for many reasons. It allows students to “think and learn in many different ways,” and it “provides educators with a conceptual framework for organizing and reflecting on curriculum assessment and pedagogical practices” (Smith). In other words, kids are getting a somewhat generalized education that meets their needs, and teachers can have a good outline to create and reflect upon their effective teaching. Teaching the arts is one of those effective and necessary aspects.
Art is beneficial to a student’s education, and it shows in other academic areas as well. The Arkansas River Valley Arts Center reported that “in the results of extensive studies that have proven that students who participate in the arts score higher on the SAT tests.” (www.arvartscenter.org). Other studies have shown participation in art to increase test scores of all kinds. Another study by the same group found that “those who participated in arts programs were much more likely to be high academic achievers,” (www.arvartscenter.org).

Not only do test scores improve, but other aspects of the student’s academics may improve as well. Art allows children to express their creativity. It can become an outlet for young people. Art allows them to use their imaginations to make “new connections, transcend previous limitations, and think ‘outside the box’,” (www.princetanol.com). It gives children the freedom to say things they want to say, and express feelings and emotions that may not be allowed out in any other form. When students are expressing themselves and being heard, they are easier to teach.

Higher test scores and the benefits of self expression should be enough to make art a necessity in a curriculum, but there is yet another argument for administrators and school corporations. Teaching children art will improve their problem solving skills. Helping children with these skills will help them in all areas of academia and life. More open ended type assignments allow students to develop their own ideas, and it also allows for self directed learning. They can try and see what works and what does not work. Many teachers struggle to teach their students problem solving skills, but all they need to do is teach them some art. The open ended approach is for those skills, and it gives a method. Teachers are to “present a problem defined by a set of rules or criteria. Students
were given opportunities to work within the criteria to solve the problem,“ (Bates 3).
This approach again allows students to be heard, especially since teachers are to recognize “individual differences, a variety of problem solving behaviors, and multiple ‘right’ answers,” (Bates 4). Problem solving skills empowers children. They become confident that they can come up with their own answer, and it can be right. These skills can be generalized to all academic areas, and they are a vital part to any curriculum.

Art is a necessity in a school curriculum. It is a basic human function, so to go back to the basics is to go back to art. It is supported by the laws, government, and high education officials as a great learning tool. Art education allows all children to have their needs met. I have seen many children who learn best by drawing pictures or creating a project instead of writing a paper. I believe all children should be able to have an appropriate education, and all children need the chance to create an output in a different manner. It helps those children who have strengths in art, and it pushes the children who are weak in art to grow. Participation in art education raises test scores and academic success of students, and it gives students an outlet. When children are allowed to express themselves, they feel more confident in all areas of life. It develops the creativity and problem solving skills that will be vitally important throughout all aspects of their lives, academic and others. Art has importance on all levels, and it needs to be included in the curriculum. This is a conclusion I believed before I wrote this paper, and the research and facts simply backed up my beliefs. Children are individuals, and more than anything else, art gives them the chance to express that individuality.
REFERENCES


4. [www.arvartscenter.org/education.htm](http://www.arvartscenter.org/education.htm)

5. [www.princetonol.com](http://www.princetonol.com)