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Publication Date
2011

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High-Quality Art Education: For Inclusion and Resilience

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Education

by

Rachel D. Stewart

June 2011

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High-Quality Art Education: For Inclusion and Resilience

Introduction

Special education policy currently dictates that students with disabilities be served in the least-restrictive environment (LRE) possible. LRE means that general education teachers across the socioeconomic spectrum have the responsibility to serve students with a widening variety of developmental, behavioral, and academic needs. To ensure access to the kind high-quality education that builds the foundations of a successful life, many interventions and instructional techniques have arisen to ensure cultural sensitivity and increase teachers’ ability to meet the instructional needs of their students. Recent research discovers that, by establishing a multi-modal teaching approach where instruction of academic and social skills relevant to future success in school is tailored the needs of individual learners, rates of academic success increase (Fiske, 1999, Brown & Evans, 2002, Catterall, 2004). One way to establish a whole-person approach to learning is by including a high-quality arts education experience for all learners. Unfortunately, lack of funding and teacher training have diluted the use of dance, theatre, music, and visual arts so their direct effect on the complex process of learning is currently unclear. The arts stimulate the underlying emotional and cognitive components of learning (Jensen, 2001, Brown, Martinez, & Parsons, 2006, Koelsch, 2009) and sustaining them within the general education classroom can increase readiness to learn. Though they
can be used to integrate exceptionalities, teach culture, and focus students, there is not yet a clear picture of how to ensure that these results be achieved.

With the proper scholarly approach, arts instruction teaches both a rich appreciation for subject matter and the discipline required to undertake rigorous study (Harding, 2010, Temple, 2007). Correlations have been shown to exist between study of the arts and school performance. Particularly in the case of music, it is abundantly apparent that an association exists between arts exposure and academic success (Fiske, 1999, Vaughn, 2000). Despite this, and other evidence that strong art programs in America’s K-12 system may improve overall academic success, high-quality arts education is quite limited in practice. Gaps in access to any kind of arts-based learning have been reported between socioeconomic groups (Constantino, 2003), but in fact even those who posses the means to expose their students to the arts may be doing so in a less-than-effective manner. Often times music or visual art instruction will take place with a specialist teacher outside the home classroom, or art will be used purely to expose students to various cultures or solely as a creative outlet with little or no attention given to the comprehensive educational standards (Bresler, 1995). As a curricular “extra”, arts instruction does little to support the overall academic and behavioral growth of students. Perhaps because it is more complex to assess, the value of art-based learning as a serious component in the general education classroom goes largely unnoticed. Measureable, comparable, and replicable
results of operationalized arts instruction are difficult to produce, and this hinders researchers in their ability to inform educators about how to use arts effectively.

To increase social identity of individuals with developmental disabilities and de-stigmatize those students whose cultural identity may place them at increased risk of special education placement, common practice is to service students with individualized education plans in the least restrictive environment possible. This leaves general education teachers with the task of imparting the same information equally to a group of youngsters who acquire that information quite differently or possess differing strengths and challenges to learning. By embracing different communication styles through the use of music, movement, pictorial representation, and allowing emotional expression, teachers who use the arts are able to create a culturally sensitive environment that validates the range of intelligences their students represent. In addition to making information more accessible, social skills are exercised and relationships are fostered through the teamwork and different roles each child can play within each creative activity. As will be outlined in this paper, positive reinforcement comes synonymous with the artistic process through innate choice making, leadership opportunities, and the involvement of the learner in the assessment of their own work. Add in evidence for the stimulation of underlying cognitive and emotional processes, constructs of particular interest for integrating special education students into the general education classroom, and the necessity of scholarly artistic experience becomes quite clear.
In order to more clearly define the role of the arts in the instructional curriculum, the purpose of this paper is to explore generalities about best instructional practices for scholarly arts learning as well as specific outcomes of arts learning. This broad review of literature focusing on the different experiences of K-12 students in the arts provides a framework by which to begin defining best practice arts-instruction and it’s influence on the educational process.

Institutionalizing high-quality arts education can perhaps mirror the effects of other proactive intervention practices derived from applied science. In outlining the classroom experience currently accepted as effective to increase resilience, and comparing that with ideas about arts education with considerations outcomes of various exposures to art, the impact of a strong arts background for academic success becomes clear.

**Beginning to Define a High-quality Arts Education**

Arts education can create a multimodal, motivating learning experience. But the multifarious outcomes discussed in the present document can only be realized when instruction is done in a specific way. The outcomes of different art programs can be drastically different, depending on how seriously and completely the arts are made relevant to scholarly pursuit (Oddleifson, 1994, Bresler, 1995). This section seeks to define high-quality arts education in an effort to begin understanding its potential educational impact.

Successful arts educators know the educational standards, and are able to make connections across the fundamentals from different academic areas.
Instruction must then be tailored to best help students exercise their understanding in those standard topics the investigation (Remer, 2010). Bringing information to life in a way that stimulates eyes, brain, body, ears, and emotions can increase the capacities in which information can become useful to students in the future (Jensen, 2001). Through invested practice, students gain an appreciation for the nuances of advancing group knowledge. And while the cultural implications and implementation of multimodal learning are individually important outcomes, the arts should not be used to foster only one area of scholarly intelligence (Bresler, 1995). Arts-based learning develops critical thinking skills through an integration of context and craft. Students learn to invest their time in an idea – investigation leads to information and repetition leads to mastery – and can develop academically-relevant skills that will transfer across academic disciplines. These skills are most likely to develop when art is treated as an equal to other subject areas and included in the general education classroom (Oddleifson, 1994). In learning about art for art’s sake, and in gaining an appreciation for what it takes to achieve mastery, students learn to value their own work and the input of others- a social effect found to have relevance in every sector of society (Chapman, 2000). Teachers must not only be able to use the artists work ethic to foster transferrable skills, but also to tailor the context of arts lessons to address the social, emotional, and academic needs of a specific instructional group. Within a framework designed to meet the group in their level of need, students then find their own meaning in the work. Some students may
benefit from the cognitive and cardiac charge of dance, while others need to see history come alive through theatre. Perhaps one student in a class needs to be encouraged to research his drawing a bit more, but another to take more time on the technique and detail of a work itself. The savvy teacher will know where to start a lesson and how to encourage individualized growth. But most educators lack the training to know how to balance ways of knowing and expressing information (Donahue & Stuart, 2008).

Because even the most highly-informed instruction will create a different type of change for each set of learners, examples of arts learning will be innately different in every school, making it difficult to measure and compare instruction techniques. Indeed, defining what constitutes appropriate arts instruction is quite complex, and general outcomes of this type of learning are often used to inform instructional inputs. Harvard University’s Project Zero (2006) defines the habits fostered by art education to be the development of craft, engagement of the learner with relevant problems to be solved, the ability to envision outcomes, express ideas, observe contexts, and to take value in reflecting upon one’s own work for the sake of reaching beyond current capabilities. Students can be taught to be more perceptive, more tolerant, and more invested in both academic and social capacities. The arts emphasize growth over time in individually salient ways and can be effective in increasing motivations to learn, evolving one’s self-image, and reinforcing ideas about academic discipline. As a “basic” in our educational system, it is imperative that art be regarded in the same light
as other core subjects rather than as the for-fun educational supplement to which it is often reduced (Hope, 2007). But valuing art as a path of serious inquiry does not mean it should be rigidly demanding. Many of the observed outcomes may be due to the opportunities to personalize work. Arts learning supplements more traditional instruction while offering the learner the chance to make choices and observations about his or her own path to discovery (Whelchel, 2000). Students assume ownership over lesson content and find ways to express their individuality. Being able to express ones' self in a non-judgmental environment has been demonstrated to make the learning experience more positive.

As the information presented in this paper suggest, opportunities to connect to lesson content and take responsibility for work accomplished may play a role in the advancement of learning. Confident, responsible scholars have an increased capacity to absorb knowledge. Experience in the arts both stimulates learning readiness and makes assessment a conversational process that draws attention to personal growth. For all arts, assessment of work accomplished is critical to increasing capacity to learn content and hone one's craft (Donahue & Stuart, 2007). It is important for both teacher and student to be involved in the process of analyses in order to maintain intrinsic feedback to both parties about the leaning that has occurred. Assessment should be frequent, rather than allowing one piece to act as a definitive statement (Kahmi, 2003). In this fashion, the possibilities for growth over time are emphasized and students learn to invest their time to academic pursuit. When attention is placed on both
the product and process of art making, the arts come to serve as their own
reward and therefore become intrinsically motivating for students academically,
socially, and creatively.

By taking the time to truly analyze the details of a piece of artwork, level of
mastery can be assessed. Critical analysis and aesthetic valuing are important
in assessing one’s own body of work, but certainly there is also something to be
gained by analyzing the work of others. In dissecting a piece of fine art or
commenting on choices made during an improvisational exercise in the
classroom, students learn to recognize quality and appreciate the effort of others.
Arts learning has classically established apprenticeships and respected a
hierarchy of mastery; it is important to clearly define the roles of the participants
in a learning community to emphasize the value in producing quality work
(McKean, 2001). The multi-sensory experience provided by properly
implemented arts education increases the chance of communicating the value of
different ways of knowing and gives a wider variety of student the chance to
contribute to scholarly discussion. This responsible approach to human
interaction can support efforts to integrate the alternative learner into the
academic community.

In sum, high-quality arts education is found to be a standards-based area
of instruction, where learning is individualized for and by the target population,
and hierarchies of mastery are established within systems that base growth on
measures of both product and process. It increases perception and motivation,
academically and socially (Jensen, 2001). However, most general education classrooms lack this high caliber art instruction and research currently fails to provide a clear understanding of how to integrate the arts most effectively into the learning process. There is no definitive prescription for how much to work on personal works of art versus group projects, no quantifiable measurement for how each of the four art forms specifically impacts a complex learning process. Without measurable benefits it is difficult to recognize the merits of arts learning when pressure to increase reading and math scores, for example, is high.

Potential outcomes of arts include a continuum of academically and socially relevant skills, and therefore it can be difficult to strike a balance between the maintenance of strict performance expectations and allowing completely free expression in the absence of academic boundaries. Valuing art for arts sake and ensuring a clear, academic framework in which to work, when given equal precedence during arts-based learning activities, is reported to be effective for developing academically relevant behaviors (Van Eman, Thorman, Montgomery, & Otto, 2008). “Actual learning”, as reported by teachers experienced with integrating the arts instruction with that of other core subject areas, is evident in ways both measurable and immeasurable (Temple, 2007).

Finding a balance of academic and emotional exploration is difficult but necessary in ensuring the exposure to the arts evolves in a developmentally beneficial fashion. Students can be taught to find everyday meaning in the arts at the same time they learn to respect masters of a craft; they can find an avenue
to explore creatively and be able to demonstrate academically relevant information (Mishook & Kornhaber, 2006). Effectively integrated arts learning ensures students walk away with bigger ideas and take their work seriously, as well they utilize planned assessments and are informed by curriculum standards. These complex outcomes are possible when arts instruction is integrated correctly with other academic disciplines (Mishook & Kornhaber, 2006). Because it can be tailored to meet both scholastic and social and emotional need, the exact way to integrate the arts into instruction will of course vary from site to site. Along with lack of teacher training, these open-ended outcomes make it difficult to identify how to use the arts to create a culturally sensitive, intrinsically motivating environment for each individual. But, perhaps, considering examples of various art education programs and the impact that participation in the arts has on cognition (Koelsch, 2009, Jensen, 2001, Respress & Lutfi, 2005) and measures of learning (Chen-Haftek, 2007, Jensen, 2001, Van Eman, Thorman, Montgomery & Otto, 2008) can help a clearer picture to be formed. While not all of the evidence offered below encompasses the complex, standards based instruction discussed to be the most effective for supporting diverse groups of learners, taken together the evidence illustrates the profound effect arts education can have on overall learning and success in school.

**Arts-based Education Enhances the Learning Environment**

It has been suggested that the number of learners who respond to visual and kinesthetic clues may outnumber those that excel in receipt of auditory
information, and yet during school hours our students are expected to learn largely through lecture format, pre-determined reading selections and prepared worksheets (Dickinson, 1997). Not only are all students denied a multi-sensory approach, arguably the best approach to teaching and learning as conceived presently, but the teaching tools in use match the preferred learning modalities of less than half of the students in a given classroom (Dickinson, 1997). Applied science has evolved several ways to conform students to the rigors of learning and scaffold the teaching of individual skills to make information meaningful for the child. But perhaps by making more efficient use of the educational fundamentals established long ago many of the some results can be achieved. Through the arts, the opportunity to present information in a variety of ways exists within a system that encourages deep investigation and the focus necessary to complete that investigation successfully. When teachers maintain high performance standards with the goal of producing perceptive, motivated scholars who can recognize the strengths of others, arts based-learning can increase one’s social and emotional capacity to learn. Some arts, such as music and dance, stimulate the cognitive experience, and correlations have been shown between participation in the arts and academic success (Fiske, 1999, Vaughn, 2000). When used in the right way to exercise a range of learning variables, arts instruction supports the learner in an individual, integrated way. When considered together, the examples presented in this section represent the range of outcomes possible with arts education. Reports demonstrate an

Social and emotional components of learning

When teachers are able to understand conduct or learning patterns as a product of culture, a combination of meeting students at their instructional level and maintaining high expectations for student performance can be used to shape student behavior to increase academic and social success (Morrison, Robbins & Rose, 2008). By viewing one’s culture as an asset to the diverse learning community rather than as a deficit for the individual, students are able to develop a strong sense of self than can improve intrinsic motivations to learn as well as create a collaborative community where members strive for overall positive change within a given institution. In scaffolding knowledge, maintaining fluidity throughout the quest for knowledge, and encouraging students of all breeds to take leadership roles based on their personal strengths, we know that it is possible to increase academic success for a wider variety of student (Ladson-Billings, 1995, Morrison, Robbins & Rose, 2008).

When learning in and through the arts, the learner is exposed to information in a multi-sensory fashion. By ensuring that scholarly pursuit reaches
the auditory learner, the visual learner, the kinesthetic learner, and allows all students to experience new things in a variety of ways, schema are strengthened and concepts are personalized into one’s own culture and livelihood. In using the arts as teaching modalities for other academic content, the display of knowledge gained becomes personal and continued acquisition becomes more robust (Jensen, 2001). By experiencing life in word, in picture, in action, and in being allowed to be a part of a conversation rather than held in a restrictive novice role, students are invited to not only engross themselves in academic content but also embrace and appreciate a multi-cultural approach to building a positive community. Particularly where the kinesthetic arts are concerned, as with dance for example, the long-lasting effects of muscle memory not only enrich immediate learning but also might actually increase the likelihood that the information will be retained (Dickinson, 1997, Jensen, 2001). Given that participation in activities outside of the traditional classroom affairs can lead to increased feelings of connection to school, and the development of life-skills that assist in carving the path toward success even when academic content becomes trying, we can infer that establishing an integrated, multi-modal learning environment can be transformational in the experiences of “at-risk” students (Brown & Evans, 2002).

Arts education can teach about particular cultures, resulting in appreciation for foreign cultures, greater acceptance of one’s own culture, or an ability to make comparisons across cultures (Abril, 2006, Chen-Haftek, 2007). Recent investigation demonstrates gains made by urban African-American
middle-school students participating in arts-based interventions in the areas of grade point average, spelling ability, and self-esteem. As attitudes toward school increase with experience in the arts, risk for violent behavior appears to decrease (Respress & Lutfi, 2005). Additionally, it is suggested that an interdisciplinary approach that considers culture and human development along with institutional practice is key in combating the gaps in achievement the exist between individuals of different cultural backgrounds (Klingner, Artiles, & Mendez Barletta, 2006). As is the current topic of discovery in this paper, strong arts education can absolutely be an avenue toward interdisciplinary instruction. Any of the four major arts included in the curriculum can be a study into a specific culture as well as an exercise in self-efficacy. Of added interest to those working with those students with less exposure to academic language are the dramatic, physical arts. Movement, a universal communication device, and the pairing of movement with language, make dance and theatre activities an excellent forum through which to learn vocabulary, play with phrasing, and make the complexities of academic English generally more accessible.

When specific content knowledge is communicated in an environment designed to encourage great concentration, students from all walks of life can grasp concepts from the core subject standards. In the Sounds of Silk project – an interdisciplinary education pilot program in New York City aimed at teaching Chinese music and culture- educators attribute high levels of content knowledge gained to the active engagement in both concept knowledge and musical
performance (Chen-Haftek, 2007). Through practice, students grew to appreciate the lives of people from other cultures, understand basic music theory, and those students who belonged to the Chinese-American community came away with a heightened sense of self (Chen-Haftek, 2007). In comparative study of multicultural music education, it is found that fifth grade students who explore music’s function in a particular society along with music theory gain far more content knowledge and cultural appreciation than those who study music theory and the sociocultural context of music as separate entities (Abril, 2006). *Champions of Change* (Fiske, 1999), a national report on the impact of arts instruction, offers furthered evidence that grammar, geography, math, and many other academic content areas can be successfully communicated through active, artistic instruction. While teaching prepositions through percussion and discovering social structure through the works of Shakespeare, instructors ensure that content knowledge reaches as many students as possible. Major findings in *Champions of Change* include the excellence in the arts by those students generally considered “problematic” in the classroom, high reading and writing achievement connected with involvement with theatre, and increased abilities to navigate the complexities of the social environment (Fiske, 1999). By experiencing mathematical relationships through music study or organization of movement, using theatre and dance to learn about grammar, or exploring the function of various arts in certain cultures, academic content can be made accessible to a wider variety of student.
Absolutely, perceptions about one’s role in a community can have significant impact on learning. Navigating social complexities, effectively collaborating with others, and developing a strong sense of self are all integral outcomes of standards-based arts instruction. But it is also important to recognize the immediate, basic impact active experience has on learning. Art opens up doors for those who struggle to acquire information in the traditional format. The subject of artistic endeavor can serve as a mnemonic device of sorts, giving the student a meaningful connection to the material to be learned. The findings of *Champions of Change* begin to illustrate how in creating concrete, multi-modal, and explorational learning opportunities for all students, teachers can ensure that the individual differences that make our society interesting do not alone impede the process of learning. Consider also teacher attitudes as reported by the *Arts Education Partnership* (2004), which included recognition that when learning through the arts *all* students reap academic and social benefits. Educators feel arts instruction helps them reach English Language Learners, students with disabilities or disadvantaged backgrounds, and allows those students to feel higher levels of acceptance and achievement within the general education setting (Bannon, 1994, Brown & Evans, 2002, Duffy & Friend, 2003). Through the arts, teachers are able to reach students previously thought unreachable. By engaging themselves in the learning process, students are afforded more opportunities to absorb and maintain the information deemed important for success.
While the hands-on exploration of concepts brought about by learning THROUGH the arts can boost informational acquisition for a variety of student, it is important to consider in greater detail the sociocultural impact of learning IN the arts. Multi-modal instruction can make learning activities more accessible to a diverse collection of scholars but it can also have significant effect on the well being of the community and those it encompasses. It is known that a caring, conversational environment that celebrates a variety of learning paradigms can lead to enhanced individual learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Utilizing the idea that art is exploration, creation, and a celebrations of one’s unique characteristics, students can become confident in discovering foreign ideas. The “safe space” that an open, collaborative activity creates not only encourages individuals to express themselves freely, it can become an avenue for group comment on both academic content areas and pressing social issues. Within collaborative art forms like dance or theatre, students can work together to create symbolic representation regarding violence or perceived injustices at their school, as well as about science or language arts concepts, without the pressures of verbal confrontation (Hunter, 2008). These effects can be seen across ethnic boundaries as well as academic placement strata.

For example, James Catterall and colleagues with the University of California- Los Angeles’s Imagination Project report that students involved in theatre are more friendly with peers from different racial groups (Catterall, Chapleau, & Iwanaga, 1999). Dance-based programs have been used to
integrate exceptionalities of all types into a school’s social environment by pairing students from general education classrooms with those who more often study within a special education context. In discovering that, across the board, peers from all walks of life can appreciate the same art, share emotional reaction, and contribute equally in a performance setting, it is reported that students learn to take more risk, yet are more informed in their decisions, and demonstrate more positive social interaction with those around them (Wolf & Launi, 1996). Particularly where physical activity is involved, it is suggested that the nuances of social interaction, such as understanding physical boundaries and how to be a responsible member of a moving team, are exercised far beyond what they would be in more individualized environments (McHugh, 1995). In building a mutual respect for one another, members of a learning community become invested in the success of those around them. Students involved with the arts empathize with and assist their classmates in learning, enhancing group learning.

Indeed, arts education can have positive impact on the social environment. In creating an atmosphere where cultural differences do more to enrich education than stifle it, interaction with and appreciation for others will certainly build with time. Largely, though, it is the power of the arts over individual learners, the cultivation of personal motivations to gain worldly knowledge, which leads to both social improvements and increased performances in academic assessments. The remainder of this section is dedicated to understanding how, in feeling acceptance within one’s community
and developing a strong sense of self by way of arts instruction, the door to knowledge can be blown wide open.

By increasing one’s confidence in working with others and making academic content generally more accessible, arts education boosts perceived competence, contributes to a sense of belonging to a particular community, and plants the roots for the development of personal identity (Arts Education Partnership, 2004). Evidence demonstrates how members of both ethnic communities and groups of stigmatized learners benefit from the arts. In the 1980’s attention was placed on the effects of teaching African American dances, such as the jook, in predominantly African American urban environments. In discussing the way socially significant pedagogy is connected to an art form centered on celebration and socialization, work by Hazzard-Gordon (1985) reminds educators not to ignore the social roots of dance. By giving students a reason to take pride in themselves, by accepting and using to their advantage certain cultural values, they can become further vested in their own education and personal growth. A more recent research report expresses the outcomes of the HEARTS curriculum, an integrative approach to teaching and learning for African-American middle school students (Repress & Lutfi, 2005). Through a module that includes painting, drawing, photography, theatre, music, and dance along with basic skills in reading, writing, and math, significant improvements were had in grade point average, measures of self-esteem, math and reading performance, as well as general attitudes toward school (Repress & Lutfi,
Students also demonstrated a decrease in violent behavior and increased ability to manage emotions. Dance/movement therapy, particularly when combined with talk therapy, has led to improvements for a range of students with emotional difficulty. In affording young souls with an expanded forum to discuss and accept their individualities, school staffs qualitatively report increased self-esteem, self-control, trust for others, and academic performance (Bannon, 1994). Similar effects are noted in the use of dramatic role-play, where scripted scene study can be used to relate to colleagues as well as boost communication skills and understand language (Dinapoli, 2009).

So it seems from the examples above, those arts in which movement and group dynamics are key components may have a particularly dramatic effect on a person’s social identity. Occasionally, specific choreography or script may guide a student to an intended outcome. Intrinsic to the arts however, in addition to practicing within an imposed context is a focus on improvisation and personal choice. Whether moving freely to a musical selection, allowing a spontaneous hand to apply paint to canvas, or shuffling fellow artists around a space in exploration of the meaning of orientation in space, the arts supply endless opportunities for the individual to exercise his or her free will. Given that meta-analysis demonstrates improvements in behavioral conduct when choice making is used as an intervention with troubled students (Shogren, Faggella-Luby, Bae, & Wehmeyer, 2004), we begin to understand how quality arts education programs might serve as a proactive, positive behavioral intervention. In that
choice-making is a large part of an individual’s creative process, and process should be combined with product in assessing artistic work, growth over time in content understanding and informed originality demonstrated in one’s work can allow educators to make much more informed decisions about student learning than merely assessing the product alone. When students have their hard work recognized, perhaps their motivation to press ahead will be enhanced (Lindstrom, 2006).

Understanding the arts as a constant process of experimentation and assessment, active practice as a place to refine technique and safely forge new ground, those who study the arts are able to participate in generating performance feedback. Not merely sitting around waiting for graded papers and tests, students of art instantly absorb the fruits of their labor – or lack thereof. In that the immediate feedback about one’s performance and progress has been shown to increase student motivation (Elliott, Busse, & Shapiro, 1999), artistic endeavor not only serves similar purposes as numerically-driven assessments of traditional classwork but personalizes the end product so that the artist takes ownership of his or her successes and failures. It is further suggested that posting progress in a public fashion, as well as attaching group contingencies to the rewards of hard work, can further motivate students to improve (Elliott, et al, 1999). Consider, then, the potential impact of presenting a collaborative dance piece or dramatic scene. The success of the prepared work depends on the effort exerted by everyone involved, and the presence or absence of student
engagement will influence audience reactions. Potential outcomes, again, suggest that the arts can profoundly motivate students toward academic achievement.

Choice making, the ability to regulate one’s emotions, and ownership of process and product are integral parts of all art forms. Work ethic, teamwork, and self-discipline are key in combating the learned helplessness sometimes observed in struggling students. Within the arts, effects from creative efforts can be enhanced through the process of conversational assessment or journaling, and research increasingly reports a transfer of the motivations gained in arts education to other academic disciplines (Jensen, 2001, Catterall, 2004). As important as the connections made across the curriculum and using the arts to support multi-modal learning to support a diverse population, is the ability for students who study the arts to recognize their ability to succeed in some capacity. As students become comfortable with their role in a community and find ways to demonstrate their learning in the absence of linguistic or cultural impediment, successes found through artistic exploration foster thoughts that “I can” and encourage the individual to pursue other academic endeavors with the same gusto (Catterall, 2004).

Traditionally, arts have been accepted into school curriculum on the basis of their direct teaching of cultural values (Bresler, 1995). By increasing sense of self and building an appreciation for the cultures of others, a positive, multimodal learning environment can be established. Insofar as the arts support an
educational institution's primary goals they may be included in instruction to some degree. But there exists evidence to support that the underlying behavioral and cognitive effects of the arts may transfer to other subject areas causing both confidence and cognitive capacity to increase. While the arts can be used to teach content, about the art or in relation to other subject matter, their role in shaping sense of self and providing auto-feedback about growth can impact the entire learning experience.

With an understanding of how arts instruction facilitates self-esteem, makes education accessible for a diverse group, and affords opportunities for choice-making and other components that increase motivation for learning, it is apparent that the desire to learn can be increased. Particularly considering arguments that motivation and self-efficacy can transfer to other academic areas (Catterall, 2004), it is necessary to discover how increasing the intelligences fostered by the arts effect performance in other developmental areas. Using the arts can be transformative to the individual in a way facilitates the success of at-risk learners in the general education classroom, but the institutionalization of high-quality art brings benefits even for the typical learner. In a study of young adults, participating in dance/movement therapy exercises designed to increase self-awareness and reduce tension prior to traditional performance evaluations is demonstrated to significantly reduce test anxiety (Erwin-Grabner, Goodill, Hill, & Von Neida, 1999). These effects appear to be heightened when therapy sessions occur in group settings, allowing social support and enjoyably safe
interaction with others to enhance the relaxation experience. While all art forms create opportunities for self-expression and a management of emotions (Jensen, 2001, Respress & Lutfi, 2005), the physicality of dance activities may hold impressively profound effects in proactively enhancing an individual's quality of life. By getting oxygen and dopamine to the brain through physical activity, positive feelings arise and mood stabilizes (Jensen, 2001).

In the next section I will discuss more in detail the cognitive properties of participation in the arts, but it is important in fully understanding how the arts influence behavior and self-concept to consider the many in which being physical promotes positive self-identity. Clearly physical interaction with others in the organized fashion afforded by dance, drama, and even more traditional physical education can enhance interpersonal skills and build confidence (Hunter, 2008, Jensen, 2001, McHugh, 1995). Additionally, and of increased interest in enhancing an individual's quality of life, are the general effects on health experienced while exercising. Dance programs can be taught in conjunction with physical education and health development programs as both a preventative measure in combating diseases such as obesity as well as a way to address the low self-esteem often associated with looking a certain way. Rather than developing segregated health education programs, discussing with students the way in which dance and exercise promote strength, flexibility, and fitness more generally can combine with the emotional and behavioral effects of dance's
artistic capacities to proactively encourage students to treat their bodies with respect.

The arts – particularly those involving active physical engagement – are undoubtedly an avenue through which self-confidence and social acceptance can be established. In using the symbolic nature of the arts to support acquisition of academic content, explore emotion, and build social competencies, engagement in the entire learning process can be enhanced. When included in the curriculum as a standard area of instruction, the arts can boost learning in just the proactive fashion demonstrated effective and socially appropriate. Past purely cultural appreciation, music, dance, drama, and the visual arts can motivate students academically and promote both emotional and physical health. By learning in and through the arts, the affective components of learning are certainly enhanced. Interestingly, brain research demonstrates the innate connection between emotional processing and the cognitive functions utilized when processing information (Jensen, 2001, Kane & Engle, 2002, Koelsch, 2009). While helpful to have developed an understanding of how the arts support ones emotional aptitude and ability to cope with the complexities of school, the following section focuses on the specific cognitive effects of experiencing the arts and how arts instruction directly influences academic performance outcome measures.
Cognition, Academic Achievement, and the Arts

Ask any teacher, and he or she will probably tell you that a motivated student is a more attentive student. In the act of paying attention, individuals are activating areas of the brain responsible for both attentiveness and working memory (Kane & Engle, 2002). By activating these cortical areas on a regular basis it could potentially be hypothesized that certain cognitive functions may in effect become more efficient, therefore increasing ability to integrate information. Music and other arts activate brain regions responsible for emotional processing, language, attention and memory, and even our stress and immune responses (Jensen, 2001). By activating these areas often and in simultaneous fashion, overall cortical communication is increased. While learning how to play an instrument or about music theory will likely have greater effects that listening alone, it is interesting to note the existence of mirror neurons in the brain, which allow a listener to reap many of the same executive function benefits of the performer (Jensen, 2001, Koelsch, 2009). Dance integrates the experience of music listening, and occasionally music making, with the practice of exercise. In addition to the established understanding of how dance focuses students and integrates social and emotional processes with symbolic thematic representations, it has been show that frequent aerobic exercise enhances attention and cognitive flexibility (Masley, Roetzheim, & Gualtieri, 2009). Exercising is also shown to reduce reaction time in boys as young as 7 years old (Ellemerberg & St Louis Deschenes, 2009), and measures of response inhibition
on both motor and no-motor tasks seem to benefit from physical activity (Joyce, Graydon, McMorris, & Devranche, 2009). Some suggest that exercise has more of an effect on long-term memory than measures of short-term processing (Coles & Tomporowski, 2007), but certainly an efficient consolidation of information into long-term storage can be considered imperative for real learning to take place. Interestingly, coordinative exercise is shown to have increased effect on an adolescent’s attention than physical tasks where bi-lateral coordination was not specifically required (Budde, Voelcker-Rehage, & Pietra-Kendziorra, 2008).

Dance assimilates these effects of exercise with the regularity of musical beat. Not only can practiced, planned movement improve motor abilities in those planned tasks as well as in free, voluntary, movements (Dishman, Berthound, Booth, et al, 2005), but planned movement to a rhythmic sequence has been shown to utilize different brain areas than those used in unplanned or planned but non-rhythmic movement (Brown, Martinez & Parsons, 2005).

Of the four art forms, music and dance pose particular interest to those interested in the cognitive processes involved in learning. Rhythmic movement, whether the finger and facial movements involved in playing the flute or the grander, more aerobic movements in dance, have surely been discovered to serve as much more than mnemonic device or place to work out aggressive emotions. Improvements in working memory similar to those discussed above have been linked to the achievement of adolescents in English, math, and science (St Clair-Thompson & Gathercole, 2006). Physical fitness has been
linked with higher rates in reading, math and overall academic success in elementary school students, and high fitness levels have been linked to higher standardized test scores and greater academic gains across developmental periods (Castelli, Hillman, Buck & Erwin, 2007). Music’s inherent relationship to math most certainly impacts mathematics achievement, effects which are noted across socioeconomic status levels (Catterall, Chapleau, & Iwanaga, 1999).

Further, high involvement with arts is connected with a 10-20% increase in the likelihood a student will receive high marks in English and score in the top 2 quartiles on standardized tests (Catterall, Chapleau, & Iwanaga, 1999). The arts seemingly play an important role in integrating the human experience and proactively addressing the needs of the alternative learner. More importantly, they focus students and teach a dedicated work ethic. Even as students with whom traditional teaching methods prove effective experience art, cognitive benefits can potentially be reaped as students are challenged to think in new ways. There is no downside to studying the arts, and countless upsides. Understanding young minds to be more plastic than more developed ones, it makes most sense to implement standards-based arts programming as early as kindergarten or even preschool (Ellemberg & St-Louis-Deschanes, 2009, Hanggi, Koenke, Bezzola & Jancke, 2009, Jensen, 2001, Vaughn, 2000). This way, children with low working memory or whom are predisposed to behavior or attention problems can have their needs addressed early – reducing risk for failure in school.
Institutionalization

When engaged with the arts, schema broaden while in a heightened cognitive state. Therefore information can potentially be accessed more readily when it is needed. They can be used to teach basics like cooperative skills, or be a way to build cultural tolerance and understanding. Through artistic investigation, students can learn specific subject matter as well as become invested in their ability to demonstrate knowledge more generally. Positive outcomes on developmental and sociological variables of education are likely. Clearly, responsible use of all four art forms supports the needs of the special education population served in the general education classroom as well as boosts over-all cognitive and social readiness for learning of any student enrolled at any level of education. Perhaps by institutionalizing the arts as teaching and learning modalities, educators can proactively address topics that come up at various points in a student’s growth. Integrating arts learning more effectively across the K-12 system can support other interventions in boosting overall academic performance.

In early education, the arts reduce risk by teaching learners to take pride in their work, opening up new avenues of communication in the interest of those with language or other barriers to learning in the general education setting, and improve focus by reaching students on motivational and cognitive levels (Abril, 2006, Castelli, Hillman, Buck & Erwin, 2007, Fiske, 1999). By proactively establishing bias-free hierarchies within multimodal learning environments,
students gain the social and cognitive skills needed to sustain a sufficient academic career. Understanding other proactive interventions to have a lasting impact when implemented as early as possible (Hieneman, Dunlap & Kincaid, 2005), it follows that the gains made through an education in the arts might hold an increased importance in the primary grades as well. Should each of the artistic disciplines be given a role in the general education classroom, a range of developmental benchmarks could be explored.

Even though they are applicable in every classroom, each population must make choices about how the arts will best supplement its educational plan. Music may be explored for its association to math, its cultural context, or to stimulate emotion and attention. Dance is associated with an abundance of physical, cognitive, and affective domains. Theatre may be best used to teach social skills by one population, or as a way to bring history alive for another. The visual arts can be an exploration of applied concepts, as well it can train a person’s fine motor skills or the simple ability to sit still. Early development of an identity within the learning community and supplementing academic and cognitive interventions open the doors for more growth down the road. By diversifying instruction to ensure early success, later success can be supported. Of added interest in boosting future performance is evidence that the outcomes of arts experience co-varies with amount of time invested in the art. Across socioeconomic strata, students who begin studying arts like music and drama earlier make more pronounced gains in math and feelings of motivation and
tolerance (Catterall, Chapleau, & Iwanaga, 1999). Experienced ballerinas have been found to have different grey-matter to white-matter ratios in the brain than inexperienced dancers, and it is postulated that consistent activation of certain brain areas during dance actually consolidates information more efficiently (Hanggi, Koeneke, Bezzola, & Jancke, 2010). For the cognitive effects that grow exponentially over time and the respect for social etiquettes that clear social hierarchies highlight, high quality art instruction should be woven into the general education classroom. Resilience in the primary grades and potential to sustain academic success is then increased across the board.

As students identify their own educational paths, certain arts and the intelligences they enhance may become more or less salient. Choices about what to include and how may be influenced by innate talent or future aspirations, and each art form may take on a different role in each individual curriculum. Nonetheless, artistic applications of subject matter as well as allowing for time dedicated to the advancement of the art form itself, remain important to sustaining a culturally sensitive, multimodal learning environment. At every level of development, the arts can be used to benefit the learner and the learning group, and should be an institutional staple in the general education curriculum.

Making multi-expressive communication of ideas common practice in the classroom increases resilience to the various challenges that a group of students will likely encounter. Further considering the needs of alternative learners, it is important to note where the arts play a role in supplementing the special needs
of particular groups. Combining movement with talk therapy may be more effective for emotionally disturbed students (Bannon, 1994). Dance has been shown to increase on-task behavior in students with Autism (Hartshorn, Olds, Field, et al, 2002). Drawing can become a creative or emotional outlet for students who have trouble communicating verbally (Jensen, 2001). Theatre tasks can also be linked in with the development of emotional aptitude (DiNapoli, 2009, Jensen, 2001), and it is reported that experience in music can raise the standardized math scores of students with behavioral disorders (Vaughn, 2000).

General education implement a solid foundation in the arts, and special education services need also be designed with the whole person, and the different modalities of idea exchange, in mind. Understanding the arts to define the learning environment through hierarchies of mastery, it follows that the role of quality arts-instruction throughout the institution should be clearly defined across educational tiers.

Unfortunately, there is currently not enough information to specifically outline the main purposes arts education can serve for each population. What is known is that infusing additional learning modalities to the different facets of knowledge explored in school can supplement social and academic development in profound ways (Abril, 2006, Fiske, 1999, Jensen, 2001). Standards-based instruction where students are held to high performance standards and encouraged to reflect on their experiences can be transforming but hard to maintain without clear, consistent indications of improvement. The amount each
particular art form is explored, and direction lessons are geared, will vary according to the cultural and developmental needs of the population. But from the above collection of examples is it clear that an informed approach to arts learning enhances student performance on a variety of levels and begs inclusion as a scholarly discipline.

So how to ensure each student and group are placed on the right track? Using the emphasis the arts place on both product and process as a cue, best-practice art instruction will highlight the existence of small change over time by rewarding a dedicated process with eventual growth. In measuring change on an array of outcome variables, from displays of creativity, to language and communications skill, to on-task behavior, during a variety of relevant tasks, students and educators can make note of fluctuations in performance. Just as instruction should be multi-faceted, so assessment should not test knowledge acquisition through limited modalities.

Whereupon students experience the high-quality arts education entitled to them, culturally and developmentally at-risk learners have information made more accessible to them. The institutionalization of arts instruction and hierarchical structures it thrives, as well as an absorption of philosophies that value both the product and process of knowledge, can ensure that non-biased learning is scaffolded appropriately to meet local needs. It is possible to integrate the arts in a way that accomplishes what applied science has now found effective in producing more successful learners. Despite this possibility,
and the automatic integration of the social and cognitive components of learning that scholarly arts learning establishes, arts education remains limited in reputation and practice.

**Summarizing Arts Education and Understanding its Limitations**

Some of the nation’s elite have taken notice of the necessities of arts learning and are taking steps to ensure access and diversify the assessment of modality-specific variables, but there still exists a large gap in arts achievement across socioeconomic and geographic demographics (Arts Education Partnership, 2004). Rates of participation in arts activities have dropped in the last decade, and instruction offered is clearly limited to music and the visual arts, with so little information about the prevalence or outcomes of dance and theatre available. The arts are capable of improving the academic performance of young children, students needing remedial instruction, and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, but the populations that can benefit the most from this type of learning continue to experience cutbacks in the curriculum (Arts Education Partnership, 2010). As has been discussed, even those students with access to some type of education in the arts may not be fully experiencing them as a scholarly discipline. There is no way to attribute increases in behavior problems to the decline in available arts learning, the problem is far too complex. But it is apparent in the discoveries of applied science that the opportunities presented to students during high-quality arts instruction are a mistake to overlook.
By integrating the arts as a scholarly discipline in the general education classroom, learning modalities are certainly multiplied and information is made accessible through several forms of communication. By acknowledging the value that different forms of expression have within a society, students can gain respect for knowledge and for each other. Establishing hierarchies of learning and purposefully exploring what it means to achieve mastery allows students to shine in their area of strength and conveys that education is universal. Everyone must always strive for something; we all must give of ourselves to improve overall operations. In finding each person in a community a positive role to play, worth is validated and self-esteem increased. As topics of exploration are chosen to either support learning in other subject areas or highlight the beauty of diversity, students who learn and communicate differently can be more easily absorbed into the typical learning environment.

Applied science demonstrates how vital a positive sense of self and supportive learning environment can be in transforming the performance of at-risk students. Absolutely, choosing stimuli for arts lessons with regard to student background and recognizing the modality through which each child best expresses himself can build the culturally sensitive environment that leads to success. But exploring relevant information in a multi-modal fashion is only a jumping off point for arts-based learning. The arts innately allow students to respond to stimuli in a personal way; open-ended lines of investigation and activities that reinforce informed, original choices convey to students that there
can be several solutions to a problem and their own creativity can be used to form a solution. With models of quality work as a guide, students find their own baseline performance and continually improve in individual ways. And, as is exemplified by positive behavior interventions, making choices about one’s education boosts investment in the learning process. Further, high-quality arts instruction places dual focus on both the product and process of work. As a result, students learn the importance of improvement over time. When the hard work is put in throughout the learning process, point-in-time assessments are integrated as a part of knowledge progression. This can potentially reduce assessment anxiety and increase accuracy as teachers glean information. And, of course, illustrates for students the outcome of their labors. Borrowing from the principles of preferred intervention techniques, keeping students apprised of progress and making the assessment process conversational, rather than judgmental, boosts the motivations that lead to academic success.

Appreciating different communication styles, providing mnemonic devices, and exploring student backgrounds can of course improve relevance of and access to information. The arts allow students to be more involved with their own progress, as well as find value in the work of others. For supporting the culturally or developmentally diverse group, the time-tested process of true arts learning may increase engagement in the social and academic environment. The informed educator chooses a starting point based on student need, but the process of art-making then expands on the chosen curriculum. Students must
simultaneously exercise content knowledge while dealing with the abstractions of feeling and imagery. Emotions are stimulated while, in many cases, cognitive activity is also increased. Learning in and through the arts encourages whole-brain, whole-body, whole-person learning. This, for ANY student, can result in improved motivations for and outputs of learning. For this reason, arts should hold a place in every general education classroom. But in considering the expanded needs of at-risk learners, simply turning the typical learning environment into a multi-modal knowledge laboratory is not enough.

Implementing arts learning across the institution allows for more targeted interventions, ensures access to students with severe special education needs, and establishes competencies through which students in different academic and social strata can collaborate. By clearly defining the role the arts play in scholarly conversation and keeping high-quality instruction as a constant in the curriculum, schools can proactively intervene with populations that are traditionally seen as having a lower capacity to learn and socialize.

Why then, if they build academically relevant skills and increase overall capacity to learn, are the arts not more fully embraced by educators wanting to provide the most comprehensive, uplifting learning experience possible? Misunderstandings about what an education in the arts looks like continue to persist, and where instruction is present at all it may lack scholarly respect by being kept out of the home classroom and denied a comprehensive, standards-based approach. Often times, specialist teachers can be brought in to implement
arts programming. Unfortunately, not only is their pedagogical knowledge limited to short blocks of instructional time and often unrelated to other academic investigations, the funding to employ these specialists may not be sustainable and they end up leaving the practice for different jobs with higher pay and more consistent work (Gardner, 2010). In response to this, and the overwhelming evidence that the arts must be presented as an equally valid form of expression and investigation to other fundamental subjects, relying on specialist teachers may not be the best route to ensuring students receive transformable artistic experiences. Clearly, it is the integration of purposeful creative activity into the general education environment that leads to the complex outcomes described above.

Instructors in schools across the socioeconomic spectrum are encouraged to bring the arts into the home classroom and teach testable skills, at least in part, through artistic exploration (Mishook & Kornhaber, 2006). But many teachers lack the content knowledge to appropriately weave strong arts-based learning in with testable content (Brewer, 2003). And while there are positive opinions of arts education, some teachers are too bogged down in meeting needs for standardized assessments to feel like they are capable of fitting anything “extra” into their classroom. Unless a way to boost teacher knowledge in making academic connections during arts instruction is found, the arts will be no match for the quantitatively driven culture engrossing our nation’s school (Duffy & Friend, 2003). Some suggest university partnerships will be key in
improving pre- and in-service teacher training (Duffy & Friend, 2003). Teachers need more experience with both the pedagogical and technical skills utilized in teaching the arts, and few would argue that better pre-service training or professional development meetings would do any harm. But of course the arts are about activation, about finding the key to unlock learning but establishing your own path to the open door. In some cases, non-profit organizations can help schools to establish artist-in-residency programs, where a teaching artist instructs academically relevant coursework in a predetermined medium with the goal of passing on the materials and pedagogical knowledge of arts instruction to the general education teacher (Arts Education Partnership, 2004). In a collaborative approach to teaching and learning, specific strategies and vocabulary can be modeled for the classroom teacher who will then ultimately absorb teaching art into their own repertoire. By focusing on artistic professional development, allowing instruction to unfold over time in a supportive environment, and clearly defining the roles of the individuals in the classroom teachers can build the necessary skills for arts-based instruction (McKean, 2001). Classroom teachers must be able to demonstrate principles of art including commitment, focus, and appreciation for technique vocabulary and content. They need the resources to re-enact the learning activities offered by the arts professional. Certainly, a large draw for the arts is they should not involve too many extrinsically stimulating items – true creation comes from within the self. When artistic professionals enter the school environment with a
sensitivity to the needs of that community and are able to establish a working partnership with other teaching professionals, arts education programs can be effective.

Unfortunately, although research is beginning to define the type of instruction and collaboration necessary for fully realizing the transformative power of arts education, lack of teacher training as well as limitations in the understandings about art and cognition prevents the widespread establishment of strong professional development in the arts. Without concrete evidence that the arts make significant changes in learning behavior – socially or cognitively – it will be difficult to define for the data-driven just what expected outcome results from having arts firmly in the educational repertory. In a school culture that thrives on standardized measures, merely qualitative accounts of knowledge and teacher attitudes about instruction, a la Chen-Haftek’s (2007) report on the Sounds of Silk Project, won’t be enough to convince policy makers to place higher emphases on the arts.

Quantitative evidence about the way the arts affect behavior in the general education environment is nearly non-existent. While preliminary study with functional magnetic imaging technology reveals that music, for example, does increase cortical activity and arouse emotional centers, the freshness of this area of investigation leaves many unanswered questions. More is known about the link between music and cognition than any of the other art forms, and it remains uncertain the amount of exposure needed to begin to alter emotional processing
or executive function. Some philosophers hope that preliminary evidence will spark both further investigation as well as a recognition that the arts truly have a fundamental impact on humans existence (Hanna, 2007). But until more concrete evidence is discovered, understanding the full impact of study within the arts will remain difficult.

**Conclusion**

When it is unclear how certain skills and functions are activated and under what conditions, it can be tough to determine how exactly to individualize instruction and assess the progress of varied learners. But simply because they take more time or are more difficult to understand than the other subjects, does not mean they are not important to teach. Not only do all students benefit from artistic learning, but also some will discover gifts within an artistic discipline just as others may be demonstrate gifts in mathematics or writing composition. All students, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnic community, or academic label, should have opportunities in the arts opened to them. Admittedly, when students with different levels of innate talent embark on journeys in which they interpret stimuli in a personal way, it is difficult to judge the quality of one student’s work over another. Time must be spent valuing both the process and the product of experience in the arts. Indeed, what holds back the arts as an academic discipline is that general education teachers lack the pedagogical knowledge to reflect on process in a meaningful way and may not have the time.
to spend properly analyzing student’s work when testing pressures are mounting (Lindstrom, 2006).

The literature presented in this paper overwhelmingly suggest that arts education will be integral in improving the state of education for the diverse students grouping in schools across America. And yet its concrete support is lacking and teacher attitudes about its necessity are mixed. But, when mindful implementation of the educational standards meets multimodal instruction in a world built on taking inspiration from exemplary models in order to better one’s own work, each of the suggested outcomes of quality arts education can be achieved. Exemplary models- be they artistic masters, mathematical geniuses, or simply learning enthusiast – are key in giving students something to strive for. It is suggested that the idea of being a model citizen, and investing in a cause long-term rather than searching for dramatic, immediate results, are the qualities that can not only make students resilient to life’s challenges but give entire educational organizations the perspective necessary to make meaningful changes that will improve conditions in the long-term (Harding 2010).

Establishing hierarchies, assessing each person’s work in its own right and as it relates to a whole, and actively participating in the learning community serve to create a conversational culture where growth occurs free from judgment. The arts teach those that work with them to strive for best person and best society, and in that regard could be just the thing to re-energize a nation seemingly lost in a quest for undefined change.
Indeed, improving pre- and in-service teacher training for educators will be an important step in utilizing the educational capacity of art. Not only do general education teachers need perspective on integrating different learning modalities into their classrooms, but the arts as academically-relevant therapies must also be explored and administrators must adopt arts learning across institutional tiers. Unfortunately, lack of funding prevents informed instruction and proper supplies from entering classrooms. Further, these monetary limitations and difficulty in quantifying the outcomes of arts learning leave the research pool largely empty. To increase funding, policy makers need more evidence of the benefits arts learning offers. Hopefully, as suggestive qualitative evidence in compiled, a better understanding of the type of research needed will arise. Separate research efforts must be designed to track changes in student behavior, and any differences that occur within a community when an integrated, quality arts program is introduced as compared with behavioral outcomes of less-comprehensive approaches. More evidence can be collected on cultural tolerances following targeted lessons, social skills gained and the effects of strong hierarchies, and the motivational and academic outcomes of assessing via process and product. Psychological and neurological research might add to understandings about specific cognitive gains, particularly when engaged with dance or music. Educators and developmental psychologists must continue to specifically identify benchmarks of creativity and how various communication modalities impact ability to express knowledge. There is much to know about
this very complex area of development and learning, but patiently targeting particular outcomes and comparing high-quality instruction with other arts programs can provide increased understanding. With more concrete evidence, perhaps, more money can be allotted to both research and teacher training.

The arts foster a different type of intelligence than other core academic subjects, which may have led to its decline within school walls. But, as the evidence in this paper suggests, defining academic potential and supporting a diverse group of learners cannot be done through rote, quantifiable assessment. Particularly for increasing access to information and including special education students in the school community, the arts might be found to be as or more effective than some the methods derived from applied science. The arts foster a positive, open environment that encourages the expansion of vocabulary and academic dialogue. Moving, depicting, and emoting solidify knowledge in a way unparalleled by more traditional instruction. And while many useful, necessary interventions have arisen to support the at-risk learner, more responsible use of what have always been fundamentals in American education may streamline the complex array of teaching strategies educators are responsible to implement in a way that profoundly boosts the academic success of a variety of learners.
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