

Arts: our (disappearing) natural resource

Business



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

As I'm writing this, I've just stepped in from a thirteen hour band rehearsal.

I was sweating. I was swearing. I was in tears. I'm one of the lucky ones. Why are our band programs disappearing? In my native South Jersey, five of the schools we regularly compete against won't be in the circuit this year because of budget cuts.

When money is tight – and with a recession in full swing, money always seems to be tight – and school board members are up for re-election, it is almost pre-ordained that the arts take the brunt of the bullet. Drama. Sculpture. Dance. Woodworking. Band.

All these programs have been on the chopping block at my school, reduced dramatically in the newest round of changes. But arts are as necessary and vital to American schools as “core curriculum” classes like English and mathematics. Take away the arts, and you take away a teenager's only means to express themselves in their school. Take away the arts, and you take away the soul. While everyone knows that learning history is the only way to avoid making the mistakes of the past, few realize that the only way to preserve our future is through dance performances, musical productions, and art galleries. What will we show of the beginning of the twenty-first century? That individuality has become a dying breed.

That programs that encourage creativity are being disbanded. That people are forgetting what it is like to be caught up in something bigger than themselves. You can move someone with dance, with a piece of artwork, with a sculpture, with an instrument. The arts can cross language barriers

and generation gaps. Mathematics can't bring you to tears. Science can't make the very blood boil inside of you.

America needs its arts, if only because taking them away would leave us with a hole the size of our heart. If schools keep cutting the programs, generations of children after us will suffer, because they will never know the beauty of putting on a musical after a hundred hours of labor, or the passion that goes into finishing a painting by working all night. I don't know how teenagers can possibly stop this steady march to destroy the very core of our schools. I just know that sometimes all it takes is a single voice, and that a single voice can become a hundred, can become a thousand. Speak up for your school's art programs simply because if we don't, who will?