

Stealing the core of education: the arts

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For many students, including myself, the art and music periods in school are greatly treasured. Learning a new song, finishing a painting, performing to friends - these are usually the daily highlights for many young students. Unfortunately, the arts education in schools is currently in an unacceptable decline (Lipman). Many schools across the U. S.

are facing budget cuts and are forced to remove the arts from their curriculum. These supposed "unnecessary" and "useless" classes are just as important as traditional classes and taking them away will definitely hurt not just students but schools as well (Kowalski). Once students learn a skill, they strive to keep learning more. They move on to harder and more complex works (David). With the classic student ideal to be "perfect", there is no time for students to simply stop at one achievement; they must find other ways to get the satisfaction of, for example, a perfectly well-played song on the piano. If we compare this to normal classes, most students just finish their homework, or test, and move on to their next unit of studies.

In other words, these kinds of free and unrestricted learning help open up the curiosity and interest of students. Chuck Todd, the NBC chief White House correspondent, claims that the arts, especially music, help with something called the "drive for perfection" (Lipman). He explains this as the constant demand to perfect a skill or an art piece (Lipman). In a world with an easy and quick demand for any type of service, this surely helps students maintain patient and determined. The arts or any type of electives very often are more meaningful to students compared to traditional classes. Schools nowadays are packed with disciplined and continuous studying.

It may sound cheesy to say this as an 8th grader, but music and art classes help me clear out whatever is on my mind during the day. Similar to sports for many students, these classes help us relax and gather our thoughts. Art, music, and other elective courses keep student's interest. According to high school principal Steve Ellis, it is the very elective classes students get to take that keep them in school (Hambek). Taking away the arts from students would be like taking away phones from teens. Without these necessary classes, school would merely be a chore for students; and teachers would only be teaching uninterested students.

Would anyone want to attend a school with a group of lifeless and uncommitted students? Just about 3 months ago, I quit my private piano lessons and stuck solely to swimming and volleyball in school. Music lessons seemed pointless to me – it took up my free time and I wasn't really getting anywhere. A few weeks after, I started to notice my own laziness and impatience in my schoolwork. I got off-task easily, forgot assignments, and rarely ever focused in class. I told myself that I wasn't getting enough sleep, or it was just my “teenager mindset”, but it really wasn't.

My mom repeatedly told me to play a few notes on the piano to clear out my mind. Music and school had always been completely detached to me; they were worlds apart. “How would that ever help me?” I asked myself. I really didn't see the connection, but I tried playing anyways. To my surprise, I played on and on for about an hour or two.

I didn't believe it at first, but playing the piano again really helped me relax and gather my thoughts. Even now, I still haven't gotten back to my

biweekly lessons because of my schedule; but I still play every few days to process all my schoolwork and to unwind. Sure, traditional academic classes are crucial for students, but there always needs to be a balance, especially for younger students. Many educators believe that students learn significantly better active than passive (Chira). In normal classes, students are usually told to write down what teachers say and learn from the information given by them. However, in music and art classes, instructions from the teachers are simply just a starting point, leading students to figure out the answers on their own (Cerbasi).

“ Children naturally learn this way, but teachers don’t teach that way” says Ellyn Berk, an educational consultant (Chira). Personally, I have way more fun and perform much better by learning my own material and solving problems on my own. The arts are extremely valuable for schools and even more so for the students. Extra music and art classes probably won’t make students extremely smart, or extremely well-behaved, but it will create a better learning environment for all of us. If we are taking away the arts because it is “ unnecessary” and “ useless”, we might as well take away students’ English and math classes.