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Importance of Art in Education

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“I believe art education in music, theater, dance, and the visual arts, is one of the most creative ways we have to find the gold that is buried just beneath the surface. They (children) have an enthusiasm for life, a spark of creativity, and vivid imaginations that need training...training that prepares them to become confident young men and women. As I visit schools around the country I see a renewed interest in art education and a growing concern about the negative impact of cutting art and music out of the curriculum. The creativity of the arts and the joy of music should be central to the education of every American child.”

Richard W. Riley

*Secretary of Education, United States of America*

I found it refreshing that the secretary of education identified the same essential idea of the significance of art in education. This quote does indeed point out the importance of art in education and integrating it into the school curriculum. Unfortunately in today's society one of the first programs to be cut due to insufficient funding are programs related to art. It is essential that educators, members of the community and students realize the vital role that art has in education, so-as-to increase its availability in the everyday curriculum. Art provides methods for learning core material, outlets for creativity, and holds the key to various components of our culture. By integrating art into the curriculum educators can provide a more efficient, influential form of education for students in general.

One of the most crucial pieces of evidence for the importance of art comes from Howard Gardner's research. Howard Gardner comprised the theory of Multiple Intelligences in 1983. “The intelligences that Gardner described are logical/mathematical, linguistic, musical, spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, interpersonal (understanding of other), intrapersonal (understanding of self),

and naturalist” (Snowman 121). This theory has helped educators to revise the way in which they teach, encouraging educators to utilize as many of the intelligences as possible. Gardner’s idea is that people are all intelligent in different ways. Thus some students may learn more effectively through one form of intelligence rather than others, while other students may be able to utilize a variety of intelligences. Whatever the case it is important to use as many of the intelligences in the classroom as possible to accommodate the various ways in which students learn.

The inclusion of art into the classroom is connected to the intelligence theory through the various ways in which art can be used to learn. Art in itself is related to the visual/spatial intelligence, these learners are characterized in that, “they like to see what you are talking about in order to understand. They enjoy charts, graphs, maps, tables, illustrations, **art**, puzzles, costumes, etc” (Morrison 85). Thus there is a type of learner that understands material best through visual methods such as art. In-order-to accommodate these students, art must be included into the classroom. Art can also be taught utilizing the different intelligences such as intrapersonal (personal art work), interpersonal (group projects), and bodily (large art work involving movement. Gardner stated himself, “teaching the arts themselves, as well as using the art to teach other disciplines, enables educators to reach many students who are not now succeeding in school and to reach all students more deeply”.

Another factor to include into the school day is the need for students to be creative. Art class gives students the opportunity to let their creative juices flow and expend extra energy. In the younger years students are unable to sit and listen to lectures, they must be constantly active. Through art they can stay active while expressing themselves at the same time, “In the process of selecting, interpreting, and reforming these elements, children have given us more than a picture

or a sculpture; they have given us a part of themselves: how they think, feel, and see” (Lowenfield 2). Not only is creativity a method of expressing feelings but also a form of discovering boundaries. In an essay by Jerome Hausman, he states that, “teaching should foster imaginative and disciplined activity...This is an essential ingredient in man’s being able to reach beyond his “boundaries” or “limits” of knowing and feeling” (Andrews 51). A similar idea is presented in an article about how people learn or “Knowledge in Action”. Through art people can be creative, testing their ideas and discovering their own conclusions. It is in creativity that our culture produces new inventions and continues to evolve with higher learning.

It must also be remembered that art is a part of our culture. Thus fits into the category of history and social studies which are core subjects. In this way it is possible to use art to teach these subjects. For instance, teachers can use varying examples of art to convey the concepts of differences between a variety of cultures and time periods. The history of art goes through changes just as human societies undergo changes in their culture. In this way art is connected to the transformations that occurred in human history and can be incorporated into subjects aside from art.

In conclusion art is an essential component of education. It has been proven that some students learn better through visual or artistic methods. This proves that art should be incorporated into different lesson plans to assure that these visual students are accommodated. Also Creativity provides opportunities for students to have a change in routine and test their learning capabilities and boundaries, teaching them problem solving skills along the way. Finally art itself is a critical part of human history that needs to be given credit in the regular history or social studies classrooms. Though there are many other reasons for art to be in the educational curriculum these are some the points that I found to be the most crucial. Art can

enhance the learning process in so many ways that its seems a waste to exclude it from the learning process.

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