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The Importance of Creative Thinking and The Arts in Education

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HONORS PROJECT

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The Importance of Creative Thinking in Education

The education system is founded on the basis of teaching students how to think critically (Richard, 1993). This foundation has fueled the curriculum for decades, and the students are coming out of the system with the knowledge of how to form and analyze ideas critically. However, the students of this generation are not being taught how to creatively think in the schools, which is resulting in a fall of creative communication in the workplace (Gregory Dawes, 2002). Creative thinking contributes to the invention of new ideas, perspectives, concepts, principles, and products in our society. If creativity is to be exemplified later in life by adults, it must be fostered in children first. There are many different forms of creativity, such as creative thinking, creative writing, and creative arts (Richard, 1993). All of these need to be taught and encouraged in children for appropriate communication and expression of these ideas later on in life.

In this study, the researcher surveyed a small sample of students on the nature of their education and their want for more arts education programs in their schools. The purpose was to determine whether students believed they were getting enough education pertaining to creative thinking, and whether it was helping them in any way. According to previous literature on the subject, children are not getting enough creative thinking application in the public education system (Richard, 1993; Tarhan, Bacalni, Dombayci, & Demir, 2011). If children are getting enough education in this area of thinking, it is important to note the significance of these programs as to encourage more programs to be started. Looking at previous literature on the subject sheds light on why there is such an importance on creative thinking in education.

Literature Review

Children need a foundation in writing to communicate ideas, theories, and information with one another. Fundamental writing skills are important to the students, yet they are not being taught to go deeper in their writing (Richard, 1993). Critical thinking calls for a greater analysis in writing, a form of evaluation that is taught only at the highest levels in schools (Richard, 1993). It can be defined as “the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action” (Richard, 1993, page 22). However, critical thinking is also comprised of the element of creativity. Creativity is almost barren and non-existent in the public education system at younger levels of writing because the system believes it is not important to the foundation of writing (Richard 1993). The argument is, however, that creativity is enormously important in the development of writing because it teaches children how to develop and communicate new ideas that will help push critical thinking forward.

Creative thinking in general can be defined as the “interaction among aptitude, process, and environment by which an individual or group produces a perceptible product that is both novel and useful as designed within a social context” (Plucker, Beghetto, and Dow, 2004, page 90). Creativity is important to students because it allows them to engage in divergent thinking in a subjective manner. Since it is a subjective form of thinking, it is important to couple critical thinking with creative thinking to prepare students for life as they go on to become independent individuals who contribute to society (Tarhan, Bacalni, Dombayci, & Demir, 2011). Problem-solving and the need for invention grow over time because of the ever-evolving world. If

creativity is not part of this process, critical thinking will not be able to stand on its own (Runco, 2004). Out of creative thinking comes innovation and reaction, which are both needed in a society that is advancing. If students are only taught to be critical, they will not have the same innovation as students who are taught to think creatively as well as critically (Runco, 2004). Creative thinking will invent ideas, while critical thinking will evaluate ideas. It is imperative that the two forms of thinking be taught to students when their brains are developing in order to instill these processes into their schema (Richard, 1993). Children will develop skills that will carry over into adulthood, changing the future generations by allowing more room for invention and growth.

The curriculum focused solely on critical thinking in the United States is failing. Every year, there are about 1.3 million teenagers who drop out of high school without graduating (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2013). There is a large amount of students whom the United States is not reaching through their education. Research shows that one of the largest factors in students dropping out of school is a frustration or boredom with the classroom material being taught (Convissor, 2010). If the students are receiving the best education they can through the present curriculum, why are the 1.3 million students who are dropping out of school saying it is because of the curriculum? Creative thinking is an aspect simply not being stressed in schools. Art programs are being cut to focus on formal education. However, taking out the curriculum that will round a student and provide students with a different way to learn will continue to lead to a high number of high school drop-outs.

By itself, a curriculum based in critical thinking can be seen as failing some students. Research shows that students who are more creative are underachieving in a system that pushes only critical thinking (Beghetto, 2008; Hee Kim & VanTassel-Baska, 2010). Students who lack an environment that stimulates creativity are being linked to having behavior problems (Hee Kim and VanTassel-Baska, 2010). One study looks at underachievement scores in elementary and high school students compared to the student's level of creativity and reported behavior problems (Hee Kim and VanTassel-Baska, 2010). The students who were categorized as underachievers typically had behavior problems in the classroom, as well as scoring as highly creative on tests. The researchers hypothesize that the reason the students are underachieving is because of the lack of creative stimulation they are experiencing. The study supports the hypothesis that children who are enhanced creatively are more likely to have underachieve in the classroom if there is not an accommodating environment for their creative outlets to be cultivated and expressed.

Another problem with the education system's measure of proficiency is the issue of standardized testing. Standardized testing has often been criticized because of its lack of individuation in the learning process (Beghetto, 2008). The goal of most assessment practices is to measure the individual student's performance compared to other students (Beghetto, 2008). Even if a student has the knowledge needed to advance with their peers, not all students are made to take a standardized test which is based solely on critical thinking. The standardized tests of this era are designed on a limited, narrow-based curriculum that is heavily weighted towards regurgitating information instead of creative problem-solving (Education Digest, 2011).

Research shows that the students who rank as more creative as their peers are underachieving on standardized tests (Beghetto, 2008). This is a design flaw in the education system, not a flaw in the students. They have the potential to know and understand the material, yet are being tested and trained objectively, rather than integrating a systems approach which allows for multiple perspectives to be taught.

Other research indicates an association between creativity and behavior problems in students (Hee Kim & VanTassel-Baska, 2010). Students who are more creative are not receiving the correct balance of critical and creative thinking methods being taught, and are therefore acting out and underachieving. Research shows that curriculum designed to be more creatively stimulating will help creative students decrease any behavior problems displayed in the classroom (Hee Kim & VanTassel-Baska, 2010). The lack of creative thinking in the curriculum is not only limiting potential in students, but it could be hurting some students who learn better through creativity. Every student learns in a different way, each growing up to have a different purpose or career. Instead of teaching the curriculum geared towards one type of student, schools should encourage individuality through allowing for different types of thinking to be taught. It is important to integrate creative thinking into the classroom in order to help students who are struggling while learning under the current curriculum being taught in schools that emphasizes only the critical thinking aspect of learning. If the two forms are integrated together, more students will be able to learn using different learning styles.

A call for the arts needs to be made. Schools are consistently cutting creative arts programs due to budget reasons, yet the creativity these programs support and foster are critical

to the child's development. Students are not becoming well-rounded individuals in a purely academic environment. The arts help students begin to form strategies of expressing themselves, through many different methods. This self-expression is critical to develop because of the role it plays later on in life. Expression of individuality will help them develop their own beliefs, opinions, and ideas as they grow into adulthood. It will also serve to move society forward in understanding one another and expressing oneself in a healthy way.

One researcher found that art programs help to promote social justice in children (Medina, 2009). Students were used to the core curriculum of hierarchical approaches in education. However, the author found that the introduction of the arts promoted the idea of fairness and equality in students. This is because the idea of a critical thinking curriculum is to be as objective as possible. The introduction of the arts programs inspired students to connect the material being learned to their personal lives. Students should be encouraged to think personally about the material so they not only learn facts to help them later on, but skills that will allow them to develop and change social norms and policies. If creative thinking through the arts will encourage an instilling of values which will promote the community, it will change the way the children will think and behave as adults. The author claims that the children will learn through this not to accept the status quo or submit to it through creative thinking. Critical thinking is supposed to help students logically think about ideas or concepts; where it is failing is the personal application to life that comes from creative, hands-on experiences to promote it. The students cannot be expected to use these skills when they have not applied them in creative situations.

The author of the study supports the use of aesthetics in education to connect the observer, or the student, to the experience or perspective that is affecting them (Medina 2009). When this happens, the effects can be explored and the individual is able to evaluate the experience from a personal perspective. This way, each student is bringing a new perspective to the table and coming up with different ideas and evaluations for issues. If students learn to think this way, as adults there will be many more solutions and ideas for improvements because each individual has been taught to evaluate the manner from their own perspective. Medina hopes to use aesthetics in three ways: to promote appreciation, to promote an understanding of how the artwork makes one feel, and to strengthen the relationship between the individual and world surrounding them. This will strengthen an individual's compassion for society, which in turn will promote social justice. The integration of artwork into the education system could change the way children feel about each other and the world around them by opening them up to new perspectives.

The promotion of artwork in schools will not only bring about an awareness of social justice, but it will empower the students to change existing power hierarchies that are hurting the nation (Medina, 2009). The arts programs help students to feel more comfortable and confident in who they are and what they think by allowing them to express their thoughts in creative ways. After being emboldened by this, students will feel as if they can make a change on social progression. This instilment of values will push the country forward by promoting educated citizens who want to be involved in the government as well as the streets to help fellow individuals, states, or nations.

In 2007, only 11% of Californian schools had arts programs, which is similar from state to state (Herbert, 2012). Funding for the arts programs has dwindled significantly due to the failing economy, yet the education system still expects to achieve the same results from their students after taking art out of schools (Herbert, 2012). Schools cannot maintain their academic achievement by getting rid of creative thinking in schools. Whether it be through art, music, or writing, students learn to apply and express themselves into the material they are learning. Funding for the arts is the first thing to be cut in a bad economy, because it is deemed unnecessary for education (Herbert, 2012). Society must get rid of the notion that the students can learn critical thinking without creative thinking, because the two complement each other in such a way as to strengthen the student's understanding of the material as well as the world around them.

Whatever the reasons are that schools are not funding the arts programs, it is not enough to cover the immense gap students will have without the arts. Individuals need to be able to use their creative outlets in order to fully contribute to society. This is because creativity opens the door for invention, innovation, and growth (Richard, 1993). Stifling creativity in children by cutting arts programs in schools will not help children grow into fully developed adults. Creativity is already a part of an individual, and schools must teach children strategies of channeling it in order for a form of healthy self-expression to come out of it. Although critical and academic thinking is important to an individual, creativity and the arts will help students become more well-rounded and contributive to society. If the student sees a problem with a policy, they will feel as though they have the ability to change it. People are more receptive to

change when a detailed solution is brought about (Dawes, 2002). Students will be able to provide this solution after using their creativity skills to invent problem-solving techniques or alternative solutions to the problem. In this way, the reaches of creative thinking will affect society.

There are many other benefits to arts education programs. Students who engage in music study from an early age have greater phonological awareness, which means that the students have the potential for better reading skills early on (Education Digest, 2011). If music helps children begin to understand rhythm and phonetics, they will have an easier time learning how to read and interpret the words. Children who concentrate on a certain form of art or music are also shown to have a better attention span, which allows them to focus on one idea or perspective longer and more intensely (Education Digest, 2011). This is important to a child's education because it impacts how much a student can learn in one class period. If the focus on creative activities was not instilled in a child, then they may not have the same level of an attention span than other children. Another benefit of studying arts in early childhood is the building of the brain to support more neurons for holding more knowledge in long-term memory (Education Digest, 2011). Since the individual engaging in a creative activity uses multiple senses to interpret and store the data and experience, the brain may change the structure of neurons to fit more information into the long-term memory. The importance of this research shows that the benefits of the arts program's to a child's brain structure is reaching above and beyond the system currently in place. If children learn these skills early on, it will make them a better learner later on in school. Some of these research findings hold great implications for the

educational system's future curriculum, however, most of it is not known to the general public. Since the public does not know about the benefits of the arts, they are quick to cut the very programs that allow their child to become a better learner.

There are many promising results of art integration programs in schools. One Chicago program referred to as CAPE showed an improvement in reading and math scores over other district schools that did not implement the program (Education Digest, 2011). The program implemented many arts courses into the curriculum such as music, art, and creative writing classes. Another study that focused on arts programs was in Montgomery County, where three arts-integration focused schools were compared to three control schools which did not have art programs (Education Digest, 2011). The reading and math gap that existed between minorities and low-income students closed significantly, while the control school's gaps widened. This study is another example of how the integration of arts into the education system will help the students in other areas of their learning.

With the example of success from real schools, arts programs must be considered as a significant learning tool for students to broaden and shape their skills to make the better learners. The learning techniques that an art or music class might provide for a child is not the only benefit, however. The arts give students a program that they can enjoy and learn to love learning (Grytting, 2000). So many students admit that they are bored by schoolwork or do not want to participate in learning because of the way lessons are presented (Convissor, 2010). Arts programs give students a break from lectures or note taking and stimulate their minds by getting them to think creatively (Grytting, 2000). Creative problem solving can be a fun way to get

students to think without making them feel as if they are learning new material. These programs can make students look forward to learning, and instill in them a curiosity that will spur them to keep learning outside of their formal education. The success experienced in these programs will also help increase students' self-esteem by providing them an outlet in which they can be free to express ideas and opinions without being wrong. Achievement is available for every student because it is more subjective than other areas of thinking.

Intellectual growth is also a benefit of having arts in the curriculum because the students grow to be more well-rounded individuals (Grytting, 2000). Not only are students learning their basic core curriculum, but they are developing their multiple intelligences that Howard Gardener proposed (Grytting, 2000). For example, spatial learning can be found in art classes that teach a child how to draw one object from different perspectives. Kinesthetic intelligence can be learned through dance or gym classes, where a child learns to work with their own bodies to accomplish tasks. Interpersonal intelligence is often found as developed because of art classes since the students are working together on projects that necessitate group problem-solving (Grytting, 2000). Not only is teamwork supported by these activities, but leadership skills are as well. Creativity is one of the necessary traits of a leader because they must be able to critically think about problems and creatively come up with solutions to help others (Grytting, 2000).

Leadership is present in the arts when students lead themselves or groups in activities that boost their self-esteem at the same time, since there is no failing if the student attempts to do their best. This skill can be taught in other programs, yet it is commonly present in the arts because the students are encouraged to express their thoughts and ideas creatively in their own way. Even if

the children are only “leading” themselves, they can still develop skills based on determination, motivation, and focus as a leader. All of these are examples of the ways art programs help a child develop.

Workplaces are starting to acknowledge the importance of art education as well (Cesarone, 2012; Dawes, 2002). Many employers claim that the art programs help develop good collaboration skills that they need in the workplace, as well as a problem-solving mentality that they look for in potential employees. The employers also brought up the point that the arts grow in a student an appreciation for diversity that is needed in the real world (Cesarone, 2012). With this appreciation, the workplace will be more cohesive and accepting of differences. These points were brought up by employers who were concerned the arts were not being appreciated enough (Cesarone, 2012). It is important to listen to these benefits when thinking about the importance of arts education.

Gaps in the literature occur because of the lack of focus on the student’s thoughts and opinions about creative thinking in the education system. There has not been enough data collected on how students feel about the arts programs and whether or not they perceive them as helpful to their learning process. In order to move forward in the research, the student’s voices must be heard. They will know what they like, and they will know what is helpful. People need to start respecting those opinions in order to fix the number of drop-outs and failing students in the system.

Methodology

Design

The purpose of this study is to focus on the student's voices when it comes to their education curriculum they are currently participating in. The researcher surveyed a sample of students to determine what kinds of arts programs they are engaging in and how the students feel about the programs. Naturally observing the students responses to these questions on paper ensured that there was no manipulation of answers or biases taking place in the survey. The purpose of the study was not to hypothesize about the student's answers, but to simply capture the voice of some local Ohio students about how they feel or felt about the experience with arts programs in the education system.

Participants

Participants from this study were volunteers from a faith-based community program. Overall, there were 30 volunteer participants, ranging in ages from 6 to 18 years old. In total, 18 of the participants were female, while 12 of them were male. A majority of the volunteers, 20 in all, were Caucasian, with 7 being Hispanic, and 3 being African-American. All participants attended public schools in a 50 mile radius of northwest Ohio sometime in the past ten years and were able to provide unbiased answers to the survey.

Procedure

The researcher announced the opportunity for volunteers to participate over social media outlets and community gatherings. After the 30 volunteers agreed to participate by taking a survey, they were escorted to a private room where they could sit and answer a roughly 10 minute survey.

For individuals who were too young or needed help answering the questions, a parent or

guardian was present in the room to help. All participants and their parent or legal guardian signed at the top of their survey to an informed consent that this was to be an anonymous survey used for a study on arts programs in schools. The survey consisted of 4 closed-ended questions, and 4 open-ended questions which focused on their experience in school with the arts. The close-ended questions asked the participants to articulate how many and what kind of programs the individual had been through. The open-ended questions then found how the individual felt about those programs and the impact of the programs on their education. Participants were debriefed after the survey in groups and thanked for participating in the study.

Measures

The demographic information gathered on each individual was gathered on the top of the survey. This information included the individual's age, ethnicity, and gender. The survey did not take names to maintain anonymity. Next, 4 close-ended questions were asked to determine how many arts programs the individual had participated in, what kind they participated in, how many years of school they might have went without participating in an arts program, and what types of courses they preferred as a part of the arts program curriculum. Then the participants were asked to answer 4 open-ended questions in which they could explain their opinions. These included how they felt about the arts programs they participated in, how they felt the programs helped them, how the programs could improve, and if they thought the programs were important to education and why. After collecting the surveys, the opinions of the students could be analyzed and shared concerning how they felt about the implementation of arts programs. The

close-ended answers were organized into percentages and the open-ended questions were categorized together into similar responses to analyze the data for the results.

Results

First the responses were given percentages to the close ended questions. Of the 30 participants, 100% had all participated in an arts program in a public school within the past 10 years. Of the group, 60% had taken more than 5 classes that fall under the arts, while 40% have taken under 5 classes in this area. 80% of the participants claimed they enjoyed their experiences in the arts programs. The most common arts in the schools for this group of participants in sequential order were art, music, dance, and creative writing courses. When compared to demographic data, participants under the age of 10 generally had taken less than 5 arts classes, while any students over the age of 14 had taken over 5 arts classes. Most participants under 10 enjoyed their experiences, with only one not enjoying the experience. Above ten years old, more students agreed that they did not enjoy their experiences, with 5 students in all who did not enjoy the arts courses. Of the 60% of participants who had taken over 5 arts courses, an even 50% of the genders are seen on both sides. However, more females, 75%, enjoyed their experiences in the arts programs, while only 25% of males agreed that they enjoyed their experiences. When ethnicity was compared to the results, it was found that 70% of Caucasians had taken over 5 arts courses, about 42% of Hispanics had taken over 5 arts courses, and only around 33% of African-Americans had taken over 5 arts courses. However, when asked about enjoying the classes, both Hispanics and African-Americans answered a resounding yes, with every minority in the study positively enjoying their experience in the arts. 30% of

Caucasians did not enjoy all of their experiences in their arts classes. These are the results of the close-ended questions asked in the survey.

The results to the open-ended questions were harder to categorize since every participant brought new ideas and opinions to the survey. However, the researcher was able to make categories for each question under which most participants fell. Most participants had enjoyed the arts classes as indicated above in the close-ended question; however the reasons for enjoying the classes were all different. Participants generally liked or disliked a course because of the material taught or the instructor who taught the course. Of the 20% of participants who did not like their arts course(s), most of those did not enjoy the course because of their instructor, coming in of about 14% of participants. Only 1% of participants did not enjoy a course and did not know why they disliked it. There was also a general opinion that many adopted as to how the arts course(s) helped them. 60% of participants said the course helped them learn new ideas, perspectives, and ways of thinking that they could apply to their other schoolwork. 20% of the participants claimed the arts helped them by giving them a break from schoolwork. 10% of the participants had other reasons, such as helping them gain friends, which made the course helpful to them. 10% of participants said that these courses did not help them in any way. In areas of improvement, a large scale of responses simply wanted more courses in the education system. 70% of the participants said that the improvements needed to be made to arts programs was that there needed to be more in the curriculum. 20% of participants cited other improvements, such as being able to integrate people with disabilities into physical arts courses, allowing more open self-expression, or giving students more time in a course to develop their project/assignment.

Out of the participants surveyed, 10% did not care about the arts courses enough to seek improvements or did not want to be a part of arts courses. Finally, when asked about the importance of arts courses in education, another 80% said they were needed in the schools because they helped students grow intellectually and/or as a person. 10% said they were needed so the individual could have more fun in school. Lastly, 10% said arts courses were not needed in education and did not improve a student's learning.

More females than males thought the arts programs were important in education. Also, more females enjoyed the arts courses. However, more males were willing to give improvements that could be made in the arts courses than females, with only 2 females either not liking the arts or contributing an improvement on the survey. Generally, males disliked a course because of the material taught, while most females cited the reason for not liking an art course as the instructor's fault. Moving on to age, most students over the age of 12 were able to cite improvements to the system, or articulate reasons they enjoyed the arts course(s). Students under the age of 10 all claimed the reason why arts courses were important was because they gave students a break or that they were fun. Also, ethnicity was seen as playing a role in the survey answers. Caucasians were the only ethnicity to express that arts were not needed at all in education. Hispanics were among the most likely to give improvements to the system, and African-Americans were most likely to cite reasons of being fun on the survey. These are the results of the open-ended questions asked on the survey.

Discussion

Overall, the survey supports the conclusion that arts courses are needed in the education system. Most young participants want to participate in arts courses and advocate that they are helpful to their learning. Many participants noticed the intellectual and personal growth they experienced because of arts courses. If the students recognize the importance of arts education, then it is important for curriculum coordinators and school boards to recognize the importance of them as well. This survey provides support that the students engaging in school find the courses helpful to their education and would like to see more courses in the future, instead of the path of cutting programs in times of economic downfall.

The survey captured different ages, genders, and ethnicities to compare demographics to one another when analyzing the data. Gender differences were present in the survey, with more females supporting arts programs than males. This may be because females are more fluent and expressive, while males are more closed-off and have trouble articulating feelings (Runco, 2004). Even if males do not support these programs as much, or feel as if they help, these programs should help males in this area to become more open to communication, since it is a necessity in the course. Females will also benefit because they will be more likely to continue to develop skills in this area, and build self-esteem from excelling in these areas.

Age was also an indicator of how well the participant was able to express themselves. Most young children said they enjoyed arts programs and wanted to continue them. This may be a reflection of needing a break from studies, as many quoted, or it may be an internal recognition of the growth the arts is helping them develop. Older participants were able to formally express

their opinions in a more detailed way, with some participants not enjoying arts courses. These participants commonly cited the reason for not enjoying the courses as to not being in their area of interest. For example, one participant, age 15, said he did not enjoy the arts course he took because it was a music class, and he was tone-deaf. His answer shows that he is not opposed to all courses, just those he does not excel in. Still, these courses could help students develop skills in areas where they have none. One participant, age 9, said that she enjoyed art classes because her skills in drawing have improved. Her answer shows that self-esteem and skills can be built in a course if done correctly, even if the child does not excel in that area.

Ethnicity also played a large role in the survey answers. Most minorities realized the need for arts courses, yet received fewer opportunities to participate in them in the education system. This is often a reflection on available resources to different demographic groups. In areas where minorities are receiving less funding, it is still important to introduce students to arts programs to help them build skills and grow as an individual. Many of the minorities in this study enjoyed the arts programs as well, while Caucasian children were more likely to have a percentage who did not like them. This may be because the minorities of this survey have not participated in as many arts courses, or it could be because there were fewer of this demographic to catch a good glimpse of the local population.

Overall, the results support the notion that arts education is important in schools throughout the grades. Children recognize the need for arts programs in their education and support the idea of integrating more of these programs into their curriculum for a better learning experience. Many students brought up the need for more arts programs without prompting when

asked how to improve arts programs. They were open about needing more courses that allow them to expand their minds and learn in a different way, opposed to the present method of focusing more heavily on critical thinking methods in the classroom. If students are asking for more of these courses to be offered, perhaps it is best to allow for at least more electives that a student could choose to engage in. If there were more options and more spaces for elective arts courses, then a student could choose an area of interest to work with. One of the factors why a participant did not enjoy a course was because they were not interested in it, so if they had the choice of more courses, perhaps they could find a course they did benefit from because of their interest in it. The study allowed the researcher to begin to understand a student's want and experience with arts courses in order to further the argument for more arts programs in the education system.

Shortcomings of this study could result from a small sample size. Only 30 participants responded to the volunteer sample, and each participant was from a 50 mile radius of northwest Ohio. All participants also belonged to the same faith-based organization, which could have had an effect on the results. The biases of the researcher were controlled for since the survey was anonymously taken in a separate room from the researcher. Controls could have been compromised by any parents who had helped younger participants answer the survey questions. There was also a small percent of minority ethnicities that were involved in this study, which could have skewed some of the results regarding minority opinions. Overall, the small sample size of a select demographic needs to be expanded upon to learn of results that can be applied to a broader population.

Conclusion

The argument for more arts education programs in schools has been supported by this study. Students need a broader amount of arts courses offered in order to continue to develop new skills and learning tools that help them in other studies. The arts programs will help them couple critical thinking with creative thinking, which in turn offers the student the best experience of learning possible. This study, mixed with the review of previous literature, should help to expand upon the idea that arts courses are recognized by professionals and by students as helpful learning tools which should be integrated more broadly into the curriculum to enhance the learning experience.

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