

## **Engaging Students in Art and Humanities: A Potential Solution for Meeting Standards**

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What distinguishes the humanities from the natural sciences is not a certain subject matter, but instead the method of approach to any question. The humanities probe intangibles such as purpose, meaning, and judgment – all adding up to the capacity for self-reflection, abstract thought, and creativity. The humanities focuses on understanding meaning, purpose, and goals and furthers the appreciation of singular historical or social events – an interpretive method of finding “truth” – rather than explaining the causality of events or uncovering the truth of the natural world. Somehow, when we explore what it means to be human, we want more than neat categories and a perfect definition. Embedded in the concept of self-reflection is mystery. There is something about us that we cannot quite put a finger on, that defies clear labels, yet challenges us to try to figure it out. Underlying our thought is the assumption of a human nature, a sense of what identifies us as a species (Anschicks, 2009). If the humanities explore the intangibles, art and its relevance for students today is situated within the domain of the humanities. The education we provide in this realm helps students make sense of their world, grow as an individual and build a cultural literacy to prepare for the complex challenges they face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Citizenship, Self-Reflection, Humanities and Art**

A main justification for the Humanities, since the late 1800's, has been that it encourages self-reflection which, in turn, helps develop personal consciousness and/or an active sense of civic duty. In the late 1900's and early 2000's, scholars extended “narrative imagination” (vonWright, & Moira, 2004), to mean the ability to understand the records of lived experiences outside of one's own individual, social and cultural context. Through the narrative imagination, humanities scholars and students develop a consciousness more suited to the multicultural world in which we live. That consciousness might be one of a more passive nature

allowing more effective self-reflection or it might extend into active empathy, facilitating the performance of civic duties. Experiencing the environment is a lifelong process.

*It is a process shaped by culture, influenced by language, impacted by beliefs, affected by values, and moderated by the distinctive features of that part of ourselves we sometimes describe as our individuality. We humans give simultaneously both a personal and a cultural imprint to what we experience; the relation between the two is inextricable. (Eisner, 2002)*

The goals of liberal arts education and the personal ownership of ideas impart a higher purpose and motivation to the study of the humanities and enhance, rather than compromise, theoretical and conceptual learning. The continuing dominance of post-modernist thought in research and criticism challenges and deconstructs the role of the humanities as a positive force in society (Nikitina, 2009). This kind of post-modernist thought diminishes the value and importance of the arts and humanities in the overall goal of learning and education. Nikitina recommends five strategies to foster tangible concepts of learning:

1. *Embodiment through media and the arts*, which calls upon students to embody abstract concepts through the creation of artifacts. Literary styles or philosophical ideas are transformed into objects executed in the medium of the student's choice.

2. *Activism*, that provides opportunities for students to act upon insights developed through conceptual learning in the humanities classroom.

3. *Co-creation*, in order to transforms a student of literature from an admiring reader into an involved co-creator. Students read texts with a view to their potential transformation, extension, or critical development. Creative participation tends to

foster deeper understanding and appreciation of literature, while developing in students a more critical stance.

4. *Contemporizing*, bringing abstract concepts to life by steeping them in the present moment. Students read the past through the lens of their present and develop deeper insight. By “trying on” a particular concept, students become aware of the particulars of their cultural experience. It involves embedding remote ideas into contemporary culture and personal experiences.

5. *Cross-pollination*, referring to new insights or plans of action that are many times born at the intersection of two ideas, methodologies, or concepts. Since the humanities disciplines are in the business of commenting on, critiquing, and contextualizing events, experiences, and phenomena, they lend themselves most naturally to interdisciplinary crossover. This strategy involves bringing a humanities perspective to bear on topics or methodologies outside of its realm or on different disciplines within its own realm.

Schools and society engage in a symbiotic relationship that seeks to promote cultural consciousness through social interaction. Schools are generally entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining the cultural awareness and in that way provide a survival mechanism for students to react and adjust to society’s prevalent attitudes and expectations. Whether schools are or should be merely informants of culture as it exists or as agents that promote constructive change is a question Fowler (1996) posed. Historically, the arts have preserved the *artistic* culture and found their place in education as the conduit for transmitting knowledge about other cultural heritages. The arts fit naturally into the enculturation process; how they are valued in that role determines where they fit in the school curriculum.

**Art as Meaning Making.** Art represents one communication system we employ to understand our culture. There are several theories on how we perceive, internalize, and communicate those meanings. Our initial contact with the world is through our sensory system. Those senses become the first avenues to our conscious being (Eisner,

2002). Consciousness then, is all of those thoughts, processes, and translations that humans mentally progress through that produce an interpretation of the world. Those interpretations can be conceptualized by means of a symbolic system which is unique to the individual. Research provides different perspectives on the systems employed to make meaning of what is observed, perceived, internalized, and communicated. The senses are the filter through which all information from our environment passes, before it can be assimilated into some form of representation and be communicated (Eisner, 2002). These communications – be they literary or artistic, verbal or gestural – aid us in constructing knowledge about our culture.

Gardner (1994) theorized that the use of symbols is rooted in the early stage of human development. Not necessarily a physical object, these symbols can be in the form of emotive or sensational feelings or concepts. The theory asserts that symbol use is couched within three overlapping systems, illustrated by a figurative analogy; the *making system* of the artist, the *perceiving system* of the critic, and the *feeling system* of the audience. The making system refers to the portion of human activity that related to behavior, elements and schema that are transformed into skills at various levels of development. The perceiving system consists only of the discriminatory process related to external elements. The feeling system, the most difficult to define since it is purely in the affective realm, relates most directly to the arts since it is a crucial component of the artistic process. Gardner does not believe that the three systems necessarily coincide to Piaget’s stages of development. Fowler (1996) suggests that since we cannot adequately communicate our feelings, perceptions and understanding through words, other symbol systems provide an avenue for doing that. Symbol systems function, then, as both a way of knowing and a means for understanding. The arts’ role in this understanding is the conveyance of expression through symbolic representation.

Making meaning of the world through that symbolic representation is what art allows us to do, and in this way, provides the rationale for art’s inclusion in the curriculum. Following an

ethnographic study on art integration, Lynch (2007) referred to the making of meaning through art as a socio-cultural event that “provides learners with the supportive segue into the unfamiliar, while simultaneously nudging them to explore content from entirely new perspectives” (p. 4). The study was conducted in a kindergarten through fifth grade Title I magnet school, with low SES students, to determine the effect of art learning on students. Observations from the study provided the following insights:

1. *Integration allowed students to use their hands, bodies and voices in meaningful ways.* What normally would not be allowed in a regular classroom is encouraged in the art classroom as students move about with a sense of freedom, to explore and discover. This sense of freedom and responsibility for their own learning increases attention span and encourages perseverance with the task.
2. *Making art allowed choices about how to interact with the content.* Expressing their understanding of content through art leads students to observe in greater detail, be more deliberate in their choices, and more thoughtful about what they considered essential, which underscores art as an intellectual exercise.
3. *Integrations become social events.* The learning was child-centered with little domination by the teacher after initial instructions were given. Students moved about the room, sharing and borrowing materials in the process of creation. This social interaction did not distract from their purpose, but rather enhanced it.

The whole child is immersed in the art process – intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically, and therefore *rigorously*, in the learning process.

### **Art as an Intellectual Discipline**

Research substantiates benefits to students from art that include fostering higher-level thinking that translates to increased academic achievement. This transfer of knowledge refers to the relationship

of knowledge gained in the art classroom and how it applies to other academic disciplines. Transfer has been an issue of vital importance in the discussion of education since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. When subjects such as Latin – a century ago – and the arts after WWII, were beginning to become marginalized, advocates debated that those courses supported learning in the academic subjects as well as the development of a well-rounded individual (Lindstrom, 2009).

The current direction in the arts is to view them only from a contemporary standpoint, as art is related by media in the popular culture. With this comes the inference that not only is the art of the past irrelevant, but no longer is it necessary to make any distinction between what was created by masters such as Michaelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and Rembrandt and what we interpret as art today (Smith, 2008). Braiding art with the humanities, and presenting them as viable, valued and representative of interdisciplinary inquiry that helps students make judgments about form, function, and style as it relates to personal, commercial, and communal purposes. What, then, can we say about Humanities and Art as a high priority for today’s school curriculum? Together they serve to broaden students’ horizons, help them make sense of their world, and build a personal awareness. Under that broad banner, they also:

- strengthen student resiliency;
- provide young people with opportunities to develop supportive relationships;
- give parents, teachers, and youth a chance to communicate high expectations;
- offer students opportunities to experience success and recognition for their accomplishments;
- provide young people with the chance to actively participate in their learning; and offer creative and engaging ways to explore difficult, complex issues with youth through pleasurable experiences (Partnership for Creative Experiences, 1998).

**Knowledge transfer.** Schools that incorporate music, art drama, dance, and creative writing into the basic curriculum have found that teaching the arts has a significant effect on overall success in school. Like language or mathematics, the arts involved the use of complex symbols to communicate. To attain competence in the arts, it is necessary to gain literacy with the symbol systems. The topic of transfer and its relevance to art education remains an issue explored in much of the recent research, however, the validity of knowledge transfer has been played out in settings across the nation, as evidenced by some worthy studies (Catterall, 2007; Gullatt, 2008; Haastra, 2000; Rabkin, 2002; Ruppert, 2004). Higher levels of thinking that translate to increased test scores is definitely attractive – especially as we contend with the accountability issues involved with bringing up those test scores – but participating in visual art activities has other positive effects as well. Art teachers engage their students in learning activities which require use of higher-order thinking skills like analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Arts education, then, is first of all an activity of the mind. Those that are skeptical often maintain that position in favor of promoting “art for art’s sake” (Eisner, 2002) rather than merely as a vehicle for assisting other academic courses.

Studies focusing on the arts and human development concluded that the arts not only provided benefits on many other measures but that involvement in art was positively correlated to SAT scores and grew stronger for every year of art involvement (Haastra, 2000). Findings from a 2005 study comparing the SAT scores of non-arts students to their arts-involved peers, showed a 58-point increase on the verbal portion, and 38-point increase on the math portion for the art students (Ruppert, 2006).

A National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS, 1988), followed more than 25, 000 students for ten years, and became the focus of a study that would further determine the role of art in education. Catterall, Chapleau, and Iwanga, (1999), had as a first priority, extending the original research to look beyond grade 10, to include through grade 12 and beyond. A second priority of this new study was to

consider the *depth* of involvement in the arts, and the benefits to students based on the amount of involvement, and third, to investigate any connections between involvement in the arts and cognitive development. The findings showed consistently more favorable outcomes for arts-involved students, in terms of higher achievement, staying in school, improved attitudes about school and community, and less television-watching. A particularly notable result of this study is that the performance benefit also holds for high arts-involved, low SES students. Performance differences were about the same across grade levels in the area of test scores, between arts and non-arts involved students, that were not in the low SES category. The differences showed between 16- and 18 percent increase. At grade 10, for example, low arts students scoring in the top half of the test score distribution was 47.5 percent, whereas those participating in arts fell at the 65.7 range –a difference of 18.2 percent. The 18 percent difference became a large advantage for the arts involved group. In this case, 57.4 high arts students scored well as compared to the low arts group where 39.3 scored well computed this way ( $57.4/39.3= 1.46$  or 46%). In the low SES category, the nominal differences were lower, (generally between eight and 10 percent) but essentially the same benefit was seen by this group in terms of the positive correlation of art involvement and improved test scores, with the greatest increase being seen between 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade, if art involvement was consistent. The advantages increased appreciably over time, with continued exposure to the arts (Catterall, Chapleau & Iwanga, 1999).

**At -Risk Populations.** Probing the benefits of art to low SES, at-risk students, is relatively new to the arts research, but positive benefits seem to occur in environments such as juvenile detention centers, as well (Venable, 2005). Personal identity development is one positive outcome of art instruction with incarcerated individuals as well as improved self-esteem and increased successes. An Indiana detention center, in collaboration with two pre-service art teachers, brought art into the daily lives of the detainees, through a mural project designed to test the theory that art could help these young adult children. The facility housed 433

offenders whose average stays were just over six days for the detainees, and approximately 90 days for those incarcerated. The population was representative of the small town that houses the facility the largest majority of individuals were white (81.7%) as well as male (65%) with an average age of 16 years.

The Coalition for Juvenile Justice (2001), reported that youth that drop out of high school are three times more likely to be arrested than high school graduates, and that approximately 35% of those that drop out are unemployed. But for those involved in quality educational programs, re-offense rates can be reduced by 20% or greater. Of juveniles that are incarcerated 70-87% exhibit emotional or learning disabilities. The national toll due to drop outs through lost wages and taxes amounts to roughly \$200 billion. Williams (in Venable, 2005), found that successful art programs can help incarcerated individuals reconnect with humanity and develop the personal control that enables them to find their place in society. The mural project involved collaboration that eventually overcame the awkwardness and reluctance displayed by the delinquents at first. As they became more comfortable, conversations ensued, and cooperation replaced mere collaboration. Venable (2005) reported that the chance to success and develop their self concepts through safe and encouraging relationships with the art students provided them with opportunities some of them never before experiences.

**Projects to Promote Art.** Mural projects in other cities (Judith Baca's *The Great Wall of Los Angeles* and Jane Golden's *Philadelphia Mural Arts Program*) have seen the benefits of art-related skill building in areas such as teamwork, communication, and self-discipline. The mural project grew to being an art integration program that focused on the math and science curriculum in the Indiana facility (Venable, 2005). Interest in defining art's relationship to learning extends beyond benefits in human development to include the intellectual realm.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century provided us with some new philosophies of intelligence that were then transformed to models for teaching and learning in

the arts. The groundbreaking multiple intelligence theory (Gardner, 2003), broadens our view of how humans learn and realize their potential. It shows that the arts can play a crucial role in improving students' ability to learn, because they draw on a range of intelligences and learning styles, not just the linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences upon which most schools are based. Though revolutionary in its findings, MI was not touted as an educational goal in and of itself (Gardner, 2003). The theory spoke to the educational community in a variety of ways, however, and indirectly brought a new mindset regarding intelligence in the field of education. Projects piloting the theory, such as Arts PROPEL, (a collaborative project between Pittsburg Public schools and the Educational Testing Service) sought to test growth and learning in things like music, visual art, and creative writing, which were generally not included in the type of assessments being done in academic environments. Project Spectrum attempted to field-test various instruments for validity in assessing these separate intelligences. Project Zero, sponsored by Harvard University, was a practical and active involvement with educational reform. All of the projects provided some insight into the way the arts lend themselves to creativity.

**Creativity in the art realm.** General creativity is fostered and encouraged through art training. Creativity is in the spotlight in America, today, as it relates to both general education and art education. Part of the reason for that is the attempt to find a standard definition for creativity. This lack of agreement as such, may inhibit inclusion in the school curricula by "practically-minded" school administrators (Coleman & Cross, 2001). By recognizing this and structuring the learning environment in a way that allows children to incorporate their interests, a strong center point for self-regulation, into the learning process, art programs can benefit children in positive ways.

Children are powerfully affected by storytelling, music, dance, and the visual arts. They often construct their understanding of the world around musical games, imaginative drama and drawing. Preschool children naturally draw, with the primary purpose being to tell a story, before they can write. The expressiveness and spontaneity that is

present in early drawings and other artwork, is often lost by the time a child reaches middle school if it is not nurtured (Eisner, 2002). Art becomes a language through which children communicate. As an extension of their art, children often express what is not apparent to another viewer, such as when they call a form “squishy” even when it is not really squishy, they are seeing beyond what is apparent. Art provides a route for children to be able to describe, interpret and relate to things “that have no literal equivalent” (Eisner, 2002).

**Instruction in Art.** Visual art situates the child in this very type of learning atmosphere. The kinds of thinking being taught in the art classroom, referred to as “studio habits of mind,” and touted as what might be the “real benefits of art education,” provide a “set of lenses for thinking about teaching and learning in the visual arts” (Hetland et al., in Lindstrom, 2009). Visual arts presents students with opportunities to experience success and recognition for their accomplishments, and engaging ways to explore complex issues through pleasurable experiences.

Instructional practices in art have evolved over the last century. The Bauhaus, a discrete art academy focusing on design in Germany in the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, maintained the philosophy that artists are not “made”, meaning artistic creativity cannot be taught; that only the *skills* of art can be passed along to students. Students were provided with the kind of challenges that have any number of solutions, and this idea is still used in art schools and engineering programs today. Programs that ask students to solve practical problems serve to encourage them to focus on the “what” that needs to be addressed in order to find solutions. This method offers the opportunity for students to look at the design process from different perspectives: shape, form, utility, and aesthetic properties (Sullivan, 2005). This type of training rests on creative problem-solving (Eisner, 2002).

Drawing is a universal mode for communicating thought and ideas (Goertz, 1991). Professionals such as architects, engineers, mathematicians, geologists, physicists, and sociologists incorporate drawing as a means to think,

process, and communicate more effectively. For example, Thomas Edison’s notebook of drawings allowed him to work through his thought process in this way to be successful in finding the answers he sought (Goertz, 1991). Because it begins with the hand expressing a visual image, drawing utilizes the brain’s ability to see and think in a fluid way. Given a problem, a student using the process of drawing to reach an understanding can now think creatively to find solutions. Drawing facilitates creativity because it creates a momentum that does not inhibit the flow of ideas (Goertz, 1991). Drawing also improves both writing and memory skills (Dorn, 1999). Memory that is preceded by the drawing of an object that is being observed, is improved to a greater degree than when something is drawn from memory or traced (Lancing, Colbert, and Caldwell & Moore, as cited in Dorn, 1999).

Proponents of the Master-teacher-as-mentor style of art training whose inheritance goes back to apprenticeships, still believe it is the best way to illuminate what we already know in order to transform the lives of others (Adejumo, 2010). Adejumo was apprenticed at age seven, a product of the mastery learning style, and became an accomplished printmaker. The status of visual art today leaves a void in the education of the art student, in terms of helping them get to where they need to go. Asking how we can redesign an art education that has become canonized in order to improve the outcome for students, Adejumo believes we too readily accept what we have instead of thinking beyond current parameters to create what we need.

In the 1940’s Lowenfeld and Read (in Eisner, 2002), parted from the Bauhaus tradition in claiming that creativity needed to be a freeing of the spirit, an expressive endeavor that derives from within, and does not inhibit the individual in any way. The art teacher’s role was to be as uninvolved in that process as possible. This constructivist-personal discovery and learning-theory is well illustrated by the now famous Reggio Emilia approach to learning in Italy. With a foundation based on a socio-cultural theory of knowledge construction, the school’s approach fosters children’s intellectual development through systematic focus on symbolic representation.

Reinforcing exploration and discovery, the school's approach is to encourage children to "express themselves in all of their available expressive, communicative, and cognitive languages" (Edwards, Gandini & Foreman, 1998, p.7). Teachers assume the role of facilitator rather than director of knowledge, while making opportunities for children to engage in open-ended discovery and constructive questioning and creative problem solving. Using what has been learned by the Reggio Emilia style of instruction, Edwards, Gandini and Foreman (1998), purport that creativity appears to evolve from multiple experiences paired with a supportive framework for the development of personal resources, within which is the freedom to go beyond the "known" to make discoveries. Creativity seems to flourish in environments where teacher/facilitators tend to recognize the cognitive *process* in a discipline rather than the *results* of that knowing and doing.

***Providing a Balance.*** During the past quarter century, research regarding school-based programs have demonstrated beyond question that the arts can not only bring coherence to our fragmented academic world, but through the arts, students' performance in other academic disciplines can be enhanced as well (Boyer, 1979). A greater balance must be achieved between the academic disciplines and the creative and performing arts. *The Rembrandt Project*, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), became the focus for a study (Smith, 2008), to determine *how* that balance might be achieved through visual art. The project represents a strong committed effort to the development of higher order thinking, leading to academic achievement and increased perceptive and creative skills. The project provides the essence of Gardner's (2003) theory that individuals should be given opportunities to study in depth, what humans have produced that represent beauty, truth and quality. The study further revealed that discipline-based art that integrates art making, art history, art criticism and aesthetics is essential and the *Rembrandt Project* is an exemplary model for doing that. Through the availability of a web-based study of Rembrandt, the famous Dutch artist, the project acts as a vehicle for developing multiple literacies.

Included in the team of experts are those with university experience, art and social studies specialists, classroom teachers, and administrators with dual experience in K-12 and higher education. If we intend to promote the arts in K-12 educational programs, colleges and universities must be prepared to make the link to those school programs through its own art and humanities courses. Most American colleges and universities subscribe to the theory of a broad "liberal arts education." This requires that all students study the humanities in addition to their specific area of study.

Through the humanities we reflect on the fundamental question: What does it mean to be human? The humanities offer clues but never a complete answer. They reveal how people have tried to make moral, spiritual, and intellectual sense of a world in which irrationality; despair, loneliness, and death are as conspicuous as birth, friendship, hope, and reason. (The Humanities in American Life, 1980, p. x).

The researcher's aim is to uncover new knowledge and to visualize research data in new and revealing ways.

### **Legitimizing the Humanities**

Fostering the ability to develop and own a literary or philosophical insight should be central to humanities learning in college. Information transfer without tangible action or at least a view of tangible action or application is a serious failure of education. For humanities students, the transfer of knowledge from concept to action often goes untested and unrealized. Yet, the stakes in the humanities are just as high as in science and mathematics; we cannot afford to have students fail in the application of trigonometry concepts, nor can we have them fail in the arts.

There is concern that today, scholars of the humanities may be becoming obsolete (Cook & Turner, eds., 1999). Currently, the percentage of enrollments and majors in the humanities is shrinking in comparison to the growing number of undergraduates enrolled in private and public post-secondary institutions. This is surfacing as a modern "crisis" facing humanities scholars that has many

sides: universities in the U.S. have adopted corporate guidelines requiring profit from undergraduate education and from academic scholarship and research. This has resulted in an increased demand for academic disciplines to justify their existence based on the applicability of their disciplines to the world outside of the university. Increasing corporate emphasis on “life-long learning” has also impacted the university’s role as educator and researcher. Responses to those changing institutional norms, and to changing emphasis on what constitutes “useful skills” in an increasingly technical world, have varied both inside and outside of the university system.

### **Art, De-Valued**

With the current focus on what is considered to be “core subjects” in an age of test scores and accountability, art remains undervalued in many schools. It has been shown that in schools where art is included in the curriculum, and students participated in those arts, the learning environments are improved (Rabkin, 2006). Since the inception of NCLB, the average art participation time for elementary age students is 77 minutes per week (Gullatt, 2007). This is a time when students by nature, enjoy art activities, and are eager to explore, experiment, and express their world through their art. One of the negative results of removing art from the curriculum is reduced self-perceived competence, and productivity in children (Viglione, 2009). This perception is almost 20% higher for those involved in art. Students who are not high achievers in academics can find success in the art classroom.

A study was conducted by the Center on Educational Policy (2007) that included sending surveys to 491 school districts, stratified by district type-urban, suburban, and rural. Information provided by the 349 responding districts, paints the picture of what has happened to art in the current educational climate. (Information below has been excerpted from the report).

1. Increased time for tested subjects in elementary schools since 2002. About 62% of districts reported that they have increased time for English language arts (ELA) and/or math in elementary schools since school year 2001-02 (the year NCLB was enacted),

and more than 20% reported increasing time for these subjects in middle school since then. Among districts that reported increasing time for ELA and math, the average increase in minutes per week since 2001-02 was substantial, amounting to a 47% increase in ELA, a 37% increase in math, and a 43% increase across the two subjects combined.

2. Reduced time for other subjects. To accommodate this increased time in ELA and math, 44% of districts reported cutting time from one or more other subjects or activities (social studies, science, art and music, physical education, lunch and/or recess) at the elementary level. Again, the decreases reported by these districts were relatively large, adding up to a total of 145 minutes per week across all of these subjects, on average, or nearly 30 minutes per day. These decreases represent an average reduction of 32% in the total instructional time (February 2007, District Survey).

3. Number of minutes per week devoted to various subjects. About 24% of districts reported that their middle schools have increased instructional time in English language arts since 2001-02; the comparable figure for math was 20% of districts. Most districts reported that their middle schools devoted about the same amount of instructional time to subjects other than ELA and math as they did before NCLB took effect. Similar to the survey findings from the elementary level, a higher proportion of districts with at least one identified school (39% in ELA and 34% in math) than of districts with no identified schools (20% ELA and 16% in math) reported increasing instructional time in these subjects at the middle school level. Districts that have increased instructional time in middle schools reported adding an average of 118 minutes per week in ELA and 97minutes per week in math.

Instructional time in minutes per week:

- English language arts 331
- Math 274
- Science 250
- Social studies 248
- Foreign Language 200
- Physical Education 178



Art & Music 167

Lunch 159

4. High School. At the high school level, the amount of coursework that students take in particular subject is heavily influenced by their state's graduation requirements. We found that the average number of semesters that students must take in various subjects to graduate ranged from eight semesters in ELA to five in science; however, these results were from our district survey rather than a state survey. In addition, 26% of districts reported that they have increased the number of semesters of math coursework students must take to graduate, and 18% reported doing so in science. On average, these districts said high schools required an additional two semesters of coursework in both math and science. This finding is consistent with a study from the National Center for Education Statistics (2007), which concluded that high school graduates in 2005 had earned more course credits in social studies, math, and science than graduates in 2000 (Center on Educational Policy, 2007).

#### **Achieving a Visual Literacy in Art and Humanities**

The debate about how much emphasis to place on art, and for what reasons, has been influenced by philosophies that seemed plausible at different times in the history of art education. The 21<sup>st</sup> century demands new thinking as we ask the questions about what needs to be done to prepare students from K-12 through the doctoral level, with the intellectual ammunition needed to survive the complexities of the world. Visual art, as a studio class representative of practice in the field, can help provide new research that would lead us toward that goal. The meaning of literacy as it is applied in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is being able to communicate effectively, in both verbal and non-verbal ways (Galligan, 2001). If we recognize art as part of a "cultural narrative while using it as a critical literacy framework" (Millman, 2009), we can help students better understand the meaning in

There is a concern that as a nation, we are losing traction in our effort to be competitive and meet with the demands for creativity in

response to political, economic and cultural needs. Yet, results from a national poll conducted by Lake Research Partners indicated that the United States focuses less effort on the development of creativity than do other nations (Zimmerman, 2009). If we intend to develop a citizenry that is prepared to meet those challenges, our educational system needs to provide students with the tools to reach this goal, taking steps toward cultural literacy, and a workforce that has the creative and collaborative skills necessary to be successful in today's society. It is possible that we need to consider the development of standards-based instructional strategies informed by those we have at the national level for other subject areas. In working toward a more rigorous and appropriate humanities education for the times, however, Smith (2008) suggested art, by its very nature, teaches students to think in ways that develop the skills necessary to achieve that critical literacy that Millman (2009) speaks of – art as it relates to their culture and history. The creative economy no longer focuses on the production of goods; it centers on the ability of citizens to utilize creative thinking, innovation and effective communication (in Eisner, 2002). Providing students with the tools to reach this goal can be a step toward establishing a workforce and a society that has the creative and collaborative skills necessary to be successful in today's society. Keeping in mind the kind of society we are striving for, the degree to which communication and collaboration are essential, and how the humanities and arts can lead to a better visual and cultural literacy, we owe it to America's students to value these disciplines as integral to achieving those goals.

#### **Hope for the Future of Reform**

Failure to recognize the value of the humanities is doing a disservice to the nation's youth, who are in need of the proper tools to successfully meet the new demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Perhaps even greater than the preparation of the future workforce, is the benefit the humanities – and specifically, visual art – have on the development and well being of

the individual. The humanities and art together serve to broaden student's horizons, help students make sense of their world, and build a personal awareness.

Holistic education means educating the affective, cognitive and physical components to serve the whole child. Using that analogy, then, providing the kind of learning experiences that develop each whole person means the whole society reaps the benefits too. In an effort to construct an educational system that aligns with the mantra "for the good of society" we are missing the mark. We are expecting our children to develop into creative thinkers capable of producing innovative design and products to compete in a world whose demands are rapidly changing, and we are not providing them the tools to accomplish that (Fowler, 1996). This might be a cause for rethinking not only what we include in our curriculum, but what we emphasize when we assess student performance. It is time we model some creative thinking in seeking solutions to the current accountability dilemma.

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*(Authors' note: We believe more clarity can be achieved in a paper of this length, if we concentrate primarily on visual art and its benefits to students. This by no means makes an assumption regarding comparable benefits from the other arts).*