

Fine arts enhances learning

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The theory that participating in fine arts like music, dancing, drama, and art distracts students from their academics is wrong. Many students doing extra curricular activities maintain a 4.0 GPA while taking honors and AP courses, but students participating in music and arts courses actually benefit from it. Participation in the arts improves SAT scores, IQ, and analytical thinking. Fine arts does not distract you from learning, it enhances your learning because it creates more brain connections, makes you smarter, and requires analytical thinking.

Many spend years studying for the SAT's in order to get the perfect score and be accepted to the perfect college. What if the answer to their success was simply learning a musical instrument or participating in drama?

Statistics show that students who are involved in music (or the fine arts) score well above the students who do not, on both the verbal (52 points) and mathematics portion (37 points) of the SAT. This is because when learning a regular subject the learned concept isn't put to practice right away. It is learned for the test, but then forgotten. In fine arts, the skills learned are put to practice and retained because you constantly learn new skills.

Therefore the students unknowingly are able to grasp new concepts quicker while still retaining the information. A study was done on toddlers in Georgia called the Mozart effect. This study exposed young children to classical music and as an effect increased their performance in all areas of school. However those students who did not stick to listening to classical music did not continue to perform above the class. In other words why not start exposing yourself to classical music and/or learning fine arts? It is proven by

German researchers that music actually grows the brain 25% larger than those who do not participate.

So why is that? Petr Janata, a music physiologist at Dartmouth concluded that fine arts increases connections made between the left and right hemispheres in the brain. Tiny nerve cells, neurons, are found in the outside layer of the brain called the cortex. These nerve cells connect with branches, this allows us to problem solve and think. When something is learned or practiced these branches multiply and get stronger. The more connections made in the brain the smarter you will be.

However, it is not only music that is proven to make you smarter, activities like drama and music appreciation are actually known to be better forms of brain boosters. A graph from the college board, 1999 Profile of College Bound Seniors Report shows the relationship in SAT scores based on which fine arts class the student has taken. This graph shows that classes like drama, drama appreciation, and music appreciation perform 30-10 points higher than those students only participating in music. Although a high IQ is beneficial analytical thinking is more important. “ Arts develop analytical thinking because it requires students to be creative.

They don't just regurgitate memorized facts. They have to apply those facts.” , said Dr. Kevin Strothner, head of music at The Heights School in Potomac, MD. Analytical thinking is a critical component of visual thinking that gives one the ability to solve problems quickly and effectively.

Kids who grasp this concept better are proven to perform better in math and science courses. A neurological research done on March 15, 1999 showed
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that third grades with experience in piano lessons scored 100% higher on math test than those who don't. However there are some that say it distracts from learning due to the hours needed to practice. It takes time away from homework and studying. This is true. I am in band and it is a huge time commitment.

We practice throughout the summer, 14 hours per week (not to mention at home practicing), and always have something to do over the weekends. Doing band is difficult to balance with school and at sometimes band has come before my academics, but band has taught me how to manage my time well. Since I have so much to do all the time I needed to adapt and learn how to make things work. Now it seems I am less stressed because I know how to manage my time. Even though I previously stated that the fine arts makes you smarter, this does not hold true for everybody. The Mozart Affect study is the prime example.

If students continue to learn music and arts then the effect of it will follow them into their academics, however if a student doesn't stick with it, that student will not see those effects. Also students who are taking an arts class need to be devoted to their academics as well or their grades and SAT scores will not be as high as those fine arts students who are dedicated to both. The research is clear. Why not take a fine arts class? They are fun and are a break from the everyday hassle of school plus the arts make you smarter. So parents invest in your toddlers piano lessons or get your child involved in drama or band.

Students, maybe re-think dropping out of music after middle school. Fine arts improves your child's academics, it does not distract from it.