

Voices in the Arts

Perspectives on the Importance of the Arts in Education



Voices in the Arts



Dear Colleague:

For more than a decade, intense interest in how the arts stimulate learning has engaged researchers. Their efforts show that the study of music, drama, writing, dance and the visual arts helps excite and reinforce learning in subjects beyond the arts, like math, English and science. Yet, as budgets shrink, the arts have been withdrawn from many of our schools and classrooms.

We need to change this. Arts education is not a frill; it is beneficial to every student. The arts help teachers reach students across a broad spectrum of learning styles and raise achievement in at-risk students, young children, underserved populations and students with disabilities.

The arts play a primary role in students' development. They are the cornerstone of emotional, creative and expressive development in young people. I couldn't agree more with Secretary of Education Arne Duncan when he said, "The arts can help students become tenacious, team-oriented problem solvers who are confident and able to think creatively."

Recent findings that link an arts education to brain development and improved memory hold out hope that introducing the arts early will benefit all children. If we also can use the arts to encourage students to stay in school through graduation and do well in their classes, we will have been truly successful.

Of course, the exploration of any art form requires a knowledgeable teacher. Teachers create and maintain successful learning environments and raise student achievement. Through the arts, teachers and mentors can encourage community building and collaborative learning, and help make school a place where students want to learn.

For all of these reasons, the College Board's Trustees approved a set of short- and long-term strategies recommended by the National Task Force on the Arts in Education that will enable the College Board and its more than 5,700 member institutions to take a leadership role in making the arts accessible to all students.

Our goal is to provide an opportunity for young people to engage the arts in ways that draw upon their creativity and contribute to their lifelong learning. With your help, we will reach this goal.

Gaston Caperton
President
The College Board

Voices in the Arts

This booklet brings together voices from artists, arts educators and students. Their work and stories illustrate the important role that the arts can play in preparing students for college and career success. We hope that you find their stories and artwork inspiring, and that you will join us in recognizing the arts as an invaluable component of American education in the 21st century.

The artwork throughout this booklet have been created by AP® Studio Art students, and represent the talent and high level of accomplishment that AP Studio Art students can achieve.

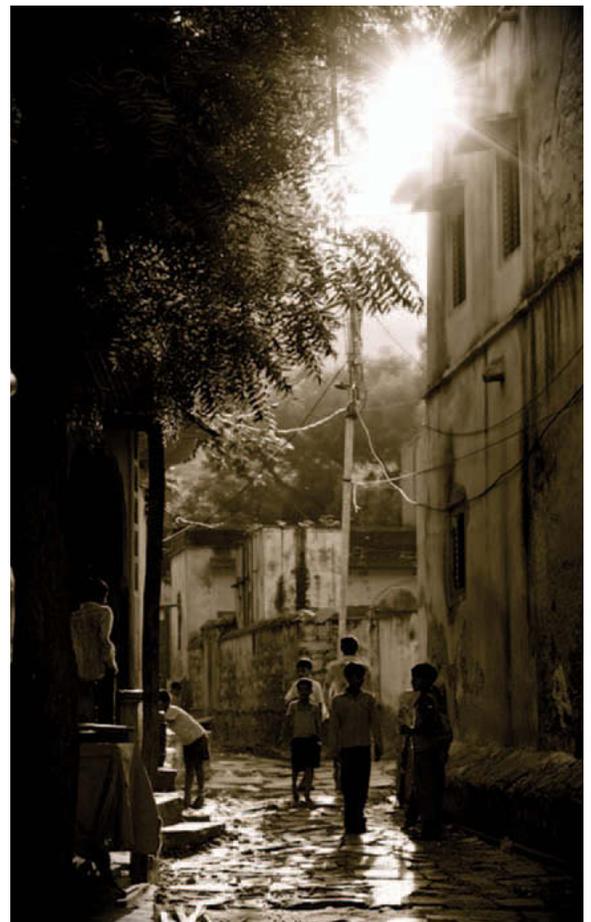
The National Task Force on the Arts in Education

The idea for this booklet was generated in response to the discussions and recommendations of the National Task Force on the Arts in Education (NTFAE) — a committee of leading artists and educators convened to address the opportunities and challenges facing arts education in the United States.

Representing the voices of educators, students and parents across the country, the NTFAE recommended a series of strategies that would enable the College Board and its 5,700 member institutions to take a leadership role in making the arts accessible to every student. These recommendations, which were unanimously approved by the College Board’s Board of Trustees and began to be implemented in 2010, include:

- Reaching underserved student populations
- Promoting student creativity
- Understanding the arts in a global perspective
- Integrating the arts into a greater number of College Board programs
- Engaging a greater number of professional artists in arts education
- Building partnerships and affecting policy at the national, state and local levels

Visit www.collegeboard.com/arts-task-force to read the full set of recommendations and learn more about how the College Board is implementing them.



Indian Summer by Cori Storb, Photography.



I have
of myself for I feel as if I had
I have

I have lost my life. I will never
I have

Thinking Differently: The Arts and School Reform

By Kurt Wootton, Director, Habla: The Center for Language and Culture

There is a clarion call across the nation for urgent school reform. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan asked states to “think differently and creatively,” emphasizing “developing new learning models — new educational approaches — and bringing new energy and ideas to the field of education.” As many essays in this publication indicate, the arts play a crucial role in the lives of young people, particularly as we globally seek creative solutions to poverty, ecological issues, and inequities in education and healthcare.

As we seek to “think differently and creatively,” we can look at how teaching in the arts can help us rethink the way we teach across all subject areas. A pedagogy of the arts embraces several core principles that can play a significant role in changing the very culture of schooling.

- 1. Teaching to the unexpected.** We generally ask students to reach for the expected: memorizing multiplication tables or learning facts and dates. Today we are deploying batteries of standardized tests to measure student achievement. These tests and routine expectations, however, should only be a small part of an education. We need to teach our students how to make their way in the world — how to navigate relationships, bureaucracies and information. In other words, we need to teach students how to make sense of it all. The arts inspire us to interpret what is around us and to create from within. Therefore, what we create is always surprising to the person sitting next to us. Teaching to the unexpected means designing projects that inspire a different response from every student.
- 2. Capturing a student’s growth.** Art colleges ask students to submit portfolios, a collection of products developed over time that best represent a student’s growth and talents. In schools, students often move from class to class, from year to year, with no continuity or reflection. Success is measured by grades and test scores. By developing an authentic body of work across the curriculum, students are able to reflect on their own learning and represent themselves to the world beyond school.

- 3. Developing solutions.** When students engage in an artistic process, they are introduced to a particular problem that doesn’t have a single solution. For instance, when a muralist works in a classroom, he or she asks, “What might we transform this white wall into? What do we want to say? How will we say it?” The students collaboratively take up this “problem” and participate in a process that will explore possible solutions. The teacher does not have the answer because *there is no single solution*. The teacher metaphorically sits side by side with the students, asking questions and coaching them through the artistic process. The arts are some of our most powerful disciplines for imagining what might be possible and for thinking through problems democratically.
- 4. Making learning visible.** Education reformer TheodoreSizer emphasized the importance of what he called “exhibitions” across all subject areas, where a student “must exhibit the products of his learning.” The arts make students visible in front of their peers, teachers and the community. When we view a student’s photograph or painting, when we witness a student on the stage performing, they are no longer invisibly sitting in the back of the classroom. Perhaps the greatest reform we can make in our schools is to foster educational environments where all students are known.

A school with these principles is a school where students are making their education, not just receiving it. A pedagogy of the arts helps us to see how we can change the very foundation of schooling by creating a fertile soil where creativity and imagination flourish in all classrooms.

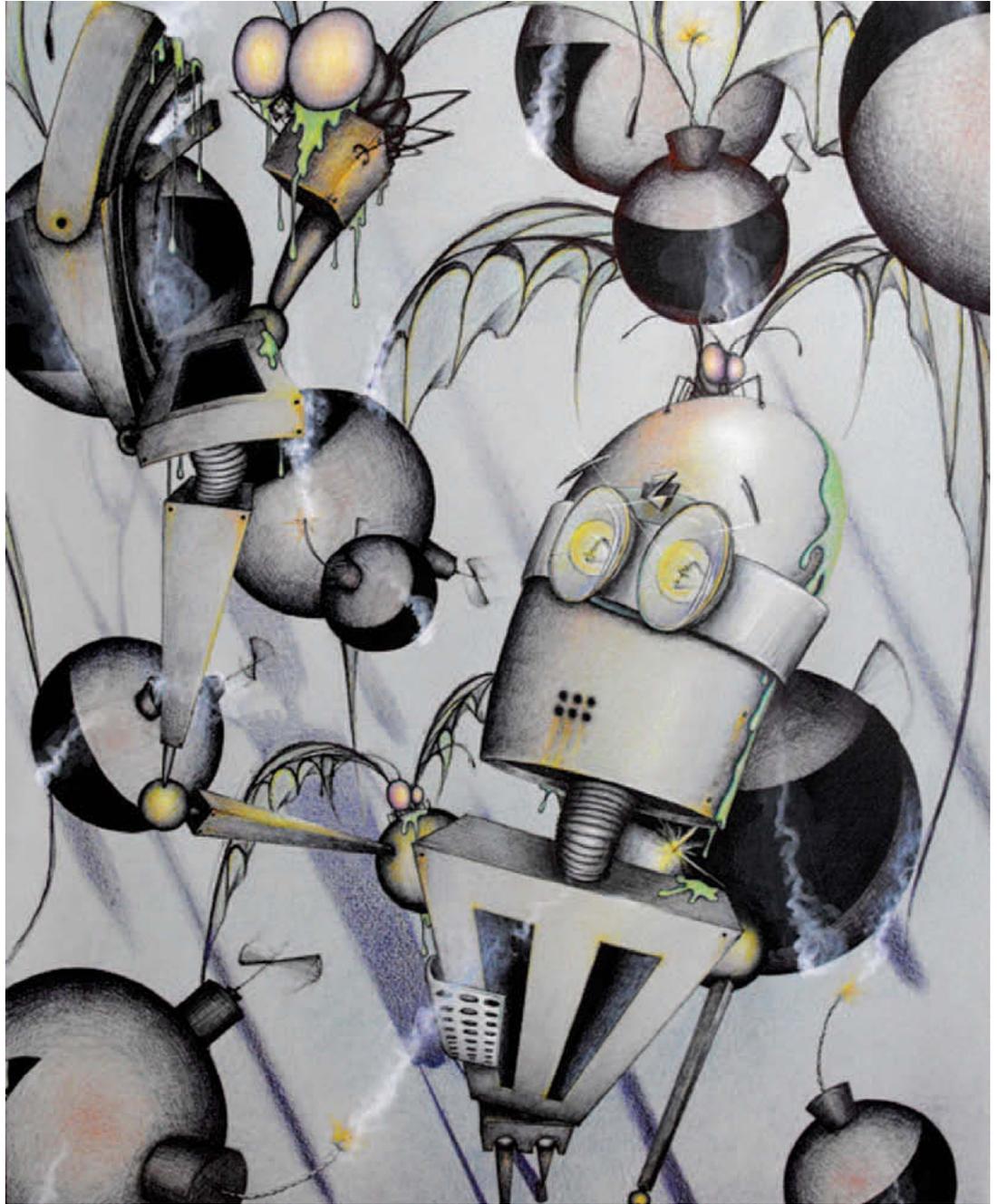
Duncan, A. 2009. *Speech at the 91st Annual Meeting of the Council of Education.*

<http://www2.ed.gov/news/speeches/2009/02/02092009.html>

Sizer, T.R. 1992. *Horace’s School: Redesigning the American High School.* New York: Houghton Mifflin.

“The arts are some of our most powerful disciplines for imagining what might be possible and for thinking through problems democratically.”

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Golem's Debauch by Zac Retz, Pen, colored pencil, and watercolor.

STEAM: A Master Teacher Infuses the Arts into STEM and Creates a Movement

By Donald Pemberton, Director, Lastinger Center for Learning, University of Florida, and James Oliverio, Director, Digital Worlds Institute, University of Florida

First-time visitors to Gloria Merriex's classroom quickly discovered that they were witnessing a gifted maestro at work.

Tall, lean and graceful with a confident countenance, Merriex conducted her fifth-grade math classroom at Duval Elementary Fine Arts Academy in Gainesville, Fla., as if it were a great orchestra. Towering over her young protégés, the master teacher worked from a script that was deeply embedded in her brain but appeared unrehearsed to the casual observer.

With eyes firmly fixed on their teacher, the students were led through a dazzling array of exercises and activities that had no resemblance to those of any other math classroom in the world. Singing, dancing, reciting, writing and constantly moving, Merriex's pupils unraveled the mystery of mathematics.

Merriex, a gifted pedagogue, ingeniously merged music, movement and math into a brilliant mosaic that immersed her students into an exciting new world of learning where the goal was total and absolute mastery of mathematics.

A typical classroom lesson might start with a group sing-along or a hip-hop song Merriex had composed that contained essential math facts and formulas. Next, her students might pantomime geometric symbols, followed by an original dance, also choreographed by Merriex that provided visual representations of math concepts. Merriex, always one step ahead of her students, would quickly change pace, returning the children to their seats to work on their exercises in their journals. Soon, they were up again, writing their math problems on the board and explaining their reasoning and problem solving to the class.

Counterintuitive and unorthodox, Merriex believed in teaching the most complex and demanding mathematics principles first, then slowly and methodically adding new skills and concepts. Every day she circled back to what had been learned and taught since the first day of school, always vigilant for slippage and gaps in learning.

By the time the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) appeared at their doorstep, her students were ready to conquer it. Year in and year out, her classes had some of the highest FCAT math scores in the state — and in the last year in which her students were tested they achieved the greatest math gains of any fifth-grade class in Florida.

In time, word got out about the talented math teacher. Scholars, principals, doctoral students and leaders of philanthropic foundations from around the state and country visited her classroom to see her work.

Suddenly and sadly, it all came to an end when Merriex died last year after a full day of teaching. Stung by grief but deeply determined to preserve the legacy of Gloria Merriex, directors of research institutes, university scholars and doctoral students, professional development specialists, and filmmakers launched an unprecedented effort to capture lessons learned from a master teacher who had infused the arts into mathematics to improve student learning outcomes.

James Oliverio, director of the University of Florida's Digital Worlds Institute, drew inspiration and data from Merriex to launch the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) Learning Network. In *How Teachers Help Failing Students Succeed*, Elizabeth Bondy, professor at the University of Florida, recorded and examined Merriex's strategies, techniques and beliefs. Emily Peterek Bonner, professor at the University of Texas at Houston, documented Merriex's experience in *Gloria's Story: A Journey of Mathematics and Culture* (Hamilton Books, in press). Brittany Fix and Thomasenia Adams, of the University of Florida's Lastinger Center for Learning, produced *Glorious Math*, a supplemental curriculum that includes a workbook, teacher guide and instructional DVDs.

Although fame was never her goal, the release in early 2011 of *Discovering Gloria*, a feature documentary about Merriex's life and success as a teacher, may yet gain the national recognition that she so richly deserved. Directed by Boaz Dvir and funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, *Discovering Gloria* utilizes archived footage and interviews to weave a compelling story of the creative power of a teacher to develop innovative approaches that instilled in her students a love of learning and a mastery of mathematics.

Merriex was not the first or only teacher to infuse the arts into mathematics to propel her students to mastery and high levels of achievement. Indeed, in schools throughout the country and the world, similarly talented and innovative teachers are utilizing highly creative approaches to improve mathematics learning. In this respect, perhaps Merriex's greatest legacy was demonstrating, with verifiable and measurable data, the limitless possibilities of the power of infusing the arts into the STEM areas.

More information about Gloria Merriex and the materials listed above can be found at the steamlearningnetwork.com or lastingercenter.com

"... in schools throughout the country and the world, similarly talented and innovative teachers are utilizing highly creative approaches to improve mathematics learning."

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Concentrate by Peter Hocking Fung, Oil pastel.

A Student Perspective on the Importance of the Arts in Education

Interview by Pamela Paulson, Senior Director of Policy, Perpich Center for Arts Education

As a member of the College Board's Arts Academic Advisory Committee as well as a member of the steering committee for the National Task Force on the Arts in Education, Pamela Paulson has worked on the College Board's arts initiatives for many years. Paulson recently sat down with Sam Ekren, a senior at the Perpich Center for Arts Education focusing in media arts, to get a student's perspective on the importance of the arts in education, how the arts can be applied to other academic areas, and what it's like to be a student at an arts-rich high school.

How have the arts been infused across the curriculum in your school? And how has this impacted your learning?

The arts are integrated into a lot of my classes so I get to use my art in other subjects, like Urban Geography. Instead of having to write a final paper, I was able to do a 20-minute documentary video on the Wal-Mart that moved into Park Rapids, a town near my home. I did a lot of research and many interviews as I created this video. This was a great opportunity for me to learn about a situation that had raised some real concerns, and express my findings through my art form — media arts.

I also have integrated media arts into my English class, Mass Media and Democracy. We were supposed to create informational flyers about a current social issue. I used my photography skills to create the images I wanted to use along with the text. I worked on issues like water conservation and paper versus plastic.

This kind of learning is really important to me because I get to be involved in issues in the community, rather than just learning facts from a book. It allows you to actually do something — then you need to find out the facts so they can support your perspective. In my old high school, the focus was on the textbook — just reading, writing and memorizing. Then you forget the material. When you are using art to learn, it sticks with you because you remember the art you made and that helps you remember other parts of the learning.

How have your arts experiences promoted your creativity and critical thinking?

When you are working in the arts, you have to think more. You can't just come up with something that looks nice — you have to think about things that have meaning and cause you and other people to think. It is about using your creativity to come up with new ideas, not just doing something technically correct. In order to be the best, you have to have good technical skills and good ideas.

I like to connect my art to current issues. And when I (or my peers) do that, other students see that it has meaning. Then they aren't satisfied if their art doesn't have this depth, and they usually go back and make their artwork more meaningful and relevant.

How have professional artists been incorporated into your courses and school experiences?

We have professional artists come to work with us in our classes. Today we are supposed to have a screenwriter come talk with us. We also had a speaker who had just directed his first film. He invited us to come to his opening screening, and when we got there he remembered us — it was great.

It is important to have these kinds of experiences because this is what we are studying, and these are real experiences. I am currently curating a film festival at a museum in town. This kind of experience is important because I get to see the work that goes on behind the scenes in selecting films. It is likely that I will do more filmmaking in college. I will probably do more independent work, rather than the Hollywood-type stuff, but who knows where things will go? I have applied to several different kinds of schools and programs.

Has it been important for you to be in an environment where there are students studying dance, music, theater and visual arts as well as media arts?

I am influenced by having all of the different arts around. I may be most influenced by the visual arts students because photography is similar to the visual work in assignments like photomontage. I also like having the music program here so I can work one-on-one with students to create videos. We did a video poetry assignment together, and since then I have worked with music students several times.

What are some of the advantages you have had by being in an arts-rich school?

The biggest standout for me has been how much more prepared I am for applying to college. Portfolios are such an important part of this process, and I learned so much about how to develop a good portfolio.

Doing a portfolio in photography made it easier for me to find my style. When you lay out all of the photos and you can see everything over time, it seems pretty clear. I saw that I was doing mostly portraiture. And my approach is to have something just a little out of place so that the person seeing it asks, "What are they doing?" These are not standard portraits — it is more of an artistic approach. I could see these photos being in a gallery or in a fashion magazine. I ask myself if the intention is to be about fashion and a product, or is it about making art. I have found that overall, studying the arts can be prepping you for a career even while it gives you a chance to make your artistic statements.

"When you are using art to learn, it sticks with you because you remember the art you made and that helps you remember other parts of learning."



Dance and Theater Engage Students with Diverse Learning Styles

By Anne Green Gilbert, Artistic Director, Creative Dance Center, Kaleidoscope Dance Company and Summer Dance Institute for Teachers

I enter a classroom. The teacher stands at the front of the room delivering a lesson on fractions. I notice Magda sitting quietly, one eye on the teacher and one eye on the paper on which she is doodling. Next to her is Thomas, who is looking everywhere but at the teacher, lolling in his chair, almost falling out of it. Behind Thomas is Johanna, bouncing back and forth, whispering to the two students on either side of her. Three seats back is Alex, who is thrusting forward in his seat, arm raised high, eager to speak even though he doesn't know the answer. These are just four of many different learning styles I observe in this classroom. I am thinking to myself, "Is this teacher connecting with his students? Who is learning here?"

I leave that classroom. I wander down the hallway toward the sound of laughter and eager student voices. I peek into the classroom where the noises are coming from. I see fractions written on the board but no immediate sign of a teacher. The students are standing in pairs scattered around the room. One student in each pair is moving his or her limbs in an interesting sort of dance. Some students move two limbs, some move three limbs and some move only one limb. The other partner holds up various fingers or forms a shape with his or her body, perhaps to indicate an answer. Then the partners switch roles. I locate the teacher, who explains that the students are reviewing fractions through dance before they take a written test. Everyone is smiling, engaged and, as the test scores later prove, learning.

In the first classroom, the teacher's auditory style may only have been reaching students who learn through auditory instruction. This means a number of students were not engaged and not learning. On the other hand, in the second classroom, all of the students were engaged and learning. Why is this? How do dance and theater help teachers connect with students with diverse learning styles? These questions can be answered by looking at the way our brains work. In *Brain Rules*, John Medina offers a number of facts about the brain that can help us understand why theater and dance serve as such powerful teaching tools:

Brain Rule #1: "Exercise boosts brainpower." Students who are engaged in dance and theater activities greatly increase the oxygen and blood flow to their brains through movement. Blood and oxygen are brain food. These students are more focused and remember concepts better than their peers who spend greater amounts of time sitting.

Brain Rule #4: "We don't pay attention to boring things." The brain needs emotional stimulation to remain engaged. Dance and theater games make learning come alive for all students. These art forms encourage students to express a variety of feelings and validate emotional responses.

Brain Rule #8: "Stressed brains don't learn the same way." Human beings need to feel safe and satisfied in order to learn. Dance and theater involve social interaction. Working in pairs and small groups provides a sense of security for students who may have learning or language difficulties. The more brains working to solve problems, the better the solutions.

Brain Rule #9: "Stimulate more of the senses. Neurons that fire together, wire together." Students involved in dance and theater engage multiple senses. They observe, speak, move and touch. The more senses a person uses to learn a subject, the deeper that learning is.

When dance and theater are utilized as springboards for teaching, their multisensory nature offers every learning style an easily accessible point of entry into a subject. Kinesthetic learners feel comfortable moving and manipulating objects. Visual learners feel at ease moving around, over and through people and props. They also learn through observing peers' solutions to problems. Auditory learners easily follow verbal cues and stage directions, and they enjoy speaking and giving feedback. Students who like to read and write may initially be engaged by researching historical background material, taking notes, and writing plays or reviews. The interactive nature of dance and theater engages students who have strong social skills. Students who enjoy expressing their feelings are drawn to the emotional aspects of dance and theater. Learning through theater and dance provides at least one entry point to **each** student. Engaging in these forms also encourages **all** students to go beyond their comfort zones and strengthen their ability to learn in other ways. When teachers incorporate dance and theater into their instructional methods, they not only engage students who learn differently from one another, they also deepen the learning experience for every student.



On the Way Home by Yuki Mizuno, Acrylic gouache.

How Can Music Training Improve Cognition?

By Eric Pakulak, Research Associate, Brain Development Lab, University of Oregon and Helen Neville, Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Oregon

There is widespread agreement that learning to make music and experiencing meaningful music events are inherently and uniquely valuable. Unfortunately, recent cuts to school budgets for education in the arts and music have deprived many students of the benefits offered by an education in music. In response, a burgeoning literature has sought to provide scientific evidence of the potential benefits of music instruction on cognitive and academic development in children in order to build the case for keeping music in our schools.

Although there have been several reports that musicians have higher IQs and better skills in some areas of cognition than non-musicians (summarized in Schellenberg 2004), most of these reports interpret these correlations as showing that music *causes* improvements in cognition. However, it is of course equally likely that people with strong cognitive skills are more likely to make the considerable effort to learn music. Given the degree of focused attention, abstract and relational thinking, and fluid intelligence required to learn music, many researchers and educators believe that learning music trains and builds cognitive resources. In order to assess this hypothesis, it is necessary to randomly assign individuals to either receive music training, a comparison training or no training. While some studies have found evidence for the benefits of learning music using this approach, they typically only studied a limited number of cognitive abilities (e.g., Rauscher et al. 1997; Schellenberg 2004).

At our lab at the University of Oregon, we are conducting an ongoing study to test this hypothesis. In the first stage of our study, we set out to test the hypothesis that, following eight weeks of daily music training, Head Start preschoolers would display gains in a number of cognitive domains, including language, preliteracy and visual-spatial skills, numeracy, and nonverbal IQ, and that these gains would be larger than those observed in control groups. Importantly, preschoolers were randomly assigned to groups and matched on variables known to be important in cognitive performance. Children in the music training group received eight weeks of small group (5:2 student/teacher ratio), 40-minute, daily classes focused on music activities, including listening to music, moving to music, singing and making music. To examine whether any effects observed were specific to music training, several control-comparison groups were included. These included both small (5:2) and large (18:2) groups receiving regular Head Start instruction and an attention group, in which children received instruction in focusing attention, awareness to details and aspects of self-control.

The effects of training were measured using a range of measures of cognition and literacy administered by testers who were blind to group assignment. We found that, following music training, children displayed significant improvements on several tests of language, a test of numeracy, a test of object assembly and tests of nonverbal IQ including fluid reasoning, quantitative reasoning and critical thinking. Improvements in the regular Head Start large group were limited to tests of language, though similar improvements were also found in the Head Start small group and attention training groups (Neville et al. 2008).

These results show that music training can improve cognitive development in young children and also provide evidence for *how* music training produces such effects. Specifically, it appears as though the benefits of music training are due in part to the increased time spent in small group situations with good adult attention. These results also suggest that music training may result in improvements in attention. Processes of attention amplify processing across several cognitive domains and are thus central to every aspect of cognition and school performance (Blair 2002).

Our laboratory is continuing to study the effects of attention and music training on student learning. We are now conducting a hybrid training program, including a once-per-week small group training of attention for preschoolers, using music training activities along with several other activities, together with a weekly training session for their parents that specifically improves adult attention and guidance. Preliminary results indicate that this provides substantial boosts to cognition and brain function, and suggest that this approach is the most powerful we have tested to date.

In order to share the results from research on the effects of experience on brain development, we recently produced a not-for-profit DVD titled *Changing Brains*, designed to be a resource for parents, educators and policymakers. It features individual segments with evidence-based information about different brain functions and structures, including music and attention as well as practical tips for caregivers. For more information, visit changingbrains.org.

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"... music training can improve cognitive development in young children ..."



AP Studio Art

By Celeste Pierson, Instructor of Art, The University School of Nova Southeastern University

In this climate of educational overhaul and quantification, why should our children spend valuable time in an art studio when they could be pursuing other, more academic endeavors?

When I'm in the studio working with students, the answer to that question is clear! It's right there in front of me in the form of student-made images and objects that express their ability to focus, plan and follow through. Many young people are adept at memorization and are able to give correct answers on a myriad of subjects. A visual artist's task is to identify his or her *own* question and then take risks to articulate that question or idea. Students are *inspired* by the heady, confidence-building experience of coming up with an idea and making it happen. Most important, students are introduced to the idea that failure with one attempt doesn't mean that *they* are a failure, it just means there is a lot more to learn. When they spread out the 24 or so (depending on the subject) completed works in the AP Studio Art course, they can see that with perseverance and effort, the quality of the work and complexity of their ideas improved. Evidence of learning can be *clearly seen* in the development of their ideas and technical skills. Visual art students learn to take responsibility for their own actions. This experience will serve these young people throughout life, no matter what their chosen profession.

When I ask students how they think the work will be evaluated for their AP score at the beginning of the year, most respond, "Doesn't it just depend on the person who's grading it? Isn't it just a subjective evaluation?" To this I answer, "No, it's based on a carefully prepared set of rubrics or descriptors. The graders are trained to use their own extensive knowledge of art combined with the rubrics. In this way, they come to a consensus as to the quality of the work." This is when I share those rubrics with the students and they use them to evaluate their own work. Once they use the rubrics themselves, it helps them understand the complex but unified process. I know going through the process and using the rubrics helped me to understand the first year I attended the Reading.

The training is comprehensive, with tremendous integrity used by each grader to give students the benefit of the doubt and to emphasize the positive. We are there to see what the student *has* achieved, not to pass judgment on his or her shortcomings. The rubrics used to evaluate are a list of descriptors from levels one through six. Evaluators are asked to find a predominance

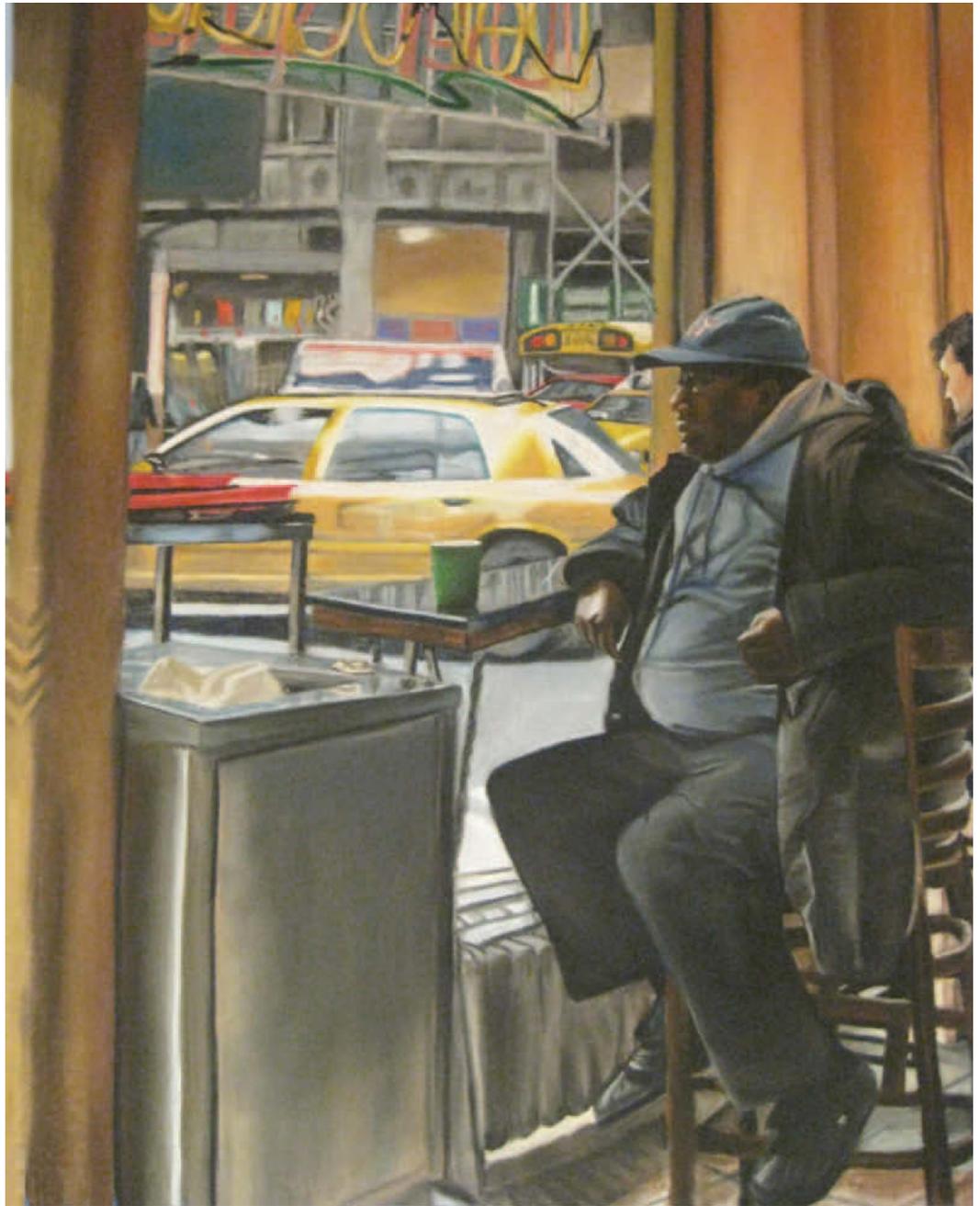
of evidence for work at each level and to grade the work accordingly. The rubrics are continually being tweaked based on input from the Readers, leaders and development committee members. They are a living document meant to unify and keep the process current.

Every section of the portfolio is graded by at least two readers, and if there is a big difference or discrepancy in the grading, it goes on to two more people who must come to a consensus regarding the level of the work. When all three sections of the portfolio have been graded, it has been reviewed by a minimum of seven different readers. This is a way of ensuring a nonbiased, well-balanced evaluation of each portfolio.

A myriad of support systems can answer any question you might have as a teacher or administrator concerning the AP Studio Art course. The website at AP Central® (http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/courses/teachers_corner/index.html) offers links to student images, lesson plans and comprehensive information concerning any portion of the exam. I encourage all AP Studio Art teachers to check out this website where they can apply to become an AP Studio Art Reader. Your experience will broaden your understanding of the process and help your students achieve success.

"A visual artist's task is to identify his or her own question and then take risks to articulate that question or idea."

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Contemplating the City Life by Deanna Troy Henry, Pastel.

The Arts in College Board Schools

Interview by Erica Saleh, Coordinator, Office of Academic Initiatives, The College Board

College Board Schools are public schools dedicated to preparing students in low-income and traditionally underserved areas, with the goal of preparing all students to enroll and succeed in college. College Board Schools are characteristically small, personalized environments that require no screening of applicants and, among other features, promote advisory programs to support students' academic, social and emotional development. Perhaps the most important aspects of a College Board School are the commitments to ensure challenging and engaging teaching and learning, as well as to foster an atmosphere of academic rigor with high expectations for all. One such College Board School, the South Bronx Preparatory School (SBP), exemplifies the College Board mission with a successful

arts program. Virginia Jose, an arts educator at SBP, spoke with us about how the arts fit into the mission of the College Board Schools.

What arts courses and programs are offered at South Bronx?

At South Bronx Preparatory we currently offer arts courses in studio art, AP Studio Art 2-D Design and theater. During SBP's after-school program, students can join the Art Club, Prep Players Theatre Club or Urban Art Beat (a hip-hop songwriting workshop). Prep Players has grown to establish its presence by organizing engaging school plays that employ the arts in a comprehensive manner. Students may choose to participate as part of the cast, stage crew or set design.

What has your role been in developing and shaping the arts program?

In 2005, the visual arts program was implemented into SBP's school curriculum, and I was hired as the first art teacher. It was understood that in order to better serve the needs of our students, the arts needed to play a key role in their academic experience. Since then, I have worked closely with our principal and faculty to establish a visual arts culture at our school through collaborative planning and community outreach. In 2007, AP Studio Art 2-D Design was added to our high school course offerings. The number of students taking AP Studio Art has increased every year since its inception. In helping shape the arts at South Bronx Preparatory, I've helped students develop their artistic skills by participating in projects that explore both personal identity and interdisciplinary connections.

How are the arts integrated across the curriculum at South Bronx?

The arts are loosely integrated across the curriculum. At both the middle school and high school levels, students have an opportunity to create visual presentations or to express themselves musically or theatrically. While we do not have a fleshed-out document, many educators at SBP incorporate the arts. This is because the arts provide another avenue for assessing student knowledge. For example, in an eighth-grade English class, students can create visual maps using symbolism found in a text; and a math unit exploring geometry can provide students with opportunities for creative expression while demonstrating knowledge via creating geometric designs.

What skills do students learn in their art classes that are applicable to other courses?

Students who take an art course at SBP learn how to sharpen their organizational abilities. In addition to enhancing their motor skills, students employ critical thinking skills that help them make meaningful connections in other courses and with the world at large. Regardless of their academic performance

level, students are given the time to self-reflect on their work. Spatial reasoning and problem solving are among the key skills pertinent to interdisciplinary application. A student's working memory is heightened through assignments such as intensive drawing activities that enhance hand-eye coordination in visual arts; performing a monologue in theater; or engaging in songwriting during our after-school program.

In your experience, in what ways does arts education advance the College Board's mission to connect all students to college access and success?

The journey to college should be as dynamic and enriching for students as possible. Despite the difficulties that many of our students at South Bronx Prep endure as individuals, they are given opportunities for creative expression through solid exposure to the visual and theater arts. The arts promote critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, self-reflection and cooperative learning — all of which are necessary for college and career readiness.

How have you seen students grow personally or academically through their experiences in the arts?

During my time at SBP, I have had the opportunity to witness many students excel in the visual arts and theater. One young woman began her arts education with me during her seventh-grade year. She continued to take art and music appreciation classes in the eighth grade, and then she became a high school student at SBP. Her exposure to the arts in middle school gave her the skills and inspiration to invest in visual art, songwriting and theater during her high school years. Today she is a hardworking, confident, model student who excels academically and has made a firm choice to pursue AP Studio Art during her senior year in fall 2010. Determined to become a well-rounded arts person, she is constantly exploring her options to further her education in the visual arts and theater, researching everything from precollege summer programs to four-year colleges with strong arts programs.

I currently have an AP Studio Art student who has improved academically as a result of taking this course. One day during after-school Art Club, she told me how much she has grown because of my art classes. "When I finally got to take AP art, I felt like I was more balanced as a student because I had the perfect amount of regular classes and visual art classes. So I stopped drawing in my regular classes because I had more art in my schedule." Her statement is a sentiment that is shared by many students who are eagerly waiting to take another visual art course.

"... students employ critical thinking skills that help them make meaningful connections in other courses and with the world at large."





Note of Thanks

This publication maintains a strong and sustainable discourse on what the College Board National Task Force on the Arts in Education has termed *Arts at the Core*. This initiative provides a critical look at the arts as an integral part of the learning process, and addresses the challenges and opportunities facing arts education in the United States.

The articles in this publication are the informed views of researchers, teachers, artists and students who espouse unique ideas on the arts in educational contexts. Each author has provided a thoughtful assessment of the critical issues surrounding the role of arts in education. Through critical inquiries, classroom observations, and student and teacher interviews, the authors provide new insights on the vital role the arts play in student innovation and creativity. These voices speak firmly and loudly about ways the arts can produce constructive critiques that will attract the attention of educators and policymakers. The collective work of the contributors serves as a cornerstone for the premise that through active and critical dialogue, the *Arts at the Core* initiative will maintain relevance in the movement toward education reform. Through these joint efforts, we hope to witness a resurgence of attention to the significant role the arts play in a well-rounded and complete education for young people.

I want to express my appreciation and thanks to each of the contributors for their commitment to arts education and for their discerning voices to this publication. Particular thanks go to Dr. Nancy Rubino, director of the College Board Office of Academic Initiatives, and to Erica Saleh, coordinator of the College Board Office of Academic Initiatives. I would also like to acknowledge the generous support from Gaston Caperton, president of the College Board, and the Board of Trustees, and Dorothy Sexton, vice president of governance and secretary of the corporation.

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Do you have comments or questions for the National Task Force on the Arts in Education? Send us your thoughts at artstaskforce@collegeboard.org.



Front cover: Untitled
by Sylvianne Shurman,
Colored pencil.