

# Removing creativity from curriculum harms development of creative thinking

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When a person goes to the doctor, it is good to be examined by a professional who can creatively approach diagnosing and developing solutions to physical ailments. When a jetliner is facing a challenging flight situation, it is comforting to know your plane is being piloted by a creative team that will find a way to guide you gently and safely to the ground.

These are but a few examples of how music and the arts have been recognized historically as being an important part of an effective education with the power to foster creative thinkers and better scholars. In our modern society, why then are music and the arts among the first elements to be cut from school curriculum?

Music was one of the original liberal arts, considered of equal academic value with subjects such as mathematics and astronomy. The world's greatest philosophers (Aristotle, Plato, Socrates) regarded music and the arts as a powerful expression of the values of society, and also an important force in shaping the character of young people. Aristotle suggested that if you change the music to which a young person listens, you can greatly influence the character of that person.

How many parents and grandparents learned and remembered language, history and math concepts by watching "Schoolhouse Rock"? Can you still sing the preamble to the Constitution, or the process of a bill becoming a law, or my favorite, "Conjunction Junction"? Due to their effectiveness in learning, many sources of content songs can now be found online. We know inherently that the arts can aid in learning, but what does the research say?

Numerous studies have suggested that student involvement in music or art significantly impacts student academic achievement. Research has suggested that students who participate in music study scored significantly higher in both verbal and math skills, and that the longer students studied music, the more their SAT scores increased. One study found that early childhood students who received keyboard or vocal lessons in school for a year achieved an average IQ score increase of seven points. It has been found that children who are involved with the arts, in general, tend to have higher grades and are less likely to drop out of school, and that children who play musical instruments are likely to have higher self-esteem, confidence, discipline, concentration and emotional intelligence.

While the arts are being cut in some of our local school districts, many medical schools are starting to increase arts in their curricula, in what is becoming a medical humanities movement that is sweeping the nation. In November, the Boston Globe reported on this growing trend at major medical schools such as Harvard, Brown and Yale universities. Future doctors, as part of the curriculum, are asked to analyze paintings or participate in music or dance in order to increase their observation skills, their creative approaches to disease and cure, and their empathy toward patients.

Depriving students of tools that could boost their academic performance and creative potential due to a narrow interpretation of which subjects are most important to be included in the school curriculum is unacceptable. In light of the research evidence, school districts should consider strengthening, and not cutting, art and music in their curriculum.

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