

# The clifton strengths finder tool education essay



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## **Introduction**

The Clifton Strengths finder (developed by Gallup research) is a tool used in positive psychology. It is useful in finding the natural talents one has been born with. Knowing these characteristics may be used to help determine a future career. In my opinion I received themes that were key in the life of an art educator as well as one who wishes to pursue their own art. Each theme reacts with each other in seemingly perfect harmony. My results of the Clifton Strengths finder reassured me to pursue my future goals.

Artists lead a life of constant visual and physical stimulation with their world that triggers personal creation. I believe that it is about making something ordinary into something thought provoking and extraordinary. What has been created is ideally perfect in that artist's eyes. The results of Strengths Quest reinforced my intention of pursuing the life of an artist and educator. Maximizer, Intellection, Input, Ideation and Adaptability were my top five themes. Each shall be discussed in relation to a career in art.

## **Discussion and Content**

Maximizer is a theme centered on harnessing skills and working them to perfection. This was my top theme and two areas of my life that this may apply to is how my artwork communicates and how I use my time. Art means to me as my ideas expressed visually. If the visual I have created doesn't match the concept in my head I then get very frustrated. At times I see what I have made as excellence. Other times it is not the case. I have set a high standard for myself because I want to be an up and coming 21st century

contemporary artist. This will be useful because contemporary art is an extremely competitive

Not only in my art do I see the theme Maximizer, I also see it in how I spend my time. I see time as a game where I must use the time I have as efficiently as possible. I am aware that this is a skill that I have managed with excellence and precision. With two jobs taking over 40 hours of my week away from me and as a full time student I still manage dean list grades, a steady relationship and volunteer work. Through practicum experience I have learned that art education is a 24/7 job. Art teachers are usually required to cater to all grades of the school, thus creating a workload heavier than most general curriculum teachers. Not only that, the class period they have with the children is usually 45 minutes. Teachers must become efficient and therefore must maximize their time to fit in as much as they can.

Although I believe this I understand that maximizing my time is not always good. Slow education is a method of teaching that is doing away with students cramming for tests and rushing their childhood. In *Praise of Slowness*, is a novel on how society has created humans so obsessed with time that we lose our sense of being. Slow education can create students that are independent and passionate about learning. Teachers must stop obsessing on making every second count. (Honore 2004) They should pace themselves and determine what are the essential lessons they want to cover. (Manning 2003) In the future I will want to learn how to slow down and maximize the impressions my lessons leave on the children.

Intellection is the theme of exercising the brain. My thinking has been shaped through the writings and teachings of transcendentalists,

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philosophers and environmentalist. Artists see things differently. There are many artists that have spent their lives in deep reflection and have taken visual notes of the immense inner workings of our universe. One artist who does this extremely well is Andy Goldsworthy. He is an artist that works outside with the elements. One type of sculpture that he creates are four foot egg shaped formations made out of various materials such as slates of rock or dirt. In his documentary, Rivers and Tides, we see his sculpture being taken in to the sea by the tide. The next day his sculpture reappears yet slightly altered from its night in the sea. To many this has no meaning, but to him it is a way for him to interact with the cycles of the earth. The thoughts I think are uniquely mine and therefore will make perfect sense in my mind. As an artist I will join my intellection with my artwork and it will give meaning to my life. Just as allowing the tide to destroy his sculpture, Goldsworthy finds the concept behind it much more powerful. (Goldsworthy 2004)

Thought has also allowed me to get through many of the tough times in my life. When I could not relate to people in high school and college I turned to a field, where I laid out under the sun, skimmed books and formed conclusions. This mental activity took place of people and relationships. Some say isolation is detrimental; however I came out as a stronger individual. The way I express what has gone through my mind is through painting, drawing, and sculpture. Although my theme maximizer creates stress to make the “best” art possible, the release of my intellection and ideas is a meditation practice.

Input was my third theme and it is the strength of collecting. There are few art rooms in schools that don't make you think of saying "holy hoarders

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that's a lot of stuff." Art Educators faced with small budgets resort to scrounging resources to use with their students. (Manning 2003) Creative teachers transform recycled cereal boxes into cultural masks from Africa. I understand that to pursue art teaching to children I need to collect both tangible and un-tangible resources. When children need ideas having a stock of magazines and art books is crucial to their success. Luckily this comes naturally to me. On a personal level the theme input also enables my own artwork. Gestalt is a form of art that involves forming a whole out of separate parts. As an example in my work, " Kick to the Face." 2008 I collected old leather men's shoes from retail shops. I then formed a three dimensional old man's face and hat with the fragments of leather. It became a reflection of how the old are treated and neglected. Karen Bondarchuk (an art educator at Western Michigan University) creates large Crows out of blown out tire pieces that she " scavenged" on interstates and freeways. (www.karenbondarchuk.com 6/27/2010)

Ideation is a fascination with forming ideas. It can also be seen as creativity. These ideas I have created are ones that I would wish to teach to future students. Art education has changed a lot over the years. It is not craft that they teach instead it is new perspectives on matters of our world. Art teaches children to not accept what has been fed them, rather soak in and then create their own perspectives. I want to teach this art of ideation. The banking method of teaching can be understood through the image where each child is a bucket and the teacher is judged successful on how full he/she fills each bucket with water. (Freire 72) Freire fears that, " The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they

develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. " (73) Few American teachers know the philosophy of Paulo Freire because our government functions successful when its people do not question. Ideation is an art form that I will want transfer to my students. .

I have chosen a future profession that is unstable in this economy. U. S. Government demands our children to be taught math and sciences. Both very important subjects that should be learned however when art is left out of the equation we get unhealthy children that depend on medication, and are burned out before they are twenty. (Louv 2005) Although my goal is to have a steady art education position, I am realistic and understand this may not happen. I will need to adapt in order to make a living. Overall art education is being weaned out of the education system. I may have to scrap a wage by what I can create. I look forward to a shaky future. It means I will not be like the countless other Americans that live robotic mind numbing routines that they are not passionate about.

It was really hard for my parents to understand that I am adaptable. Over and over I got the warning to avoid the art career. My maximizer theme demands excellence of myself so I have the drive to get me where I want to be. Adaptability is also needed in a classroom if I do get a job in the field. Freier understood that one cannot force upon their students the same information because it will not be effective. He calls this phenomenon "narration sickness." This means that it is necessary to adapt your curriculum to your students needs. (Freire 2000)

## **Conclusion**

It is a good feeling to know that I have natural positive qualities that will enable me in the future I want. President Obama supports the arts because it is a unifier of people and it increases a student's self-esteem. It is good he believes in a well-balanced curriculum. (Duncan 2010) That means that there is hope that I will be able to utilize the positive strengths that I have in order to live a self-fulfilling life as an artist, thinker and educator.