



Art Programs in Public Schools: Why They Matter

By Preston Saunders

Creativity is the cornerstone of what makes us all human. A continued education in art and expression is vital for people of all ages, as it encourages innovation and the willingness to form independent thought. The way we interpret visual and fine arts are what distinguishes us from everyone around us. We are all unique and not unique simultaneously, as people are merely different combinations of shared skills, ideas, and human experiences. Therefore, our art is one of the only areas in which we can claim to be completely ourselves, and we need to protect its importance at home and in educational environments.

The arts give us many opportunities to share experiences and gain literacy in forms of communication other than the spoken word. Programs that teach people of all ages to express themselves through the visual and fine arts (including drawing, painting, playing an instrument, dancing, photography, and many other forms of expression) are what teach us to think analytically and interpret what artwork says about a time period, culture, event, or other similar idea. In a materialistic society like ours, being able to understand visual culture and how it has developed over time is important in order to navigate modern fashion trends and advertising. Specifically in schools, we should maintain art programs and keep students thinking creatively for different, more personal reasons. Socialization and settings where creative collaboration is encouraged promote the ability to work with others and develop the independent thinking skills that many higher educational facilities and workplaces value. Art is not only a technical skill where form and mathematics are observed in creating a product; art is also necessary for mental growth. The ability to comprehend aesthetics and human difference is part of this growth. Art also develops the senses, leading to massively increased perception and memory in young children. In order for children to develop motor skills like hand-eye coordination and developing controlled hand muscles, drawing or painting with a pencil or brush

is essential.

However, the arts are undervalued in society. College admissions do not place as much academic weight on success in visual and fine arts, typically considered “extracurriculars”, as opposed to success in math or english, as art is not seen necessary to educational development. Adults devalue artists by refusing to pay them for their work, and afterward insisting that, because they do not make the money they deserve, it is not a viable or important career choice for their children. Thus, many parents turn kids away from actively pursuing art. To remedy this, it is important that art programs become available to working adults. If people are exposed to methods of expression that they were previously not aware of, not able to afford, or not allowed to pursue, it will be easier to convince them of the importance of art in their own education and their child’s education. Art programs in schools also need better funding, as in 2019 most public schools funnel nearly 75% of their allotted money toward sports programs. Without affordable access, students will not be able to learn such important artistic skills.

References

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